

The English Letter

Sept 29 2021

A lot has happened since we last told you about our goings on in England.

This might mean that this letter goes on a bit as there are a few photos that are important to include, and they take up space. As ever it is my belief that pictures often speak louder than words. Never the less I suggest you stop now or perhaps concentrate on the pics and avoid all the text. You have been warned.

Well, the big news is that we have finally moved.

The process in England is nothing short of dreadful being a feeling expressed by virtually everyone we have spoken to. Horrific is another descriptive offered up. There is no legal contract until the final moments and thus it can fall apart just when you are about to move. For this reason we did not know for sure that we had sold our 1 bed flat in Silsden nor bought the 2 bed unit in Lytham St Annes until Sept 17 with removal provisionally arranged to take place on Sept 21.



It is stressful to pack and do everything else without the certainty that a legal contract exists. The process must change and soon.

And so a picture for you of the van arrival and Bev later that evening outside the front doors of Sandhurst Grange.



Our address is now available being: 19 Sandhurst Grange, Sandhurst Ave, Lytham St Annes, FY8 2ET .

The move followed Courtney taking up residence at Surrey University and Andrea needing to move closer to her new company. Sept 18 saw us go down to the Surrey Campus and halls of residence and we were most impressed by the facilities available. She is doing a Sports Science degree.



Our little flat is not ready for pictures as it is full of boxes. Nothing is simple with the move, from the transactions themselves to just transferring Sky and power supplies. The companies hide behind

Covid and use robots to handle all standard processes. But if you have a non standard need then the phones just do not get answered. I will not go on but suggest you stay where you are and do not move.

We know what you are saying “why did you go to Lytham St Annes (LSA)?”

A good question, with a long and complicated story. In short we had visited the town a few years ago and liked what we saw. When checking property prices we were surprised to note that this north western spot was affordable to this Rand based couple. And so when the move became necessary we decided to sell our 1 bed flat in Yorkshire for a 2 bed unit in Lancashire



It is an over 55 complex with about 34, 1 and 2 bed flats. It describes itself as Independent Living. This offers a choice of total obscurity in your own flat or to interact with others when desired, or perhaps needed. Good to have a social and support structure available if required.

This is sunset at LSA on our first evening with the little pier not reaching the sea once the tide is out.

It follows that there have been a [few last minute farewells](#). Mind you we are just moving-not leaving.

One has to remember that we were not sure we were actually leaving until the last few days. So a great deal was unsaid or not done.



Sheila (blue top) played hostess to us for dinner(pic taken by Andrea)and then a week later the two Phils (Phil and Phylis) also invited us in for another splendid meal.



Justyna and Martin, with Jacob and Miriam, then arrived to hand over a parting gift to Courtney before she went to Uni, and this allowed for a full group shot of the occupants of our little row of 4 houses at the cul de sac end of Sheridan Close.



In our typical way we took advantage of a sunny afternoon to undertake our last Braai in Swanley with Ken and Sheila enjoying the offerings indoors as the chill of the night arrived.

You will note the pile of boxes to the left partly hidden under a curtain and the empty book shelves to the right. The dining room table had already departed but we made do.

We were so lucky to have these neighbours beside us that permitted an harmonious and friendly atmosphere, being people one could turn to if in need of assistance. We will stay in touch.

We decided that we could just fit in a quick hit and run trip to Hampshire and Dorset to see some old friends. So more pictures I am afraid.



In geographical order we first have Di and daughter Sarah (finger neatly in the air and joining us for lunch from her work at home job) and the other is of Trudi.

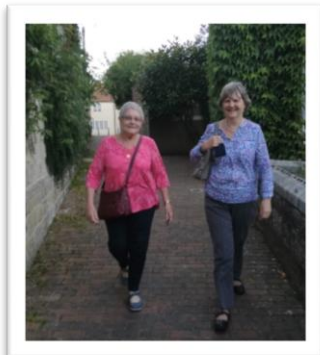


Now these people go way back to Mondeor in Jhb and then to Port Elizabeth. But this day we all met up in their new place in Southampton. It was a lovely day with Di doing her usual great hosting role. It also enabled us to realise that

Southampton has an old town complete with walls and fortifications.

The next day found us in Poole where we met up with Carol.

This relationship started in the 1960`s when we all worked at BAT in Westminster. Another sunny day allowed for a garden lunch of salmon (oh how the other half live).



This hit and run visitation permitted a drive to Dorchester and a good chatty evening was had in the local Wetherspoon pub. I always enjoy a Wetherspoon for a number of reasons but one of those is the unusual properties in which they have set up shop. We see Bev and Judith on their way through one of the delightful and historic passageways of this old town.

Judith is another from Port Elizabeth and there were lots to talk about.

One last, but not least, picture and occasion was to Stephanie and Gavin`s new bungalow in Orpington where we were joined by Jemima, Richard and sons Noah and Arthur. During the day, spent once more in the garden (even a bit of cricket), we had a video call from Ben and Jade who displayed their new and first child, Matilda. Baby born prematurely whilst on holiday in Cornwall and the call was from the Truro hospital.

Posed pic taken by me.



If you are still with us then you have done well. Actually I am aware that quite a few of you have met and know these people and so we hope it did not bore you too much.

So that was our big event that starts a new chapter with much exploring to do. If anything interesting pops up then we will record it in the newsletters.

But so much else happened since we last wrote.



We watched a lot of the Olympics and of course enjoyed all the medals that came the way of Team GB. There is this belief that when we introduce some new “sports” then we have a good chance of gaining a medal. But a super effort by all the athletes, despite the empty stadia.

Perhaps the Paralympics is the most warming experience as people with disabilities express their joy and are so grateful to perform and show off their talents and fitness. It contrasts so vividly with the obscenely paid soccer players that roll around in “agony” when touched on the pitch.

There was a passion and emotion with the Olympians, who earn little or nothing, to the lack of heart and purpose of the newly formed 100 cricket series.

Team GB did so well and some might say that the wealth of a nation can be seen by the opportunities provided to those who been dealt a poor hand.

Whilst on sport, I should add that the British Lions tour to SA went as I expected. Neither side really played that well in these Covid times.

Let us quickly move on as there is so much to cover however briefly.



We had dinner.

Andrea had a birthday and we all went up to the O2 in Greenwich. This was built around the millennium and holds some 20000 spectators. It also has lots more including restaurants. It was to one of these that we aimed for.

Overhead were those who paid a lot to eat in pods that hung from giant cranes. Others walked across the top of the dome and yet more went across the Thames in cable cars.



But our move meant that we left the Swanley U3A, Orchards Academy (invigilating) and Citizens Advice.

Some pics recall these times with Bridge group down to 4 at Tony's with Mark and Gill.



Penny runs the Creative Writing section from her home and in the garden during Covid times.



picture is of the lateral flow from a local chemist. I and have been double jabbed school. In fact my last

All of these activities were so amongst some really friendly



Now this test kit that I obtained free of charge needed to display a negative test result in order to undertake a mock exam at the appearance at Orchards.

interesting and where I learnt a great deal and kind people.

Nearing the end now.

I have changed my mind about Emma. She is British yet with a very diverse background. I was most unhappy at the manner of her departure at Wimbledon but amended my opinion when I saw her get through 10 rounds of tennis at the USA open. There was true grit on display and long may it last.

I am not sure I have formed a clear view, however, regarding Begum. Her latest portrayal is of a transformed and misguided person. One could argue that a citizen is still a citizen and we need to protect or follow judicial process in the UK.

I have lost a bit of faith in the BBC and tend to support this with all the others from Al Jazeera to CNN, France, Euro and then the other British news stations. I sense a clear line of news reporting that appears to be less than balanced in content and view. They have a new man and we will see what transpires.

Talking of new then it leads on to the cabinet reshuffle and Boris. Quite a bold number of changes including some that might have been expected. I can moan at the politicians but would not wish to have or be able to do their jobs. The idea of Brexit, Covid, refugee boat arrivals and Afghanistan all on one's plate is a lot to deal with.

At this precise moment some petrol would be nice to have. I spoke to a plumber this morning who could not get to us as his vans were out of fuel. The market should sort this kind of supply and demand out but the UK seems to have reached this stage in their cycle of growth when the pleasant

surrounds of home working and that general feeling of entitlement provides a situation where we have a million or so of people “out of work” but with hundreds of thousands of vacancies unfilled.

Covid offers a shield to those who wish to do as little as possible and benefits provide for those who do not feel like working today. Of course I generalise and my interaction at CA illustrated that there are some who really have fallen through the cracks despite their own endeavours who require and deserve the help of the welfare state.

I fear the UK has lost that cutting edge that took us to the state of Empire builders. Now that is another story not for this diary.

With Covid fading I find that I have quickly moved from keeping a mask in my pocket, in case I need one, to no longer having one (unless we are going somewhere that insists on it e.g. hospitals). We are so close to being in that state of “living with the problem” as we do with all the other nasty things that go around. Mind you, it is still early days to determine how long the vaccines last and the need for boosters like the annual flu jab.

So we look at Facebook and see all those pictures of British holiday spots! No palm trees, more about hiking across moors and mountains or looking at history and culture. Pretty good outcome if you ask me.

Our move north takes us to within an hour of Melanie and Alex’s new house in Kendal (Just went up to see her Green Door Art Trail displays) and Mackenzie who is doing an apprenticeship degree with BAE.

But we leave you with a bit of new knowledge which is that you gain 3 points for a kick to the opponents head in Taekondo! You needed to have watched the Olympics to appreciate this.

That is really it from the north west of England.

Love and best wishes to you all.

Alan and Bev

Sept 2021