

SCHÖNBRUNN PALACE MY WAY OF TELLING HISTORY

(c)

by Robert M. Tidmarsh



**WITH GRATITUDE TO
Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H.
and Colleagues of Schönbrunn Palace**

SCHÖNBRUNN 1936-1955

‘An Englishman in Vienna?’

A question repeated many times during my years at Schönbrunn.

I first came to Schönbrunn as a tourist, arriving in Austria in 1972. With no knowledge of the German Language at that time I could not have imagined that two years later I would be employed in the palace of Schönbrunn as a guide. Long hours of study after work, both in order to improve my use of German and to learn the history of Austria and the Palace were eventually to enable me to pass the required exams.

By 1980, I was to undertake the supervision of the Imperial apartments and its guides also to be involved in first attempts to modernise the tours and the updating of pre-war administration of the Imperial apartments. I was to witness many changes both in my work and the running of the palace. I still achieve most satisfaction when imparting knowledge, gained over the years, to others making their first or subsequent visits to Schönbrunn, this whether they be tourists or one the many VIPs it has been my pleasure to escort around this magnificent building.

In the 1990's the State Administration of Schönbrunn was handed over to a professional and dynamic private company, who, avoiding no expense has further developed and improved facilities in and around the palace. Today we see continuing restoration, bringing Schönbrunn ever closer to its former glory in the time of its heyday.

Part of my duties over the years has been to compile and write ‘scripts’ for the trainee guides (these were mainly students) who needed to refresh their knowledge from time to time ensuring the visitors would be given correct information. A matter of great importance to me as a person fortunate enough to have spent more time in Schönbrunn than many of its Royal inhabitants.

I hope this book will not only provide a quick reference to the history but will also give its readers an association with events that took place during those bygone days and that out of this will come a renewed interest of things past.....

The history of Schönbrunn as a whole has always been tied closely together with the history of Austria, this being the scene of many political conferences, receptions and suchlike. Schönbrunn and the history of Europe are forever one and part of the whole. My intention was to set out and to link the past and present of Austria's place in Europe and to remind us that we presently are creating the history of the future.

When I started to write this book about Schönbrunn, I again decided to set out the information in ‘script form’ as I have done since the 1980's. The guide should be able to answer any questions asked during the tour and must refer to his/her own

basic knowledge of history spontaneously. I have learned over the years that background knowledge should enable the guide to establish a link and thereby avoid the tedium of referring to other books in order to acquire the requested information.

I first decided to write a short account of Austrian history, then to absorb this, into the existing tour. Thus providing a lead into the related topic. A useful tool for the guide.

Knowledge acquired as a guide that has served his duties in Schönbrunn Palace for the past 30 years does not count as a qualification in history. It was never my intention to write the history of Austria or an encyclopaedia but merely a compiled collection of scripts attained over the decades that should enable my colleagues and readers to appreciate the importance of this magnificent building.

This collection is not complete and will probably never be so. One may regard it as a token of my respect for the palace, its history, those who contributed to its past glory, and present and future colleagues who may continue this unfinished work.....

Robert M. Tidmarsh

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SCHÖNBRUNN 1936-1955

1936

As early as 1936 (1st Republic of Austria) Schönbrunn was divided into two sections, the area behind the Gloriette was used as a site for the building of a large complex, the 'Dollfuß (Gedächtnis) Führerschule' and taken away from the rest of Schönbrunn. The youth of Austria, both boys and girls, were to be brought up in the way of the authoritarian government of the first republic and trained as Youth-Leaders.

After the annexation of Austria (Anschluß) by the German Third Reich, the so-called Fasangarten-Kaserne, now known as the Maria-Theresien-Kaserne was completed, making Schönbrunn in later years during the Second World War a legitimate target for the allied bombers.

1939

In 1939 at the start of the Second World War the outbuildings of the palace (Hofküchentrakt and Stables) were used for the storage of wheat (and ammunition?). The Imperial Apartments were open to the public until 1943 with the exemption of citizens of Jewish heritage, they were not allowed into the grounds of the palace.

As the war progressed it became very difficult to maintain the palace (Ensignement) and towards the end of 1943 tours were no longer possible due to lack of staff. A few tours of the park continued throughout the war.

The valuable contents of the Imperial Apartments were removed in 1943 to be stored for safe-keeping in the cellars of the Hofburg or, like many other works of art belonging to the museums of Vienna, in the salt mines at Hallein and Altausee (Salzburg, Styria and *Oberdonau).

* Oberdonau = The term 'Oberdonau' was used during the Ostmark (1938-1945) and corresponds roughly to Upper Austria.

The cultural events during the war years were in the form of concerts (Kraft durch Freude) held in the main courtyard (Ehrenhof) and in the gardens on the south side of the palace. Many events such as Balls and Receptions took place in the reception rooms and Great Gallery of the palace itself. Schönbrunn was used also for the making of films such as 'Tanz mit dem Kaiser' and 'Wiener Mädeln'.

Schönbrunn Zoo 'Tiergarten' suffered greatly, unable to supply food for its animal stock and no longer importing exotic species from overseas this eventually leading to a drop from 2.200 animals in 1938 to 1.300 in 1945.

1944

In October 1944, Schönbrunn became a target for allied bombers. The Little-Gloriette was damaged, several bombs destroying the swimming pool and other buildings in that area of the park.

In February 1945 the 'Guards Wing' (Gardetrakt), situated next to the main gate was destroyed during one of these raids, one of the bombs tearing an enormous 25 metre hole into the main building adjacent to the Oval Staircase (Ovalstiege) and wedged between the ceiling fresco of the Great Gallery and the roof above it, not exploding.



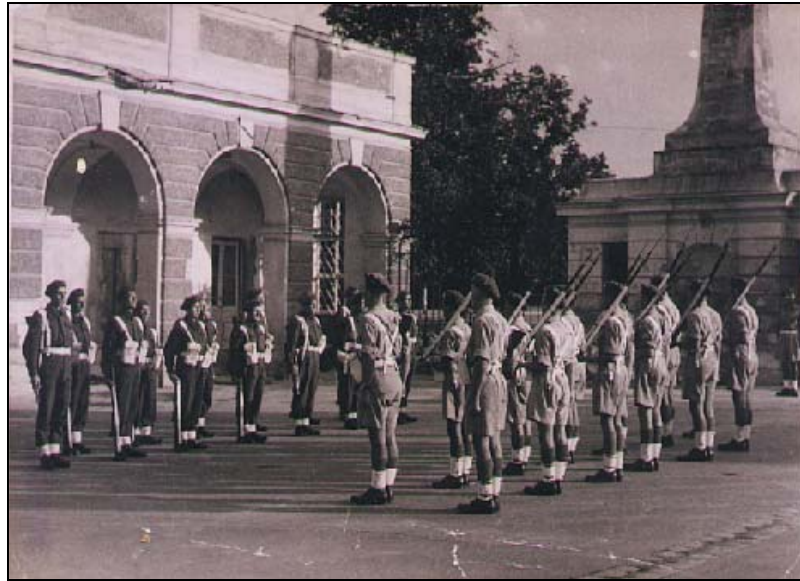
Two days later a heavy air raid left 269 bomb craters. Most of the bombs fell into the park of Schönbrunn and left outbuildings as ruins. The Palace Theatre was slightly damaged. The Cavalry Wing (Kavalierttrakt), the Restaurant, the east side of the Gloriette, the large Palm House (Palmenhaus) and Sun Dial House (Sonnenuhrhaus) were all badly damaged. The zoo (Tiergarten) was also badly hit decimating most of the animal stock but fortunately leaving most of the historical buildings in the old 'Menagerie' mainly undamaged.

1945

After the allies entered Vienna, Russian Forces took control of Schönbrunn, they then installed their General-Command in the main offices of the Zoo (Tiergartenverwaltung). The Russian Commander helped to solve the problems of the Zoo by supplying food, greatly needed by now, for the few remaining animals.

The city of Vienna was divided into four military 'sectors'.

Later that year, in September 1945, 'British High-Command' moved into the palace, using the first floor (Reception rooms) and other rooms on the ground floor (Gisela-Rooms), together with some of the outbuildings, as their headquarters. The British General staff and a division of the British armed forces needed to be accommodated and as a result in July 1945 some of the tenants received letters of notice to quit thereby making room for British military staff. An airfield was constructed on the then football field in front of the main building (APCOA Car Park).



The Imperial Apartments remained closed to the general public throughout the following years during their occupancy by British High-Command and the usage of Reception Rooms in the palace by British forces.



Repairs to the building began soon after the allies entered the city. The main building was immediately repaired but less urgent repairs to the outbuildings took place in the 1950's. Schönbrunn was, like many buildings during the 1940's,

administrated by the Ministry of Trading and Rebuilding (Ministerium für Handel und Wiederaufbau) and during the years 1945-1975 the enormous sum of 400 million Austrian Shillings was spent on its refurbishment.

1946

The Vienna Military Tattoo in Schönbrunn 1946

The word Tattoo is derived from the Dutch words 'Doe den taptoe' (turn off the taps). The British army military signal 'Tattoo' was a drum beat late each evening which indicated that soldiers should return to the barracks in time for 'last post' and 'lights out' and that the beer taps in the taverns should be turned off. This developed slowly into a ceremonial performance of military music by massed bands which in recent years has become well known due to military tattoos like the famous Edinburgh Military Tattoo, an annual event held during the International Festival in Edinburgh Castle which is attended by some 200.000 people each year. The British Army has always held Tattoos, usually in London where they could perform and show their expertise and attract large crowds of visitors. The Tattoo changed over centuries from the Fyffes and Drums in the days of Oliver Cromwell to Regimental Bands, particularly the Brigade of Guards that perform all over the world.

In April 1946 a parade of British troops took place in the main courtyard of Schönbrunn Palace (Ehrenhof). This was followed up with a Searchlight Military Tattoo in the main gardens to the south of the palace (Blumenparterre) in June that was climaxed with a large firework display. The amount raised £10.000 (400.000 Austrian Schillings = €9.069), was presented on the 26th October 1946 to the City of Vienna (Bürgermeister Theodor Körner) thus enabling the city of Vienna to finance a six-week holiday for 2.400 children at a holiday resort.

The British continued holding similar activities for the benefit of children in following years.

Mr. Tom Canning remembers:

'Rehearsals began under Major Bullivant, Captain Peter Bull and Lord Carmichael with much hilarity, a stagecoach was built by the fitters and test driven through the narrow cobbled streets of Althoven with the locals shaking their heads at the antics of the 'Krazy Englanders'. Costumes appeared and I was dressed as a Monk, with the other passengers of the stagecoach being namely Hughes, Kelly and MacCormack dressed as well to do landed Gentry and two 'females' who looked suspiciously like Willie Moore and Al Offord.

A driver for the two horses was recruited from the front end of a Sherman Tank, who found that steering two skittish horses in a straight line was quite a challenge, while the co-driver spent hours rehearsing the 'Post Horn Gallop' or reasonable facsimile, whilst bouncing up and down in a springless stagecoach.

All too soon we were entrained for Vienna being held up at the Semmering Pass by big hulking Russians with Kalashnikov machine pistols hanging from their shoulders, the general consensus was that we were not going to have many laughs with those chaps.

The Tattoo was to be held in the grounds of the Schoenbrunn Palace with the bomb damaged 'Gloriette' in the background, and was a magnificent setting even with the absence of all floralworks.

This was to be - as always - a searchlight Tattoo and could only start when the sun went down. The show started with the Coldstream Guards performing the 'Sunset Ceremony' as only the Guards can. The programme was two hours long and was enjoyed by more than 10.000 Viennese during that week. Various V.I.P.'s and Brass made short work of the refreshments on a nightly basis.

As an old Cavalry Regiment the 16/5th Lancers, founded in 1689 by Queen Charlotte who also gave her name to a group of Islands off the British Columbia coast, were well placed for a spot in the show as our second in command Major Bullivant, had some experience with the pre war Tattoos held in London, so we were in - and our sister regiments 17/21st Lancers and Lothian and Border Horse were out. Unfortunately our other Armoured Brigade in the Division had the 4th Hussars which was Mr Churchill's old regiment from the Boer War and they were also in, just in case the old man decided to drop in for the show!

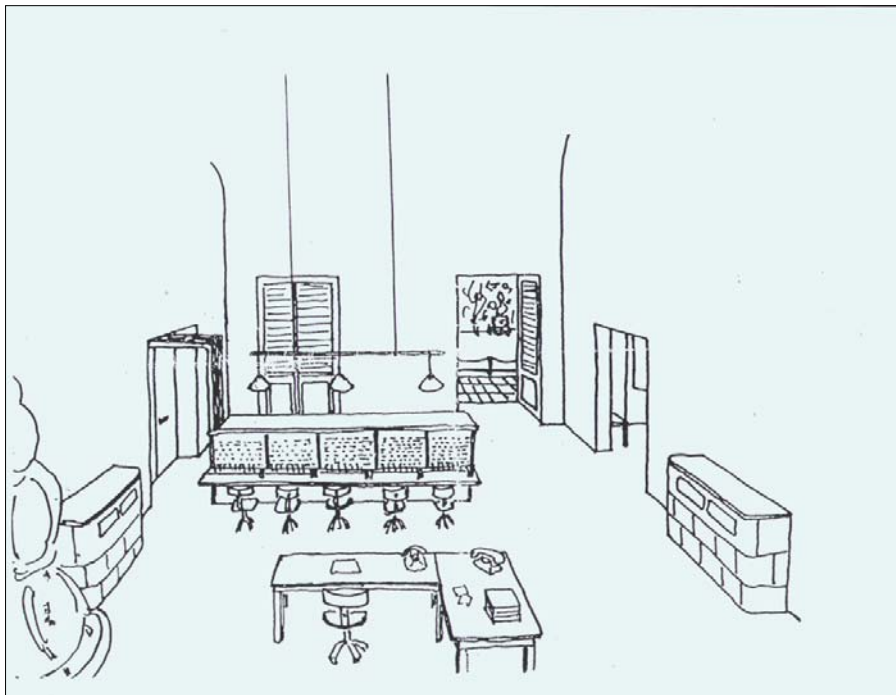
There was a shortage of 'pukka lances' and so these were given to the Hussars and we had to make do with sharpened clothes type poles with a pennant. Our fifteen minutes of fame consisted of a sketch of mounted Brigands awaiting the arrival of the stagecoach and show jumping over benches and tables outside the hostelry where the horses were to be changed (Wells Fargo copied this idea in the tumultuous American wild west in the 1860's) On the sounding of the post horn, the Brigands would hide and at the right moment, would gallop out and surround the stagecoach demanding 'your money or your life' (both Dick Turpin and Robin Hood held the copyrights of this demand in the 12th century) this was also copied in the wild west - (John Wayne et al). When the passengers had been relieved of their worldly goods, the 7th Cavalry rode to the rescue - this was a troop of the 16/5th Lancers really at the full gallop with outstretched clothes poles and pennants a fluttering - and escorted the Brigands off to the slammer, but not before the Leader - Capt. Peter Bull riding a Lipizzaner Stallion rode in front to give a mighty bow to the audience who went wild to see their own Lipizzaner again after their rescue from Czechoslovakia by no less than US General George S. Patton.

The rest of the programme was very entertaining with the various bands marching up and down all over the place, the Hussars doing their 'Musical Ride' (also copied by the Canadian Mounties), the 4/5 Hampshires firing a Foe de Joie - this was the whole battalion of 750 men firing their rifles in very quick succession from left to right, giving a continuous fire. This was lost on the audience until the organisers changed it so that one man in the centre fired his rifle two seconds

AFTER the others had finished! This brought the house down as did the performance by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Pipe Band in their full Highland Dress as did other units.

1948

In 1948 British Headquarters moved into a military complex behind The Gloriette, which had been used by British forces since 1945. The Palace itself was given back to the Austrian Government but the British Telephone Exchange remained situated in the palace until well into the 1950's.



The Imperial Apartments of Schönbrunn were reopened to the general public on the 4th September 1948.

1955

After the signing of the State Treaty in the Belvedere Palace on the 15th May 1955 the Palace of Schönbrunn became the chosen venue for one of the most important government receptions of those years. The Reception Rooms were used to entertain the four foreign ministers of the occupying forces and politicians of the day (Wjatscheslaw Molotov, Harold Macmillan, John Foster Dulles, and Antoine Pinay together with their delegations). The Austrian Parliamentary delegation headed by Felix Hurdes, Hans Reimer and representatives of the four main Austrian political parties, ambassadors etc. The Ceremonial Hall (Zeremoniensaal) was used for the main guests (VIP's) (80) and the Reception rooms being set aside for the other 1,200 invited guests.

As at all receptions in the following years the Neptune Fountain (Neptunbrunnen) and the Gloriette were floodlit.

A splendid sight, but not so in the Main Court Yard, where three hundred cars could be parked and continued thus until the 1980's when the practice was stopped.

The emerging second Republic of Austria now 'introduced' itself to the world and used the Reception Rooms of the palace in the following years for State and Government receptions.

List of a few of the Receptions given during the early years of the 2nd Republic of Austria:

- 1954-Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie
- 1960-Emperor of Iran, Shah Mohammed Resa
- 1961-John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev
- 1962-Heinrich Lübke-Republic of West Germany
- 1962-Queen Juliane-Netherlands
- 1962-Frederik IX-Denmark
- 1964-King of Thailand and his wife Sirikit