

LONDON, DEVON, AND CORNWALL

MARCH 10 TO MARCH 25, 2015

What, in god's name, could tempt *anyone* to visit England in March? The weather is likely to be so much like Seattle's at this time of year (dreary, rainy, cool) that it beggars the imagination that the Magids are actually going to make this trip.

Of course, poets through the ages, have glorified this chunk of real estate. For example:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
yadda yadda yadda

William Shakespeare *King Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1

Nevertheless, there has to be some compelling motivation. And, in fact, there is.

Yale University, finding many ways to separate alumni from their money, sponsors trips to exotic locations across the globe. Lee and I have never been tempted to take part, except for this: from March 12 to March 18, we will attend the Yale London Theater Seminar (six plays in seven days, under the guidance of Yale drama professor Murray Biggs). And, having traveled all this distance to the "scepter'd isle," we will then tack on a driving tour of Devon and Cornwall before heading home.

What makes this excursion especially appealing is that a single fee covers admission to the plays, transportation to/from the theaters, pre-theater dinners, tours of backstage, and accommodations at *The Montague on the Garden Hotel*, an elegant establishment, located just minutes from Bloomsbury and the British Museum.

Then, on March 19, we will rent a car and drive to Wells, where we'll spend one night, and then to *Gidleigh Park Hotel* (in Dartmoor National Park) for four nights. Lee, bless her heart, did all of the reading (as she always does) concerning attractions in Devon and Cornwall. We considered visiting them on our own vs. hiring a local guide. The latter proved difficult, as every tourist service had very specific itineraries in mind, itineraries that did not mesh with what we wanted to see. Much to our delight, Ken Fowler (who was our guide when we visited The Cotswolds two years ago)* offered to drive to Chagford, a nearby town, take a

*You can read about Ken and his guide service by going to my travelog and viewing pages 26-31: <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/England-Rhine2013.pdf> Travelogs from other trips can be viewed by going to the list at any of my course web sites, e.g. <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/index2.html> And pictures of both this trip and earlier ones can be viewed at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>

room at a bed-and-breakfast, and serve as our guide here in this southwestern corner of England. The Devon-Cornwall peninsula is the most western part of England, separated only by vast expanses of open sea from Newfoundland and Labrador.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10 TO WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

In contrast to most overseas travel days when we are rushed to get our suitcases packed and other things put away before Jana comes to clean, today is unbelievably (and unbearably) slow. Our flight does not leave until nearly 8:00 pm, so ... having stuffed books, magazines, driving instructions, toiletries, USB cables, power cords ... and, oh yes, clothes into our suitcases before noon, we have the rest of the day to wonder: What in the hell have we forgotten to do?

Gig Harbor has had lovely weather for the past week: sunny (except for morning fog) and moderately warm for this time of year - it seems a shame to leave, but the weather forecast does call for the return of rain tonight. By the time we arrive in London, a little past noon tomorrow, Weather.com is forecasting conditions very much like Gig Harbor's: temperatures in the low 50s for the next few days with only a small chance of rain. Is it possible that London will not live up to its reputation of perpetual thick fog?

We plan to leave for Seatac a little after 4:00 today, realizing that we'll be hitting the highway during rush hour traffic. Once we arrive and get past security, we plan to spend some time in Delta's business class lounge. I imagine that there'll be a fashionably late dinner served on the plane, but we can slake our thirst and quiet our hunger pangs by having drinks and snacks in the lounge. We've also decided to drive to the airport rather than use the Gig Harbor Taxi Service. The reason? Seatac is offering a sale for use of its parking garage. Really! Instead of charging \$130 per week and \$28 per day, the figures are \$99 and \$19, respectively. Is it too much to hope that they'll have similar promotions when we fly again? Coupled with the fact that we turned in frequent flyer miles to get business class seats, this trip will be much less costly than others have been.

In fact, leaving home at 4:00 gets us to Seatac in about 50 minutes. The traffic is mercifully very light, but we are clad that we're not going on to downtown Seattle, as I-5 is pretty much a parking lot north of the airport exit. We spend a good deal of time, going up and down the aisles of the airport garage, searching for an open space when, *voilà*, a car pulls out of a space right near one of the elevators - this bodes well for a successful trip! We show our credentials at the Delta desk, say goodbye to our checked luggage (one suitcase for me, one suitcase and a smaller case for Lee), and head for the TSA security line. Lee's boarding pass says Pre-Check, which seems to imply that she (but not I) is not considered a security risk. As it turns out, however, the Pre-Check line is closed, so she has to join me and the rest of the peons in a regular line. As an ancient doddering dude, I'm allowed to keep my shoes on, but I have to subject myself to all of the other indignities (emptying pockets of *everything*, removing belt, removing laptop and Kindle from briefcase, removing liquids in their zipped plastic bag from my carry-on). The line is mercifully short and we are soon at the Delta Sky Club before 5:30.

I partake of some coffee and a few cookies; Lee has a bit more, but not too much. At 6:55, we go to Gate S7, right next to the lounge, to board the Boeing 767-300ER plane. The lie-flat seats in business class are identical (maybe it's even the same plane) as those on our trip to Germany in 2012; for a complete (painfully complete) description of the seating arrangement, see pages 2-3 in the earlier travelog: <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/Germany2012.pdf> (As a Seattle-ite by choice and not by birth, I should really show some allegiance to Boeing, but I have to say that the lie-flat seating in the Airbus A330 is far preferable, see page 2 in <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/NorwayCruise2014.pdf>)

Lee and I are across the aisle from each other, in Seats 4D and 4C, and more or less within shouting distance. Our first task (which we fail miserably) is to find a place to stow the blanket and pillow that are occupying our seats. The logical thing is to stuff them in the open space in front where our legs will go if we convert the seat to lie-flat mode ... except for the fact that both bulky items are wrapped in slippery plastic and slide right out of the space, no matter how hard they are stuffed in. I finally succeed by also stuffing in my briefcase - it provides some friction to hold the plastic packages in place.

A dinner menu is delivered. We are to be started with "Grilled shrimp with roasted corn salsa" followed by "Beet and goat cheese salad" and "Farmer's Market vegetable soup." From the four choices of the main

course, I choose "Seared beef tenderloin with loaded mashed potatoes and baby mixed vegetables." I choose a Decoy Pinot Noir from Sonoma, California. For dessert, from the three offerings I choose "Vanilla ice cream sundae with choice of sauce, whipped cream, and chopped nuts." It also sounds very elegant, but in fact it's quite "ordinary" as I'll make clear when the food actually arrives. (I wonder what the people in "steorage" are being offered.) Although our scheduled departure time is 7:52, the doors are closed at 7:33 (I can still hear the screams of the passengers who are trapped in the security lines and are running down the hallway). The captain announces an estimated flying time of 9 hours (as opposed to the published 9:33). The humorous safety video (which we've now seen several times) is shown, followed by advertisements for Delta (well, we *are* a captive audience). The plane taxis onto the runway and we are wheels up at 7:58. While in the lounge, I had started the February 2 issue of *The New Yorker* which I continue reading on the plane.

The TV monitor on the back of the seat in front of me is dormant during taxi and take-off, but comes to life as soon as we're air-borne. Alas, all of the legends are in Japanese! I try re-booting the machine - still Japanese. So I signal to a flight attendant, who has no idea how to remedy the situation. But she calls in reinforcements (i.e., her senior colleague) who flicks a couple of touch-screen controls and ... we are in English! (Actually, all that I want this for is to turn on the reading light above my head. In other such "infotainment" systems, the light is activated on this touch screen, but it's different here. In fact, inside the arm rest is a portable remote (mostly for playing games) and it has a light-bulb icon, exactly what I need.)

The "infotainment" system does offer a wide variety of movies, games, TV shows, and who knows what else. My preference is to read magazines and books while in flight, so I set the panel to show the plane's progress as it commences its nine-hour-plus journey. As was also true on the Boeing 767 300ER that we flew to Germany in 2012, the tray table that is stashed inside the console is magnetic! Here's what I wrote at that time:

As I'm finishing the dessert, I make the *startling discovery* that the cutlery is magnetic! Actually, that's not correct. The edges of the tray table are magnetic (so that they'll snap shut when closed) and the cutlery is some iron-based alloy and not, as one might have hoped, Sterling silver. I demonstrate to two of the flight attendants that I can balance a knife or fork on the edge of the tray such that it's hanging (precariously it would seem) over the edge. Neither attendant was aware of this magical phenomenon. One actually accused me of pulling a trick on her, but the other one had a "logical" explanation: "Maybe it's because of the turbulence?" (So much for the efficacy of science education in U.S. schools!).

At about 8:45, the shrimp salad (see the menu description, earlier) is served and shortly thereafter the beet/goat cheese salad and the vegetable soup. It's at about this time that the senior flight attendant succeeds in converting my entertainment system from Japanese to English; and with Flight Tracker finally operative, I see that we are well into Canadian air space on a northwest trajectory. (How the captain managed to get us here without my expert assistance, I'll never know.

During the first or second course, I finish the February 2 *New Yorker* and begin reading the February 9 issue. The main course is then served: the beef tenderloin turns out to be overcooked, tough, and rather dry; I finish only about half of it. In contrast, the vegetables (carrots and squash) are undercooked and provide an interesting test of my ability to cut into them without shooting fragments into the aisle. Finally, I reject the ice cream sundae but I do have coffee.

At about 10:15, I shut off my light, recline my seat (only part-way to horizontal), and close my eyes, hoping for sleep. On every earlier flight, I've found difficult to get to sleep and this one is no exception. Perhaps I doze a bit, but by 11:30 I give up and resume reading my magazine. At 12:15 PDT, I set my watch seven hours ahead (the U.S. is on Daylight Saving Time but England doesn't do this until the end of March), and try again to sleep. Forty-five minutes later, I give up, turn on my reading light, and resume my magazine reading. We are now rounding the south coast of Greenland and heading in a southeasterly direction toward England. When I finish the February 9 magazine, I begin reading one of the Kindle books that I

downloaded: *The Bat*, by Norwegian crime writer Jo Nesbø, the first in his Harry Hole series.

At 10:40 am, the crew turns on the cabin lights, distributes warm washcloths, and begins breakfast service. On an earlier flight (with the identical menu, I might add), I had chosen granola cereal instead of a "Tomato Basil Frittata with chicken apple sausage and sautéed mushrooms" (as it's described on the menu) because I worried that the latter might have Mexican spices that would cause grief for me. But Lee told me that it was delicious and quite innocuous, so that's what I choose this time. She's right - it is delicious and I survive with all of my interior plumbing unaffected. Accompanying the main course is a bagel, fruit plate, and coffee - more food than is really needed, but what the hell - this is a vacation. Right? Right.

At about 10:45 we cross the western edge of Ireland and at 11:20 the coast of Wales. It's a cloudy day, so that I can't see any land features through the window. Instead, like the pilot, I am on "instrument approach," using the ever-reliable Flight Tracker on my monitor. Our wheels touch down at 12:05, well ahead of schedule. The sky is hazy and there are patches of fog as we taxi to the terminal.

It's a surprisingly long walk from the gate to passport control, but we have been given a card, while on the plane, that allows us to use the Fast Track line. This is, apparently, a perk - of which I do not approve - for those who are traveling Business Class. As it turns out, this line moves no faster than the others, so my conscience is mollified. Our luggage arrives fairly quickly and we find an ATM. Recalling the problem of our 2013 visit to England when requests for £200 (about \$320 at that time) were rejected - KeyBank has a \$300 limit, but who knew? - we set our sights a bit lower at £160 (about \$240) and are rewarded by crisp bills bearing the likeness of Queen Elizabeth II. (Before making this trip, we worried that Queen Liz might be rude enough to die during our visit - after all, she *is* 88 - causing the whole country to close down in mourning; but she was good enough to hang on, as was Princess Kate who did not yet deliver the next heir to the throne.)

A month or so ago, we had made arrangements with the Hotel Montague to have a private car meet us at the airport (for a cost of £95 plus tip), figuring that the cost of two train rides from Heathrow Airport to Paddington Station followed by a taxi to the hotel would amount to almost as much. In fact, we are met by a driver who leads us to his good-sized car and heads into the city. We learn that congestion pricing, designed to discourage casual drivers from entering the city, does not apply to buses or taxis or hired cars; but if one is driving a privately-owned car into the center of town, a picture is taken of the license plate and a bill is sent that must be paid that day, lest penalties mount. One would think that this would have a significant effect on reducing traffic, and according to our driver it worked ... for a while. But people decided to "suck it up" and the downtown areas is as congested as ever. In fact, there is such heavy traffic, made worse by numerous detours as a result of road repair, that our driver zigs and zags through minor streets in a way that he guarantees will get us to the hotel earlier than we otherwise might. I'm dubious, but also powerless in this situation.

The Hotel Montague (its full name is The Montague on the Gardens) is a classic, old hotel in a row of houses in Bloomsbury, just a block from Russell Square, University College London, and The British Museum. Or as it's described at their web site, "A genteel Georgian townhouse in elegant Bloomsbury, The Montague is a peaceful hideaway in the heart of the city that combines up-to-the-minute sophistication with ample old-world charm." (TripAdvisor rates it No. 9 of 1600 hotels in London, a bit of a surprise, I'd say, in light of the many elegant and well-known hotels in this city.) If you've nothing more productive to do, pay a visit to the hotel's web site <http://www.montaguehotel.com/> and read its history, which begins

The Montague on the Gardens provides us with a distant echo of the activities of the rascally Ralph, Duke of Montagu, who came by this land in a very devious manner. The story begins not with Montagu - an ancestor of the present Lord Montagu of Beaulieu - but with a 'crack-brained, addle-pated fellow' named Christopher Monck, 2nd Earl of Albemarle. Christopher's father, George Monck, 1st Earl of Albemarle, had been the chief mover in restoring Charles II to the throne of

England in 1660."

Whew!

This is the hotel that was chosen by Yale Educational Travel for people who are participating in the Yale London Theater Seminar. The fixed price of \$10,500 for two includes seven nights at the hotel, tickets to six plays (about which much more shortly), dinners at six restaurants near the theaters, transportation to and from the restaurants and theaters, and (of course) the priceless commentary and leadership of Murray Biggs, professor of drama at Yale, who has been leading these theater tours (not only in London but also in New York, Ontario, and other venues) for years. Indeed, the majority of the 38 people who have signed up are repeat attenders, some of them for the fourth and fifth times. (No, it's not like flunking a course and having to repeat it - rather, it's a different set of plays, venues, restaurants, and participants each time). Because we've decided to arrive one day before the first get-together on March 12 (Thursday), we've paid an extra £204 + tax for the one extra day.

Our room (332) is on the fourth floor, although they, of course, call it the third storey (sic); fortunately there is an elevator (smallish, slowish, but still it's better than climbing stairs). The room is described as a Classic King Suite. It consists of a main room, where the bed and other furniture are located; the bed is very close to the outside wall, making it a challenge for the person (moi!) who is sleeping on that side. There is a small bathroom with modern plumbing fixtures. And what allows it to qualify as a suite is that there is an adjacent room, up two steps from the main room, with a chaise lounge that essentially fills the room side-to-side and front-to-back. As said piece of furniture is too crowded to sit on, we use it to stash out suitcases after we've unpacked and, also, our clothing, as there is not chest of drawers or dresser.

In place of a dresser, there is a hanging set of flexible shelves (hard to describe) inside the closet, where there is also a tray with an electrical device to boil water and an ample supply of packets of instant coffee and tea; there are also cookies that are replenished each day. The tray sits on a safe and must be removed from the closet and placed on a desk to get the coffee maker close to the nearest outlet. There are also two night stands next to the bed and two easy chairs. Each evening there is turn-down service which results in a treat's being left on each pillow: the nature of the treat rotates from day to day, chocolates one day, lip balm (??) another, and hand lotion (??) the third. The window looks out on a lovely garden, hence the hotel's official name. Alas, one cannot gain access to said garden because it is the private property of the Duke of Bedford.* The room has a wall control for air-conditioning and heat.

*Now wait just a minute! Given that I grew up in The Center of the Universe (Brooklyn New York, that is) on Avenue R just one block from Bedford Avenue; and given that Bedford Avenue, some four miles to the north, was just beyond the 40-foot-high right-field wall of Ebbets Field; and given that Edwin Donald Snider, known as Duke Snider, was a power-hitting centerfielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers; and given that he was wont to lift his majestic home run swats over the 40-foot wall and into Bedford Avenue; it was he who was known as The Duke of Bedford I contend that the one who controls access to the garden behind the hotel is an impostor.

I adjust the setting, but it's hard to tell if cool air is actually coming through the vents. A building maintenance man, whose presence I request, says that it's working perfectly - "Ye jes' haf ta be patient, mon."

Although the limited shelf space does not allow us to unpack completely, it is adequate for the coming week, so we do what little unpacking we can and set out for a walk. We pass the British Museum (the crowds entering and leaving are impressive), cross busy Great Russell Street (dodging cars and taxis), and head to Covent Gardens Market, a distance of about a mile. Most of the market is exposed to the outdoors (although under a roof) but there are also indoor venues in which some high-priced brands are featured: L'Occitane, Burberry, etc. We stop to admire St. Paul's Church (built by Inigo Jones in 1633 and *not* the same as St. Paul's Cathedral, which we'll visit in a few days.) Nearby we spot *The Lamb and Flag* <http://lambandflagcoventgarden.co.uk/>, one of London's oldest pubs, but we do not stop in for a pint. On

the way back, we stop at Konaki <http://www.konaki.co.uk/>, a Greek restaurant that had been recommended by the hotel's concierge, and make a reservation for this evening.

We return to the hotel at 4:30 where I suffer a near total collapse, having been on-the-go for many hours with essentially no sleep. But we are intrepid travelers and we must persevere. So after just a short rest, we head out at 5:45 for our 6:00 reservation at Konaki. I begin with Hallumi (described on the menu as "goat's milk cheese grilled so softness") followed by "Mediterranean prawns on charcoal" (with the prawns, alas, still in their shell - delicious but very very messy as I remove the shells by hand; at least I've been given a bowl with lemon water with which to cleanse my fingers.

We go back to the hotel where we read for a bit and use the internet (free throughout the hotel). We consume the hotel's cookies but don't bother to make coffee. On the desk is a "gift" - a book bag bearing the Yale logo, inside of which is some hand sanitizer and an LCD flashlight. Do they know something that we don't?

We head to bed (hey, that's a rhyme) at 9:30 and fall asleep easily. But that's too good to be true, because I find myself wide awake at 2:15; after tossing and turning but not getting back to sleep, I get up at 3:15 and read for a half-hour. Returning to bed, I'm still tossing and turning until 4:15, but then to my surprise I fall asleep until the alarm goes off at 7:00. So I get about seven hours of sleep, total, not too bad,

A commentary about modern travel inconveniences: I swear that half of the weight in my suitcase is for cables of one sort or another. There is the power cord (and transformer) for the laptop; the power cords for the Kindle, electric shaver, cell phone, and camera battery; the USB cable to connect the camera to the laptop; and the flash drives that I use to backup the laptop at the end of each day. Someday, some bright person will invent a single cord* to handle all of these functions. Someday ...

*On April 7, a short time after our return, I watched the championship game in the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament. During halftime, ESPN aired an interview with UConn coach Geno Auriemma in which he ranted over a wide range of topics. He, too, expressed the wish that some genius would invent a single cord for every device that one uses. And he surprised me by his stance on a number of controversial topics. For example, he said that global warming is caused by human activity, he called the American public stupid for refusing to acknowledge the results of science, and he said that the way the Republican-controlled Congress has defied every initiative suggested by President Obama suggests that even if Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa were elected president, they, too, would enjoy a perilously** short honeymoon period.

**Another pet peeve of mine: The next time that you watch a sporting event either live or on TV, pay attention to the way that the singer (usually from the world of rap or rock) pronounces *perilous* in the National Anthem. I can almost guarantee that one or both vowel sounds will be butchered, coming out as *perolous* or *perolless* or *periless*, suggesting that the singer does not know the meaning of the word *perilous*. In fact, only three times in recent years have I heard it sung correctly: once at a Tacoma Rainiers game, once at the Super Bowl, and once at the World Series. In each case, the singer came from the world of opera. I don't recall the name of the man who sang at the minor league baseball game, but the women who did the honors at the nationally televised extravaganzas were Renée Fleming and Joyce DiDonato.

Thursday, March 12

The skies are partly sunny and hazy as we awaken and head downstairs to breakfast. There are two adjoining breakfast rooms, each with tables set for two or four persons. The first room that one enters has the cold buffet, the second the hot selections. We are allowed to sit anywhere - and make the unfortunate choice of the second room which is exceedingly hot because of the very hot steam table in the corner.

Indeed, the metal covers for the eggs, beans, sausage, etc. are much too hot to lift with the bare hand; even when protected by a napkin.

This day I choose to help myself from the hot offerings: scrambled eggs, bacon (in the English style, i.e., fatty and not crisp), mushrooms, beans, and potato cake. Surprisingly, there is no blood pudding. Not that I'm complaining, mind you. The remaining mornings I'll have cold breakfasts; Lee will alternate between the hot and cold. But for certain we'll seat ourselves from tomorrow onward in the cooler room (even though it, too, gets somewhat overheated by the steam table in the next room). We order juice, coffee, and toast from one of the wait-staff. In fact, the staff are numerous and persistent, continually coming to our table to see if everything is satisfactory and if we need/want something more. The coffee comes in a metal pot, enough for about five or six cups; and the toast comes on a six- or eight-slot rack. There is butter and jam on each table.

The breakfast rooms are quite empty when we arrive (at about 8:00) but fill up rapidly. Whether these arrivals are our fellow theater enthusiasts we won't know until the group assembles in the afternoon, but chances are that at least some of them are taking part in the Yale program. In addition to Murray Biggs (mentioned earlier) and Steve Victor (about whom more in a while), there are 38 participants; many are couples but there are a significant number of single persons. (Before leaving Gig Harbor, we received a roster that gives the home address, an email address, and the year of graduation from Yale, if applicable.) s the hotel has about 80 rooms, it seems clear that our contingent fills a significant portion of them. Another indication that many of the people at breakfast are part of our group is that we hear many American accents; and as they greet one another, it seems that many are repeat attendees. (I feel like a freshman at a mixer in which all of the prep school kids know one another.)

Prior to leaving the U.S., we (and everyone else) had received many packets of material and (seemingly) weekly updates and corrections. Among these were: letters of invitation from Murray Biggs and Steve Victor; a schedule that listed the plays, the restaurants, the bus schedules, two tours, and the meeting times for our discussions; a list of the participants (see above); and (most important) a spiral bound soft-covered book containing the scripts of all six plays. We had been admonished to read the plays ahead of time so that our discussions could be well-focused.

From the participants' list, I noticed several interesting things: four sets of participants had Houston addresses (one of which was in a high-rise apartment near where Lee and I lived during our first year of marriage); four women had addresses in Greenwich, CT; two of the men were emeritus professors, as I could discern from their email addresses: one in anthropology at Dartmouth, the other in French and humanities at Johns Hopkins; two or three of the men had engineering degrees* from Yale college or Yale

*When the email addresses failed to give information about a person's profession, I could often ascertain this by consulting Yale's online alumni directory.

grad school; a couple of them were lawyers; one woman had a degree in divinity. In addition to the contingent from Houston, Texas was also represented by two men from El Paso and a woman from Austin; there were two mid-Westerners (a woman from Des Moines, another from Chicago) and two sets of Southerners (Birmingham and North Carolina). Aside from Lee and me, the West Coast was represented only by a lawyer and his wife from San Francisco and a woman from University Place, WA, which is only about 10 miles from where we live. Thus, the majority had addresses from Eastern states (New York, Connecticut, Maryland, Washington DC, Massachusetts). As for age distribution, I'd guess that I am at the median and my child bride, Lee, below it - for those participants who listed the year of their Yale degree (only men, of course, before women were admitted in 1969), there were a few from the early 1950s. By the time the program had ended, I would guess that we had had the opportunity to meet and talk with nearly every participant, either at the seminar or on the bus or at dinner or in the theater.

Although we will not meet our fellow seminarians (is that a legitimate word here?) until this afternoon, we did receive information about our "leaders." Murray Biggs, a second cousin of famed organist E. Power

Biggs (and unrelated to Monte Biggs, our primary care physician in Knoxville), was born in England, grew up in South Africa, studied acting and did some performances, and served on the faculties of MIT, Wellesley, Berkeley, and Uconn before coming to Yale. He is a distinguished-looking man, perhaps in his early 60s, with a warm personality, a sense of drama in his speech, and a (slight) British accent. As it came to pass, he showed himself to be a master seminar leader, expressing his own views but also encouraging and applauding the views (some of them quite outré) of others in the room; he made it a point to call on every person who raised a hand, and he had the uncanny ability to note the order that hands were raised and to announce (and then follow through on it) the order in which he would call on them. He never embarrassed anyone by directing questions at a person who had not asked to speak.

Steve Victor is the Yale Alumni Association representative for this program (and others). He did a masterful job of organizing every detail of the eight days: hotel rooms, transportation, restaurant reservations, theater tickets, seminar rooms at University College London, and (as I like to think) the weather, given that it rained only briefly during our week here. Yes, there were a few glitches (unavoidable, I'm sure) but as Robert Burns counseled us, "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men/Gang aft agley." His (Steve's, not Robbie's) undergraduate degree (from Wisconsin) was in mathematics and his Ph.D. (from the hated "H school") was in history of science. He and his wife, also a Ph.D. from "that" place, held a number of faculty positions. He spent about 12 years at the Yale Art Gallery, using his scientific background to specialize in the history of silver manufacturing. More recently, he spent 16 years in the education department at the Association of Yale Alumni, retiring in 2008 as Associate Director. Since then, he has pursued a long-time interest in archaeology as manager of the Yale archaeomagnetism lab, which has taken him to excavations on several continents; his specialty is using changes of the earth's magnetic field to date, more accurately than is possible with ^{14}C , the age of ancient artifacts. For the past several years, he has taken care of the arrangements for the Yale London Theater Seminar and other theater programs, a most desirable gig I would guess.

I've chosen not to give the names of the 38 participants, lest this document be found online by stalkers and other miscreants. On the other hand, I've revealed the names of Murray and Steve, as these are a matter of public record and appeared in the Yale brochure. Also, their pictures can be seen on the walls of most post offices. With rewards posted.

As nothing "official" is scheduled for this morning, Lee and I leave the hotel at 9:45 and walk to the British Museum, no admission fee (as is true for most of the museums in London). Aside from the collection, what impresses the most are the crowds, both in the outside courtyard and within. There are many school groups of various age students and, most surprisingly, many of them are speaking languages other than English. I assume that they are on London tours from their respective schools in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, wherever.

We begin on the ground floor and make a beeline for the Greek sculptures and particularly those that came from the Parthenon (these are also called the Elgin Marbles and are an issue of some dispute*)

*An addendum: The New York Times reported on May 15 that "... the Greek culture minister has declared that Athens will not pursue legal action to settle the bitter, decades-old dispute ... he viewed the best means of securing the Elgin marbles as being through diplomacy" <http://tinyurl.com/ldfm2x5>

between the governments of Greece and Great Britain). According to the museum's web site, the removal of the sculptures are justified thus:

The first major loss occurred around AD 500 when the Parthenon was converted into a church. When the city was under siege by the Venetians in 1687, the Parthenon itself was used as a gunpowder store. A huge explosion blew the roof off and destroyed a large portion of the remaining sculptures. The building has been a ruin ever since. Archaeologists worldwide are agreed that the surviving sculptures could never be re-attached to the structure.

By 1800 only about half of the original sculptural decoration remained. Between 1801 and 1805 Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, of which Athens had been a part for some 350 years, acting with the full knowledge and permission of the Ottoman authorities, removed about half of the remaining sculptures from the fallen ruins and from the building itself. Lord Elgin was passionate about ancient Greek art and transported the sculptures back to Britain. The arrival of the sculptures in London had a profound effect on the European public, regenerating interest in ancient Greek culture and influencing contemporary artistic trends. These sculptures were acquired from Lord Elgin by the British Museum in 1816 following a Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry which fully investigated and approved the legality of Lord Elgin's actions.

The huge room in which the pediments and metopes are displayed is brilliantly laid out, with some computerized recreations of what the sculptures looked like before they were ruined. The Parthenon, itself, was built some 2500 years ago as a temple to Athena, but has served for other religions over the years and has suffered from fires and explosions and the weathering of time. I take numerous pictures, both long shots and close-ups. To reach the room with these artifacts, one passes through the Egyptian collection (with its Rosetta Stone that is surrounded by thousands and thousands of students, thus preventing one from a close look) and the Assyrian collection from Nimrud. The latter is especially poignant in light of the destruction (for religious reasons!!) of Nimrud and its artifacts by the morons who call themselves Islamic State. After exploring the ground floor, we go to the upper floor and wander through the rooms devoted to Europe from 1050 to the present. A highlight for me is the Lewis Chessmen, 12th century walrus ivory pieces from the Hebrides. Two hours fly by before we have to tear ourselves away and return to the hotel.

Our electronic keys won't open our hotel room door! When I report this to the staff, it's explained that our one-night reservation is ended and that we need to re-register for the seven nights that are part of the Yale package. This requires Lee to come to the desk (she had gained entry to our room through the kindness of one of the cleaning crew) and shortly all is taken care of.

Steve Victor's email said that he'd meet everyone in the hotel lobby at 2:15 (he'll be carrying a Yale pennant) and direct us to the room in the Institute of Education at University College, London. Lee and I arrive in the lobby at about 2:00; I strike up a conversation with a woman who turns out to be one of the Houstonians; and I meet other Houstonians sitting nearby, all of them friends who have planned this trip (and attendance at earlier Yale seminars) together. The classroom to which Steve leads us has regulation chairs; it would have been nice to have been seated at a table or at a chair with a collapsible or permanent tablet arm to allow easy note-taking. There are coffee and cookies available. Steve spends some time on logistics: bus schedules, restaurants, meeting places, etc. and distributes the tickets for all six plays.

Murray Biggs introduces himself and asks each participant, in turn, to stand and tell something about him/herself. Some people ramble on for too long, but Murray (gentleman that he is) makes no attempt to cut them short. (At all of the other morning discussions, we'll spend about half of the time on the show from the previous evening and half for the play that we're going to see that night.) We learn that the two men from El Paso run a small theater that puts on performances of Shakespeare; and that a man from very rural western North Carolina directs and acts in plays as a sidelight to his main job, running a publishing company. Nobody else is a professional or even amateur thespian, but nearly everyone has had some experience in performances. When I speak, I forget (deliberately?) to mention my two theatrical adventures: the brilliant play about Ponce de Leon that I wrote and starred in, when in fourth grade; and the second-year graduate student beer-party play that Mait Jones and I wrote and in which we took the two leading roles. All of the "unattached" women seem to have had a connection to Yale through their deceased husbands or other relatives; and all of them are highly educated having done their undergraduate degrees at places like Vassar, Radcliffe, and Cornell. Probably the oldest of us are a woman who received her B.A. from Wellesley in 1948 and a man who earned his LL.B from Yale in 1951.

In December, I has asked David McIntosh, the Assistant Director of Yale Educational Travel*, if the

*If they were to change their name to Yale Educational Travel Institute, they could use the acronym

YETI. I wonder if I should suggest this to them.

London theater and restaurant scene "required" coat and tie ... or if it was more informal, much like Seattle where I've not put on a tie since arriving here, I think. He replied "The London theater and dinner scene is not terribly formal. Coat and tie are certainly not obligatory, although you would not be out of place wearing a tie." Well, I took this as a mandate for going tieless, although I was a bit concerned. At the first get-together with Murray and Steve, they were wearing ties and sports jackets, but I don't think that any of the male participants were doing so. (I may be wrong about this.) By the second session, even Murray and Steve had ditched their nooses. It wasn't until the "farewell dinner" on March 18 that a couple of my fellow theater-goers dressed up; I was not among them.

After about an hour, Biggs turns the discussion to tonight's play, *Antigone* by Sophocles. I read this twice, once in Gig Harbor and once last night. It's based on a famous tale Greek mythology in which Antigone, a daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, wants to bury her brother Polynices although this is forbidden by Creon, the new king. The reason: Polynices and his brother Eteocles agreed to share the rule of Thebes after the death of Oedipus, but Eteocles reneged on this and so Polynices led an army to attack Thebes. Creon, seeing this as treason, has refused to allow the body to be buried. The play sets the civil law (Creon) vs. the law of the gods (Antigone's view); similar conflicts occur in the U.S. (e.g., the Affordable Care Act vs. The Little Sisters of the Poor and vs. Hobby Lobby).

Alas, we are *not* going to see the version written by Sophocles, as I discovered last night when viewing the web site of Theatre Royal, Stratford East* <http://www.stratfordeast.com/> Instead, we are to see a modern

*In what was once a very bad neighborhood but recently gentrified, this is considered one of London's "fringe" theaters based on the types of productions that it mounts and for the young, largely immigrant audience that it attracts. Our group is, most decidedly, not a young nor immigrant audience.

adaptation by playwright Roy Williams that is set in a London ethnic ghetto and features as its principals "Creo" and "Tig" <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/19/roy-williams-antigone-pilot-theatre>

Biggs tells us that Sophocles, who lived to age 90, is believed to have written some 90 plays. The best known is the Theban trilogy (*Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*), although these are never performed as a single work. Other mythological tales of the ancient wars are also treated by Euripedes and by Aeschylus, whose trilogy *The Oresteia* is a true trilogy, intended to be performed intact (*Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*). Biggs tells us that Hegel wrote a book on Greek tragedy and pointed out that unlike Shakespeare's tragedies in which there is a clearly identifiable villain (e.g., Iago in *Othello*), the two antagonists in Greek tragedies each possess some version of the truth. In other words, instead of pitting right vs. wrong or good vs. evil, the Greeks wrote about right vs. right, power vs. power. Greek plays are distinguished by three unities: action (one plot), place (Thebes in this play), and time (one day, dawn to dusk, in *Antigone*).

Well! We've learned about Greek tragedy, now the question is: How well will the Roy Williams modern adaptation hold up? The answer will have to wait until this evening.

The bus leaves at 4:15 and is heading to The Cow <http://www.geronimo-inns.co.uk/london-the-cow>, a restaurant that is upstairs from a pub in a shopping center. It is some seven miles east of UCL and, according to Google maps, should be reached in 35 minutes ... barring heavy traffic. Alas, traffic is very heavy and it's clear that we're not going to arrive for our 5:15 reservation. Steve Victor, while on the bus, distributes menus so that we can decide on our appetizer, main course, and dessert so as to speed up our orders upon arrival. But the traffic is getting worse, so he then takes a show of hands on preferences and phones this information to the restaurant staff. I choose chicken liver parfait, sausages and potatoes, and what was described as "corn flakes ice cream" (even though none of us could detect any hint of the cereal in our dessert). This restaurant and the one that we'll visit on the final evening are the only ones for which wine is included; at all of the others, we'll have to order and pay for wine separately. Well ... we *finally*

arrive at 6:00; the food is served as quickly as possible and we all rush through dessert (no time for coffee) so that we can make it to the theater (a ten-minute walk away) for the 7:30 start.

As for the play - well, it is loosely (very very loosely) based on the Sophocles version, but the acting seems to be very much over the top. Creon is the strong man who heads up a gang of street thugs. Tig's brother has been killed, but has been left to die in the street. So far, one can see the similarities. But then there are departures, accompanied by violence and physical activity, made more confusing by the Caribbean accents of the cast. Oh, well, it has its moments, but I was happy when the bus arrived to take us back to the hotel (a considerably shorter journey than the one that brought us to the theater, there being no rush-hour traffic with which to contend). I'll be interested to learn what Murray and the others think about it, tomorrow morning.

Back in our room at 10:30, we make some instant coffee (to make up for the coffee-less dinner). In the room is a "welcome package" of cookies, just like the one that was there when we checked in yesterday. The reason, of course, is that this is a "new" reservation, as explained several paragraphs ago. Maybe we can pull the scam every day: check-out, check-in, get cookies. We get to bed at 11:30, but I awaken at 3:30 and get up to read for an hour. I return to bed, hoping to get some sleep before the alarm goes off at 6:15. Why the early hour? Because tomorrow morning, our discussion session at UCL begins at 8:30 so that we can go to the Garrick Club (more about this tomorrow) for a tour at 10:00.

Friday, March 13

The sunrise is encouraging, but the weather forecast is for rain - we shall see. After all, it *is* Friday-the-thirteenth! For breakfast, I go for the cold spread: a wonderful selection of cheeses, meats, smoked salmon, fruits, and cold cereals; as was true yesterday, we need to order toast, juice, and coffee separately. As was not true from yesterday, we sit in the cooler of the two rooms. But, as was true yesterday, the service is spectacular - it's impossible to put down a plate or finish a juice without a server's whisking the dirty dish away or asking if you'd like to have more.

At 8:15, we make our way to UCL for the morning's abbreviated 8:30-10:00 discussion. Murray devotes about the first 45 minutes to last night's *Antigone* and the final 45 minutes to tonight's play: *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett. Returning to the topic of Hegel's differentiation between Greek tragedies and those by Shakespeare, it turns out that Shakespeare did write plays in which there is no villain: *Romeo and Juliet*, for example. Yes, Tybalt is an easily offended lout but not a villain. Also, *Julius Caesar* would fit this mold: it pits two "rights" against one another: democracy and republican values vs. the old order; even Cassius is not a true villain in the sense that Iago and Richard II are villains. And also *Antony and Cleopatra* - not only is there no villain, this isn't even a tragedy. Rather, it's a "political debate" (similar to that in *Antigone*) pitting "good government" against "passionate love."

Murray points out differences in the Sophocles and Williams versions of *Antigone*. For example, in the former, the lovers - Antigone and Haimon - do not meet during the course of the play, but in the latter they have several scenes together. And, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, they are teenagers, taking part in a drama that pits one right (power and the state) vs. another right (romance). He points out other similarities and differences in the two approaches to the story, but (Dear Reader) my notes are difficult to read - in fact, they are nearly illegible, as I'm writing on a piece of paper supported only by the soft-covered booklet of scripts rather than a hard surface.

We break for coffee, before turning the discussion to Beckett. I sense a great deal of apprehension among the seminar participants, a not unexpected reaction to a Beckett play. But let me begin by discussing my approach to coming to grips with this work. Before I realized that we'd receive the scripts for all of the plays, I searched for this one (and others) at the Pierce County Library and online. And I was able to find hard copies of the Beckett and Mustafa's *Play Mas* as well as online versions of John Ford's *The Broken Heart*, Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, and Sophocles's *Antigone*; only the final play of the week,

Stevie by Hugh Whitmore was unavailable.

So, dedicated student that I am, I read *Happy Days* and thought to myself, "NO this is not possible!" We have a two-person play (Winnie and Willie) in which one character speaks 99.9999% of the words while buried up to her torso in Act I and up to her neck in Act II. Winnie ruminates about her condition, her life, her relationship to Willie, all the while having limited motion in the first act and essentially no motion in the second. How in the world is an actor going to pull off this tour-de-force? And then I discovered, on YouTube, the entire two acts from a 1979 performance, directed by Beckett himself, and starring Billie Whitelaw, a British actor who worked with Beckett over some 25 years to bring his plays to life. If you, Dear Reader, want to be stunned, check out these performances; you won't regret it. They are: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40dUZK2CIbQ> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnfSIY1XV_w

With Whitelaw's extraordinary performance permanently etched in my brain, I wondered if any other actor could match it. The part of Winnie, tonight, is to be performed by Juliet Stevenson, a wonderful actor whom we've seen in several British TV dramas, so there is reason for hope. (Oh, yes, Willie will be played by David Beames, but he is rarely seen and even more rarely heard.)

Murray begins by talking about the theater, The Young Vic <http://www.youngvic.org/> just down the street from the much more famous Old Vic, whose history goes back 200 years. The Young Vic, in a converted building, is considered the "cheeky offspring" of the original. The Yale Educational Travel office provided a script with English along one side of the page, French along the other. Beckett lived in France for many years, but unlike *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot*, which were written in French, *Happy Days* was written in English. Murray asks the obvious question: Is there a plot? And he answers in the affirmative. The following occur during the course of the play: time moves forward relentlessly; a raucous bell sounds, from time to time, to keep Winnie alert; the sun beats down mercilessly; a character named Mr. Shower (or Mr. Cooker) makes comments, as related by Winnie; Winnie, herself, undergoes change during the play, particularly in the second act as opposed to the first; and there are theatrical surprises (a parasol catches fire, an emmet* crawls by, Willie's bald, sun-burned head is visible from the rear; and at the end, Willie

*I had to look this up: *emmet* is British term for an ant. Why Beckett chose this word rather than the more familiar one is not clear.

makes an appearance, dressed as if for a wedding, as he crawls up the hill toward Winnie; and Winnie's big black bag, which holds all of her worldly possessions, is a source of surprises (a toothbrush, a bottle of elixir, a looking glass) and apprehension (a pistol) as items are removed (during Act I while she has the use of her arms).

Winnie tells us that Mr. Shower (or Cooker) and his wife have walked past and have asked a most telling question: "What does it mean? What is it meant to mean?" (Some critics have speculated that Shower and Cooker are really the German words *schauen* and *gucken*, meaning *to look*.) The same questions can be asked about the play. Murray provides several answers: (1) we are all bound to the earth, literally in the case of Winnie; (2) we have aspirations, even if they're not realized; (3) this is the human condition, an existentialist's view of one's decline toward the end of life; (4) habit and routine are important, especially under difficult circumstances; (5) optimism in the face of disaster is a virtue. Following Murray's introduction, there are many comments and questions from the seminar-attenders; clearly all of us had read (and tried to understand) this fascinating play.

At a little after 10:00, we walk to the Garrick Club (<http://www.garrickclub.co.uk/>), which is near Covent Garden, about a mile from UCL. Nearly everybody makes the walk, although a few of the less mobile people take a taxi. This club, named in honor of the 18th century actor David Garrick, is nearly 200 years old; membership is open to those in the theater (actors, playwrights, composers, directors, etc.) and even accepts those whose fame comes from film. (Lee and I think that we see Hugh Bonneville - aka Lord Robert Crawley of *Downton Abbey* on a street corner near the club.) It is a typically fusty place with very specific rules: for example, the gentlemen ascend via one staircase, the ladies by another - sounds like a

Jewish orthodox wedding! Two docents* lead us from room to room, extolling the history of the club, its

*One is elderly and *vedddy* proper, the other a 40-something casting director, are quite peeved that our group hasn't all arrived at 10:30. In fact, some straggle in at 10:45.

most famous (and infamous) members, the extraordinary art that hangs on the walls, and the paintings or caricatures of famous contemporary performers. We learn a great deal about David Garrick: his career on stage (long), his stature (short), and his ego (huge). Our final stop is in the dining room, which features a very long table at which the men sit, and smaller tables for the women. I was right - a Jewish wedding! The talks border on the pretentious (as do the decor and general ambiance of the place) but on balance the visit is worth-while. Picture-taking is not permitted, but you can see the rooms and the artworks by going to the web site.

As this is our third day (of eight) devoted to walking in London traffic, it is perhaps not out of order to comment on traffic rules in England, particularly the *insane* predilection of these people for driving on the "wrong" side of the road. Yes, we dealt with this in Scotland in 2001, in Wales and England in 2009 and 2013, in New Zealand in 2010, and in Australia in 2014, but still it comes as a shock when we encounter it again. No, we are not driving a car right now, but we *are* pedestrians who have to cross some very busy streets in very crowded London. To their credit, the authorities realize that visitors from the U.S., Europe, and the rest of the civilized world* are likely to step out into the path of a speeding car or truck (called a

*Even Canada, which still considers itself to be part of the Commonwealth and still issues coins, cash, and postage stamps featuring the queen's image, is sensible enough to have cars drive on the right side of the road.

lorry, here), every intersection has LOOK RIGHT painted on the street's surface, along with an ARROW pointing to the right. The problem is (and others in our Yale group have made the same observation) that for a two-way street, on the far side the same words and arrow are also painted, but to those of us on our side this second arrow is pointing to our *left*. The inevitable result - nearly everyone looks *left*, but then unsure of the action, looks right, then left again, and then right again. By this time, the WALK signal has changed to DON'T WALK, and so the entire process needs to be repeated.

At the end of the tour of the Garrick Club, the rest of the participants either return to the hotel or seek a place for lunch, but Lee and I walk (about a half-mile) to Somerset House on the Strand to visit the Courtauld Gallery of Art <http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/> There is a modest fee (about £6) in contrast to the free admission to the state-run museums, but the expense is worth it as the collection is excellent (see my photos that are posted at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>) Although there are paintings from 15th to 18th century Europe, we are most interested in the 19th and 20th century works: Early- and Post-Impressionism, German Expressionism, and paintings of the Bloomsbury Group (a revelation to the two of us). There is a room devoted entirely to Cézanne; and another that has sketches that Seurat did in preparation for his masterpiece, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, which, alas, is in the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago and not here in London. A surprise is a blue and white vase with daffodils by Picasso. Who knew? There are fine works by van Gogh, Braque, Manet,* Matisse,

*Which reminds me of an old *New Yorker* cartoon. One elegantly dressed woman turns to another and asks, "Is it Manet or Monet whom we're not supposed to like?"

and - in the Bloomsbury Room - Vanessa Bell, a sister of Virginia Wolff.

Well, here we are right near Covent Garden, so isn't it time to do some ... shopping? Lee thinks so - and I don't get to vote - so we walk to Jack Wolfskin, which is only a half-mile away and, more or less (mostly less) on the route that we'd walk to get to the hotel. And we (i.e., Lee) buys a jacket to keep company with the hundreds of jackets already in our closets. We get back to the hotel at 2:40 for some rest and relaxation before heading out, later in the afternoon.

We board the bus outside our hotel at 4:30 for our dinner reservation at Baltic Restaurant, south of River Thames <http://www.balticrestaurant.co.uk/> and just one block from the theater. We arrive well before our 5:15 reservation (in contrast to our late arrival at The Cow last night). The meal begins with a platter of four starters, shared by everyone at the table: Blinis with Smoked Salmon, Marinated Herrings, Aubergine Caviar, and Sour Cream; Pierogi filled with Cheese, Potato, and Spring Onion; Salad of Hot-Smoked Salmon, Beetroot, Watercress, and Horseradish Dressing; and Small Spice Lamb Meatballs with Sour Plum sauce, Salad, and Flatbread. (Did I really memorize all that? No, I lifted it from a purloined menu.) Then, from the choice of four mains, I order Chicken à la Kiev with Sautéed Cabbage, Mushrooms, and Boczek (whatever the hell that is). And from the three desserts, I have Sernik: White Chocolate & Vanilla Cheesecake. Of course there's coffee with dessert. And nobody seems to mind that wine has to be paid for separately, as it is not included in the dinner. The excellence of the food and the leisurely consumption (compared with last night's frantic "forced march") make this what most participants will agree to be the best restaurant of those selected for the seminar. We also have a congenial group to speak with, most notably Steve Victor, who tells us about managing the archaeomagnetism lab at Yale.

The Old Vic is a theater-in-the-round, but because of the unusual stage arrangements for *Happy Days*, nobody is seated beyond the hill where Winnie is "trapped" and behind which Willie makes his occasional appearances. We sit on benches that are padded but still quite hard for our tender bums. And Juliet Stevenson's performance is extraordinary (and quite different from the Billie Whitelaw that I had watched on YouTube). Our group is scattered throughout the audience; from time to time, laughter would emerge from the Yale people, but not from others in the audience, an advantage that we had because we had read and discussed the play whereas others had not. One of the unexpected "stars" of the play is the deafening bell that would ring every time Winnie zoned out. A nice touch, not mentioned in the script nor seen in the Whitelaw performance, are small rock slides that occur above and around Winnie when the bell sounds. The play begins at about 7:30 and ends at 9:30; we are back to the hotel before 10:00.

After reading for a while and using the internet, we get to bed by 11:00. And, for the first night in London, I sleep all the way through, arising (before the alarm) at 6:45.

Saturday, March 14

We've been fortunate with the weather ... so far - some of the afternoons and evenings have been chilly, but there has been no rain. We are among the first to arrive for breakfast; we sit in the room without the hot steam table, although even this room is a bit too warm. I choose the same cold items as yesterday. Again, the service is superb, almost too solicitous: "Is everything OK?" "Do you need more juice/toast/coffee?" "May I remove this plate"? and so on.

From 9:30 to 11:30 at UCL, Murray leads a discussion of last night's *Happy Days* and tonight's *Play Mas*. Everyone's apprehension about having to spend an evening with the inscrutable Mr. Beckett has been dispelled by yesterday's discussion and by Juliet Stevenson's performance. By the end of the week, I think that many of us would agree that the Beckett was the best thing that we saw. Murray and the group go through some of the more arcane or just plain weird parts of the script. We note the extremely precise stage directions, much like those in a Pinter play. One thing that several people wonder about is Winnie's many references to "the old style"; I contributed the "useful" fact that, as a scientist I like to count things, and this phrase appeared 10 times over the two hours. Everyone is struck by the change in Billie's appearance and outlook from Act I to Act II; where she had been upbeat "Oh, well, can't complain" she now realizes that the end of her life is near.

Murray says that Beckett was very deliberate, very precise in his choices for words, scenery, the length of pauses, and even names. Earlier versions of the script had the name Mildred which was changed to Winifred, and finally to Winnie (although a Mildred does appear in a very weird reminiscence about a little girl and a doll, presumably referring to something earlier in Winnie's life.) Similarly the male character changed from Tom to Edward to Willie. One of the participants suggests that "Willie" was chosen because

it is also refers to the male sex organ. I volunteer that Willie was probably referring to himself when he answered Winnie's "What is a hog, Willie, please?" with "Castrated male swine. Reared for slaughter."

I remark that Winnie's removing the revolver from her big black bag and setting it aside, never using it, violates Chekhov's dictum that if you show a gun in Act I, you must use it in Act II. But one thing that the performance got us all thinking about (having not sensed it in the written script) is that at the very end when Willie, decked out in clothes that are suitable for a wedding groom, crawls painfully up the hill, reaching out his hand, it's not clear if he's reaching for Winnie or for the gun. That he collapses (and presumably dies) before reaching either objective and, thus, renders the question moot.

After a break for coffee, Murray turns the discussion to *Play Mas* by Mustapha Matura, a playwright born in Trinidad, but living in England since 1970. The play is to be performed at the Orange Tree Theater in Richmond, Surrey <http://www.orangetreetheatre.co.uk/> 11 miles southwest of the hotel. Murray describes it as the most charming small theater in the city. It is in a former school house, across the street from Orange Tree Pub. Once upon a time, all of the pubs were owned by families; now most are owned by brewing companies. The Orange Tree Pub is still in private hands; the owner is the man who founded the eponymous theater in the 1960s, but is now only marginally involved in its operation.

As for the play, it opened at the Royal Court Theater in 1971, just nine years after Trinidad had gained its independence from England. The "Doc" referred to in the play is Eric Williams, who led the revolution and served as the country's first prime minister for many years; his task was to resolve conflicts between the PNM (People's National Movement) and the DLP (Democratic Labor Party); the former, which Williams led, was made up mainly of African immigrants; the latter, which lost out, was made up mainly of Asian Indians. *Play Mas* refers to the annual carnival, loved mainly by the African population, a time of drinking and music-making and dressing up and performing skits. In Act I, the tailor Ramjohn Gookool (of Indian extraction) has the upper hand over his assistant Samuel (African); but in Act II, their stations are reversed and, indeed, Samuel is now the chief of police and is working hand-in-hand with Chuck Reynolds, an oil man and/or CIA agent.

On the printed page, I found Act I to be extremely funny, but many in our group complained because they could not work their way through the written Caribbean dialect of both men. Act II, though, I thought was predictable and without merit, although most of the seminar-attenders thought that it was better. Oh, well, as the French say, *Chacun à son goût* which translates, very very loosely, as old-time New York Met (Elio) Chacon is in his son's goo.

We return to the hotel for a while to plot our afternoon activity. At 12:30 we venture forth and decide to tempt fate by using the London Underground. I had forgotten how deep the train tracks are and how long the escalator ride (thank heavens that one doesn't have to ascend many hundreds of steps when emerging from the tube). There is an amusing optical illusion, which I try (without great deal of success) to capture with my camera: people on the down escalator appear to be leaning backwards when viewed from the up escalator and, conversely, people on the up escalator appear to be leaning forward when viewed from the down. After figuring out how to buy and use Oyster Cards, we make our way to Bond Street station in the very busy center of the city. Oxford Street, onto which we emerge, is a zoo! It's been many years since I've been in downtown Manhattan, but I don't recall sidewalks there ever being as full of people (of all ages, nationalities, and races) as is this thoroughfare.

Our reason for coming here is to see if Selfridges* Department Store bears any resemblance to the very

*No apostrophe in the name. Why not?

elegant establishment from the early 20th century that is depicted in the TV series *Mr. Selfridge*, now in its third season on *PBS Masterpiece*. It doesn't. It is a huge place (second only to Harrods, also no apostrophe) and occupying a full city block. Instead of catering to only the upper upper crust of English society, the 21st century version tries varying approaches to appeal to every generation, to every ethnic

group, to every social stratum, as long as they have money to spend and are willing (eager) to do so. One floor, in fact, is labeled AGENDER which, we assume, is unisex clothing.*

*Here's the store's definition of *agender* at <http://tinyurl.com/moddert>: "Without a gender (nongendered, genderless, agender; neutrois); moving between genders or with a fluctuating gender identity (genderfluid); third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender." Thanks. Nice slide show, too.

Although crowds may be a "normal" occurrence at Selfridges, the density of packing today is undoubtedly increased because tomorrow is "Mothering Day" (Britain's quaint name for Mother's Day) and every department has signs imploring patrons to buy something nice for Mum. This puts me in mind of the closing stanza of Tom Lehrer's brilliant song *Oedipus Rex*, in which he sings "So be sweet and kind to mother, now and then have a chat,/Buy her candy or some flowers or a brand new hat,/But maybe you had better let it go at that ..."

We wander through the food court and a few other departments before we decide that we've had enough. Besides, we want to visit an old established book store, not far from here. But then there is an unexpected event. As we approach a door that exits onto Oxford Street, we see large unsmiling security men, all with radio receivers in their ears, keeping the doorway and aisle open. Lining the two sides of the aisle are excited and cheering crowds, made up mainly of 20-something females, each holding high a smart phone/camera to capture the moment. Think I to myself, "Wow! Is the queen going to arrive? Maybe Kate and William? Who can it possibly be?" I'm shivering in anticipation of being so close to royalty. But the bubble is burst when I ask one of the guards the reason for blocking the door, and am told that Heidi Klum and her entourage are arriving to show off their new lingerie collection. Defeated and deflated, I mutter "Oh, shit" and ask if there's some other door that we can get to before the celebrities arrive. The guard takes pity (all the while wondering why these two American visitors don't want to observe the festivities) and lets us cross the aisle to go to a door that opens onto a different street. Lee, bless her heart, has labeled the crowd scene as "The Klum Scrum."

It turns out that the event was covered in the press. Here's one of the stories: <http://tinyurl.com/ny2hslz> My favorite line in the article is a quotation from Ms. Klum: "I always have to be ready to take off my clothes and look great. If you're not fit and your not 100 per cent, someone else is going to get the job." (Tsk, tsk, please note the misuse of "your" in place of "you're.") Had the Magids been hip, we would have known about this event, because it was touted and advertised at Selfridges web site:

<http://www.selfridges.com/content/article/meet-heidi-klum> There's even a contest: "For your chance to meet Heidi, make a purchase from the beautiful new collection in Lingerie on 3 at Selfridges London between Saturday 7 March and Saturday 14 March. The first 100 customers to purchase from the range and collect their wristband between 9.30am and 1pm on the day of the event will be invited to meet the supermodel herself." Oh, swoon, if only I'd known ... (I have to admit that the posted images of this 41-year-old in her scanties are very titillating; don't you agree?)

We are not far from Daunt Books <http://dauntbooks.co.uk> 83 Marylebone High Street. We discover that it is not really on Marylebone Street but rather on the more major James Street, one block to the west. So why, please tell me, does its address say Marlyebone? Is it possible that they just like writing this silly word?) Its web site describes itself as "an original Edwardian bookshop with long oak galleries and graceful skylights" and it is, indeed, quite a find! Most interesting is the very large room with areas devoted to different continents and countries therein. For example, the section for Norway has not only history and travel books about Norway but also works (in fiction and non-fiction) by Norwegian authors. After spending some time at the bookstore, we take the tube back to Bloomsbury and hang out in our hotel room before it's time to leave for dinner and the theater.

We board the bus at 4:15; about an hour later (after some challenging driving through heavy traffic and narrow streets), we arrive at Bacco <http://www.bacco-restaurant.co.uk/>, an Italian restaurant. Perhaps the

main reason for the traffic is that this restaurant and tonight's theater are not far from Twickenham Stadium where the Six Nations Rugby Championships are being waged. Today's match features Scotland vs. England. When we emerge from the bus, we encounter an alcohol-fueled scene of revelry as a boisterous crowd (nearly 100% male) is chanting and singing (and drinking!) both indoors at a pub and in an outdoors patio. We work our way past the revelers and finally get indoors.

Bacco offers four choices for starters, four for mains, and three for dessert. I choose *Fegato al Marsala con crostino di polenta* (calves liver in Marsala wine with crispy polenta), *Pollo* (chicken breads with roast potatoes), and *Torta di mela* (warm apple tart with a scoop of vanilla ice cream). The room in which we are seated is unusually noisy (well, it *is* small and, yes, we are all talkative). We then walk a short distance to the theater. As I expected, the play doesn't offer a great deal; it plays exactly as it appears on the printer page, except that the woman playing Mrs. Gookool seems much too young and the man playing Chuck Reynolds does not sound authentically American. The performance takes place on a square area that is not elevated; our seats are in the front row and, from time to time, our feet come perilously close to getting entangled with those of the cast.

Because traffic has thinned out (although the drinking is still going on), the ride back to the hotel takes only 45 minutes. Steve Victor takes advantage of the relatively long ride to talk about Yale, its finances, its endowment, its admissions policy, its financial aid package, and so on. There are many questions for him and comments, a significant number of which are about the impact of women on the undergraduate experience. (Nobody on the bus had been a student post-1969 and, therefore, knew Yale College as 100% male.) This gives me the opportunity to tell a wonderful story about Jean Lasilla, one of the few women in chemistry grad school when I was there. After passing one of her major exams, she went to the hospital and delivered a baby girl, whom she brought to the lab and to seminars (at which the child would scream only if the lecturer was poor). Said child, Kathrin, grew up to go to Yale and then become editor of the Yale Alumni Magazine. Kathrin told me that she was seated in class next to a male student who, after they exchanged names, said "Didn't I have a chemistry textbook written by your father?" "No," replied Kathrin, "That was my mother."

The weather begins to feel a bit like winter (low temperature, high humidity, wind). Back in our room, we make some coffee and have some cookies as we read and use the internet. On the bus ride at the end of the evening, I realize that today is π -day (Pi-day). π , as is known by all who didn't fall asleep in high school math class, is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter and has the value 3.141592653589 Well, today is 3-14-15 and one can say that at 9:26 this morning we have matched the first eight digits of π .

Sunday, March 15

Yesterday was Pi-Day and today is The Ides of March. Surely, bad things are going to happen. But I do manage to sleep all the way through to our alarm at 7:15. Today, I choose the hot breakfast (scrambled eggs, bacon, beans, sausage, "blond pudding" (say what??), along with juice, toast, and coffee. But we eat in the cooler room, the one removed from the steam table. This is a free day - no events are scheduled, so we can take advantage of London's cultural offerings. We decide to visit two art galleries: the Tate Modern in the morning and the National Gallery in the afternoon.

The Tate Modern <http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern> is south of the Thames and not especially close to any Underground station. We take a red line train from Holborn to Tottenham Court, switch to the black line to Embankment, and then take the green line to Blackfriars. It sounds complicated, but for experienced Londoners like the Magids, it works like a charm. The weather is about what we had expected for this season in London: foggy, misty, drizzly, yecchy.

The Blackfriars tube station is on the northern shore of the Thames. To get to the other side, assuming that one doesn't want to swim, it's necessary to find a bridge. It turns out that two are available, each about

equidistant from the Tate. My desire is to cross on the pedestrian-only Millennium Bridge because its history has a certain resonance with those of us who are familiar with the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, the 1940 version that collapsed into Puget Sound not three months after it was finished. (If you've not seen motion pictures of this debacle, do a Google search - you'll find any number of them easily.) The Millennium Bridge, opened in 2000 (as its name would imply), didn't even last three months. As Wikipedia relates it, "Londoners nicknamed the bridge the 'Wobbly Bridge' after participants in a charity walk on behalf of Save the Children to open the bridge felt an unexpected and, for some, uncomfortable swaying motion on the first two days after the bridge opened. The bridge was closed later that day, and after two days of limited access the bridge was closed for almost two years while modifications were made to eliminate the wobble entirely."

Alas, we walk along the bank of the Thames ... and see signs directing us to the Millennium Bridge, but we never find it. (Perhaps it has collapsed ... again?) Besides, the rain has begun to fall with more authority, so we bag our original plan and cross the river on the Blackfriars Bridge (for pedestrians and cars). Even so, it's still a bit of a walk from the south side of the bridge to the museum, but finally we arrive shortly before 11:00. We and several thousand of our fellow human beings, that is. The collection is wide-ranging (although not as extensive as I would have imagined) and has representative works by Ernst, Giacometti, Picasso, and the rest of them cool cats. There is an excellent selection of surrealists: Man Ray, Dali, others. There are stone sculptures by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. Most surprising, to us, was a series of pencil sketches by Louise Bourgeois; our knowledge of her comes from the large outdoor sculptures that are in the Seattle Olympic Sculpture Garden. One room is devoted to electrical and electronic art; a highlight is a pair of TV monitors playing an endless loop of Nixon's speeches, with one monitor distorted by a Helmholtz Coil; we hear (and we react negatively) to the famous (infamous) Checkers speech. (There are many artists unfamiliar to us and there is some art that we admitted Philistines are loath to call art.)

At about 12:45, we stop in the museum's café for a coffee and pastry. This, actually, turns out to be a bit of an ordeal. All of the tables are occupied, so Lee gets in line to order while I requisition a tiny round table adjacent to an uncomfortable bench. The serving line moves so slowly that I have an opportunity to survey the room - and when I see an open table with real chairs, I pounce on it. Eventually Lee (and the food) arrives. There is an outdoor balcony with access from the dining area, so I step outside to take pictures (in the gloom and fog) of skyscrapers, the Millennium Bridge (still standing), and St. Paul's Cathedral.

Our next stop is the National Gallery <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/> which is located equidistant from two Underground stations: Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus. ("Oh, boy, a circus!" but Lee tempers my enthusiasm.) This art museum is one of the world's greatest; about two weeks ago, we had seen Frederick Wiseman's documentary film *National Gallery*, so we had a good idea of what was on view, even if not all of the art that he chose to show necessarily appeals to us. So we walk in the mist and fog and rain from the Tate to Blackfriars Bridge to the tube stop where we take the yellow line to Embankment and switch to the black line to Leicester Square. Emerging from the deep deep dungeon, we find ourselves in front of Wyndham's Theatre, where we will see *A View from the Bridge* tomorrow.

Although my notes don't show it, at some point today we must have put extra funds onto our Oyster Cards. When we acquired them, we left a deposit of £5 (to be refunded when we surrender the cards) and entered £10 to cover fares on each card; as a typical ride is about £2.50, the Oyster needs to be fed. Today.

Leaving the underground station, we walk south on Orange Street, past the National Portrait Gallery on the right and St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church (some "fields"!) on the left. The streets are very crowded, perhaps because it's the weekend (or, as they put the stress in England, week-END), perhaps because it's Mothering Day, but mainly because the St. Patrick's Day Parade (two days early, I would contend) is held today. Many of the people in the street are wearing green hats or sporting green scarves or jackets or pants (or all three). And although it is only the early afternoon, a number of the green-clad revelers are just a wee bit tipsy. There is a large cloth barricade preventing us from seeing (and hearing) the music that is coming from Trafalgar Square,* just across the street. As we approach the National Gallery, we sense

*Trafalgar Square sports two famous statues: one is Nelson's Column, a phallic structure guarded by four lions (not to worry - they're made of stone), which commemorates Admiral Horatio Nelson who died in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The battle was not fought here! Rather it was a sea battle off the coast of Spain and involved England vs. Spain and France (which sounds like an unfair match, except that England won). According to Wikipedia:

The battle was the most decisive naval victory of the [Napoleonic] war. Twenty-seven British ships of the line led by Admiral Lord Nelson aboard HMS Victory defeated thirty-three French and Spanish ships of the line under French Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve in the Atlantic off the southwest coast of Spain, just west of Cape Trafalgar, in Caños de Meca. The Franco-Spanish fleet lost twenty-two ships, without a single British vessel being lost.

The British victory spectacularly confirmed the naval supremacy that Britain had established during the eighteenth century and was achieved in part through Nelson's departure from the prevailing naval tactical orthodoxy, which involved engaging an enemy fleet in a single line of battle parallel to the enemy to facilitate signalling in battle and disengagement, and to maximise fields of fire and target areas. Nelson instead divided his smaller force into two columns directed perpendicularly against the larger enemy fleet, with decisive results.

Nelson was shot by a French musketeer during the battle and died shortly after, becoming one of Britain's greatest war heroes. Admiral Villeneuve was captured along with his ship *Bucentaure*. Spanish Admiral Federico Gravina escaped with the remnant of the fleet and succumbed months later to wounds sustained during the battle. Villeneuve attended Nelson's funeral while a captive on parole in Britain.

The other statue shows King George IV on a horse; neither he nor his steed had anything to do with the Battle of Trafalgar, but when one is king, one can have sculptured likenesses installed wherever one damned well pleases. George IV's predecessor was, of course, mad King George III, the only British king (except for Arthur and Henry VIII) whom Americans know. These two dudes, III and IV, might be harbingers of the third and fourth Bushes to reign in the U.S.; perhaps John Ellis "Jeb" Bush (former governor of Florida and, presently, one of about 100 Republicans vying for the 2016 presidential nomination) and George P. Bush (son of Jeb and nephew of George W. and current Land Commissioner in Texas).

that something is amiss: we're not permitted to enter the first set of doors that we encounter. (Don't tell me that Heidi Klum is coming here, too!) When we get to the second set of doors, there is a line and only a few people are admitted at a time. We head to the cloak room where we learn the unhappy fact that the closure of some doors, as well as the cloak room itself, is the result of a job action that some unions have called. Worse than that, some of the galleries that we most want to visit, those devoted to French Impressionists and Dutch Masters of the 17th century, are also closed because of the job action. Most disappointing, we can't see the Turners and Constables and the other "stars" of English art history. Although I admit to not having been a fan of Turner's landscapes and seascapes, the movie *Mr. Turner*, which we saw recently, has whetted our appetite by explaining something of his style and motivations

So, coats and umbrellas under our arms (in this over-heated, non air-conditioned building), we head to see what we can see (before other galleries are also shuttered). Well, not all of the impressionists are unavailable, because we see several works by Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Renoir, Monet, Degas. and many others. (Aside from the unfortunate tendency that I have to take poorly-focused pictures indoors, many of the images can be seen at my photo web site: <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>) A special treat are some additional studies that Seurat did in preparation for his enormous *La Grande Jatte*, which complement the sketches that we saw at the Courtauld.

It's cold and drizzly as we make our way to the tube station and back to the hotel, where we arrive at about

3:30. Lee had identified a couple of possible restaurants for dinner tonight. We consult the concierge about them and he recommends a French bistro within walking distance, *Savoir Faire* <http://savoir.co.uk/savoir/> and he reserves a table for us at 6:00. We spend some time reading and using our computers until it's time to leave for dinner. I didn't take notes on what I ordered, but Lee did. According to her, I started with sautéed chicken livers and for the main I had chicken supreme with mushrooms. And we're not the only ones to have decided on this restaurant: about 15 minutes after our arrival, three women from our theater group take a table alongside of ours; and 30 minutes later another couple arrives. Could it be that the hotel's concierge is getting big cutbacks by recommending this place?

Back in our hotel room, I re-read tomorrow's play, read another issue of *The New Yorker*, and work some crossword puzzles. We're in bed by 10:30, hoping for a good night's sleep before tomorrow's busy day.

Monday, March 16

The alarm is set for 6:30, but I awaken at 6:15; nevertheless, it was a good sleep. Peeking out through the curtains, the day looks cloudy and cold, much like yesterday. There has also been rainfall overnight. We go to breakfast where I choose cold items and Lee has warm. We then walk to UCL for the start of our discussion at 9:30.

As is Murray's habit, we spend about the first hour on the previous night's entertainment, *Play Mas*. Murray informs us that several of the characters in the play were real people: Mr. Gookool, for example, was a textile magnate and a financier of movies (hence the fascination, in the play, for American movies and actors). He also notes some differences between the performance and the scripts that we had read. For example, "coolie" (in the performance) was used to describe all Indians, thus implying that all Asians are essentially the same. Several of the monologs were longer in the performance than in the script. One of our group says that he was working as an economist for the International Monetary Fund in Trinidad at the time of independence and that the action of the play closely paralleled the actual events. My own view is that the play was *much ado about nothing* (to use a phrase that I invented ... all by myself ... with no outside help).

Following our coffee break, we turn the discussion to Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. As the only native Brooklynite* in the group, I should be able to add some local color and background to our

*This is not quite true. A wife of one of the Yale graduates tells me, a day or two later, that she spent part of her childhood in Brooklyn and attended, for a while, a Brooklyn high school. In our conversation, she says that her parents grew up on the lower East Side of Manhattan. This is not surprising, given that many Jewish families lived in those tenements after arriving in this country. But ... what was so striking (and Lee came to the same conclusion) is that this woman bore an uncanny resemblance to one of my aunts, now deceased. We began to wonder if there might have been some hanky-panky involving her grandparents and mine when living in such close quarters. It's possible ...

discussion, even though the action of the play occurs in Red Hook neighborhood, a rough neighborhood where I've never been except when my father drove us on the Belt Parkway through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel.

The play opened as a one-act drama in 1955 with a stellar cast: Van Heflin and Eileen Heckart played Eddie and Beatrice Carbone, Jack Warden was Marco, and J. Carrol Naish was the lawyer Alfieri, who also narrated part of the story. A synopsis: Eddie (a longshoreman) and Beatrice are helping to raise Catherine, their 18-year-old niece. Two cousins arrive from Sicily and jump ship to enter this country illegally; they are brothers Marco and Rudolpho. Both manage to get occasional work as longshoremen, while staying out of sight of immigration officers. As the play transpires, Catherine falls in Love with Rudolpho, despite Eddie's conviction that the man is gay* (a word not in use at that time). Eventually Eddie tells the authorities about

*The evidence? Rudolpho has platinum blond hair not black, he's not muscular, and he likes to sing (high notes), he spends all of his money on records. In a conversation with Alfieri, Eddie says "The guy ain't right" without actually using the word homosexual.

Marco and Rudolpho's illegal entry and they are arrested. The latter is released because he plans to marry Catherine, but Marco threatens to kill Eddie if he gets out. Well, he does, there's a shouting match and a fight, Eddie pulls a knife, but it's he who is stabbed and killed by Marco. (The title of the play is not at all clear, as Red Hook is really nowhere near the Brooklyn Bridge; but even if it were, the title still seems to be without meaning.) The 1955 play was unsuccessful and closed. Miller rewrote it and cast it in two acts. This version opened a year later and had long runs in London (directed by Peter Brook) and New York.

Arthur Miller grew up on the affluent upper west side of Manhattan, but when the family fortune was wiped out during the great depression, they moved to Gravesend* in Brooklyn where he attended Abraham

*This is what Murray said and what Wikipedia (that font of all knowledge) reports, but two online sites that quote Miller, himself, has him living in Midwood and attending Midwood High School, not Lincoln.

Lincoln High School. This is not an affluent neighborhood, but it is world's different from Red Hook. I suggest that he lived in the more affluent Midwood neighborhood and that he attended Midwood, my high school's chief rival, but I argue this without real conviction as there are conflicting stories on the internet.

In preparing for this morning session, I had looked into the performance that was to take place at Wyndham's Theatre, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wyndham%27s_Theatre which dates from 1898! The cast involves actors whom we had seen in movies and on TV. Eddie is played by Mark Strong, who has had major roles in these recent movies: *The Imitation Game*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Sherlock Holmes*, and many others; <http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/a-view-from-the-bridge-5>. Beatrice is performed by Nicola Walker, who is familiar from the PBS series *Last Tango in Halifax*; she has also done many other English TV dramas. There is a reference in the play to a gangster named Frankie Yale. I had assumed that this was a fictional name, but he was quite real: you can read about his "distinguished" career as well as his death by "lead poisoning" (i.e., a hail of bullets, as ordered by Al Capone) at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankie_Yale

Murray likened the play to a Greek tragedy* (it even has a chorus in the form of some dock workers) and

*It fits the pattern that he talked about in regard to *Antigone*: there is no identifiable villain - rather, each of the protagonists is "right" and acts accordingly to his moral compass.

tells us that it's based on actual events. The question of "informing" (which is central to the play) echoes Miller's refusal to "name names" when called before Joe McCarthy's Committee,* in contrast to Elia Kazan

*I informed the group that the official name of the committee was the House Committee on Un-American Activities, but activists and editorial writers changed the word order to House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a more accurate description of its role.

who did reveal the names of actors, writers, and directors who had joined the Communist Party in the 1930s. Murray expresses concern (and also did so in the preliminary brochure) about whether British actors can adopt reasonable American accents. I added that the question really is whether they can sound like working-class Italian immigrants. I guess that we'll find out this evening.

We return to the hotel at 11:45 and ask the concierge to determine if the job action at the National Museum is ended and if all exhibits are open. He phones and is told that there are still closures, but we are resolute and decide to visit a second time. In fact, the exhibit of 18th century Dutch paintings is open (we see several excellent works by Rembrandt, Hals, Rubens, Vermeer, and van Dyck) as are the 18th and 19th century British masters (Turner, Hogarth, Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Constable). As mentioned on pp

18 and 19, we had seen two movies (the documentary *National Gallery* and the dramatized *Mr. Turner*) which increased our appreciation of some of the art but didn't help me to enjoy Joseph Mallard William Turner's seascapes any more than I had in the past. But the movie was terrific, as was the depiction of Turner by the incomparable Timothy Spall, he of the perpetual scowls and incessant grunts. Was this vocal mannerism historically accurate? I have no idea. Several adjoining rooms are devoted to works that were acquired by a M. Paul Durand-Ruel (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Durand-Ruel), a Paris art dealer, who promoted the Impressionists before they became famous; the works on display were gathered from collections in the U.S. and Europe.

Following a coffee and cake in the museum cafeteria, we walk (no crowds of raucous St. Patrick's Day celebrants, this time) to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, about a half-mile away, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_Royal,_Drury_Lane), for an hour-long tour that is planned for 4:15. The rest of our group arrives (on foot) from the hotel. The original building was erected in the 17th century and had several notable directors, including David Garrick and Richard Brinsley Sheridan until it burned to the ground in 1809. The theater, which we visit today, was built in 1812. The tour is led by two men, undoubtedly aspiring actors, one of whom channeled Sheridan and, later, Garrick.

From the theater, it's only a block or so to an Italian restaurant called Orso, <http://orsorestaurant.co.uk/>. As I kept neither a copy of the menu nor any notes about it, I can't report what I ate. But Lee's notes are intact! So I can tell you that we both start with *piadina* (an Italian flatbread) stuffed with ham, spinach, and fontina. Following that, I order pumpkin ravioli and, for dessert, poached pear with ice cream. The group then walks a half-mile to Wyndham's Theatre which, as I mentioned in yesterday's entry, is near the Leicester Square tube station.

The performance of *A View from the Bridge* departs in several significant (and often silly) ways from the script that we all read. During Alfieri's opening monologue, in which the outcome of the play is already hinted at, Eddie and one of his fellow longshoremen are standing under an overhead water shower, washing and scrubbing their torsos with soap and then rinsing off; this goes on for several minutes. One wonders if Mark Strong's contract requires that he be allowed to display his manly upper body in any show in which he performs? The set is minimal - in fact, there is no furniture to speak of in Eddie and Beatrice's home, although each of the cast (at one time or another) is busy mopping up water from the shower scene. The accents, as far as Lee and I remember them, seem fine. What does not seem "fine" is Eddie's 18-year-old niece, Catherine, who, upon seeing him, would run toward him and jump, wrapping her legs around his body (which we have already stipulated is "ripped"); later, there's a scene in which Eddie strokes her as she's wrapped around him again, not the sort of behavior expected for a prim and proper virgin (as is made clear during the play). Also surprising was the nearly perfect English (with essentially no accents) by the two brothers who had sailed from Sicily and jumped ship just days before. But perhaps the weirdest "special effect" takes place at the end. In the script, Eddie pulls a knife on Marco, but is himself stabbed and dies from the wound. On the stage, the fight and subsequent knifing occur, but then entire cast arrives and drapes their arms around their protagonists in a huge scrum (silly enough) and then red water (blood, I suppose) rains down on them from the overhead shower which hasn't been seen since the opening. And they stand there for a good five minutes, their clothing and skin turning bright crimson. And it is, while coated in glorious red, that they take their curtain calls.

At one of our morning sessions, Murray had told us about how a chair can almost become a character in a play, depending on how it's approached by the actors (who might signal, by their behavior, anger, boredom, lust, power, resignation, and so on). Well, a chair does play a role in tonight's play, first to serve as a way for Marco to demonstrate his physical strength vs. Eddie's, and second for Alfieri to sit upon as he does his final monologue.

The play ends at 9:45. Lee and I and another member of our party take the tube to Russell Square, about a block from the hotel; others either took the tube or a taxi or walked all the way. We are back in our room by 10:15, where we read until bed-time at 11:30.

Tuesday, March 17

We awaken at 6:15 and have breakfast (I choose the cold breakfast, again). It is a cloudy day, but it looks as if we'll avoid rain. We walk to UCL for the 9:30 to 11:30 discussion of last night's *A View from the Bridge* and tonight's *The Broken Heart*.

As for the Arthur Miller, it doesn't take long for several of us to tell Murray that the script from which he's reading is *not* the one that we have in our hands. In fact, I had already determined that what we had was the original one-act version, the one that Miller re-wrote and divided into two acts; I knew this because I had downloaded what proves to be the two-act version from the internet and I was able to make comparisons early this morning. Murray apologizes for this; he says that he must have handed his secretary the original version, from which she was supposed to make our photocopies, without realizing that it was not the two-act version that he had and that we would see. At the morning's discussion, many people comment on the weirdness of the performance, especially the shower scenes at the start and end. Murray allows as to how this director is known for "over-statements" in his productions. One thing that I mention is Miller's excellent ear for lower class syntax in several of Eddie's speeches, such as "I could tell you things about Louis what you wouldn't want to know" and "You mean to tell me that there's no law that a guy which he ain't right can go to work and marry a girl."

Following the break for coffee, we discuss John Ford's *The Broken Heart*. A confession: as a dutiful "student" I had read every script that was sent to us, twice in fact for the four plays that we have already seen, but this one I gave up on. After reading and reading and reading the densely printed 91-page text, I noticed that I had reached only Scene I of Act I, with many many more pages to follow. So I did what any lazy student would do - I consulted the internet for information about the play and playwright.

John Ford (1586-1639) followed Shakespeare by about 20 years. His most famous plays are this one and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. The play we're to see this evening is described as a Caroline revenge tragedy and is set in an imaginary place in ancient Greece. There are so many characters, all with Greek names of course, and so many plots and sub-plots that I'm going to "allow" my pal, Mr. Wikipedia, to describe it for you:

Set in Classical Greece, the play recounts the story of Amyclas, King of Laconia (or Sparta), his daughter Calantha, and their court. The young Spartan general Ithocles, motivated by pride, interferes with his sister Penthea's intended marriage to Orgilus. Ithocles demands that she marry a greater nobleman, Bassanes. Bassanes proves to be a tyrannical husband, irrational and jealous, who keeps his wife a prisoner. Orgilus pretends a journey to Athens but secretly remains in Sparta in disguise. Ithocles, victorious in battle, recognizes that he has wronged Penthea and Orgilus, and supports a planned marriage between his friend Prophilus and Orgilus's sister Euphrania. Ithocles himself seeks the hand of Calantha, the King's daughter—and she accepts him, instead of her cousin Nearchos, a prince of Argos.

The unhappy Penthea starves herself to death; Orgilus traps Ithocles in a mechanical chair and murders him, just before his planned wedding to Calantha. In the closing scene, Calantha dances at a prenuptial banquet, and keeps dancing as she is informed of the deaths of her father the King, her friend Penthea, and her fiancé Ithocles. The dance ended, Calantha, now Queen of Sparta, condemns Orgilus for his murder of Ithocles, appoints Nearchos her heir and successor, and dies of a broken heart.

Well! That just about sums it up, eh? (Need I say that my spell checker had a virtual heart attack when confronted by the Greek names?)

Not only have I confessed to being a "lazy student," it should come as no surprise that I also cannot find my notes from our session with Murray. No, the dog didn't eat my homework - we have no dog. But I do recall Murray's telling us about the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, where we'll see the play. Wanamaker

(1919-1993) was an American film actor and director who was black-listed after the McCarthy hearings and moved to London. He acted in and directed works for the stage, television, and movies; and also directed an opera. He founded the Shakespeare Globe Trust and used it to raise money to build a replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, completed in 2014, is adjacent to the rebuilt Globe; both are on the bank of the Thames, the south side not far from the Tate Modern. It has numerous "quirky" features, most notable among which is the absence of artificial lighting. Once the production begins, all light comes from six large chandeliers, each with a few dozen lit candles, that can be raised or lowered as the action on the stage requires. For those scenes in which an actor needs additional illumination, he or she carries a small candelabra with three or four candles.

Having searched the internet, I'm aware that the play has received several excellent reviews <http://tinyurl.com/lnnv1zd>. Lee notes that the actor playing the evil Bassenes is Owen Teale, someone she recognizes from several British TV dramas; I should have recognized him as well, as he appeared in various episodes of *Inspector Lewis* and *Silk*; he's best known for his work in *Game of Thrones*, an epic series that Lee and I have not watched.

The best discussion of the plot and themes of *The Broken Heart* that I could find comes from an unlikely source, the newsletter of the World Socialists organization; it is a review of a performance in New York City two years ago, but it does not restrict itself to that specific performance but to a discussion of themes of the play: <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2012/02/brok-f22.html>

In the afternoon, we take the Underground to St. Paul's Cathedral, one of the most famous structures in London. Constructed in the late 17th century, following the great fire of London that destroyed most of the neighborhood, and designed by Sir Christopher Wren, its most distinctive feature is the dome that can be seen from great distances throughout London. By being so close to it, as we exit from the tube station, we actually have trouble finding it and knowing in which direction to walk. But we persevere and eventually find the place. I have no interior pictures to post at Picas because picture-taking is not permitted. This comes as a surprise, given that we've never been restricted at any other cathedral or church in England, including the equally famous Salisbury Cathedral that we visited two years ago. Even worse, there is an admission fee of £15, each. Well, it is an impressive structure (you'll have to take my word for it) and you can actually see interior pictures online because, apparently, some photographers greased the proper palms and got permission to shoot footage. And we are interested to see tombs and plaques of famous artists, scientists, writers, and poets, including Arthur Sullivan, Samuel Johnson, Alexander Fleming, and J. M. W. Turner. There is a monument to the Duke of Wellington, and next to it the tomb of Lord Nelson.

From St. Paul's, we take the tube to Liberty London (on Regent Street), a quirky department store quite near Selfridges <http://www.liberty.co.uk/fcp/departmenthome/dept/liberty-products>. Wikipedia tells us

The Tudor revival building was built so that trading could continue while renovations were being completed on the other premises and in 1924 this store was constructed from the timbers of two ships: *HMS Impregnable* (formerly *HMS Howe*) and *HMS Hindustan*. The frontage on Great Marlborough Street is the same length as the *Hindustan*.

It styles itself as a high-end fashion emporium for men's, women's, and children's clothing, but as we wander through its departments (on creaky wooden floors) and move from floor to floor via a creaky old elevator and come upon fabrics and furniture all in ghastly floral prints (note that I didn't say "creaky") I conclude that this is the type of place that would have nothing that I'd want to buy. That does *not* mean that Lee is uninterested. Having failed to find anything that she'd like to buy in the needlepoint department, all is not lost as she finds a very expensive jacket to hang alongside the other jackets in the several closets that house her "stuff" - when I dare to ask why she needs yet another jacket, she explains that each one has a specific purpose: to keep out rain or snow or deluge of locusts ... or to keep one warm when the outside temp is between 25 and 30°F, between 31 and 35°F, between 36 and 40°F, and so on. I am not convinced, but what can I say. My annoyance is ameliorated by our stopping in the store's cafeteria for coffee and cake.

We take the tube back to the hotel, where we arrive at 3:30. The afternoon sun is pleasantly warm, but as evening approaches the day will become much colder. We read and use the computer until 4:45 when our bus departs for the short trip to tonight's restaurant, Swan at Shakespeare's Globe www.swanlondon.co.uk; the bus crosses the Blackfriars Bridge (the one that we traversed on foot when we visited the Tate Modern) but has to stop short of the restaurant because there is a pedestrian-only zone (along the Thames) for the Globe Theatre, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, and the restaurant. All three are connected; in fact, when leaving the restaurant, we go into a very large lobby that has entrances to both theaters. Our fixed price menu offers only one starter ("Goats curd, red onion confit, red grapes, and toasted almonds") but three choices for the main course (I select "Pan fried semi-cured salmon fillet, purple sprouting broccoli*"); for

*Is it really "sprouting"? Nah, perhaps in a former life it had already sprouted, but when delivered to the table one is quite sure that it has spouted its last sprout and is now dormant.

dessert, there is only one offer: "Treactle tart." As I had mentioned several pages ago, wine was included in the dinner for the first and last nights, but if one wanted wine on any of the four intervening evenings we would have to pay. Apparently, the server does not understand this, so first he tries to collect for everyone's wine orders from poor Steve Victor. When he is corrected, he apparently finds it too cumbersome to collect £4.90 (the same price for the house red or white wine) from each individual so he just throws the full bill on the table and walks off. Somehow, each of us has enough small change and bills to throw our contributions onto the bill; whether it is enough or too much or too little we have no idea.

In my discussion of this morning's seminar, I described some of the unique features of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Upon being shown to our seats, we become aware of others. Most of our group are in the balcony; several of us are in the first row (where I'm hoping that we'll be able to catch foul balls, even if we've left our mitts at home). One has to feel sorry for a man who is not part of our group; by chance he is seated between one group of three Yale attendees and another of four, which (in and of itself is not such a bad thing) but he is seated right behind a wooden column. So, not only are the hard wooden benches uncomfortable for all of us, but his sight lines are miserable. Our bench seats have open metal backs that allow (invite?) people sitting in the row behind us to kick whoever is in front. This does not happen to me, but Lee finds herself continually being tattooed by the person behind. Exasperated, she gives a good strong shove to the shoe (and the person wearing it) that has invaded her space - and the onslaught stops, but only for a while.

The play is very long (well, I knew that it would be when I failed to finish reading the script) and the plot is very complicated, involving acts of revenge and violence, power grabs by several participants, acts of love (both completed and not) by shifting pairs of people, and (as mentioned earlier) the raising and lowering of the candle chandeliers, often obscuring the action for us. Our view was completely blocked for the scene that we most wanted to see in which Ithocles is trapped in a mechanical chair and murdered by Orgilus, blood spilling out through Tygon tubing onto the stage. (Is this some of the same blood that rained down on the protagonists in *A View from the Bridge*? Who knows?) If I may be permitted, I'll now reprint the concluding paragraph from Wikipedia's description on a preceding page:

The unhappy Penthea starves herself to death; Orgilus traps Ithocles in a mechanical chair and murders him, just before his planned wedding to Calantha. In the closing scene, Calantha dances at a prenuptial banquet, and keeps dancing as she is informed of the deaths of her father the King, her friend Penthea, and her fiancé Ithocles. The dance ended, Calantha, now Queen of Sparta, condemns Orgilus for his murder of Ithocles, appoints Nearchos her heir and successor, and dies of a broken heart.

So there are bodies everywhere, some murdered, one dying from starvation, another just expiring from a broken heart. And what then? As the cast takes its bows, lively music begins and everyone engages in a joyous jig. (Apparently, audiences in John Ford's time expected this sort of happy ending, something - *Gott sei Dank!* - that is no longer the custom in modern the theatrical productions.)

The play, which began at 7:30 finally ends at 10:15. We walk along the Thames to the where the bus waits for us, and we're back at the hotel at 10:45 and to bed at 11:15.

Wednesday, March 18

We awaken at 6:30, not willingly but encouraged by the alarm clock. The day is sunny, mild, with some haze. Following breakfast, we attend our final seminar (9:30 to 11:30) at UCL.

Changing the normal order of things, we spend the first hour discussing tonight's play, *Stevie* by Hugh Whitmore.* The play is about the life of Stevie Smith (1902-1971), an English poet and novelist.

*Whitmore has written for the movies, television, and the theater and has won several awards (including two Emmys). Of the movies that he's written, the only one that I recognize is *84 Charing Cross Road*, a wonderful film starring Anne Bancroft and Anthony Hopkins. One of his best regarded plays is *Breaking the Code*, which served as the model for the current movie about Alan Turing, *The Imitation Game*.

According to Murray Biggs, her poetry is highly regarded by people like Robert Lowell, despite its seeming simplicity and childish rhymes and themes. The title role in this performance is taken by the wonderful Zoë Wanamaker, daughter of John Wanamaker, whom we've seen in numerous movies and TV productions; at the present time, she is portraying Princess Maria, a Russian emigré, in the third season of *Mr. Selfridge*.

The Hampstead Theatre <http://www.hampsteadtheatre.com/> dates from the 1970s and is known for producing new works by often unknown playwrights. Among them, according to Wikipedia, are Michael Frayn, Howard Pinter, Mike Leigh, and Roy Williams (whom we encountered in his bizarre adaptation of *Antigone*).

Stevie Smith was not exactly a recluse, but she did have an unusual life. She lived in a distant suburb of London, commuted to the city for a boring secretarial job that she held, took care of her maiden aunt to whom she was much attached, never married but did have lovers (male and female), and died of a brain tumor.

Because we have no script for this play, Murray distributes a packet of her poems (each accompanied by a whimsical drawing of her creation) and asks each of us, in turn, to read one of the poems out loud. As stated earlier, many of them seem trivial. For example, one consists of just two lines: "If I lie down on my bed I must be here/But if I lie down in my grave I must be elsewhere." Another, *Dear Muse*, is quite sing-songy:

Dear Muse, the happy hours we have spent together.
I love you so much in wet or fine weather.
I only wish sometimes you would speak louder,
But perhaps you will do so when you are prouder.
I often think that this will be the next instant,
Meanwhile I am your most obliging confidante.

But what do I know? If Robert Lowell thinks that she's a major poet, then so she must be.

As we conclude the first part of the discussion, Murray tells us that he's invited one of the cast from *The Broken Heart* to meet with us. And as we finish our coffee, we find that it is Owen Teale, who played the miserable misanthrope and misogynist, Bassenes. As I mentioned two pages ago, he's a well-known actor, best known for the current *Game of Thrones*. He willingly answered all of our questions, some of which almost forced him to "diss" his fellow actors which he did with great reluctance. We asked why he was reluctant to take the part, what finally convinced him, what the early "study sessions" were like, how

easy or difficult it is to slip in and out of a role like this, how he manages to take on so many projects (of varying demand and seriousness) in a matter of months, and so on. It was extremely informative and entertaining. (I was happy to learn that he and the other actors found John Ford's writing to be poorer and less elegant than Shakespeare's and his meaning to be confusing and obscure.)

At 11:45, we are back at the hotel where we arrange for a ride to the airport (actually the Avis Rental Car) for tomorrow morning. Back in the room, we do most of the packing. As reported on p. 5, we have used the chaise lounge in the second room for storage, so it takes some doing to reach everything and to get everything assembled; at least we don't have to worry about packing for a plane flight (i.e., our "dangerous" liquids can go into the carry-on).

At about 2:30, we go for a walk in the Bloomsbury neighborhood, admiring the parks and Georgian houses that have made this place so fashionable for a couple of hundred years. Russell Square, a full city block, is gorgeous (although very few things are in bloom), but Bedford Square Garden, ruled over by a statue of the Duke of Bedford, is padlocked; access is available only to residents of the neighborhood. I'm pleased that the local pigeons have expressed their displeasure on the Duke's head. (And, as noted on p. 5, all right-thinking people *know* that the only real Duke of Bedford is Duke Snider, centerfielder for the 1950s-vintage Brooklyn Dodgers.) We also go to the Holborn Underground Station where we recover the £5 deposit and the unspent money that we had loaded onto the card. We grab a coffee and pastry at the café in the British Museum, then return to the hotel.

At 4:30, we mount the bus for the three-mile ride to Bradley's Restaurant and the nearby Hampstead Theatre. These are the only venues for which we've had to head north. The bus driver winds his way through the grounds of University College London (we'd seen only a small portion of it when going to our seminar discussions in the Institute of Education). Much to the Magids' delight, we pass the chemistry building, named after Sir Christopher Kelk Ingold;* the plaque on the door is not circular or oval, as they

*Ingold (1893-1970) was one of the most important organic chemists of the 20th century. He essentially invented the field of "reaction mechanisms" wherein one asks, not what the structure of the reaction product is, but rather what are the steps by which the reaction occurs. Chemists will recognize the reactions whose mechanisms he elaborated: aliphatic nucleophilic substitution (for which he coined the descriptors S_N1 and S_N2); electrophilic aromatic substitution (hence the benzene-shaped plaque); elimination reactions (E1 and E2). And he showed the important of resonance (which he called mesomerism) for explaining stability and reactivity. Today's introductory organic chemistry textbook is based more on his work than on anyone else's. Many chemists believe that he deserved the Nobel Prize; rumors are that he was denied this honor because of his feud with Nobel Laureate Sir Robert Robinson (1886-1975, Oxford University) who had an alternative way of explaining reactivity and stability. Robinson came to Yale to give a lecture in about 1961; it was embarrassing to hear how out-of-date his ideas were, the same ideas that he was promoting when he and Ingold feuded.



are for all of the other historical markers around campus; instead it is fittingly hexagonal, perhaps a reference to the shape of the benzene ring.

Bradley's <http://www.bradleysnw3.co.uk> describes itself this way: "The style of the food is best described as Great British with a French Accent, with the majority of seasonal produce coming from around the British Isles. Our fish comes daily from Brixham Devon and our lamb and beef from the West Country as well as our oysters from Ireland." We have three choices for the starter, three for the main course, and three for dessert. I choose "Duck Terrine with Puy Lentils & Burnt Apple Purée" followed by "Corn Fed Chicken Breast, Leeks, Salsafis, & Chanterelles," and then "Plum & Almond Tart with Vanilla Ice Cream." As noted earlier, the wine is part of the price (no nasty spectacle as there was last night); and there is time for a leisurely cup of coffee before we need to do the very short walk to the theater.

The play is excellent. Zoë Wanamaker commands the stage, even when other actors are present. The review in the *Guardian* <http://tinyurl.com/lw8rd54> was very laudatory: "Zoë Wanamaker is so perfectly cast in Hugh Whitmore's play about the life and work of the poet Stevie Smith that you don't feel so much that she's acting as simply channeling the mid-20th century poet and novelist." One of our party says that a 1978 movie featuring Glenda Jackson was actually better. Perhaps. The play runs for a little over two hours, meaning that we are back to the hotel by 10:15 and to bed by 11:30.

Thursday, March 19

It's a cloudy morning, but there seems to be no prospect of rain. Following breakfast, we complete our packing and check out at about 9:15. Lee leaves a nice gratuity for the staff, particularly those who police the breakfast room so judiciously. When we pay the bill, we are pleasantly surprised to learn that the cost of the private car is "only" £80 in contrast to the £95 charge when we arrived; the reason: the driver will not have to pay for parking at the airport.

In fact, the car and driver are already here - and it's the same driver whom we had last week. The traffic is much lighter than it was upon our arrival and we get to the Avis Rental office in good time. We had chosen a diesel VW Golf, knowing that we were going to have to negotiate some narrow roads and tight squeezes between hedges. (The agent offers us two other cars - a small Audi and a small Mercedes - but we stick with the Golf.) One downside, which we suspected would be the case when we booked it, is that the trunk (oops, I mean the boot) does not accommodate both suitcases. So one of the large suitcases sits in the rear seat (unbuckled, I'm sad to say) while the other and all of the smaller carry-ons are in the boot.

I'm delighted to let Lee do the driving. In fact, it will turn out that she'll be the sole driver for the entire week. Of course, despite my careful navigating, she makes a wrong turn almost immediately: on the perimeter road at the airport, I had instructed her to go straight, but she thinks that a right turn is better. She's wrong. So we get back to the perimeter road.

Our destination is the town of Wells and its famous cathedral. Google maps estimates a little over two hours to traverse the 110 miles, nearly all of it on motorways. When it seems likely that we'll get to Wells much too early for the 2:00 check-in, Lee has the idea that we should drive to Marlborough for lunch; it's only a bit out of the way, and we enjoyed this rather prosperous town when we were staying at Bradford-on-Avon in 2013. Today, the weather is unseasonably cold and windy as we walk about the town, peeking into the windows of the upscale shops, taking note of the school kids in their various preppy uniforms. We stop in Azuza Café for a sandwich and coffee. While we are eating, the wall TV is silently doing a newscast showing a full eclipse of the sun from 1999. Had the sound been on, we might have discovered that the real story was another near-total eclipse that will occur tomorrow morning! More about that later.

Leaving Marlborough, we head to Devizes, another small city that we had visited two years ago, and past the locks on River Avon, which we do not stop to admire this time. And we head straight for Wells, where we arrive at 3:45. The door to Belleview House (<http://www.belleview-house.com/>) is locked, so we leave a note on the car's windshield in the inn's small parking area and walk into town to see the cathedral. Unlike St. Paul's, picture-taking is permitted, although at a cost of £4.

It is a magnificent structure, both on the exterior and inside. The cathedral was constructed over three centuries, from 1175 to 1490, and has undergone several more modifications and restorations. An excellent account of its architecture and history can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wells_Cathedral Among its unique features are the scissors arches (more properly called strainer arches) that were installed in the 14th century; as the picture to the right and the many that I've posted at Picasa reveal, these arches do resemble scissors. According to Wikipedia:



In 1338 the mason William Joy employed an unorthodox solution by inserting low arches topped by

inverted arches of similar dimensions, forming scissors-like structures. These arches brace the piers of the crossing on three sides, while the easternmost side is braced by a choir screen. The bracing arches are known as the "St Andrew's Cross arches" as a reference to the patronal saint of the cathedral and have been described by Wim Swaan as "brutally massive" and intrusive in an otherwise restrained interior.

We spend about an hour at the cathedral, then walk back to Belleview House. The door is still locked, but we knock loudly and are admitted by Ellie, the manager. It is an old place that doesn't quite live up to some of the glowing online reports, but it is undoubtedly the finest B & B in Wells. We are on the "first" floor (i.e., upstairs) via a difficult staircase, but it is only for one evening and we can leave most of our luggage in the car. The furniture and bathroom facilities have some age on them, but on a positive note there are cookies, candies, and instant coffee available. No air-conditioning, of course, and although the day was warm in the sun, it has become noticeably cooler as evening approaches.

At Ellie's suggestion, we walk back into town for dinner at a simple place with a fancy name: Penn Bar at the Crown (<http://www.crownatwells.co.uk/penn-bar.html>) I order the "Chicken and Leek Pie, New Potatoes, Green Beans" and Lee has "'Brixham' Dressed Crab, Leaf Salad, Local Baby Potatoes." (Whew, I'm glad that the crab wasn't naked.) We also enjoy a couple of local ales. We return to the our room at 7:00 where we read, work crossword puzzles, make instant coffee, and enjoy some of Ellie's excellent homemade lemon cake. We go to bed early at 10:15.

Friday, March 20

We are up at 6:30, take note of the pleasant sunny morning, and manage to shower in the very small bathroom, no washcloths (but we persevere). In addition to the nice buffet of cold offerings (fruit, juice, cheeses, cereals, yoghurt) Ellie prepares a nice breakfast to order: I have a Full English Breakfast and Lee orders Eggs Benedict (made with back bacon on a "muffin" that is sweeter and richer than a typical English muffin).

As mentioned on the previous page, we had seen a SkyNews TV report (pictures but no sound) about a total eclipse in England in 1999. We did not know that there was to be another such event today! Only upon leaving Belleview House and walking to our car do we realize that we are witnessing a partial solar eclipse. According to <http://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/solar/2015-march-20>, the eclipse is total for the Faroe Islands and Svalbard, places that we've visited in the past couple of years; and it is partial over much of Europe (for London, for example, it is partial and lasts about two hours, peaking at 9:30, the very time that we are outdoors to observe it).

We are heading to Gidleigh Park Hotel in Dartmoor National Forest, some 87 miles from here, but first a stop at the town of Cheddar, about 10 miles distant. Google maps had suggested a route (via a numbered highway), but Ellie recommends a better one by named streets (turn left at the Ploughboy Inn, continue on Old Bristol Road, Plummers Lane, Cliff Road, etc.) that is more scenic and goes through the spectacular Cheddar Gorge. It is, indeed, a wonderful drive, a bit challenging at times, but what the hell - Lee is doing the driving and I can relax. Up to a point. The road twists and turns past granite wall faces that remind us of I-75 near the Tennessee-Kentucky border; it is foggy at the start of our drive, but clear by the time we exit the gorge. Aside from the scenery, the drive is made especially nice by the many goats and sheep who are quite accustomed to cars and stop to pose for us.

After a short while, we are in the town of Cheddar where we look for the Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company (<http://www.cheddargorgecheeseco.co.uk/>). Parking is at a premium in this small town, but we do find a public lot; and we luck out because the place where one pays for parking is closed, so the cost is £0. We walk back to the cheese store, pay a modest £2 fee, and spend about an hour inside. It's a fascinating place. There are TV monitors to tell the story of the making of cheddar cheese, right alongside large picture windows where visitors can watch each step of the process in action. They get only one tank car of

milk each day (from a specific farm, maybe even from a specific cow, although no cow could produce that much milk) and they have amazingly few employees carrying out the operation. Because my notes on the operation are minimal (i.e., non-existent), I'll borrow the following from Lee's description (any errors are her fault):

In a large stainless steel trough, rennet (from a vegetable source) is added to start protein denaturation. The developing curds are cut and re-cut continuously with a hand-held wire assembly, first in one direction, than in another. Whey is constantly drained off - it is sent to a nearby farm where it becomes part of the daily nourishment for some contented pigs (contented because the whey ferments a bit in warm weather). After a few hours, the curds go into a second trough. When the contents are mostly solid, rectangles of curd are gathered, manipulated, and turned over. This is called "cheddaring." Whey still continues to be expelled.

After more time, curds are shoveled into stainless steel buckets (called truckles) that are lined with cloth on their way to becoming wheels (plugs) of cheddar weighing about 24 kg each. Over a few days, the truckles are subjected to increasing pressure by a piston that pushes down on the contents. The plugs look increasingly like cheese as the air pockets get pressed out. Each one is weighed and tagged, after being wrapped in cheesecloth, and slathered with butter. They are aged for up to 18 months in a temperature- and humidity-controlled room down the hall, or in nearby Gough's Cave.*

*Upon our return to Gig Harbor, Lee discovers that human remains found in Gough's Cave suggest that the inhabitants might have been cannibals. With all of that great cheese available?

We get to taste some of the cage-aged cheese and we buy a small wedge, planning to eat part of it at our next destination and give part of it to Ken Fowler. We also purchase some jars of jam (for us and for the Mankses).

From Cheddar, it's 14 miles to Glastonbury and the ruins of its abbey (<http://www.glastonburyabbey.com/>) Wikipedia tells us:

The abbey was founded in the 7th century and enlarged in the 10th, before a major fire in 1184 destroyed the buildings. It was rebuilt and by the 14th century was one of the richest and most powerful monasteries in England. The abbey also controlled large tracts of surrounding land and was instrumental in major drainage projects on the Somerset Levels. The abbey was suppressed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries under King Henry VIII of England. The last abbot, Richard Whiting (Whyting), was hanged, drawn and quartered as a traitor on Glastonbury Tor in 1539.

From at least the 12th century the Glastonbury area was frequently associated with the legend of King Arthur, a connection promoted by medieval monks who asserted that Glastonbury was Avalon.

Ah, yes, King Arthur. We will run into King Arthur "sightings" in several places, but here at the abbey is his very grave. Supposedly. If he really existed. At the ticket counter, one of the clerks is just unwrapping a package that had arrived. In it is a note, written in pencil: "I found the holy grail for sale in a chapel shop. Fortunately they did not recognize what it was. I thought I should return it." And, indeed, there is a battered pewter cup that the note is wrapped around. Woo-ee! After examining the artifacts inside the reception building, we venture outdoors and explore the abbey ruins. We run into a costumed man who alleges that he is Thomas Cromwell. (Well, he looks nothing like Mark Rylance, who plays him in the BBC adaptation of *Wolf Hall*.) I even take a picture of a stone headstone claiming that this is the site of King Arthur's tomb. Another monument identifies the graveyard where the remains of Arthur and Guinevere were dug up before relocation.

The day is gloriously sunny as we walk the abbey's grounds. We stop for coffee at a shop in Glastonbury, across the street from "New Age Central" - there are shops devoted to witchcraft, sorcery, crystal power, magical potions, and other such things; pictures of the storefronts can be seen at Picasa. Amazing!

What's a day without shopping? Good question. Ellie had told us that just outside Glastonbury is an outlet center (I mean centre) that houses the corporate headquarters of Clark Shoes. The outdoor mall has a variety of stores, but Lee finds nothing to buy at the Clark Shoe Store nor a suitable pattern at the Denby store to replace our everyday dishes. Good! So the visit not only cost nothing in purchases, it also cost nothing to park as a nice man had handed us his pre-paid pay-and-display receipt, and we give it to another lucky person when we leave.

It's about 2:00 when we leave Glastonbury and set our sights on the Gidleigh Park Hotel <http://www.gidleigh.co.uk/>, some 80 miles to the southwest. Although an instruction manual for the car is in the glove compartment, there are no instructions for the sound system. It takes a lot of pushing and sliding and punching of buttons before I can finally find the BBC stations. We begin with BBC3, largely classical music, which we used most of the time in 2013. Much of the trip is via motorway (the M5). Our expectation for a quick transit is squelched by several serious traffic jams, all because of one road construction project or another. For long stretches, all lanes but one are closed. We are crawling along for some 20 miles (according to posted signs); at one point the radio is playing Brahms's 4th symphony. Just as the 4th movement begins, there is an unmistakable smell of manure from an adjacent field. Everybody's a critic!

I begin to worry about getting to the hotel in time to meet Ken Fowler for dinner.* When we finally clear the

*Anticipating that there might be difficult narrow roads leading from the hotel to the restaurant in Chagford, where we had booked a table at 7:00, we arranged for Ken (whose B&B is only about a mile away) to pick us up at the hotel, to have dinner with us at our expense, and to drive us back to the hotel. Google Maps had already alerted us to the fact that there are some very challenging single track roads leading to and from the hotel; and since this would be after dark, we wanted to rely on a more experienced driver. We didn't realize, when we set up this plan, just how "brilliant" a move it turned out to be. Read on.

traffic tie-ups we reach the end of the motorway and exit onto the A30, a decent road (although not a high-speed motorway). At a town called Widdon Down, we turn south onto a minor road, the A332 and head toward Chagford.

Did I say "minor road"? It is a very minor road - and very very narrow. And as we enter Chagford, it becomes narrower and more treacherous. (In her journal, Lee describes it as "harrowing.") But following the instructions from the hotel and from Google, we persevere. Did I say "narrow"? It gets worse. After a bit there's a sign indicating a turn onto a road that leads to Gidleigh Park.

According to the hotel's instructions, it's "only" 1.5 miles to our destination. The road is narrow beyond narrow, with lots of blind curves, mud puddles here and there, high hedges on each side, and only the barest hint of anything that might be called a passing place. (Perhaps we were spoiled during our Scotland sojourn in 2001. Not only were the passing places wide enough for a vehicle to pull off the road but they were all marked with flags on poles that could be spotted from a distance. And there were very specific rules for which car should enter a passing place and wait until the oncoming vehicle(s) passed.) The image to the right, downloaded from Google, gives a rough idea of what this road and the others that we'll encounter are like. It is a veritable miracle that we encounter no cars, trucks, horse-drawn wagons, tractors, or anything else - and so, after having driven about 1/2 mile we see an elegant stone building. Surely this is Gidleigh Park? Surely not! It is marked Holystreet Manor. Oh.



So we keep on, and after another half-mile, we get to the end* of the "main" road and are instructed to

*We know it's the end because (1) the surface changes from asphalt to dirt and (2) there's a sign saying "Unsuitable for Motors"

make a right-turn to the hotel. Is this last 0.5 mile section even narrower? You betcha! But after several twists and turns (and no oncoming traffic) we see the hotel looming in the distance. Then and there, we congratulate ourselves for having convinced Ken to pick us up and return us this evening; and we also decide to add Sunday evening to the two nights, Saturday and Monday, for which we had reserved a table for dinner at the hotel. We just hope that they'll have a table available because I think we'd rather starve than attempt to travel to and from Chagford after dark. (The dining room, which boasts two Michelin stars, is quite expensive; it was for this reason that we had hoped to have one meal somewhere else.)

We arrive at the front door shortly before 5:00 and we check in. Our car keys are taken from us, but there is a promise that the staff will park the car and also carry our suitcases to the room. This is an offer that we cannot refuse. A *very* tall, *very* fast-speaking young woman (who mumbles and is difficult to understand) takes us on a tour: past the three dining rooms, the bar, the lounge, and then up the stairs (our room is in the floor "two" - i.e., the third floor), stopping along the way to show us the refrigerator and snacks room on floor one. Our room is quite spectacular (see the pictures at Picasa). The main room is very long, with a bed at one end and a desk, chaise lounge, and another easy chair at the other. The bathroom features a huge bathtub, and an even larger walk-in shower (capacious enough for a some ten of one's closest friends), and a bamboo reclining couch that we're told can be used for relaxing (it's warmed by coils, somewhere) but which, to me, looks like a place where water-boarding might be performed. The toilet is in a separate room. What we'll discover later is that there are blue night-lights that come to life as one walks past various sensors.

We unpack and then head downstairs to wait for Ken. We also are successful in getting a dinner reservation for Sunday, although considerably later than we'd like. Nevertheless, in light of the alternative we grab at it. Ken arrives at 6:50, somewhat the worse for wear - although a Brit through and through, he has some choice comments to make about these Cornish* roads. He negotiates the single track quite

*That comment would imply that Chagford and Dartmoor National Park are in the county of Cornwall (population about 550,000), but in fact they are in Devon (1.1 million). In the map to the right, the dividing line between the two counties runs more or less vertically from Bude in the north through Launceston to Saltash on the southern coast. Exeter (120,000) is the county seat of Devon, but Plymouth (250,000) is it's the largest city. Truro (19,000) is the only city of any size in Cornwall, if one can really call that a city. When we begin our tour with Ken, tomorrow, we'll still be mostly in Devon. It won't be until two days from now that we begin to explore Cornwall.



deftly, I think, and we find Whiddons Eatery <http://www.whiddonseatery.co.uk/>; we let Lee out of the car to make sure that the staff holds our reservation while Ken and I drive a bit through Chagford until we find a suitable place to park.

The restaurant, family-owned and -run, is very pleasant. It is open only three evenings for dinner and offers a three-course fixed price menu for £24. We already knew that they did not have an alcohol license, so we had purchased an inexpensive bottle of wine on the way here. Ken, it turns out, does not drink (wine, beer, or anything alcoholic), so we get to bring most of the wine back to our room - where it sits, untouched, until the day that we leave. I enjoy a salad of chicken livers and bacon to start, chicken breast for my main course,* and cheesecake for dessert. We have a nice discussion, catching up on what's happened in the

*Potatoes (fried and boiled) and vegetables (greens with sesame seeds, root vegetable mash, beet slices in tempura batter) are served family-style.

Cotswolds since we were there two years ago. Everybody seems very satisfied with his or her meal, and we tend to linger longer (nice turn of phrase, eh?) because nobody, least of all Ken, wants to negotiate that damned single track road; and, of course, he has to do it in both directions, first to take us to the hotel and then for him to get to his B & B.* We are back at the hotel at 9:30; we read and I do some crossword

*His B & B, we learn, is owned by an American couple who live most of the year on a yacht in the Caribbean. Many well-known authors have stayed in this inn. For example, Evelyn Waugh wrote *Brideshead Revisited* here.

puzzles before going to bed.

Saturday, March 21

We intended to get up at 6:45, but the alarm didn't go off and so we don't rise until 7:45. Still, we still have time for showers and breakfast. We head downstairs and are directed to one of the three available dining rooms. All of the staff, both the management types and the wait staff, are attired in dark suits or dresses. A cold buffet table is available, but one can also order hot food from the menu. I choose the former even though it is less elaborate and elegant than the one at the Montague. The selection of cold meats and cheeses is meagre and there are only three cold cereals (one of which is corn flakes, so I'm content); skimmed milk is also on offer. Lee has a boiled egg along with selections from the cold buffet. A basket of croissants and toasts is placed on the table; there is also butter and a selection of jams. Tomorrow when we're not so rushed (I hope!) we'll have time to order hot food; today, we barely finish at 9:05, barely ahead of Ken's arrival.

Ken picks us up at 9:15. He tells us that his phone kept ringing throughout the night. We assure him that we were not the culprits - neither did we call on the house phone nor on our cell phones which are now turned off. There is no explanation.

The day begins sunny, but with fog beginning to roll in. We (i.e., Ken) drive to the east on the hideous 1.5-mile single track to Chagford, then an additional 3 miles to the southwest on an even more narrow single track road, to a pseudo parking lot (other cars and vans are there) right next to the gate to Batworthy* Farm

*Each of the guest rooms at Gidleigh Park bears the name of a town or other physical feature. We are in Walla Brook, but among the others are Bel Tor, Frenchbeer, Gallaven Brook, Roos, Combeshead, Sittaford, Haytor, and (of course) Batworthy.

(no, the Caped Crusader does not make an appearance) at 9:45. Ken surveys the landscape, ascertains where he thinks we're likely to find neolithic stones, points "Up there!" and we, foolish children that we are, dutifully follow him. As we begin, a large cat (a mountain lion) crosses the field, about 100 feet in front of us. Gulp! We are trudging up a moor, defined by Wikipedia as "an uncultivated upland area that is characterized by low growing vegetation on acidic soils"; this description does not mention that this particular trek is very much uphill (at an angle of close to 45°, or so it feels), through thick vegetation and muddy pools, peat, and blooming gorse. Our goal is some distant rocks and a tor (a large stone outcropping), thanks to my female companion who gets her jollies by visiting neolithic stone circles and such;* alas, these features seem to recede into the distance the farther we proceed.

*See, for example, our quest to see the "stupid stones" of Avebury in 2011 and West Kennett 2013, <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/France2011.pdf> and <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/England-Rhine2013.pdf> respectively. The reader might be interested to learn the a list of tors in Dartmoor goes on and on and on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Dartmoor_tors_and_hills

Ken, who is in better shape, not to mention younger and more practiced than the Magids, is considerably ahead of us when *tragedy* strikes. A tall stand of insolent and aggressive grass grabs my ankles and flings me to the ground, right into a patch of gorse, which Webster's defines as "a spiny yellow-flowered European shrub." I can attest to "spiny"! And a little further on, the same damned thing happens again. I use my hands to push myself from horizontal to vertical, but this is accomplished only by pushing on the gorse. Even two weeks after returning to the U.S., I am using a sterilized sewing needle and tweezers to pluck small (but painful) pieces of sharp vegetation from my palms and fingers. But stalwart soldier that I am, I right myself (with help from my spouse on accounta I can't use my hands to push off from the ground lest I get even more thorn-like objects embedded) and we go on. Finally, our quest is done. There are stones. In the ground. More or less in a row. Be still, my beating heart.

So we trudge down the 45° slope, being careful to avoid the malevolent grass and the even muddier puddles and get back to the car at about 10:30. The one saving feature is that we encounter sheep, lots of sheep, so I'm not quite as peeved as I might otherwise be. The gate to Batworth Farm is open and a woman rides out on a horse to the great consternation of some friendly sheep dogs who make a hell of a racket when they are unable to "herd" the horse the way they do sheep.

In the evening, Lee will discover a map that suggests that if instead of proceeding up the hill at right-angles to the gate at Batworthy Farms, we had gone up a path (yes a path!) adjacent to the fence we'd have seen more stones, better* stones, maybe even prettier stones, without the hassle of the 45° climb. And maybe

*The Scorhill Stone Circle is considered the best stone circle in Devon. This is what we missed by following behind Ken. Oh, well, here are some pictures: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorhill> What we saw is the much less impressive Shovel Down Stones [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shovel Down](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shovel_Down)

without being tripped by the tall grass. (We should dock our intrepid guide for having led us astray.)

We head back toward Chagford and past it, then southeast for a total of 15 miles to Bovey Tracey, still within Dartmoor National Park. Ken explains that the history of these single track roads (of which we are getting our fill, these past days) with their high hedges and/or stone walls is that smugglers used them to stay out of sight when they brought goods from the southern coast to the cities inland. But they were on foot and didn't have to worry about oncoming 200-hp vehicles.

Our destination is the Devon Guild of Craftsmen <http://www.crafts.org.uk/>, a gallery featuring arts and crafts of local artists. There is an exhibit called "Re-Making the Past. Working from the Bronze Age" <http://tinyurl.com/n5bdl8t> by these artists: Susan Kinley, Helen Marton, Syann van Niftrik, and Wright & Teague. They work in a variety of media: found objects, clay, wood, stones. Mary Butcher's specialty seems to be the use of willow branches to fashion elegant shapes that evoke boats and other objects. I take a good number of pictures.

Nine miles to the southwest is Buckland-in-the-Moor (population 94) which we reach at 12:40. The approach road is *really* narrow, but our safety is assured by a helpful sign: "Please Drive with Moor Care." We visit St. Peter's Church (dating from the 12th century), walk around the grounds and through the graveyard with its ancient tombstones, then inside for lots of picture-taking (posted at Picasa). The most unusual feature is a clock on the outside of the tower which, instead of having Arabic or Roman numerals, has letters that spell out "My Dear Mother." A local nobleman, who gave the money for the clock, is buried in the graveyard; the stone lists his honors. Ken assures us that *MBE* stands for *My Bloody Efforts* and that *OBE* stands for *Other Buggers' Efforts*. Who can say that he's wrong?

And then it's on to Widecombe in the Moor, just three miles to the north, to see its old church. According to Wikipedia:

The church of St Pancras is known as the 'Cathedral of the Moors' in recognition of its 120-foot tower and relatively large capacity for such a small village. The church was originally built in the fourteenth century, in the Perpendicular style (late Gothic), using locally quarried granite. It was enlarged over the following two centuries, partly on the proceeds of the local tin mining trade. Inside, the ceiling is decorated with a large number of decorative roof bosses, including the tinner's emblem of a circle of three hares (known locally as the Tinner's Rabbits).

I take numerous exterior and interior pictures, many of the aforementioned chancel ceiling.

Just 0.2 miles out of town is the Rugglestone Inn, where Ken has reserved a table for lunch. It's very much a local place, a pub that features ales and simple foods, with a gorgeous fluffy dog under the table next to ours. The menu is in chalk on a blackboard. I have a ham baguette that comes with a small salad, along with a pint of ale (whose name I don't recall). The place is charming in its own way, so I take lots of interior pictures. In a yard outside the inn are several active (and aggressive) turkeys who seem quite content to be penned in with some goats; the goats seem cool as well.

As we head out of town at 2:20, we see fields with small wild ponies, so more pictures are taken. At 3:00, Ken stops so that we can take pictures of a clapper bridge which, according to Wikipedia, is "an ancient form of bridge found on the moors of Devon (Dartmoor and Exmoor) ... It is formed by large flat slabs of granite or schist supported on stone piers (across rivers), or resting on the banks of streams." I take several pictures of it and of my intrepid female companion, who is bold enough to cross it.

And then, 17 miles to the west, we're in Tavistock. Its fame, such as it is, is that it was voted "The Best Market Town in Britain," or so a sign inside the covered market proclaims. Well, the Magids are not impressed! The goods (used books, cheap jewelry, DVDs and CDs) resemble those of a medium-priced flea market and are not much different from the non-food section of Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne. What is *unexpected* is a display of T-Shirts that would make a member of the John Birch Society or The National Rifle Association proud. Among the slogans in the pictures that I take are "HOPE FOR PEACE? PREPARE FOR WAR!" and "IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO STAND BEHIND OUR TROOPS, STAND IN FRONT OF THEM" and "THIS IS MY RIFLE. THERE ARE MANY LIKE IT BUT THIS ONE IS MINE. MY RIFLE IS MY BEST FRIEND. IT IS MY LIFE. WITHOUT ME, MY RIFLE IS NOTHING. WITHOUT MY RIFLE, I AM NOTHING." Whew! We leave the covered market and walk past some interesting shops (alas closed): "Howell's of Tavistock. Butchers and Poulterers" and "Country Cheeses." We find a place to have a coffee.

It's now 4:30 and it's time to return to our hotel; along the way, we pass some fine-looking sheep and small horses, all of whom pose (whether they know it or not) for my camera. Although we've made many stops today, we've never been far from Gidleigh Park and, indeed, it's only 20 miles away from Tavistock. For a good part of the return, we are on a decent two-lane paved road with a real center stripe; this must please Ken, although eventually he'll need to negotiate the old 1.5 mile single track when he approaches Chagford and our hotel. We arrive at 5:15 and say good-bye to him for the day.

Somewhere on the road today, Lee saw a lorry (i.e. truck) with the word CREMATOR on the side. Probably this is not for the making of certain dairy products. The word is followed by "Collector of Casualty Animals." Ah, I see. Ken confirms that this is how road kill is picked up and disposed of. Well, it's a hell of a lot better than the system in Australia in which the driver of a vehicle that has sent a kangaroo to kangaroo-heaven is required to get out of the car and drag the carcass to the side of the road.

I should mention that Ken has traded in his SUV (the car that he used when he took us around the Cotswolds in 2013) and has bought a VW Sharan, an MPV (which apparently stands for Mini Personal Van or, perhaps, Most Player Valuable), a van with seating for seven. Because it gets better gas (I mean petrol) mileage than his SUV, he quotes a reduced rate for us. Lee insists that I sit in the front passenger seat; she says it's to enable me to take pictures, but I think that the real reason is that she wants me to be flung through the window in case of a crash. A curiosity - I note that the dashboard gives an electronic readout

of the mileage in MPG. I ask him, Why not in miles per liter? (which is how fuel is sold). He says it's even stranger that when one compares vehicles in a dealer's showroom, all of the efficiency ratings are posted in miles per gallon.

Ken has another new feature, a GPS unit that's very helpful in Devon and Cornwall where he's not intimately familiar with the roads (although he has been here many times with his family; also his sister lives in Devon). Of course he needed no GPS in The Cotswolds where he has lived for years and can probably negotiate with his eyes closed. This GPS "speaks" in an annoying synthetic female voice which he calls "Sally Traffic." We don't know if that's the manufacturer's name for it or a name that he's chosen, but on consulting the internet upon our return home, I suspect that it's the latter. According to Wikipedia:

Sally Boazman, known to many of her listeners as 'Sally Traffic,' is a British radio traffic reporter, best known for her work in the afternoons on the national BBC Radio 2, with more than eight million listeners. Her reporting 'revolutionised' United Kingdom traffic news with the addition of live reports from motorists on mobile phones and lorry drivers on CB radio. Boazman's reporting is so up to date that the national Highways Agency uses her broadcast to update their own reports ... Boazman was described as 'bit of a superhero for motorists,' by Autotrader UK as the 'sexiest voice on the radio' and by veteran broadcaster Steve Wright as a 'national treasure' who changed the way traffic reporting was done. Her fans have named a thoroughbred race horse (which occasionally even won), after her as well as lorry trucks.

Well! I can attest that the "Sally Traffic" computer voice emanating from the GPS does *not* qualify as "the sexiest voice" in any sense. She(it) is shrill, demanding, uninflected, and just plain annoying (e.g., "Make a U-Turn at the earliest opportunity," the implication being that if one does not do so, one is likely to die in a horrible crash.)

We spend some time in our room reading and using the internet, before heading to one of the lounges* at

*Given the choice of being seated in the bar or the drawing room, we choose the former. According to Lee's journal, the bar "is more cozy and less full of aspirational Brits (especially the women in their slightly garish, too-tight dresses." My wife is so judgmental!

7:30 (where we order our dinner and have a wee dram of Scotch whisky: Talisker for Lee, Laphroaig for me); there is also a plate of canapés which tempt Lee but not me. We are ushered into the dining room for an 8:00 reservation. Immediately we are given an *amuse bouche*: salmon tartare. The *à la carte menu*, outrageously expensive at £118 (!!), does offer some choices: I start with "Warm pigeon* salad with apples

*I find it impossible not to think of some of the *delicious* rhymes in Tom Lehrer's song about pigeons: "But it's not against any religion/To want to dispose of a pigeon./So if Sunday you're free,/Why don't you come with me,/And we'll poison the pigeons in the park./And maybe we'll do/In a squirrel or two,/While we're poisoning pigeons in the park." I use "delicious" for turns of phrase like "My pulse will be quickenin'/With each drop of strychnine" and "When they see us coming, the birdies all try an' hide/But they still go for peanuts when coated with cyanide" - you'll agree, they *are* delicious! (The lyrics, not the pigeons.)

and walnuts" followed by "Cornish duckling, star anise, orange braised chicory and orange scented sauce"; I don't order dessert (even though it is included in the price), but Lee does succumb. My pigeon appetizer was fine, but Lee notes that some reviewers on TripAdvisor complained that "the pigeons are so undercooked that they are still flapping." (And I thought that *my* wife was judgmental!) The food is excellent, but the presentation is beyond pretentious; we are visited by many wait persons of both sexes, each with a French accent (authentic or not) who mumbles as the various food items on the plate are described. At least there is no pointing with the pinkie, as I deplored at several other English restaurants in 2013 and as described with dripping sarcasm by Herman Koch in his wonderful novel, *The Dinner*. We have coffee in the lounge where we are offered a plate of *petits fours*; again, I am virtuous but Lee has a small *crème brûlée* and a small pudding. One thing that does concern me: if the menu does not change

from day to day, will there be enough choices for me, given my food allergies. We shall see.

Back in our room at 9:45, I feel grotesquely full. How, I ask, does Lee do it? We are in bed at 11:00, having seen a weather forecast that promises as good weather for tomorrow as we had today. Although we are likely to be disturbed by the staff, we put out the privacy sign - it offers two choices: OUT FOR THE COUNT and OUT FOR THE DAY.

Sunday, March 22

We rise at 6:30 and are at breakfast at 7:45. I opt, again, for a light breakfast (cold cereal, rolls, juice, coffee) but Lee orders from the menu: Eggs Benedict (two eggs, one with a solid yolk, the other semi-solid). As was the case at dinner last night, the serving staff this morning all sport impenetrable French (or pseudo-French) accents. Also they mumble. And speak very softly. I feel as if I'm in a foreign country. (Well, I am, but I thought that it would be a country in which I understand the local language.) I'm guessing that last night we had about a dozen men and women (mostly men) who delivered the various courses, the bread, the wine, the *amuse bouche*, etc. At dinner tonight, I'll try to make an accurate count, starting with the *maître d'* (or whatever he's called) who seats us in the lounge and starts the process rolling.

Last night's "man-in-charge" surprised me by calling us by name and knowing that I had reported allergies to cumin and curry. A similar thing happens this morning: while we are seated at the breakfast table, another man brings us the morning paper that would ordinarily have been left on our doorknob. (When we checked in, we were given a choice of which newspapers we'd like to have in the morning. Not having any strong preferences, I think that I ordered the *Guardian* for two mornings and the *Telegraph* for the other two.)

Not only is the number of serving personal unusually high but even in the early morning they are all wearing dark suits and, as noted above, speaking a strange blend of foreign accent *cum* English *cum* mumble. This also pertains to the very tall woman who escorted us to our room upon arrival and whom we've encountered several times since. I wonder if she's part of a new breed of extremely tall Europeans. I had thought that only the Danes and Dutch were unusually tall, but we have seen many tall young people since arriving in England.

PUN ALERT This is a bit of an embarrassment in that the following is the *only* pun that I created during our two weeks in England; perhaps I'm intimidated by the specter of master wordsmiths like Joe Willie Jim Bob Shakespeare, but perhaps there are other explanations ... such as impending senility. Whatever the reason, let it be known that during our five most recent European trips I've recorded as few as *seven* and as many as *eleven* puns during each. (Well, there's another on the next page, but it's not one of my invention.) So coming up with only one is a terrible downer. Ready?

Lee: The plaice is a kind of flounder

Ron: I'm delighted that you really know your place.

I have no memory of why Lee mentioned "plaice" - perhaps she had had it or was planning to have it for dinner ... sometime? I'm further embarrassed by the fact that this, the *only* pun in these pages, is not especially creative. (By the way, Wikipedia informs us that "The European plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) is a right-eyed flounder belonging to the *Pleuronectidae* family" but you probably knew that.)

The morning, which began as grey and dreary, is beginning to brighten (but still with some low cloud cover, reminiscent of a typical day in Seattle) as we finish breakfast and get ready for Ken's arrival at 9:15. Our day's itinerary begins with Tintagel Castle, 50 miles to the west and on the Bristol Channel. Following that, we'll travel about 10 miles to the southwest to Port Isaac, also on the channel where we'll do some sightseeing and have lunch. Following that, it will be on to Padstow, a fishing village, and then to Bodwin

Moor, and return to our hotel.

Today we'll be leaving Devon for our sightseeing in Cornwall. We arrive in the town of Tintagel at about 10:45. Our quest (an appropriate word, here) is Tintagel Castle. The trip is uneventful, except for the following. Leaving Gldleigh Park by the narrow 1.5 mile single track (with which we are now intimately familiar), we turn north rather than continuing east to Chagford. Within a hundred feet, we encounter two stone walls, one on each side of the road, with a sign indicating that they are exactly 7' 0" apart. These are, in effect, a "Go - No Go" gauge to let a driver know if his/her vehicle can cross an upcoming narrow bridge with stone walls on each side. Even the experienced single-track-driving Ken is concerned, so he approaches the pincers very slowly. I open my passenger side window - I can touch the stone, but there is still a clearance of about one or two inches. The same is true when Ken reaches out on his side. (In fact, later on Lee checks the specs for this VW Sharan and notes that its width is listed as 6' 3"!)

So, what is Tintagel Castle? According to Wikipedia:

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, puts his wife Igraine in Tintagol while he's at war (*posuit eam in oppido Tintagol in littore maris*: "he put her in the oppidum Tintagol on the shore of the sea"). Merlin disguised Uther Pendragon as Gorlois so that Uther could enter Tintagel and impregnate Igraine while pretending to be Gorlois. Uther and Igraine's child was King Arthur.

Got that? So Arthur, (if he existed at all) is the illegitimate son of Uther and Igraine (great names!), and the legends have it that he rose to fame, gathered many knights around him (and around his round table), married Guinevere, fought many battles, saved England from the Saxons, had a sword named Excalibur, sought the Holy Grail, and was buried (perhaps) at Glastonbury (see my commentary for March 20). As there was no CNN at the time (the 5th century), we can only rely on such modern authoritative texts as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* whose opening story line is revealed by Wikipedia:

In 932, King Arthur, along with his squire, Patsy, recruits his Knights of the Round Table: Sir Bedevere the Wise, Sir Lancelot the Brave, Sir Galahad the Pure, Sir Robin the Not-Quite-So-Brave-As-Sir-Lancelot, and the aptly named Sir Not-appearing-in-this-film. On the way, Arthur battles the Black Knight. Arthur chops off the Black Knight's arms and legs but the Black Knight refuses to surrender despite being fatally wounded. The knights reach Camelot, but following a song-and-dance cutaway, Arthur decides not to enter, because "'tis a silly place". They are instructed by God to seek the Holy Grail.

Which reminds me of a wonderful joke and pun. King Arthur is reviewing his brave Knights, all of whom are standing at attention, clad in freshly polished armor, shining swords at their sides. There on the line is tall and sturdy Lancelot, equally tall and sturdy Galahad, even taller and sturdier Bedevere, and so on down the line until he comes to a small man in badly tarnished armor, carrying a wooden sword, and sporting not only a black beard but also a yarmulke. Bewildered, Arthur turns to Merlin and asks:

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות ?

Now, I don't expect the casual reader of this journal to be able to read Hebrew, so here is the transliteration into our alphabet: *Ma nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleilot?*

Still need help? OK, it's the first of the Four Questions that are asked by the oldest boy at the Passover seder and it is translated into English as "Why is this *night* different from all other *nights*?"

End of joke.

So back to Tintagel Castle. First the pronunciation, as indicated on a sign we encounter: tin-TA-gel (soft g). We pay our admission fee and spy the castle ruins, far far off in the distance. To get there, we head down

a very long pathway, some 3×10^6 steps, at a downward 45° angle (or even steeper) to the base of the castle, where we encounter stone steps, built into the cliff, leading every upwards. These are unevenly spaced, of varying height, and potentially slippery, designed (or so it seems to me) to foster twisted ankles and broken hips. But we climb ever upwards (I'll get an accurate count on the way down - assuming that we're still alive), stopping from time to time to catch our breath and to marvel at some of the ruins (e.g., Merlin's cave, the castle's Great Hall, and, of course, the latrine which emptied directly to the sea - no Environmental Protection Agency is those times). To the right is an image borrowed from Wikipedia; I have posted numerous other images at the Picasa site. At one point, the trek becomes too arduous for me, but Lee and Ken are part mountain-goat and so they continue to climb and take some spectacular pictures. Near the top, they even encounter a herd of mountain goats (who had probably not paid the admission fee). I am left alone to wait and to ponder if my traveling companions have fallen to their deaths, but they return after about 20 minutes and, reunited as a threesome, we begin our trek down. I count precisely 155 stone steps downward followed by precisely 1304 paces up the 45° (or steeper) slope. It occurs to me that both the downward slope and the upward stone climb could be avoided if a tram or zip line or some mechanical device were used to connect the ticket office to the castle. Even a horizontal foot bridge would do the trick.



We leave Tintagel at 12:15 and arrive in Port Isaac (population about 700) just 15 minutes later. Lee and Ken are "beside themselves" (what a strange expression!) because Port Isaac is the locale where the TV series *Doc Martin* is filmed. In the show, the town is renamed Port Wenn. My two companions ooh and aah over the building that serves as Doc Martin's private home and surgery and at the other buildings* that

*There is a private home that doubles as Bert's Restaurant; a gift shop (fudge/ice cream/tchotchkes) that serves as the pharmacy; a hotel that is use as Louisa's primary school; and on and on. If you, like Lee and Ken, are beside yourself, you can see the location of other buildings in the show at <http://www.bayhotelportisaac.co.uk/portwenn-doc-martin.html>

are used in the program. Poor Ron, not a fan of the program, finds nothing interesting except for the location which is right on the shore of Bristol Channel. Nevertheless, I take lots of pictures when instructed to do so by Lee. We have lunch upstairs at the Mote Bar and Restaurant <http://the-mote.co.uk/> Lee and I order the lobster salad, only to be told the someone else had consumed the one lobster on hand. Damn! So I settle for the Ploughman's Lunch (and am gratified that it does not consist of soil and hay) plus a local beer. The only sour note is that I spy someone wearing a New York Yankees cap; I had seen three such abominations during our time in London. Don't these people understand that they are glorifying the evil empire?

Following lunch, we need to walk uphill (another 1205 paces, by accurate count) to the Car Park where we left the car. Alas, it's not here. This is the wrong Car Park. So Ken leaves us sitting on a nearby bench while he walks all over town, looking for where he had parked. Finally he succeeds and we set out for Padstow (population about 3,000), 16 miles to the southwest where we arrive at about 3:45. This is a charming fishing village, also on the Bristol Channel. I take a great many pictures of the small boats, the serious fishing boats, the ferry,* the impressive seawall, and the many dogs who roam the downtown

*The ferry, foot passengers only, crosses the harbor in about 10 minutes and takes its human cargo to Rock. Ken tells us that this is where wealthy young nobles and royals go to party. We look for Will and Kate, but to no avail.

streets. At about 4:15, we leave to drive across Bodwin Moor and then due east to the town of Launceston (population about 7,000), right at the border between Cornwall and Devon, which we reach at about 5:00. Although I don't recall ever having read a word of Daphne du Maurier's fiction, we stop and take several picture of *Jamaica Inn*, the inspiration for her novel of the same name. The inn is rumored to be haunted. And du Maurier, as I discover by reading her Wikipedia entry, was accused of plagiarizing several of her

books from a variety of sources. So it goes.

Ken gets us back to the hotel at 6:00, well ahead of our reservation for 7:30 (drinks) and 8:00 (dinner). (I started sneezing early this morning - and by evening I'm pretty sure that I'm developing a cold. Oh, joy!) We are ushered into the drawing room rather than the bar. The woman (Sarah, by name) taking our drinks order seems less than competent and, in fact, brings the wrong whisky - Lee had ordered Oban and I Laphroaig, and one or both were wrong when delivered (I don't recall which). We know this because the bottle itself is shown before the whisky is poured. Hors d'oeuvres are brought, but I refrain from them, to the great consternation of our server. From the menu, I've decided to start with the foie gras followed by Brixham turbot and shellfish (clams, mussels and cockles, leek purée, spring vegetables, and a basil butter sauce), no dessert, cost (as last night) £118(!), which does not include a glass of Sauvignon blanc. At least, this is what I would have ordered had only the less-than-competent woman (Sarah, by name) asked us. People who sat down after us have been able to place their orders, but not the Magids. Blatant anti-Semitism, that's what it is! *Finally* at 8:05, we get to place our dinner order with the *maître d'* who took sympathy with us.

I promised, this morning, to count the number of people involved in tonight's dinner. The number is *nine* (which suggests that my earlier guess of "a dozen" might have been slightly inflated). The *amuse bouche* is very good: some goat cheese with raisins, and apples. One of the nine servers is a welcome delight: a young man from Portugal, no French accent, who is a big fan of NBA basketball and, particularly, Kevin Durant. He does his best to watch games that are streamed live and arrive here in the middle of the night; needless to say, he does not work mornings.

At 10:00, we have finished our meal, so we have coffee in the lounge. Both of us reject the *petits fours*. Another server (No. 10 by my count) brings the carafe. I am amused to watch the staff in action: whenever a guest rises from a sofa or easy chair, one of the dark-suited staff goes over and plumps up the pillows and cushions such that they do not have that *horrible* sat-upon look. We are back to our room at 10:30 and in bed shortly thereafter.

Monday, March 23

We get up at 6:30. I now know that I've got a cold, dammit. Last night, I started taking the cold-and-sinus pills that Lee had packed, but I don't have much faith in their doing much for me. We go to breakfast* at

*Lee is none too happy. In her journal, she writes "the soft-boiled eggs that I specified *runny* are, once again, hard-boiled. And the toast soldiers are flaccid and too wide for dipping. These people need to employ a proper fry-up cook." Take that!

7:45 and wait for Ken, who arrives at 9:15. The day begins cool, but sunny.

Our destination is St. Ives (population 11,000), a seaside town near the most western tip of the Cornwall peninsula, but still on the northern coast (i.e., the Bristol Channel). The attraction is the Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden (<http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives/barbara-hepworth-museum>) Hepworth was a sculptor in the style of Henry Moore (with whom she was a student at Leeds School of Arts). We first saw her massive stone, bronze, and marble structures in Toronto; and since then, we've seen them many more times, most spectacularly in the pavilion devoted to her works at the Kröller-Müller Sculpture garden which we visited in 2012. Born in 1903, she traveled throughout Europe but in 1947 she moved to St. Ives where she spent the remaining 26 years of her life.

But to get to St. Ives takes some doing, as it is not only 100 miles and about two hours of driving away but it begins, sad to say, by our having to squeeze through the 7-foot-wide pincers that were mentioned on p. 38. To take advantage of the long drive, I ask Ken for a tutorial about cricket, a sport that has mystified me ever since seeing it on TV and reading about it in magazines and English newspapers. The rules are strange (but perhaps no stranger than such baseball oddities as the infield-fly-rule) and the customs even

stranger (e.g., a championship match takes place over five days, including pauses for tea breaks). What surprises me is that trash-talking (e.g., about a player's mother, race, nationality) occurs. And I foolishly thought that only gentlemen played cricket. So where does the expression "That's not cricket" come from?

We even discuss rugby a bit, another sport that seems to legalize mayhem and violence. Ken tells us about a scandal that has come to be called Bloodgate (seems to me that the Watergate burglars have a lot to be ashamed of, not the least is the attaching of -gate to all sorts of affairs). Here is how Wikipedia tells the story:

The Bloodgate Scandal was a rugby union scandal involving the English team Harlequins in their Heineken Cup match against the Irish side Leinster on 12 April 2009. It was so called because of the use of fake blood capsules, and has been seen by some as one of the biggest scandals in rugby since professionalisation in the mid-1990s.

During the quarter final of the 2009 Heineken Cup against Leinster, Harlequins wing Tom Williams came off the field with what turned out to be a faked blood injury in order to facilitate a tactical substitution for Nick Evans to re-enter the field having gone off earlier injured. An investigation by the ERC and the RFU revealed that blood injuries had also been faked by Harlequins to enable tactical substitutions on four previous occasions. These findings resulted in a twelve-month ban for Williams (reduced to 4 months on appeal), a three-year ban for former director of rugby Dean Richards and a two-year ban for physiotherapist Steph Brennan as well as a £260,000 fine for the club. The club chairman Charles Jillings subsequently tendered his resignation while the club doctor Wendy Chapman was suspended by the GMC for cutting Williams's lip to hide his use of the blood capsule. On 2 September 2009, it was reported that Harlequins had escaped being thrown out of the Heineken Cup following the scandal when the board of organisers European Rugby Cup (ERC) said it approved of the bans and fines already handed out.

We arrive in St. Ives at about 11:00 and, after some difficulty, manage to find the Hepworth Museum. There are a few pieces indoors, but the outdoor collection is stunning. The objects are massive and are displayed in natural settings among trees and other flora. The pictures posted at Picasa will reveal the scene about as well as two-dimensional pictures can. But they fall far short of creating the effect from seeing the sculptures in person. We also get to look (through a window) into Hepworth's locked studio, left exactly as it was when she died; and at the massive pieces of granite, marble, and stone that had not yet been chopped, carved, whittled, whatever into works of art.

We leave at about 11:45 and make our way to the Tate St. Ives Museum. It's in a beautiful modern building with a commanding view of the beach and waters beyond, but the collection (at least what's on display today) involves small photographs and is not particularly interesting. Ken, during the time that we've spent in the two museums, has walked around the city, stopping for coffee, and scouting out possible restaurants for lunch. He has hit upon The Beachcomber, which has no web site but is well-reviewed on TripAdvisor. One satisfied customer has written a ghastly four-stanza poem that begins "St. Ives we love, we have been here/For fifty years or more;/For holidays in Summer or/In Spring or Winter raw." Dear Reader, I will spare you the rest, but be assured that it doesn't get any better. We are disappointed that we cannot get Cornish pasties, but I enjoy a baguette with prawns.

Following lunch, we note that there are many novice artists (with an instructor hovering over them) doing oil paintings on the beach (see Picasa pictures) and we see numerous small boats on another beach, waiting for the tide to come in before they can float.

After we locate the car, we drive 8 miles south, across the peninsula, to the coast that's on the English Channel or Celtic Sea (it's not clear where one ends and the other begins) to the town of Penzance*

*Wikipedia, undoubtedly allowing the local Chamber of Commerce to write for it, tells us that "Penzance is the home of the pirates in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*. At the time the libretto was written, 1879, Penzance had become popular as a peaceful resort town, so

the very idea of it being overrun by pirates was amusing to contemporaries." So there!

(population 21,000) and its celebrated Minack Theatre (<http://www.minack.com/>) where we arrive at 3:00. The setting is spectacular, as the Picasa pictures reveal. This open-air amphitheater is set into the side of a rocky hill, with amazing views of the open sea beyond the stage. The season runs from May to September; and performances go on, no matter the weather. I can imagine that it would be very difficult to hear the actors' lines, especially with the crashing surf, but Ken assures me that the use of body microphones makes the words accessible, even at the rear of the seats. This coming summer will feature a mixture of Shakespeare (*King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*), other classics (*She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Seagull*), adaptations (*The Grapes of Wrath*), and musical-comedy (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*), among others.

There is a serious traffic jam (due to road construction) as we try to leave Penzance, but Ken figures a way out of town and toward Mousehole (pronounced Mowzel, sad to say) which was described by Dylan Thomas as "the loveliest village in England" (was he sober or inebriated at the time?). It's a short drive (3 miles) to this small town (population 700), set on the sea, with winding city streets and interesting shops; again, we see small boats sitting on the dry beach, waiting for the tide to come in. And we set our sights on Marazion (population 1500), just 10 miles from here and on the other side of Penzance. Alas, we lost so much time in Penzance's traffic jam and it's beginning to turn misty and rainy, so we scrap our plan to stop here. Thus, we don't explore the causeway that leads to St. Michael's Mount (<http://www.stmichaelsmount.co.uk/>), but we do take a picture of it in the fog and declare victory.

The rain has begun in earnest as we head back to our hotel, 97 miles and nearly two hours distant, once again passing through the 7-foot wide pincers as we approach the road to Gidleigh Park, where we arrive at 5:45. Ken deserves a huge thanks for his touristic information and for his lengthy drives today in not so good weather. And my cold seems largely gone! Maybe the cold-and-sinus pills worked? (As it will turn out, the answer is no.)

Tonight we are scheduled for an earlier dinner (6:30 for drinks, 7:00 for dinner). Along with our regular scotch drinks, the canapés offered are seafood bisque, carrot mousse, and quail's egg. Virtuous Ron, as is his wont, abstains. Lee is not so virtuous. In the dining room, the *amuse bouche* is salmon mousse with bits of beet and radish. I start with langoustine cannelloni, followed by venison saddle (fortunately not made of leather), and banana parfait.

Following dinner, we get ready for an early bedtime (11:00) because we have a lot of driving to do for tomorrow. At least we won't have to pack in airline mode until tomorrow evening.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

I had a terribly restless night. I had trouble falling asleep and trying to stay asleep. At one point, I got up and read for a half-hour. Surely this is not jet lag from nine days ago! Is there such a thing as Anticipatory jet lag for our flight home in two days?

We get up at 7:00 and, during breakfast, note that it is a sunny, cool day. Despite the sun, there are periods of sideways rain such that the pavements have trouble staying dry. Lee orders the Full English Breakfast* while I have scrambled eggs with smoked salmon. Following our meal, we take advantage

*That woman is so hard to please. Here is what she writes in her journal: "The dreaded Sarah is our waitress. She disappears for a long time before taking our order for cooked items - this seems to be her stock-in-trade ... Lee has the full English with, you guessed it, almost hard egg yolk in the poached eggs. The absence of baked beans is irritating, as is the lack of opportunity to turn down blood pudding! And, those aren't field mushrooms, but rather a single Portobello from the supermarket."

of the nice weather to walk the ample gardens in front of the hotel. There is well-manicured lawn, a bridge

over a rapid stream, wooded areas, flours in bloom, yard sculptures, tennis court, and (most notably) a sign for the "Stocky Furzen Cricket and Croquet Club - Members Only" to which I reply, "Put a stocky in it!"

We spend about a half-hour exploring the grounds and taking pictures before returning to our room and packing for our check-out departure at 11:00. We are pleased that young men, younger and stronger and more energetic than I, carry our suitcases down the two flights of stairs and put them in the car. As was the case with Lee and me, they also cannot figure out how to get both large suitcases into the trunk. So one goes on the rear seat again.

We're heading toward the Hilton Hotel at Heathrow, but first we set out to see the Cerne Abbas Giant, some 86 miles to the east. Google maps wants us to leave toward the north, which means through the 7-foot pincers, and even though our car is narrower than Ken's we have no intention of doing so; instead we proceed through Chagford, retracing the path from our arrival, and eventually join the A30 which leads to minor roads. Cerne Abbas is a small village (population 800) whose main (and only?) attraction is the chalk figure of a giant on a nearby hillside. Let the record show that we have (at Lee's insistence) gone to see other large chalk figures on the sides of hills when we were in England in 2013, but all of these figures were of horses. Not so, this giant. It is a man. A naked man! And, as Ken described it to us, "He's happy to see you" and "He's ready for action." Oh, yes, he expresses his happiness and readiness very emphatically, as the pictures at Picasa and the one to the right demonstrate. Wikipedia suggests that the origin of the figure is a matter of some dispute:



The figure has been the subject of much study and speculation, but its origin and age are unclear. It is often thought of as an ancient construction, though the earliest mention of it dates to the late 17th century. Early antiquarians associated it, on little evidence, with a Saxon deity, while other scholars sought to identify it with a Celtic British figure or the Roman Hercules, or some syncretization of the two. Archaeological evidence that parts of the drawing have been lost over time strengthen the Hercules identification. However the lack of earlier descriptions leads modern scholars to conclude that it may date from the 17th century, and perhaps originated as political satire.

Regardless of its age, the Cerne Abbas Giant has become an important part of local culture and folklore, which often associates it with fertility. It is one of England's best known hill figures and is a major visitor attraction in the region.

Furthermore, we learn the following from Wikipedia:

As a publicity stunt for the opening of *The Simpsons Movie* on 16 July 2007, a giant Homer Simpson brandishing a doughnut was outlined in water-based biodegradable paint to the left of the Cerne Abbas giant. This act displeased local neopagans, who pledged to perform rain magic to wash the figure away.



There's a sign posted at the base of the hill, erected (you should pardon the expression) by The National Trust, imploring visitors to text £2 "to help keep the Giant in shape for future generations to enjoy." Another sign: "Would you give £2 for a body like this?" It's amazing that they don't ask for donations of Viagra

Well, we should be heading to the northeast to get to Heathrow, but Lee has in mind one final step - and since she's driving, how can I complain. So we drive 28 miles to the southeast to County Dorset and the town of Wareham, the site of Corfe Castle <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/corfe-castle/>. Built high on a hill, and "guarded" by mountain goats, it is in ruins but impressive nonetheless. Built by William the Conqueror, it dates from the 11th century. Mountain goats we are not, but still we climb the hill and explore the existing structures. Pictures are posted at Picasa. But none is as impressive as this one from Wikipedia:



On the way to Corfe Castle, we are going through a roundabout when we see a sign to the Tank Museum. Weird! Even weirder, from one arm off the roundabout there is an army tank, a full-sized tank, coming toward us! Alas, he turns one way out of the roundabout and we another, thus preventing my getting a picture. But I do have a picture (at Picasa) of a road sign: ARMY RANGES WARNING, telling of road closures because of you-know-what. We assume that the tank is driven by friendly folk, as they fired their cannon neither at us or at any of the other vehicles. At another roundabout, we spot two pheasants. And further along, we encounter a stream that crosses our road; as there is no bridge, we must ford (in a VW?) this "raging river." (Rumor has it that the VW Beetle could float. Is that also true for the VW Golf?)

We stop in a tea room for coffee and sweets. Having done so little driving, we've not expended much fuel, but finally we have to stop and buy some. The cost of petrol is £1.199/liter, which is equivalent to \$6.80/gallon (quite pricey!) but we fill with 32.15 L at a cost of £38.55 and we've done a very respectable 43.9 mpg. We take some pictures of Wareham and of the quay where there are photogenic ducks and a restaurant/bar called The Old Granary. A sign board at the door says RECRUITING LOVELY PEOPLE NOW (with the second word spelled this way: L♡VELY)

It's now about 100 miles, mostly on fast motorways, to the northeast and the Hilton Hotel at Heathrow where we arrive at 6:30. Unlike to situation in September 2013 when the hotel was filled to the gills with people celebrating what appeared to be a Pakistani wedding, the lobby and common areas are relatively uncrowded. We have dinner at The Gallery on the mezzanine level where I begin with "smoked duck, chestnuts, spiced pear, and mesclun salad" (shared with Lee) followed by "pan fried calves liver, mashed potato, caramelised pearl onion, smoked streaky bacon"; we then get coffee at the Executive Lounge and we go to the business office to print our boarding passes. I'm sneezing and coughing (the cold is here, for sure), so I head to bed early at 10:15.

Wednesday, March 25

Although my cold seems a little better (maybe), I continue taking the cold-sinus pills. We arise at 6:15 (ahead of the alarm). Our plan is to skip breakfast at the hotel restaurant, but nibble (for free!) in the Executive Lounge for which we have privileges. To our surprise, the spread available is quite good: I have a hot meal: scrambled eggs, beans, sausage, mushrooms, tomato, but still no blood pudding! Where is their sense of tradition? The cold buffet has ham, smoked salmon, cheeses, and dry cereals. These hot and cold offerings actually put the ultra-expensive Gidleigh Park to shame. For shame, Gidleigh Park!

The day is rain-free, but somewhat hazy. We check out at 8:30 and find a petrol station in a small community west of the airport to top off the tank. We then drive to the Avis Rental Centre, ditch the car, and take the shuttle bus to Terminal 3 at about 9:30. Our flight does not leave until 1:00(!), so we are just a wee bit early, but we take advantage of the time by getting refunds of the VAT on the tens of thousands of dollars of clothing that Lee purchased.

We are "invited" to use the "fast track" line for security, but it doesn't seem very fast at all, filled as it is with thousands of our closest friends and enemies. As in the U.S., we are asked to demonstrate that our liquids are all in very small quantities and neither poisonous nor explosive. But this is just pre-security. At the real security line, we are again asked to show our liquids, laptop, and kindle, and I have to remove my belt (although my shoes do stay on my feet). Following instructions, I also empty my pockets but this proves

unnecessary as I am not directed to pass through a full body scanner.

After a rather long walk (aided by few moving sidewalks) we make it to a lounge that is shared by Delta and Virgin Atlantic. It is a large, handsome room, equipped with WiFi and a very extensive menu, but I would have traded all of these perks for a little better air-conditioning. So we wimpy and spoiled Americans sit there and sweat, sweat, sweat.

We walk to the gate and board the Delta B767-300 at 12:15. On this flight, my window seat (3A) is actually close to the outside wall. While still at the gate, new agey music is piped into the sound system. It's supposed to relax the tense passengers but it only increases my stress level. Worst of all, they use Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* melody (barely recognizable) as the main theme. The plane pushes back at 12:56, ahead of the scheduled departure time, and we are wheels up at 1:10; the announced flying time to Seattle is 10hr, 47 min.

My cold is still with me ... and I spend much of the flight sneezing or blowing my nose and asking for extra tissues. I'm glad that nobody is sitting very close to me.

Food service begins with an antipasto: a piece of dried meat (of some sort) and a hunk of cheese, accompanied (alas) by artichoke and olives; but at least I can enjoy my single malt scotch (I don't recall the brand). The first course is "Caprese salad" (which is good, mozzarella and tomatoes) and "cream of asparagus soup" (which I reject). We leave Scotland's air space at 2:30. For the main course, I choose "Feta-crusted roasted chicken breast, served over braised vegetable and chickpeas"; I'm getting full, so I eat only about half of it. But I do save some room for dessert: "vanilla ice cream sundae with chocolate sauce." Burp! At 3:25 we are off the southern tip of Iceland and at 4:40 we are approaching Greenland; I know this from the flight information available on my monitor, not from looking out the window: the ground is obscured by cloud cover, thus preventing me from taking pictures of Greenland's snow-covered mountains as I was able to do on an previous flight.

I finish reading Jo Nesbø's *The Bat* on the Kindle, just three days before it needs to be returned electronically to Amazon's vaults. I also read the Feb 23/March 2 double issue of *The New Yorker* and work several crossword puzzles. At 10:55 am (now on PDT), we approach the coast of North America. Later, as we near our destination, another meal is served. I choose "Lobster sliders ... served with a mixed salad." The captain reports that Seattle has cloudy and rainy weather (this is news???). The clouds and mist are so thick that I cannot see the ground until we are below 200 feet. We touch down at 3:48, almost an hour ahead of schedule. But who's complaining?

Passage through immigration and customs is quick; Lee tells the customs officer that she has made several significant purchases of clothing, but he just waves us through. The car is exactly where we left it. We join the commuting crowd on I-5 and ... eventually ... get home.