

# From Pigtown to Ptuj

**W**hen Oban-based musicians Robert Woods and Stephen McNally, aka Pigtown Fling, were invited to play at Slovenia's foremost social event, the Kurentovanje Carnival 2007, they had to idea what fun was ahead of them.

**Robert tells *Lorn Life* the story of their epic journey and an experience of a lifetime.**

THREE-thousand miles, eight countries and the most action packed, musical, hilarious and ridiculous time of my life. This was Carnival 2007, Ptuj, Slovenia.

We worked harder and achieved more in two weeks than could be done in months back home. Trying to cram all of our trip into two pages is impossible. You need to experience these things for yourself.

Every morning we set out with pipes and drums and played in the shops and streets of Ptuj. We were even employed to play in Qlandija - the main shopping centre. Our job was to follow people around and play music AT them. We followed them into shops, up escalators etc. Very silly.

By night the drums were put away, and the usual Pigtown Fling line-up of myself on guitar and vocals, Stephen McNally on whistles, pipes, mandolin and vocals, was augmented superbly by Jon Brindley on guitar, fiddle, piano and vocals, and Rob Welsh on pipes, mandolin and percussion. Jon's vocals and general playing were a joy to behold and Rob's energy and adaptability on such things as wooden spoons and ottoman were highly entertaining to watch.

With absolutely no rehearsals allowed, this meant improvised sets, which made playing all the more fun.

Other activities included playing outside the town hall and in the 3,000 capacity carnival tent, supporting most of Slovenia's top pop artists. During one of our gigs we appeared LIVE on Slovenian national television. The local and national press also gave us some very complimentary coverage.

Our stay was partly paid for in kind by playing a daily gig at our place of residence - the Hotel Mitra. Our stay at the Mitra was made a pleasure by the wonderful staff who couldn't be more friendly and helpful. We tried to repay their hospitality by teaching them some traditional Scottish dances including Strip the Willow.

One particular highlight in Mitra was when I asked the audience to participate by singing a traditional song. Two minutes later, the whole hotel was singing *Country Roads* in Slovenian. Most unexpected.

I wrote a piece of music for our trip which we all signed and framed and is now on the wall at the Mitra reception. My next job is to record it and send it over to Slovenia where I have been told will apparently be used as a ringtone for their mobile phones.

All of these gigs were performed by Pigtown Fling, along with two great guys and great performers who, before this trip, I had never met. Rob Welsh of Lochwinnoch and Jon Brindley of Wigan played their hearts out, brought out the best in Stephen and I, and made this musical adventure complete.

None of this would have been possible without the help of Simona Gaiser. She organised absolutely everything for us and without her the whole trip would have been a lot less eventful.

I would again like to thank Rob, John, Simona, her family and friends and the staff of the Hotel Mitra for making this an unforgettable musical and personal journey.

