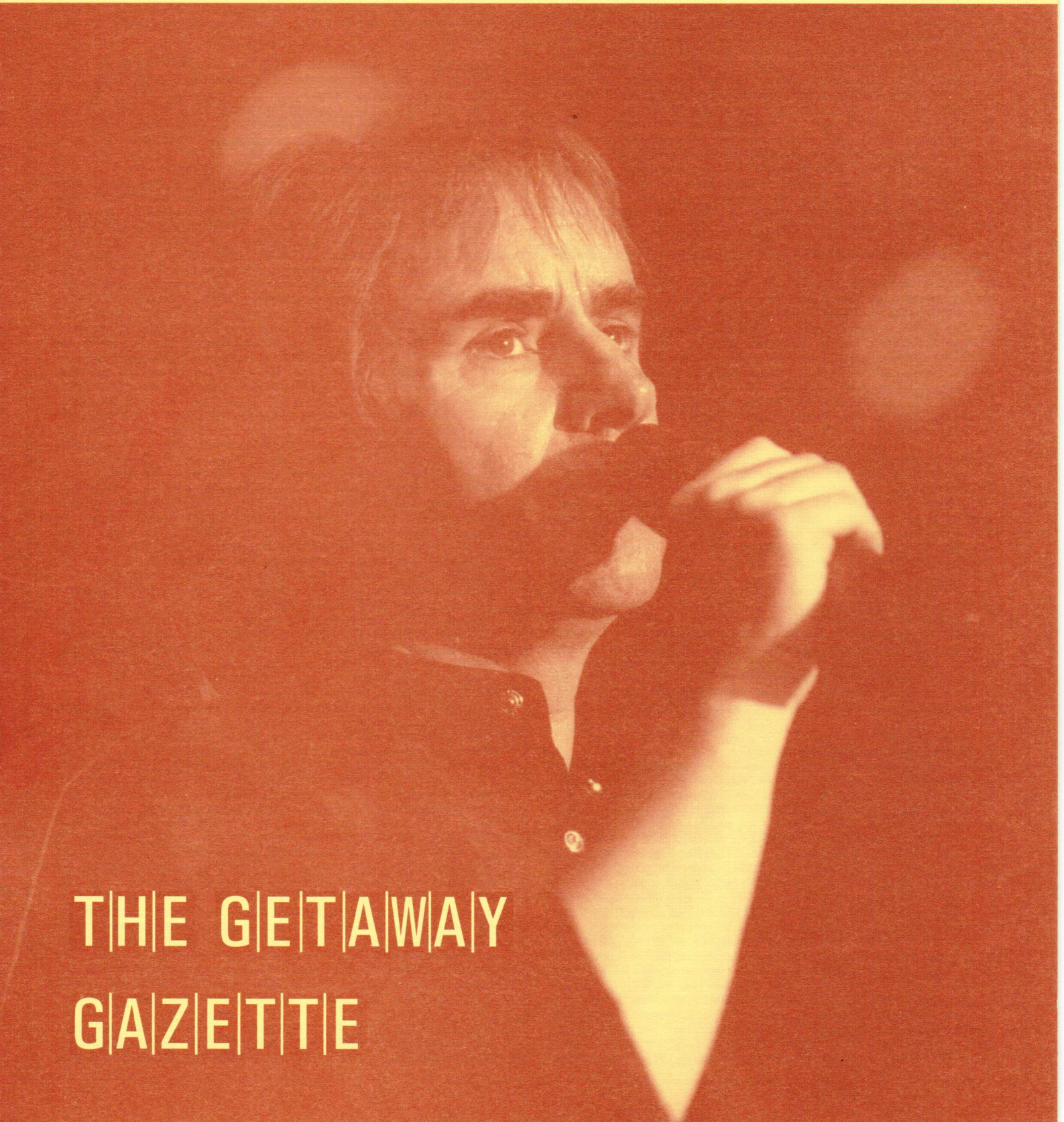


THE NEW *Chris de Burgh* CLUB

P. O. BOX 276 LONDON E2 7BW

FEBRUARY 1999



THE GETAWAY  
GAZETTE

Hello, Happy New Year and welcome to the latest edition of the Getaway Gazette - the fan club's first since the *April, 1998* edition (gulp!). Now, while the gap between newsletters is, unhappily, the longest in the fan club's 15-year history, there are many and various reasons for the delay in bringing this new communication to you, all of which will become clear as Chris talks you through his past, hectic months. However, and in the context of this very late-arriving newsletter, it is appropriate to remind you that your membership to the club is *not* actually based on a period of time (i.e. one or two years). Rather, you pay a subscription to receive a number of Gazettes (three or six) and, as such, will not be sent an invitation to renew your membership until you have been mailed the last of those magazines - regardless of how much time passes before this arrives. And on that comforting note (we hope), it's straight over to C de B who, as ever, had his studiously collated Filofax in hand when we recorded the following interview on December 23, 1998...

**First of all, we should explain to members why it has been such a long time between newsletters. We've spoken several times over the past months but, until now, not been able to pin you down for a formal interview. You've had a very busy 1998...**

**CHRIS:** "Yes. Well, one of the key reasons it's been so busy is that, when I was in South Africa - not on the recent trip, but the one before that, two-and-a-half years ago - I bought a house in Ireland. I'm not going to say exactly where it is, but it's in County Wicklow, only a few miles south of where I currently am. It's an old Georgian house, with some acres of land about it; it's the country residence, basically. Now, although the house was in fairly good condition, we had a very ambitious project to develop this house and make it comfortable and secure and, certainly, weatherproof for, hopefully, up to 200 years. We wanted to do a really fantastic job on it and, also, build a lot more besides on the same site. Although I've had property before and worked on the property, this is the first time I've been involved from plan stage - and it's so *incredibly* complex! For example, I have been having meetings three or four times a week for hours on end...looking at wiring diagrams and the position of sockets, and what height they should be. Should they be in the floorboards? Where are you likely to want these sockets? Should they be 5 amp, or 13 amp? Are you starting to get the picture? Then there's plumbing; where are we going to want the plumbing - and do we want the freshwater to these taps, or those?... It has been so mind-numbingly consuming. Every day, virtually, I am down on the site, for the simple reason that, if you're not on site, things get done which you may not have noticed and then, some years later, you'll be wondering 'Why wasn't that over there?' By then, of course, it's too late. So, it has been a huge drain on my energy and, to be perfectly honest - and you can build this up if you want! - it has been occupying a hell of a lot of my time."

**Well, one of the questions I did intend to ask you was 'How's it all going with the new house?'**

**CHRIS:** "I don't think we'll be moving in until next summer. In Ireland, like everywhere else, you have to apply for planning permission - and that took a long time to come through. Not because they disliked the plans, but because there was a drainage problem. The house is in what's called the Garden of Ireland, a very beautiful part of Ireland near a famous place called Powys Court House and, quite rightly, they're trying to protect the environment there. The way it worked, they only had one person dealing with this particular problem, and there's a huge amount of building work going on in the area. What with just that one person looking after it all, it just took weeks and weeks to get decisions. It went on and on, so we didn't actually start the building until spring time of this year (1998) and then we hit all sorts of snags in terms of underground problems and who knows what. It just been a long and difficult project."

**OK. Well that fairly fully explains where you've been domestically, so can we now catch up on what you've been up to socially and professionally?**

**CHRIS:** "One of the features of this year has been football, believe it or not. I've always been a Liverpool Football Club supporter and, before you say anything, I know they're going through a tough time at the moment! But I always remind myself that Liverpool Football Club is *the* most successful football club - ever - out of England. Down the years, they've won more trophies than any other team, including Manchester United. They've got great players, but they're just not gelling at the moment. Anyway, I've been taking my boys to quite a few football matches at Liverpool, and became great friends with the Chairman of the club. My lads absolutely love it, and Rosie has been once, too. I made a donation to a charity for sick children in Liverpool, and one of the auction prizes I made a bid for was to have your child as the mascot for the day at Anfield, Liverpool's stadium. So I organised it for both Michael and Hubie to be mascots, and they ran out on to the pitch at the beginning of a Liverpool match against Chelsea in October. It was broadcast on Sky Sports - and lots of their friends saw it! My daughter also came along, met her hero Michael Owen and had her picture taken with him. It was a wonderful day out with wonderful memories. So...I've been going to quite a few matches and, so far, I've never been to a Liverpool match where the team has lost. I've been to a couple of draws..."

**You should go along more regularly, Chris...**

**CHRIS:** "Yes. I haven't been going recently! Also, I've been going to the Grand Prix. I went to four Grand Prix again this year, which I enjoyed very much. And then on April 22, I had my annual golf classic tournament - and we raised a lot of money again for sick children and various charities that I support. Then I went to Toronto and did a private gala for the Canadian Tire Company - and that was actually a really good excuse to get across to Toronto, see some old friends and eat some marvellous Chinese food in a place called Peter's Chung King in downtown Toronto. It's got the most marvellous Chinese food; I kill for the stuff. In fact, here's a funny story - I bought the ultimate Chinese take-away. I bought eight large take-away packs of my favourite stuff, put it in a bag, took it on to the aircraft and put it away in the sharp end of the plane, in a place where you store coats and bags. So I put this Chinese food in there - and some goof put a very heavy bag on top so, by the time I got to London, this most amazing smell of Chinese food was wafting about the aircraft because the heavy bag had squashed a number of the containers. However, I managed to get it back home, and we ate it for the next three nights - which was fantastic. While I was in Canada, I also met up with a lot of the guys from the old band and we had some laughs. That was good fun. What else? (flicks through Filofax)...Jim Reynolds...May Ball...Monaco Grand Prix...Hmmm - I've been very much involved with this school that my two sons go to, in many ways - certainly as a benefactor. I suppose that's the right word, although I don't like it very much. Anyway, I've been very much involved with and behind a big project to build seven new classrooms which really are the most outstanding classrooms in the country. It's no secret now, but

I paid for the whole thing myself - for the simple reason that the school couldn't survive unless it had been for my input and the fact was, the only way that the school could develop was if it had more classrooms to take on more pupils who brought more income in to help it continue. So that's been occupying me for the past three or four years, and I got very much involved again this year. OK. Moving through...Gerry Kelly up in the North of Ireland. The Gerry Kelly chat show is my favourite chat show; Gerry Kelly himself is a marvellous guy. A very, very nice fellow. We did a special for the former world champion boxer, Barry McGuigan - it was a surprise night for him - and it was great. I played a couple of songs and had a bit of fun there. Gerry is a great chat show host because he's interested in his guests. Some of them are so obsessed with their next question that they're not even listening to what you're talking about. They're given a list of questions by their researchers and that's what they ask - irrespective of what you're talking about, which is disconcerting and, indeed, almost rude. Believe me, I've done a few chat shows and this guy is the best because he listens to you. He takes the conversation easy and the stars of his show are his guests, not the presenter. There are too many of these shows where the presenter is the star of the show - Clive Anderson being one of them. I just can't bear watching that guy because he's so smarmy and smart Alick with his remarks. He tries to get everybody to laugh at his guests - and I applauded when the Bee Gees walked off because he was so rude to them. I hate that kind of chat show, like Mrs Merton. I've actually been invited many times to appear on both of those shows, but I just turn them down. I don't want people to poke fun at me or make fun of me - not that I can't take a joke. On the contrary, as you probably know, I can take a joke but I disagree with the chat show being the star of the show; the guests are the stars, whoever they may be. Desert Island Discs. I did that in the summer, choosing eight favourite tracks and talking about my up-bringing. That was a real thrill for me, I must admit."

**I don't know if you can remember the eight songs you chose for Desert Island Discs, but I would hazard a guess that you included material by The Beatles, Paul Simon and some classical music...**

**CHRIS:** "There was Layla by Derek and The Dominoes, there were two very eclectic pieces of music - one was by an Argentine folk group singing a mass, and it was fantastic. Actually it was my favourite one of the lot. There was also a piece by Handel called Largo. And, you're right; there was a Beatles track - Let It Be - and a Paul Simon song, American Tune. It was a great experience to join the thin band of people who've done Desert Island Discs. So...what next? Oh, I did a few things. For example, I went to David Frost's annual cocktail party - where *everybody* is famous. He has it in the square outside his home in Chelsea, London, and everybody is a politician or a famous actor - and it's actually great to be there. This was my second or third year, meeting people that you know again like John Cleese and Michael Winner, all sorts of punters. That was fun. I also did a chat with Steve Wright for BBC Radio 2 - and he's a good man, very supportive. In fact, BBC Radio 2 has been amazingly supportive of me. I notice that they did a poll on the Wogan Show of the Top 100 favourite songs. I guess they were looking for easy listening or middle of the road stuff, or whatever - it certainly didn't involve hard rock or bizarre songs - and the Number 1 was Hotel California. I can't remember the Number 2 or 3, but Lady In Red was Number 4. The rest of the list behind was just amazing; of course there was Beatles stuff in there and goodness knows what else. To see that Lady In Red was voted fourth among them all was just great. Anyway, that brings us to the 27th of June and the Althorp concert. Well, altogether an extraordinary experience. The day before I had been to a Music Therapy lunch, sitting at the same table as Robbie Williams; you meet a lot of the celebs who support Music Therapy for handicapped children at these functions. A woman got up, who was the mother of a handicapped child, and she spoke so movingly about an ordinary day with her child, who's autistic, that a lot of people were in tears around me. It was terribly upsetting just hearing what this poor woman went through. The only reason I'm telling you this is because I'm really happy with what happened subsequently - and I hope she enjoyed what happened... One of the auction items was a week's holiday in Las Vegas for two people, so I bought that. To give further detail for this story, I had been invited to this particular event to receive the International Award - following in the footsteps of people like Paul McCartney and The Who - for services to Music Therapy, and to charity in particular. I was really chuffed. And during my acceptance speech while receiving the award, I said I'd like to donate the holiday I'd bought to the lady who had spoken because, obviously, she very rarely gets time to get out of the house because of her child. I felt really good about that. In fact, she wrote me a letter and sent me a copy of her original speech. And then, immediately after that as I say, I picked up my family from the airport, went off to Battersea Heliport in London, jumped into a helicopter and went up to Althorp House to meet up with Charles Spencer. We stayed the weekend in Althorp, which is a *magnificent* place. We went through the Princess Diana Musuem, which is beautiful; really tastefully done. And every time I read physical stuff about the Museum...I mean, the media are so down on poor old Charles Spencer - and he has nothing to gain and everything to lose from opening this thing up for two months of the year. *Two months a year!* You can't make any money in that time; the Museum costs a fortune. There are all these people saying 'Oh, he's trying to make money out of it.' Let's face it - the guy's worth £100 million. Why should he bother with pennies? He did what he did because he loves his sister. People forget that. And the most stunning thing of all about that museum - it's not big, but it has lovely things about Diana's life and her dresses and old film of when she was a kid - is the books of condolences which occupy one entire wall, as you leave the museum. I remember saying to Charles Spencer 'There's a lot of books here! How many are there?' And he said 'There's about two thousand here - but there's another 25,000 upstairs.' There are books from all over the world, he said: 'They are still coming in...' There are books which schoolchildren had put together - and they were *amazing*...if nothing else moved you to tears, then reading what the little children had written most certainly would. A few of the books were open, and people had signed these books and sent them to Charles Spencer. Quite an extraordinary thing. And then the concert. Well, of course, it rained like hell during the day of the show - and then it stopped about an hour before the show started, and beautiful, beautiful sunshine came. I just thought the event was amazing. I performed about six or seven songs - the audience were really into it - and the last song I did was 'A New Star Up In Heaven Tonight', which I have only performed publicly twice. The second time was on the 31st of August in Liverpool, with an orchestra, on the anniversary of her death. That was very emotional indeed, particularly since Diana's mother had taken Diane, the children and myself around the lake at Althorp to see where Princess Diana is buried. That was a privilege indeed. Very, very much so."

**Now, I have to say that I have two memories of the Althorp concert - and I don't know whether we can mention the second of them. First is that, yes, because you have some mystical power over the weather it had stopped raining, as always,**

before an open-air performance by you but, more vividly, I won't forget seeing you walking about with plastic bags tied around your feet. Can we tell people the story of how that came to be?

**CHRIS:** "Ha-ha! What happened is that there was a number of other people staying at Althorp House and, the thing was, you left your wellington boots inside the door - as one does. Now, in the afternoon, I'd soundchecked, left my wellies inside the door but when, at about 8 o'clock, I wanted to go to the stage to do the show - to my horror, somebody had stolen my boots. All that was left was a pair of size 4s. And there was no other way of getting up to the stage area from the house; there was no transportation, the only way was to walk. So I walked up a feeder road, a slip road, and I actually flagged somebody down in a car going to the concert; 'Excuse me - I need a lift!' Because I had been walking along, limping along, in these wellies that were nearly three sizes too small for me. Can you imagine? I take size 6-and-a-half to 7, and these were size 4 - and my feet were killing me. I was carrying all of my stage clothes with me and...ah, it was a pitiful sight. Anyway, when I finally got up to the stage area, I just couldn't walk any more so I got two plastic bags, tied them around my feet - and that worked a treat in all of the mud."

**Well, you made a fashion statement there - and I hear that plastic bags on your feet are all the rage now...**

**CHRIS:** "Yes; cheap and to the point. So, we did the show and then, afterwards, it was even more memorable. I suppose about 60 or 70 people went back to the house for drinks and dinner, which Charles Spencer had laid on, and, I remember, at about 1 o'clock in the morning somebody started playing the piano. There's a huge entrance hall with a massive staircase and there was a piano at the bottom of it which the princess used to play. The place was full of her; you could tell that she lived there - but I don't think she enjoyed it that much because the place must have seemed very cold and forbidding to a youngster, although it was *beautifully* done. It has long galleries, with at least three or four dining rooms - two of them in which you could seat about 50 people at the table. *Enormous*. Anyway, so this guy started playing 'Martha My Dear', the Beatles' song, on the piano - very well - and I heard this, drifted over and started singing along with it. Shortly, a lot of people started coming out after dinner, sat on the stairs and we started a concert - another concert - with everybody singing live. It was fantastic. And Jimmy Ruffin was *great*; he wandered around singing brilliantly. And this went on until half-past four in the morning, and all the artists who were staying at the house all got up and did a turn there. The actual show itself was, of course, televised, world-wide and the list of countries which took it - either live or on cable - was something like 45 long, and it was then transmitted to many, many more. Charles Spencer faxed the list to me...I'm very fond of the guy. We've had loads of conversations since the concert and, in fact, I saw him in Cape Town recently. Funnily enough, speaking of the countries where the televised concert was seen, there's a little village that I go to in Italy - where my brother-in-law, Paolo, lives - called Galinaro. It's in the Comino Valley, north of Naples, south of Rome - which is the title of his lovely book - and I've been there for the last two years, although I didn't go there this summer. Now, I know I've mentioned this in a previous Gazette but, in the village square, they have this wine festival every year, followed by a concert afterwards. The village square takes a few hundred people, and I was persuaded - the year before last - to get up and sing a few songs. People were absolutely stunned, but they didn't really know too much about me, or who I was. The same thing happened last year, except the numbers swelled to 2500, when they heard there was an international singer coming along to perform. Now this year, when I didn't go, they were gutted - because they'd *all* seen the programme, and they suddenly realised the 'star that they had in their midst' for the last two summers. They were saying (adopts Italian accent) 'Is Chris coming? Is Chris coming? Oh, no - he's not coming!' So I'll go next year. But the Althorp concert was seen world-wide, and I think it was a very nice programme. I enjoyed it a lot. So, that was the 27th of June."

**I'm going to prompt you here and remind you of some of the things featured in your 1998 itinerary following Althorp; band rehearsals, German tour...**

**CHRIS:** "In fact, the new band that I put together, their first gig was the Althorp concert. That was our first live gig together, so I was highly impressed by them. So, yes, we were in rehearsals - the British Grand Prix was in the middle of that! - and then we started the German tour, which was wonderful. I really enjoyed it. The previous time I was in Germany was with the string quartet - but this was rocking stuff, and there were lots of highlights. The particular one was the concert in Bonn. Those people who were in Bonn that night I think saw the most staggering display of fan adoration that I have ever seen - either side of the stage. The show itself was pushing three hours everywhere, and I was doing four or five shows a week, so it was hard on me, but the Bonn show was absolutely stunning - and they kept me on stage for 3 hours and 25 minutes, I believe, singing and applauding. In fact, I think if you invite people reading this Gazette to write in about their memories of that night, if they were there, you're going to get a pretty extraordinary response. It was just one of those shows. On that tour, we also went into eastern Germany, into Leipzig, Halle and Dresden - and we were lucky with the weather! That was a good tour. I really enjoyed it."

**Moving back to your new band, we'll get some more details about the individual members for a future edition of the Gazette but, in the meantime, does this new touring band replace your 'old', familiar touring band which backed you for so many years and so many successful tours?**

**CHRIS:** "I think this new band is pretty much where I'm at for the moment. I don't think the members of the old band will return again, for obvious reasons, but also because a lot of them are just doing completely different things these days. OK. So the German tour brings us up to early August, when I spent some time in Wexford before we did the open-air shows in the UK. Blickling Hall in Norfolk, for example; the weather was *stunning* that night. It was a little cold on the stage, but it was beautiful. In fact, all the shows in England, for me, were marvellous and I'm really looking forward to repeating them next year (1999), although we're not sure whether or not we're going to be working with an orchestra - because this band is so good, that it makes an orchestra actually redundant. Hopefully I'll be able to premiere some new songs at those shows, as well."

**Once again, there's another little twist in your career; over many years, you went from playing rock concerts to bigger rock concerts to absolutely mega rock concerts - to deciding that you had an idea to make music which, effectively, turned its back on what you had done before and required any supporting concerts to involve string quartet or orchestra. Here you are now about to turn full circle once more. That must be quite refreshing for you...**

**CHRIS:** "Well, the South African tour was our first time without the support of an orchestra and, I'll tell you what, it was *wonderful*, really excellent, because the energy

coming from the stage was extraordinary. And this band, it really...woke me up again to the energy you can create with a band without the need for an orchestra or a quartet. Because although it looks lovely and sounds lovely, it does tend to give a fair heaviness to a concert, there's a kind of gravitas about an orchestra, whereas the band energy stuff is fantastic. I was really digging it! Really great... I'll get to South Africa shortly, but returning to the UK shows, the last of them was on Monday, August 31 in Liverpool - that was an indoor show, I think there were difficulties in securing an outdoor venue for that one - and then I was invited to turn on the illuminations in Blackpool, which was a *complete* blast. I *loved* it! I did a show there, in the town centre, and the people were so fantastic. Afterwards, there was this very posh dinner and people were saying 'Thank you *so* much', and I said 'Well, no, I thank *you*' and Peter (Oxendale, Chris's piano player and Musical Director) and I got up and performed for the people there, just with the piano and the microphone, which was great. I really enjoyed that night. Hold on a second - the kids have just come back! (Moves away from the 'phone to say 'hello'.) OK. Where was I? Yes, moving out of Blackpool, then I started setting up the South African tour - which involved a lot of pre-promotion because they have the Afrikaans stations and the English language stations. It's the same kind of thing in Canada; you've got to do a lot of stuff in French, and a lot in English. So there was a lot of work done, through September and early October, prior to actually flying out to South Africa. I also took time out to go to a swimming pool exhibition in Dusseldorf, at the end of September, with my architect, because I'm building an indoor swimming pool. It's been something I've been very keen on for about 15 years now, and I've acquired a lot of knowledge and information about the subject, so I went to the exhibition - which was very interesting."

**And did you decide on anything that would be right for your new home?**

**CHRIS:** "Well, it wasn't actually the pool itself, it was the ancillary things like filtration systems, tiling systems, steam room and all that kind of stuff. Anyway, then there was the Liverpool versus Chelsea match I mentioned earlier and, following that, we did a couple of days of rehearsals prior to the South African - which we left for on October 12. We flew down and I got into Johannesburg on the 13th. The first show was on the 14th. Michael Bolton...now there's an interesting little saga here. Kenny (Thomson, Chris's manager), had convinced me - against my better judgement, I have to say - to support Michael Bolton, as a very special guest. Well, I haven't done one of those things for 20 years, and I was a little, er...apprehensive about this. We get to South Africa to discover that Michael Bolton has pulled out. He had a severe case of American 'flu... So it was a perfect situation; I have a three-hour show prepared anyway - and that's what I wanted to do in the first place - so I kind of stepped into the breach. It turned out that most of the tickets had been bought to see me, anyway, not to see Michael Bolton. We did shows in Johannesburg on the 14th and 15th, the 15th being my 50th birthday. That was very memorable because people were very kind and gave me presents - and sang Happy Birthday to me at the show. It was a very long show that night, and we went out and had a bit of a bash afterwards. I haven't had any bash here, at home, funnily enough. I couldn't really be bothered; I'm just very pleased, really, that I've spent 50 years on the planet enjoying myself in what is, essentially, an amazing fun fair to be alive in. Some things go wrong, some things go right but I have always taken the attitude that every day is a day of extreme interest, and you've got to do something on each day; use each day for your life."

**Can we just ponder on that thought for a while. Age is, of course, just a number - but 50 is a fair old landmark. Did you stop to reflect, just for a moment, on what it actually meant - or did you just think 'Yeah, great to be alive - on with the next year'?"**

**CHRIS:** "That's exactly what I said to myself. I reflected on the fact that nature doesn't know the number of the seasons, it just knows the seasons. Humans have put a number on the years and, in terms of human existence, it's just a finger snap. But, yeah, I just want to stay healthy. I haven't got a problem with being 50, I've been preparing for it, in my mind, for a while. Similarly, when you go up another decade - you think 'Boy, I could never be 60!' But then you work your way into it. It's people who avoid it and ignore it who find that it suddenly jumps at you and shocks you - and shatters you, actually. The ages of 40 and 50 are stormy seas but I'm in good shape, actually - and the South African tour showed me that I can still pound the boards along with the best of them and put on one hell of a show. Anyway, after playing shows in places like Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and various other locations, we wound up in Sun City. It was the first time I'd performed there, although I'd been there before, and we had a great show in Sun City, followed by a couple of days of rest and relaxation - during which 40 people from Ireland showed up on a golfing trip. I knew a lot of them, so we had a bit of fun there!.. I got back home in November, and took some time off to go down and spend time with my father and mother, who were on their way to South America at the end of the month. I also spent a few days in my little farm, just thinking about this next record. Some people think you can just walk in, write songs and there you go, but the desire to make an album - after having made 14 or 15 - it's very difficult to commit that sort of time and energy and ambition to another project. Particularly when you are thoroughly aware of the pitfalls that await; initially, the pitfalls are maybe the songs aren't very good, maybe you'll get a complete mauling by the critics - maybe you'll get out into the mainstream and, maybe, people aren't that interested. You have to be realistic; people might say 'Why on *earth* is he making another record? What's the point? We loved his Lady In Red.' Which, of course, was in 1986... So it took a few days of really intense self-analysis to work this one through - but I came out at the end of it saying 'Yeah, I *really* want to do this!' Actually, just to indicate the positive frame of mind that you've got to have - and where I wound up - is the consideration that, if one has the opportunity to speak to millions of people, all over the world, directly into their homes, their cars, their ears, whatever, with your ideas and thoughts...what a *fantastic* thing to be able to do! I think of all of those *thousands* of people who wish they had a recording contract, and here's me thinking 'Oh, God - here comes another record...'. So, basically, I turned my frame of mind right round and, of course, the predictable thing happened; I started writing lots of songs! Once you remove that block, and don't worry about what the critics might say...think about your public, think about the fact that, initially, this is going to be a record that I want to make. It's actually for nobody else but me; it's going to be intensely personal things, personal thoughts, that will be - obviously - directed at audiences. I've got to the point now where there will be resistance at radio because of the name - as happens to Elton John or Phil Collins and people of that age where radio goes 'Oh, no - not for us' - but, nevertheless, you've got to do what you've got to do. That's what it comes down to. And so I'm full of energy and full of enthusiasm for the next project - and that happened, really, having spent some time on my own because living in Dublin here, where I do the school runs every morning and a lot of the school pick-ups in the afternoons, and the *phone never stops* and this building project...it's very

hard to get any time at all for the old head. So that's something that I'll doing again; taking some time on my own for myself."

**I would imagine, as well, that for someone of your success - and because success should, and in your case does, equal wealth - the biggest stumbling block you've got to get over in terms of making a new record must be...why bother? You don't need to do this, you don't need to work. Therefore, the most important point to arrive at - and clearly you already have done - is that the only reason to make another record is because you want to.**

**CHRIS:** "Well, exactly. In fact, my record label boss came over to see me recently, we had an interesting conversation - and he left feeling a little stunned by the fact that I'd said 'Well, I couldn't really be bothered, either way, to be honest.' That was before I took this week off and, at the end of that week, I thought 'Well, hold on a second - I do want to do this.' Once you say 'I want to do something', it becomes so much easier. You're ready for it, rather than being forced to do something. I think this is a corollary for life in general. For example, in school if you are made to learn things through fear, rather than being coaxed through love...it's a completely different thing."

**In terms of a new album, obviously plans are still at an early stage - but can we expect the record during 1999?**

**CHRIS:** "Oh, yeah. I hope so. I am looking at, hopefully, starting recording in April or May. You see, I've going to have to move house during the summer, and that's obviously a big, big thing, so, as far as I'm concerned, the recording process has to be finished by the summer. That's really what it's down to. We'd be looking at a release in...October."

**Again, it may be too early for you to say, but can we expect a more 'traditional' Chris de Burgh album; you're touring again with a rock band, could that mean you may come up with the sort of record you were making before 'Beautiful Dreams'?**

**CHRIS:** "Well, d'you know? There is a sort of album I'd like to make - which is a very successful one! The sort of album I'd like to make would be incorporating the best of 'Spanish Train', 'The Getaway', 'Into The Light' and, maybe, 'This Way Up' - which is energy tempered with thoughtfulness. However, that said, I'm being pretty careful to just allow whatever is going to come through to come through; let the thing speak for itself. D'you know what I'm saying? If I want to write new ballads, well, I'm letting them come through. The energy stuff will arrive in time. I'm not trying to tailor the new album deliberately, I'm just waiting to see what happens."

**OK. That takes us up to around November/December in your diary...**

**CHRIS:** "Yes. Well, we can just talk about Christmas, which I'll be spending, probably, for the last time in this house - which I am not going to sell. Members of my family will be moving in here when they've got young children one day, which means that my kids can always come to visit, rather than standing on the roadside and saying 'We used to live here...' I'm not selling this house. We had a big party here for about 120 people the night before last which ended up, instead of drinks from 6pm to 8pm, being from 6pm until 2.30am, with pianos being pounded and so on. That was fun! After Christmas, we will be taking a little time off in the sun. But, broadly speaking, 1998 has been a very interesting year - and I have a *strong* feeling that next year is going to be really extraordinary."

**Well, I have to say, it's always a great joy to hear you say these things. You obviously are quite inward-looking because your life and your career matters to you, and you do clearly have some fairly black periods of doubt and maybe a lack of motivation - but it's exciting to hear you come out of the other end of all that in a way which I know that, when people read what you have to say, will make them excited, too, and looking forward to what's coming next.**

**CHRIS:** "Well, you know, I can't guarantee it'll be all high quality music. All I can say is it's coming from a place where I want to do it, but don't have to do it. As you pointed out; at this stage in my career I don't have to do anything, you know? The wealth has come and the slots to fill in other areas of my life have come - I'm very busy on a daily basis - but every time I sing... The other night, I went down to a local tennis club I'm a member of, and they do a review every Christmas - and they have tremendously talented people on the stage. They're really clever. But as I walked in the door, someone said 'Oh, God - you're coming. Will you sing a song?' So I actually walked up out of the audience and did three songs. Then, at the end of that and when the event had actually finished, the sound equipment was still there, the guitars were still there, so me and a friend got up and we sang for another hour-and-a-half - just off the cuff; I'd say 'Right - Beatles. Let's do this one, let's do that one.' And it was fantastic. And this may sound weird to you, but I was listening to my voice ringing out and I was thinking 'Jeez, that's not a bad voice!' The same thing happens when I'm on stage in South Africa or in Germany on tour during the summer, you know - the voice is still right there. Even last night I was singing at two o'clock in the morning and thinking 'Gee...' So, that's why I'm still interested in carrying on..."

**Well, I would add to that; you obviously love it and you have a gift - and a gift is, surely, to be shared...**

**CHRIS:** "Right..."

## PERSON TO PERSON

For the benefit of any new club members, this section puts you and your questions in the interviewer's chair...

**I understand you are a self-taught musician. Did you have to spend hours practising - doing scales and exercise - or has playing the guitar and piano been natural to you? (Dimitra Dourouda, Greece).**

**CHRIS:** "I am self-taught and, obviously, had to spend a lot of time trying to get good at playing the guitar and the piano. I'm not particularly good yet, but I'm good enough for what I want, which is to write the songs that I want to write. I started playing the piano, learning the chords, because of what I knew on the guitar and, literally, moving my fingers up two or three notes at a time if I wanted to change key. I avoided the black notes for quite a long time! I just stuck to the white notes. I mainly write ballads on the piano, and the faster ones on guitar."

**What is the catalyst for the majority of your creative efforts; the need to express feelings and emotions - or the need to share beliefs and values? (Annette Johnston, USA).**

**CHRIS:** "D'you know? This is a very difficult question to answer... I would say more likely the second one. It's like Everest; why did you climb it? Because it was there. It's because I can - and I can't stop writing songs. I don't...I'm not didactic, I don't have a plan here. As corny as it sounds, I know that the people like the music out there and, because I'm a very giving kind of a person, why not do it? People may hear the songs and go 'Oh, I love that...' Actually, the real reason I'm doing all of this is that it makes people happy - and it makes me happy to do it. So, all in all, I think it's a very good karma situation, where you're sending out good things to people and enjoying it while you're doing it."

**When you were in Moscow in October 1994, you said you liked Russia very much, that the Russian audience was great and, most importantly, you said you would come again. So, are you ever going to keep your promise? (Anna Tiourenkova, Russia).**

**CHRIS:** "Actually, I was supposed to be in Russia the weekend on September 7, I think it was, last year (1998) and I had agreed to do a series of concerts - two of which were in a football stadium with a capacity of 17,000 people. It was also, unfortunately, the weekend of Princess Diana's funeral... So, the answer is, yes, I had planned to come back to Russia but, because of that unfortunate accident and the fact that I wanted to attend the funeral in Westminster Abbey, I was unable to go. Of course, I would love to go back, however, Russia is going through a difficult time at the moment - we're all very much aware of that - but, that said, I would love to go back there and bring my music at some time in the future."

Due to the delay between newsletters, your questions were thin on the ground this time but, remember, if you have a question to ask Chris, then send it along to the fan club address, marked 'Person To Person'. The purpose of this feature is for the club to put your questions - however weird, wonderful or just plain nosy they might be - direct to Chris on your behalf each time we conduct an interview with him. We'll print as many of his replies as possible. This is your opportunity to interview C de B - so use it! Our plan is to include something of a Person To Person 'special' in the next Gazette, so let's have lots of questions from you, please!

## PEN PALS

Now, not for the first time in the 15 years that we have been operating this fan club, we are delighted to announce a marriage that we helped to make! Yes, indeed, for the *third* time that your correspondent can recall, two complete strangers whose names were included in a list of club members looking for pen pals have tied the knot as a result. The happy writers are Silke and Marius Vobel, from Germany, who finally got married during 1998. Silke wrote to give us the great news during August, and to inform us that the romance first began when she penned a letter to her future husband after his name had appeared in a pen pal list way back in...1989! Naturally, we send our warmest and most sincere congratulations and best wishes to Silke and Marius. In the meantime, below are the latest list of members looking for pen pals from around the world. Writing to them is essential, but marriage is optional!...

Dimitra Dourouda, 39 Kerkvras Road, Byron 16232, Athens, Greece.  
Jolanda van Rooyen, Leliestraat 2, 2761 HC Zevenhuizen, Holland. (18).  
Hannelore Breinich, Staufferstr. 15, 74523 Schwabisch Hall, Germany. (33).  
Sonya Keller, Neuwissen Strasse Nr. 11, CH-5422 Ober Ehrendingen, Switzerland. (38).  
Annette Johnston, 3262 S. Hudson #73, Tulsa, OK 74135, USA. (27).  
Caroline Hardwick, 38 Sycamore Close, Podsmead, Gloucester, GL1 5TY, England. (41).  
Luc Segers, Guido Gezellelaan 129, B-2870 Puurs, Belgium. (29).  
Liz Murray, 6 Blenheim Drive, Funningley, Doncaster, S. Yorkshire, DN9 3QF, England. (41).  
Anna Tiourenkova, Russia, 109125, Moscow, 1st Saratovskii Proezd, 4, 179. (19).

If you would like your details included in a future list, then send us your name, address and, if you wish, your age (this is what the figures in brackets after each name above refer to) to the fan club address. But, please, right this information **CLEARLY** and in **BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS** - because if we can't read what you've written, we won't be able to pass it on!

## THE C de B HOTLINE

Even though a typographical error ensured that the **incorrect number** was printed in the previous Gazette (!), this is the service to call for up to date information about Chris and his career, particularly in the gaps between issues of this newsletter. Unfortunately, the C de B Hotline can only be accessed by members living in the UK. Calls are charged at the rate of **50p per minute at all times** (please ask permission from the person paying the 'phone bill before making your call), and we are able to up-date this service as and when necessary. Be aware, however, that new messages are only ever recorded when relevant news or offers dictate - and that the date of each recording is always announced in the first few seconds of a call, to enable callers who have already heard it to hang up immediately, should they choose. The **correct** number to call is:

**0891 334 225**

**NB: The Hotline number given on the back of your membership card is no longer in operation.**

## UNTIL THE NEXT TIME

All of which brings another Gazette to a close. In the next edition, due before the summer (hold your breath, beginning now!), we'll have more information on Chris's progress with the new album plus - if there's enough interest and questions from you - a bumper edition of Person To Person.

So, until the next time, don't forget to send any comments, criticisms, Pen Pal addresses or Person To Person questions to me, Mike, at: The New Chris De Burgh Club, P.O. Box, 276, London, E2 7BW.

Finally, and as ever, *many thanks for your continued support and legendary patience!*