

The English Letter

October 2019

The summer is nearly over although down here in the South East it does last that little bit longer than other more northern sectors. Never the less it was a windy October day that saw us journey to the beach! No spade and bucket though.

We took the car and headed off to France. Our destination was [Dunkirk](#).



As you can see the coast was wind swept and pretty empty. Fortunately the stormy skies had cleared by the time we arrived.

In May/June 1940 they looked quite different.

We all know what happened as the British Army was saved by the wonderful array of ships of all sizes that managed to remove them from the very beaches that we now strolled over on this gentle Oct day in 2019.



We know how this defeat was turned into a “victory” and immortalised through film and book. We do not seem to recognise the role played by France and Belgium at that time although

the full story was told at the Museum in Dunkirk that is housed in the fortifications built in 1874 to protect them from a different foe.

We know it all today as [Operation Dynamo](#).

Over 1400 vessels and 340,000 soldiers.

But in truth the journey had a much more basic objective to which Dunkirk was added as the cherry on top.

In October [the Old Camdenians](#) have their annual Reunion Lunch at which much wine is consumed. In order to hold the price of the event it has been necessary to purchase the wine at the much lower Calais prices. Andrea responded to the request for a volunteer to take the trip where places like The Calais Wine Store cover the train fares if the order is over £250.

So it was for us an exciting trip as we boarded the Chunnel train and drove on the wrong side of the road. Just one day, but so much achieved.

Have some lovely reds from £1.99.



Bray-Dunes



But I have started backwards with this report being one we have only just completed. There were one or two other bits to talk about.

I tend to cover just the things that Bev and I do and leave the others to tell their own tales. But with [Andrea and Courtney](#) in the same house I have to relate the odd item of news that affects them especially if there is any opportunity for some reflected glory! Ha.

The big stories are for them to tell but some pictures highlight matters.



Andrea had this rather mad idea to complete the 100 km challenge run with this gruelling event taking place throughout the day and night. It was indeed completed with over £600 of donations raised by her for good causes.

Courtney achieved success with the Swanley Netball Club as well as doing well in her second half marathon race. Add to this the attainment of her Level One Coaching



certificate and confirmation that she has now completed her Duke of Edinburgh Gold award.

I am about to watch the [RWC](#) match between Scotland and Japan that is being played despite the Typhoon that rages through the Islands. Apart from this sporting spectacular I clearly notice how the referees continually need to explain the rules and decisions being made throughout the matches. But they do all this using the English language. The ref may not be from the UK and the players are also from various non English speaking countries. Yet they all seem to understand and I can only assume that they are all conversant with one of England's greatest exports namely the [establishment of an international language](#) (keep it quiet-the Chinese don't know yet).

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I will change the subject now to tell you about [Brian](#). As many of you know he was a little younger than Bev but we heard from Helen in CT that he died suddenly on Aug 1st. The picture we had from Helen showed him relaxed and seemingly asleep in his favourite armchair with drink and remote at hand. His humour, generosity and gregarious nature will always be remembered.

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As I think of what to say next, I realise that an awful lot of the recent activities relate to Courtney or Andrea. I guess this is not surprising given that us two old seniors tend to lead a fairly mundane lifestyle which focuses mostly around U3A activities and the CA. Mind you I did manage 18 holes on the Par 3 course two days ago where Gavin was my patient opponent.

So I need to record now that [Courtney had her 18th Birthday](#).



Being 18 meant that Andrea organised something bigger than usual with a family type dinner on the Friday and Courtney going out to London with school friends for dinner on the Saturday. Courtney selected the Tower Bridge area as seen from these pics from the bridge.



The day was spent getting ready with about 7 people sleeping over in our lounge/dining area using blow up mattresses or anything that was available.



Andrea took this pic of the Friday dinner group with Ken, me, Gavin, Stephanie, Sheila (next door neighbour) and Bev and of course Courtney in white top.

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Just a bit of space left.

I have not mentioned Brexit but each letter tends to have the phrase “we will know more next time”. At the end of Oct we will leave the EU-well maybe or perhaps or maybe not for now or ever. All very clear!

The media takes us on a joy ride every day or so as they highlight certain areas of global conflict or concern. If there is nothing that day then we can all talk about halting the habit of eating snacks on public transport. It appears that some think that this would help solve the UK obesity problem. The Royals might come in for some flack but even like the Brazilian rain forest fires, the attention will switch as the subject extends beyond our attention levels.

We are bombarded with stories and news-fatigue sets in and even the gravest of stories may remain untold or forgotten.

And so.....I will end with cheese. Yes cheese and the pic of Bev thoroughly enjoying herself in a Dunkirk cheese and meat emporium (shop just seemed inadequate a word).



And lastly the remarkable (for us) double decker train on which we and the car travelled to cross the English Channel.



Bye for now from a UK still in the EU but will we be a member when we travel to Brussels in November? What about our EHIC cards? What about the border crossing?

That story to be told next time.

Cheers and regards to all.

Alan and Bev.