

# The English Letter

Dec 5 2019

The first frosts have arrived which means pouring warm water on the car windows early morning and in my case scraping off the inside of the windows where condensation has been converted to ice.

This generally means that we have some clearish skies at night. In fact the weather so far has been relatively mild.

Opening this letter with [the weather](#) is such a typically English conversation piece after first saying hello.



We have here Courtney and school friend Alice plus Andrea as we enjoyed the [Nov fireworks in Swanley](#).

You may notice the Springbok scarf on Courtney that reflects victory in the RWC with the English team performing so poorly on the day.

On October 25 the [Old Camdenians](#) had their annual reunion lunch and AGM and I managed to find this picture of the school from a cupboard containing old bits and pieces.

It has significance for me as this was the view I had when joining the school in 1954. In the foreground you can see the waste ground that arose because this section had been bombed.



The now empty plot adjacent to the school permitted it to expand substantially over the next few years.

The main thrust of this year`s AGM was to announce the fabulous donation that had been made by Bill and Nora Wraight in their will, and to decide how best to use it for the benefit of the school.

Sadly all of this has occurred at a time when we have lost email contact with our members and thus proper justice to this event has not been possible. We hope to reconstruct our address data base in a manner where we will again have access and control.

Take Bruegel, frites, waffles, Flemish stew and chocolate and add them to the historic places of central Brussels, Bruges and Ghent. Toss in a Xmas market and lovely November weather and you have a brief picture of our 4 days spent in [Belgium](#).

I know that this was no big deal by British standards as retired people fly all over the place multiple times a year. But for us the trip to St. Pancras International Station and the Eurostar journey to Brussels was special.

We had an adventure on the first evening when two people who we helped with a cell phone pic took an ugly turn when their intentions to steal my watch unfolded. But it was only a 30 minute stroll up Stalingraad Ave to the Brussels centre-so easy? Journeys thereafter were by Metro.

I do feel rather embarrassed about it as I fell into the trap again. Yes, again.

It was in the Paris Metro a few years ago when we helped a chap who had stumbled into the carriage. It was full and we were standing by the doors and immediately bent down to help the guy who was struggling on the floor. As we were doing this a second guy (unknown to me) was busy stealing my wallet from my back pocket. The person on the floor recovered enough to leave the open door area and return to the platform. As we moved away my wallet was thrown back into the train via an open window. Yes some Euros had gone (very few) but all the cards etc. were in place.

At the Royal Palace in Brussels, Bev was asked by two ladies to take a picture of them. Her hesitant response was followed by an explanation of what had happened. Smiles and assurances from them illustrated a normal photo shoot experience.



We always pack in our city trips with a lot of walking and public transport. So we had Eurostar trips to Bruges and Ghent with a tram ride and Metro journeys plus our own feet to get us everywhere we wanted to go.

We did the usual things I guess with art gallery to see some Bruegel paintings: the old city centres and canals: the Atomium built for the World Fair in 1958: the EU Parliamentarium : Xmas market and

eating out by day and night interspersed with the essential Gluehwein.





A bustling St Pancras, illuminated and merry with the music from random piano players set the scene as we headed off under the channel to historic Belgium. We were a bit disappointed to not see many Bruegel paintings but the exhibitions offered up this set for a suitable picture.



Bruges and the old square that was the primary Xmas market site. A quieter and less dramatic Ghent provided canal side walks past castles and architecture of a once thriving inland port. The weather even permitted waffle eating outside.

I do find a lot of hypocrisy around the efforts countries and companies say they are making to stem the global warming crises. This takes the form of virtually all restaurants offering evening outside seating by the side of gas heaters.



Even our hotel asked us to assist them in the effort to cut down on carbon emissions by not asking for replacement towels so often!

I am sorry to include so much about this trip but it was the highlight since we last wrote to you.

EU Parliament buildings.

One of the images of Brussels is that of the Manneken Pis and I will end this letter showing you the lad doing a pee (he has been dressed up in one of his many outfits). It reflects the rebellious and brave spirit of Belgium following an incident in battle many years ago plus other numerous explanations.

The tree is up and Xmas is fast approaching. I will cover all that next time.

Happy Christmas to everyone.

Love, Alan and Bev

