

**T**HEY have come at last. They have been a long time a-coming but that is what happens when one is dealing with the Celtic work ethic — in so much as that can be said to exist.

Just in case you are thinking that I am working up for an Irish story, then you are guilty of racist thoughts — I am talking about Austria. You may not know (and I certainly did not) that the Celts originally came out of a fissure in the Austrian Alps. They then spread across Europe, putting swords on their chariot wheels, inventing Guinness and getting tired and emotional at Hogmanay. They also believed that when God made time he made plenty of it.

This attitude was exemplified to a friend of mine who asked an old man on a jetty in Mull what the time might be? The old man thought for a bit, looked at the sky and vouchsafed the opinion that it might be about Tuesday.

## A pair of leathers for the horizontally privileged

Now if you did not think that this concept of time existed still in the heart of Europe — how could it be compatible with the dynamo whirl of the European Union? (The answer is, very easily) — take the case of Reinhold Paschinger.

I met Herr Paschinger because I wanted a pair of leather breeches and he just happens to be the foremost maker of lederhosen in all Austria. Mention lederhosen to most of you and you will immediately think of those rather tight leather shorts with funny braces that go with pointed hats, rather big tummies and very big steins of beer. Herr P will certainly make those for you but he also makes breeches for jägers (German for hunters — what we would call stalkers) and I have always coveted a pair.

Herr P hangs his pointed green

hat (and, yes, you did see a picture of me wearing one a few weeks ago) in Gmunden, a pretty little tourist trap of a town at the bottom of the Traunsee — and you can jolly well get out a map and find it for yourself but it just happens to be in the “Celtic fissure”.

His funny, cramped, dark, little shop is a temple to leather — leather coats, leather waistcoats, leather trousers — you want it in leather (or fur) and Herr P will make it. It is not just any old leather — this is “shammy” leather, from that agile, Alpine animal, the chamois.

### COUNTRY DIARY



#### R. W. F. POOLE

In England, clothiers suck their teeth and shake their heads at my size — in Austria I am strictly League Division Two. Herr P rocked with laughter at the suggestion that I was “horizontally privileged”. What nonsense, he said, with many of his customers he had to use two tape measures — I was a mere sapling. He proved this by producing a pair of bespoke breeches which would have held two of me.

So he chuckled and measured and scribbled. He is a most charming man. How much would the breeches cost? Herr P

shrugged — it all depended how much leather was needed. Perhaps (and here he positively rocked with laughter) there were not enough chamois left in the Alps to cover the puny Herr Engländer.

Should I leave him a deposit? Certainly not, he never had problems with English gentlemen. How long would the building take? Herr P shrugged — only God knew; a month perhaps, six weeks at the most. We shook hands happily.

That was in early May — the breeches arrived on September 25. They are splendid; there are some good things that should not be hurried and Herr Paschinger is one of them. It is the Celtic work ethic, you see.

● OF ALL the seasons of the year, I think that I love autumn

the best. The dead air and (this year) brutal heat of late summer is gone. The air takes on a new freshness.

There is a sharpness in the early mornings, with perhaps a touch of frost in places. The wind comes fresh and clear across the hills and brings with it scents of heather, bent and bracken and, sometimes, a touch of the sea.

The colours on the hills are wonderful. The amazing purple of the heather flower fades and is then replaced by the varying shades of the dying bracken. The turn of the leaf adds new beauty to the woodlands. As the leaf falls, the smell of the rotting leaves in the damp autumn air adds to the pleasure.

The sharp mornings are followed by warm sunny afternoons, then evenings that make one feel it is time to light a fire again.

And, of course, autumn means hunting again. Autumn really is my favourite time of year.