

# The English Letter

March 1 2018

It has been snowing over here.

Only a bit really, but I will devote this edition to snow.

Yes, I know, that those in Canada will scoff at the snow we have because they will have had it 2 metres high and temps of minus 40. No wonder they do so well at the Winter Olympics.

In England the snow falls as a soft white covering that adds beauty, yet provides a muffler for the city's sounds. You wake up and know that something odd has occurred.

School might be closed and snowmen are set up amongst snowball exchanges. There is joy and fun in the air as temps hit zero or even a minus figure.

I will not refer to cancelled trains that seem quite unable to handle tiny falls of snow or even leaves on the track. No, this letter will only look at the happy side.

It started where the last Letter ended.

Christmas was spent at home, but Boxing Day saw a very early start as we headed off northwards to the Peak District and Yorkshire in search of the Pennines, moors and snow.

But would the weatherman grant us our wish.

The first day was to **Dovedale** and the YHA at Ilam Hall.

The hall goes back to 1546 but it was too early to book in and so the plan was to tackle the hike across to the stepping stones of the Dove River and head up to Thorpe Cloud.



It was a rather muddy walk, after rain the day before, which took us through Ilam village and along the Manifold River, with a bit of lunch, before tackling the flooded Dove River and the climb to the top.

Bev chose to head back to the YHA for some Mulled Wine, but we carried on to Thorpe Cloud which is seen in the background of this group shot.

But no sign of snow!





Andrea took this picture of us at the top. Thorpe Cloud, whilst a modest climb, rises briskly, and with slippery sides, to the summit.

It deserved a picture.



Bev was by this time happily ensconced at Ilam Hall YHA.

The building was saved by John Cadbury and opened as a YHA in 1935.



The impressive Ilam Hall is in the background with a shot of our 4 bedded room that had en-suite facilities.



Apart from the accommodation with restaurant or self-catering facilities, the cost is so attractive for anyone with Rands, being around £15.0 pppn.

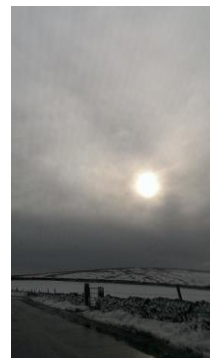
It got a lot colder overnight and we awoke to heavy frost and a scattering of snow on the hilltops.



A change of plan saw us drive up into the Pennines where more and more snow had formed.



This culminated in reaching the highest village in England called Flash at 1514'.



We turned south and headed towards the old medieval Market Town of Ashbourne, with its` empty 19th century rail tunnel and St. Oswalds that was consecrated in 1241.

This was the birth place of The Salvation Army and our walk through the town took us past the statue of Catherine Booth.





The next day saw Andrea and Courtney walk further along the Dove River gorge before returning to London for work and GCSE studies. We continued our own journey by setting off to **Ilkley** and the Moors.

But the snow had not fallen in this part of Yorkshire.

Never the less, meeting up with Melanie, Alex and Mackenzie, plus a good dinner with plenty of wine and conversation made for a lovely return to this Spa town of Ilkley.

We awoke to that strange silence mentioned earlier. Yes, the senses were correct-there had been a good fall of snow overnight. Bev opted out of our tricky walk that was responding to the magnetic pull of Ilkley Moor and the Cow and Calf rocks. Off we set complete with an old yet enthusiastic Tamba.



A few hours were spent exploring the Moors made especially beautiful by this wonderful winter coat of snow. On a day like this it was essential to pop into the Cow and Calf Inn and sip a glass of something by the side of warming log fires.



But first was the matter of doing some tobogganing down the steep slopes of the nearby golf course.

Some pictures capture the atmosphere and events.



Many will recognise the Cow and

Calf but few will have crept into the golf course and surreptitiously used their snowy slopes and hills.



Mackenzie at 18 is driving and in the final stages of A levels. Alex and Melanie will also see new opportunities unfold in 2018.



We were only there for two nights before moving south for the 370km drive to Swanley.

But was that to be the end of the snow?

Well, we have frosty relations with Europe over the **Brexit talks** but temperatures within the leave and remain camps in all UK political parties are high. Ireland have two groups being the South (Ireland) and N.Ireland where the EU has proposed a deal that would virtually annex N.Ireland to

Europe. The South would be most happy about this as it would catapult forward their desire for a unified Ireland. The North and Westminster reject it out of hand.

Hot tempers in **South Africa** have also cooled following the removal of Zuma and having Ramaphosa take his place as President of SA. A cabinet reshuffle sees one or two old names back in favour with some good e.g. Gordhan and some dubious e.g. Cele. Can Ramaphosa save the sinking ship and then turn it around in the direction of prosperity and good governance? We will all watch and see how he and the ANC get on. Along with this new shift has come the apparent downfall of the Gupta Family with some wanted by the justice system.

A few heads have rolled but the ANC is full of corruption and nepotism from top to bottom and the task ahead will not be easy nor quick. The rating agencies watch and will, no doubt, be looking carefully at the new push by the EFF and ANC to institute land redistribution without compensation.

The VAT rise from 14% to 15% was welcomed by the rating agencies but this is the first time that VAT has been increased for 25 years and hits the poor harder than the rich and thus the opposite of what the ANC stands for.

As expected, the DA now try to hold on to their voter base by aiming at the ANC party instead of Zuma.

The battle for survival by CT Mayor, De Lille carries on in a squabble within the DA.

A vote of no confidence is to be raised against the DA leader in the Port Elizabeth area and if coalition groups vote for this, then the ANC could be back in power.

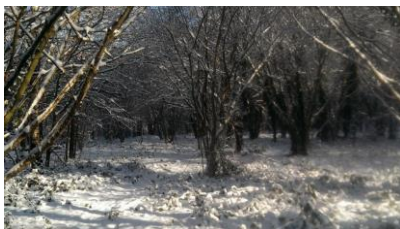
The snowy theme continued at the **Olympic Games** in S.Korea with British athletes tending to fall over when the pressure was greatest. Never the less GB managed to meet their target of medals and in fact made one over, at 5. Should we have such a presence when the cost per medal is millions of pounds?

The **chemotherapy treatment** on my skin (administered as a cream) is one reminder of a sunny time in SA that I did not want to have. I have grown a small beard as I could not shave, and also to hide the scabs and cuts that added extra horror to my bloated face. The arms were hidden behind long sleeved shirts. I am over the worst and wait for new skin to fully form.

Enough of all these words without pictures.

### **So back to snow.**

It is March 1 2018 and we start to think of Spring but my snowy theme is not yet done.



Here is a view of our local park from yesterday with the boating lake frozen over. Today I journeyed out to a U3A session at some 10 kph with the odd slip and slide along the quieter and snow compacted roads. It is still lovely to look at

and walk through and I will not dwell on the darker side of what sudden deep snowfalls mean to a nation that has little preparedness to deal with it.



That all for now. Love Alan and Bev.