

The English Letter

Sept 6 2016

We have been in England now for just over 2 months and it is time to update you on what has happened since we last wrote.

We have left West Yorkshire and are now in Kent. We are staying with Gavin and Stephanie who live in Orpington which is a 15 minute drive to the Chislehurst flat of Andrea and Courtney. Our journey down had a 1 hour traffic hold up on the A1 but apart from this the M25 took us speedily up and over the Queen Elizabeth toll bridge as we crossed the Thames into the Kentish side of London`s suburbs.

Having already registered the Focus with the Dart toll people, our fee was debited immediately to our current account as we passed through the number recognition cameras. In contrast this experience with the years of drama associated with the 2010 World Cup Johannesburg Toll road system where some 80% of motorists refuse to pay the toll fees.



First up is a picture of **Gavin and Stephanie**.

At this moment we are house sitting as they have headed off for another of the big British holiday breaks. The destination this time being Antigua!

Whilst in Yorkshire we were able to take some small trips of our own when Andrea and Courtney came up. We selected the Lake District with unusual accommodation as shown in the next picture.



Yes, that is us staying in a Wigwam!

They were part of the YHA set up in

Hawkshead where an old



mansion was the focal point, permitting sundowners with the local brews on the veranda overlooking the park like grounds.

The glaciated valleys of the Lakes are always on our visit list and with younger people with us we did some different things to our normal touring.

The first activity, of a busy and full itinerary, saw us two oldies tackle the 10 km walk beside Ullswater. Howtown was the start point and was reached by a lake ferry.

As we gently moved over the water Courtney spotted a distant large bird of prey flying close over the water and coming our way. It grew larger and larger until it became



clear that this was no natural bird! As it passed us by the mighty roar of engines revealed a Tornado jet, followed a few seconds later with another, weaving it's way between the valley hills in a dramatic display of defensive power.

My camera arm was too slow and thus I have borrowed this picture.

There is much more to tell and show of this trip and our Campervan week end. But first something else.

One of the joys of life in the UK is the quality of **radio interviews** and debates each morning. The BBC probe and thrust their way to find the truth and are not put off by vague defensive replies from the most powerful of people in the country whether political, business or union. The SABC need to take a listen and learn how it should be done (of course the ANC would not allow the "truth" to be told as things currently stand).

But back to those **10kms** towards Glenridding. A view of us along the way with a few stops for snacking and relaxation.



We did the trips to Ambleside, Windermere and another ferry ride to the pseudo Wray Castle.



A rowing trip on Coniston Water saw us waterborne on 3 of the lakes with Windermere the longest in England.



Campbell, of course, sped over the lakes of Ullswater and then finally on Coniston.

Brexit happened, the pound dropped, and the fear of doom was spread.

In the short time since then the discussions about the UK exit have started informally and the process will last some 2 or more years. But we have been able to forget about this and concentrate on the tremendous performance by the UK at the Brazil Olympics. Along the way an optimism has grown as some statistics looked promising. The LSE has done well and the pound has recovered a bit. This has made imports more expensive but tourism and exports have had a shot in the arm. Perhaps we can make it after all!

The truth will unfold as we learn more about the true implications and negotiations. There is much more talk around Europe about refugees and how best to deal with this humanitarian issue. In England the Poles have now exceeded the Indians as the largest group of newcomers.

But before this trip to the Lakes we went away for our first **Campervan** experience with Melanie, Alex, Mackenzie and Tamba. The spot was Lytham St Anne's which proved to be a lovely seaside place although a long 6 km walk into the south of Blackpool was disappointing



and made us hurry back to the more gentle activities of L St A's. Our spot was close to the coast and thus we could walk to most places of interest including the residence of George Formby along the way.

A big Toby breakfast, some pitch and put, kite display, bands and

parades greeted us during our 2 night stay. And, oh yes, the weather was good.



I was talking to a Japanese tourism guide about **Peter Rabbit**.

She told me that English in Japan book by Beatrice population to this much that visitors to signs in Japanese to arriving. I refer here, of Beatrice Potter who conservationist and was instrumental in saving many of the National Trust sites in the Lake District. Courtney and Bev stand at the front door prior to our tour. Hill Top is a short drive from Hawkshead.



conversational teaching of included The Peter Rabbit Potter. This endeared the writer and character so Hill Top Farm are met with cater for the numbers course, to the home of became a major



Not quite finished yet as another picture records more achievements from **Mackenzie and Courtney**.

Mackenzie received her GCSE results which were excellent and pave the way to A Level courses. Courtney was raising her glass on receiving a certificate confirming that her very short horror story had been selected for publication.

But I need to introduce some more people to you.

The Gavin and Stephanie Shearn family group take centre stage in this photo that captures our English Sunday Lunch scene, complete with all the trimmings, as the house filled with that delicious smell of a roast dinner.

Our hosts were **Jemima and Richard** who proudly showed off their modified 4 bed house.

Seen here from left are:

Ben, Jade, Jemima, Noah, Richard, Andrea, Bev and Courtney.



We are now **flat/house hunting** as we need to locate 3 bed rental accommodation by the end of October. In addition our boxes of stuff will be shipped in the next two weeks placing more pressure on the need to find a home. The market is tough as house building has stalled over the last few years forcing prices upwards and availability down. We seek a residence for at least 18 months to cover Courtney's time at Bullers Wood before doing her GCSE's.



Alex and Melanie had accumulated Tesco loyalty points but could not take up the Day Out tokens and we selected **Hever Castle** as our excellent day out spot (excluding traffic jam). The Castle was the home of the Boleyn's and is full of the history of this time when Anne was Henry's second wife and gave birth to a daughter who would become Elizabeth 1st. Paintings by Holbein and Titian formed one of the many backdrops from which guides explained the many stories of the Tudors.

We had a great time in Ilkley and are so lucky to be staying now with Gavin and Stephanie with both being so kind and accommodating.

We say good bye once more from a country whose Government was able to reorganise and solidly move forward to counter the potential turbulence of the referendum result. This steadying of the ship was impressive and at present Theresa May represents the embodiment of resolve and competence that allows the British public to think of other things like sport and where to holiday next.



We finish with a shot of the Ulster Ferry plus another visit to Fountains Abbey.



A brass band from the Burley Festival in Yorkshire finish it all off.

Cheers from Alan and Bev.

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