

The English Letter

Nov 14 2016

It is now the middle of Nov and a time to remember.

People, roads, buildings and the media are adorned with poppies and perhaps especially so in this metropolis of London.

As much as we need to contemplate the events of the past we also have a duty to look forward at what might be.

We have moved again!



We are in Swanley.

The move was a do it yourself affair using a hired van and cars. Add into this mix a crew of people being ourselves, Gavin, Stephanie, Ben and Jade.

They worked most of the day to get us underway for which we are so thankful.

You will see the little lane that provides footpath access to our wee place but the 7.5 ton truck that eventually delivered our 61 boxes of personal effects from SA parked to the rear area by the garages.

The last week has seen us sort through these boxes but with my leg not surviving much beyond 2 days of lifting it was up to the 3 ladies of the house to do most of the heavy stuff. A picture of the lounge/diner includes the many items of furniture that Andrea was able to obtain on various web sites, either given free or very cheaply.



Whilst we have many of our paintings on the wall, our books (the few we shipped) are in boxes awaiting book cases. At the moment they are covered over and do the job of side tables.

Swanley is a semi-rural area that charm and character did not touch. It is a genuine place of working people, kind and friendly. It is perhaps reflective of the new shopping precinct that boasts an ASDA, Aldi, Poundland and Iceland amongst others.

All of these places and the Station are within walking distance but even closer is the bakery that opens at 06.30 and the pub.

It makes me think of Wakefield where we met up with Richard (old Camdenian) and Jo on our way down. Their town is trying to rebuild after the coal mining industry collapsed and have as key features the lovely old cathedral and the Barbara Hepworth gallery.



We have not met up with many old friends since we arrived back but we did manage to get up to Palmers Green and spend a few days with **Verona and Frank**.

We always enjoy an evening of good value amid a friendly atmosphere at their local Wetherspoons and this picture of them and Bev has the library section as a backdrop. It was a Thursday and so curry specials were the thing to eat.

We also fitted in a delightful morning tea with Joyce at the rather old worldy Treacles Tea shop in Winchmore Hill.

A visit to see George in hospital provided us with a look at the NHS (however brief) with the clear view that the staffing of this enormous employer required the essential support of skilled people who may well have been born outside of the UK. A significant perspective on the immigration issue at this Brexit time.

I guess that that leads me into a bit of **political commentary**.

In SA the local elections saw a big swing away from the ANC with the cities of CT, Jhb, Pretoria and PE moving to the DA. Apart from CT, the others need a coalition to run the local affairs of state and we need to see how this may work out and to what extent the national control by the ANC can be used to limit the DA effect. Jacob Zuma and all his thousands of “pals” continue to be disgraced from all sides, not least the opening of council documents revealing more and more information. As I have said before, the ANC cadres should be shivering in their boots at the likely legal consequences when all is revealed. Perhaps it is this fear that makes them all hold tight in the hope that Zuma will pull off another remarkable survival technique until a successor can be found to keep the DA or other opposition parties away from the “till”.

People across the world have lost faith in politicians who have themselves lost touch with the needs of the electorate. This negative voting sees the door open to other parties of dubious merit. How clearly this is reflected in the USA elections. A wonderful advert for the socialist controls of China and Russia who will point to the USA as an example of Capitalism going wrong.

So, we exit 2016 with lots of exciting changes not only in Europe and the USA but in the new world. Next year will see how the old world in the EU will handle their elections.



We went up to London to get close to some inspirational, cultural and intellectual activities as seen in these pictures. Our walk to the British Museum took us through the West End and into Soho. Along the way we could not resist entering a Leicester Square store that had one product, being M&M's.

We saw the top 10 items at the BM that deliberately took us to all areas of the museum after which we ran out of steam and decided to leave our further education to another day.





With Courtney new to the Underground we then selected a complicated route to Selfridges in order that she could find her way including changing lines etc. Oxford St. was ready to turn on the lights and Selfridges dazzled with super window displays and Xmas decorations.

Since we have been away the Underground system has been enlarged (another line under construction as I write) with London a honeycomb of tunnels providing fast and efficient transport.

A walk back to Charing Cross Station and then Swanley. In 1290 Queen Eleanor died and her body was taken from Lincoln to Charing/Westminster and memorial crosses were erected by King Edward 1ST along the route. In 1291 the original one at Charing was made out of marble and thus it became known as Charing Cross.

Whilst the UK does not have Africa`s big 5, it does have **wild life** that seems ever closer to our urban homes .To illustrate this coming together I have included some pictures of every day garden animals.

So what have we got? Well there is the fox that rummages through garbage at night, the grey squirrels that joyously adorn gardens and parks, the ever present Magpie and surprisingly the parakeets.



I have borrowed the pictures but they represent a true reflection of city life although Swanley is not quite so leafy and we have yet to find them here. They were common sightings in Chislehurst and Orpington.

We have been to a few **local spots** from Camber Sands, Hythe to National Trust properties including



Uppark House that had a connection to H.G.Wells. The ladies went to see Chicago at Bromley and some of the guys (Gavin, Ben and

Steve) managed 9 holes at the local course. My leg just made it after anti-inflammatory tablets for 3 days before hand.



A big dinner at Ben and Jade`s reinforced the king size portions on offer as we chatted over matters related to MS, midwifery , policing and hedge funds and that was before I said anything! Our interests are more mundane at the moment and include things like TV, cell phone and broadband bundles plus visits to Ikea.



Gavin and Andrea stride out towards the lovely Ypres pub that nestles by the Castle in Hythe and from which we took our beers up to the old cannons with views across the river.

And yes it had its` own stock that we could not resist for a photographic opportunity.



The 5 (cinque) ports had special trading rights but in exchange they were to provide men and ships, if needed, to ward off any seafaring invaders, as Britain had no navy at the time of William the Conqueror. But you knew all that anyway.

In Oct **Courtney turned 15** in Chislehurst with suitable cake and then dinner at The Imperial Arms.

It is sad for them to leave lovely Chislehurst for affordable Swanley but we will make best use of our new home area until the next move in perhaps 18



months' time when the idea is to enter the property ladder.



We finished off our time with Gavin and Stephanie with a lovely Italian dinner at the Osteria da Fabrizio and the evening of Nov 4 saw us attend a local fireworks display but all the rockets and flares were set off on Nov 5, presumably to record the fact that we had arrived in Swanley!!



Sunday saw us at the local big car boot sale to buy garden items and we can see that the rest of the year will be fairly busy. Perhaps we will have enough things to tell you about to allow a December letter. And so we will leave it on that note from an England that has been pleasantly mild although the central heating is now on for short spells in the morning and evening.

So it is a fond goodbye from me and cheerio from Bev.

Alan