

TRIP TO ENGLAND AND RHINE RIVER CRUISE SEPTEMBER 14 TO OCTOBER 8, 2013

Having traveled in France from September 20 to October 11 in 2011 and having experienced mild, even warm (and quite frankly hot) weather, we assumed we'd find the same as we drove through the English countryside (The Lake District, Ironbridge Gorge, The Cotswolds, Wiltshire) and then cruised the Rhine River from Basel to Amsterdam. And for the most part, we were fortunate. Yes, we did have rain (lots of it) during the first few days in England, but very little additional over the next two-and-a-half weeks.

In my France 2011 and Germany 2012 travelogs, I paid tribute to my wife for her brilliant planning of our journey. So it was this time as well. In the months leading up to our departure, we (i.e., Lee*) did yeoman

*From time to time, she** will be referred to as *SWMBO* (She Who Must Be Obeyed), whereas I will be known as *HWMO* (He Who Must Obey). So it has been and so it will forever be.

**Through her long and distinguished academic career, she acquired other pseudonyms (bestowed with love and appreciation by *moi*), including *TWOU* (The Woman of Us, borrowed from a John Barth novel), *OBLOTN* (Our Blessed Lady of the Neutrons), *EATCOUT* (Executive Assistant to the Chancellor of UT), and *VPUK* (Vice President at University of Kentucky).

(yeowoman? yo, woman?) work in these areas: (1) deciding which regions of England to visit; (2) scouring web sites for suitable lodging; (3) negotiating with super travel agent Stefan Bisciglia of *Specialty Cruise and Villas*, a family-run travel agency in Gig Harbor and part of the *Virtuoso* network of travel agents around the world, concerning the plane tickets, the hotels in England, and the Rhine cruise; and (4) reading helpful web sites and travel books.

In the course of the trip, I took some 2600 pictures!! Only a relatively small number* have been uploaded

*By this I mean a mere 2200 or so. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

to my Picasa account: some of the pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very repetitive; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. Also, many just contained pictures of text (as a reminder for me) that was posted on the walls at various museums. You can view those that I've chosen to share at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>. (To put the seven England-Rhine 2012 picture albums in the order that we visited the sites, click on *sort by ALBUM DATE* at the top of the Picasa page.)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 TO SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

As I wrote in my Northern Europe travelogue from 2012, the super-reliable Steve from Brooklyn (I never did learn his last name) sold Harbor Taxi and Towncar and moved to Florida. *The Peninsula Gateway*, our local newspaper, reported that there is a new taxi service in Gig Harbor run by a woman (Gloria*) and

*She proves to be a good (if also somewhat aggressive) driver (see p. 71) and an interesting conversationalist. She says that as an infant, she was in a car that crossed the Tacoma Narrows Bridge the day before it collapsed into Puget Sound on November 7, 1940.

her daughter. I had called Gloria last month and arranged for a ride for September 14 at 6:00 am. She appears right on time in her KIA Soul, and transports us and our luggage* to Seatac where we arrive in

*In addition to the airline-authorized "one carry-on and one personal item," our past usage had included a large soft-sided suitcase (on rollers) for each of us and a large soft-sided bag (not on rollers) that had to be balanced on one of the others. Schlepping these through crowded airports had become an annoyance, so shortly before leaving for England we each purchased a Delsey hard-sided case (a "four-wheel spinner trolley," if you must know). These are light-weight (10 lbs), expandable, and have two large compartments, each. They can be pulled on two wheels (like conventional cases) or, if left vertical, pushed on the four wheels - or, if one is feeling silly or just plain bored, spun on their vertical axes. Each proved capacious enough that there was no need for a third large bag.

near-record time at 6:35.

Our destination is Manchester, UK. We wanted to fly on Delta or one of its partner airlines, but there are no direct flights to Manchester from Seattle on any airline. Nor are there convenient connections via Paris or Amsterdam, Delta's nonstop destinations in Europe. We could have flown nonstop to London on British Air, but it would have been significantly more costly and wouldn't have provided useful frequent flier miles; Delta's nonstop service to London had not yet been instituted in September, 2013.

So, we decide on two nonstop Delta flights: first to Atlanta and then to Manchester. Originally, we were scheduled to leave Seattle at 10:00 am, but Delta changed our itinerary so that we would leave Seattle at 9:00 am and arrive in Atlanta at 4:42 pm. This "allows" us the luxury of a 4.5-hour(!) layover in the Peach Tree State, as the flight to Manchester does not leave until 9:10 in the evening.

Once again, we are profligate as we raid the coffers of the Magid family retirement fund in order to purchase business class seats. Aside from more comfort on the plane, this gives other perks, among which are the "priority line" at Delta's check-in counter followed by the expedited TSA security line (no removal of shoes or belt; no emptying of pockets; no display of dangerous or explosive liquids in a zip-lock bag). So why do I go to the bother of emptying my shirt and pants pockets before entering the security area? I have no answer. Because of the speedy passage through check-in and security, we find ourselves at the Delta Sky Club at 7:00, just one hour after leaving home.

I indulge in coffee and a bagel, but nothing more as we are quite certain of being well-fed on board the plane. At 8:25, we leave the Sky Club (in S Satellite) and take the airport train to terminal B. We board the plane (a Boeing 757-200) at 8:35 and find our seats in Row C. Push-back occurs at 9:04. Unlike many planes, this one has a clear PA system and, best of all, the flight attendants do not possess the drawl found in so many Delta employees. The safety video is the same (amusing) one that we first saw on our flight from Paris in last December. Here's what I wrote in my Germany 2012 travelog.*

* It is filled with good humor and stunts, things that it is hoped will attract the attention of the jaded traveler who usually tunes these things out. Rather than my describing it, why not watch it for yourself at <http://tinyurl.com/bowacz8> (this is the version for a Boeing 737, but it's essentially the same one that we get to see). Hours from now, after we have landed in Seattle and we're waiting for the doors to be opened, I chat with two of the flight attendants and I tell them that I think that the humorous video is an excellent idea. A couple of them disagree, arguing that people won't take them seriously. Lee and I think that they're wrong. They also tell me that Air New Zealand produced a humorous video of their own in which the flight crew are naked, save for tactically- and tactfully-applied body paint: <http://tinyurl.com/ngxaky>

It is a dark day: even though well past sunrise, the plane's windows are wet from the fog and mist. The plane's taxi is a long one but finally we are air-borne at 9:21. Even though we break through the fog in a few minutes, our view of the ground is obscured by thick clouds. This is an older plane, so there is no

choice of movie or other entertainment on one's own video display: instead the same movie is shown to everyone on the overhead monitors, but (fortunately) the sound is off. Well, not quite - prior to the movie there are several annoying ads (for Delta, Coke, and other products) and these are accompanied by very loud voice and music. The movie starts and the sound is still on. Loudly! After a few more attempts, the movie is begun again but in silent mode; only those who want to watch can use their headphones to listen.

At 10:20 PDT we are served juice and coffee, then an omelette with bacon and potatoes, a bagel, and some fruit. I spend my time working *New York Times* crossword puzzles, reading issues of *The New Yorker* that had accumulated, and reading the first couple of chapters of *TransAtlantic*, a novel by Colum McCann that I had downloaded from Pierce County Library onto my new Kindle. (Through this trip, I'll read other books on the Kindle. I find that I much prefer reading the book in conventional "dead-tree" format.)

A snack is served at 11:40 PDT. The movie (title mercifully forgotten) ends shortly afterwards and is followed up one ad after another on the plane's monitor - mercifully, the sound is muted. We are flying over clouds for much of the trip, but finally break through and see the ground at about 12:30 PDT; the pilot announces that those on the left side of the plane will be able to see St. Louis; we, poor souls, are on the right, but we do make out the Mississippi River. We land at 4:40 EDT, right on schedule, but the time from wheels down to the gate seems to take "forever" as we meander all over the airport.

We disembark at Gate A7, but we need to make our way to Concourse E for our flight to England. First we need to find the Delta Sky Club which is more or less "hidden" near Gate E14. With the help of an airport employee, we finally locate it. We are amused by a "typical" American family who are near us in the lounge: father, mother, two boys, and one girl, each in a private world, consumed by one sort of hand-held device or another, and fighting over available outlets for their gadgets. Doesn't anyone talk to anyone any more? Silly question.

I finish the September 9 *New Yorker* and begin on old issues of *The Atlantic* that I had brought along; I also read some more of the Kindle-loaded book and work a few puzzles. I have a few snacks and coffee, but moderate my consumption because I know that I'll be well-fed on the plane. The long layover finally ends when we leave the lounge at 8:10; we are about to walk to Gate E28 but learn that our plane will be depart from E10 which is much closer to the Sky Club. I purchase the September 23 issue of *TIME* (the one that has undoubtedly arrived in our Gig Harbor mailbox today). We board the Airbus A330 at 8:20 and settle into our seats: these are not the lie-flat type that Delta had on the Boeing 767 that we flew from Seattle to Paris last December but they are comfortable enough; and, in contrast to the 767, our seats are actually next to one another. (For a description of the unusual seating arrangements in the 767, see pp 2-4 in my Germany 2012 travelog, <http://web.utk.edu/~rmaqid/Germany2012.pdf>)

Can I elicit any sympathy by revealing that because we are flying on this weekend, I'm missing the Alabama-Texas A&M and Tennessee-Oregon football games today as well as the Seattle-San Francisco and New York Giants-Denver games tomorrow? What a saint! (Well, one of the games was close: Bama 49 Aggies 42. The others? Not so much. Victors were Oregon 59-14, Seattle 29-3, and Denver 41-27. So maybe it's just as well that we're flying to England.)

Menus are distributed while the plane is still at the gate. The doors are closed early (at 9:03) and we are air-borne at 9:16. I order a shrimp salad, beef tenderloin, and an ice cream sundae, along with Scotch whiskey, wine, and coffee. We are finished eating at about 11:00 EDT - how fashionable! Our flight path takes us along the eastern seaboard, over New York city and Boston before heading over the Atlantic; it's a clear evening and we can make out lots of lights on the ground, but it's hard to identify either of these large cities.

In contrast to the 757 that ferried us to Atlanta, this plane has individual monitors at each seat. Does that mean that they work? No, it does not. They have push-screen displays, but all of Lee's attempts to load a movie (*any* movie) onto hers fail. So she turns to the game section and to solitaire, but this has the

annoying feature of defeating any move in which the player tries to slide a row of cards from one place to another. Think I to myself, "Do the computers in the flight deck work as badly as these?" Fortunately, "myself" doesn't answer, but I should add that these sorts of poorly functioning personal units were also encountered on the monitors of the Boeing 767s that we flew to and from Paris on our Germany trip last December, as well as on earlier trips.

At 11:30 EDT, I turn off my light and recline, hoping to sleep even though I almost never succeed in doing so during any flight. In fact, I doze until 12:30 but then am wide-awake. Unable to sleep anymore, I move my seat to the upright position at 12:50 and read (*TIME*, Kindle novel) and work more NYT crossword puzzles. I move my watch five hours ahead to England time.

At about 7:00 am, the flight attendant tells Lee that we are heading into turbulence. And she is right! Starting at 7:30, we have strenuous shaking, left-and-right as well as up-and-down; this is as severe as any turbulence I've experienced and it persists for an unusually long time (about 30 minutes). But things calm down and there is a beautiful sunrise (although with thick clouds below) as breakfast (muesli, fruit, juice, coffee) is served at about 8:00. For variety, I begin reading Richard Brookhiser's *James Madison*, which I've also downloaded as an e-Book from Pierce County Library. I also read my hard copy of *TIME*.

We land in Manchester at 9:28, more than 30 minutes early. We clear passport control and customs quickly and are in the main lobby of the airport. An ATM rejects both my Key Bank Debit Card and one of my credit cards; there is no explanation but we learn, considerably later on the trip (p. 23), that I had tried to withdraw £200 (ca. \$320) and there is a \$300 limit on withdrawals. Who knew? So SWMBO gets some money with her Capital One card. We take the bus to the "Car Rental Village" where we get a VW Passat Diesel with automatic transmission. This should be a breeze to drive, even with the steering wheel on the wrong side, but it turns out that the car is longer (by 8 inches) and wider (by 3 inches) than the 1999 Passat that I drive in the U.S. These numbers don't sound like a big difference, but with my focus on staying to the left on all roads and with my lack of three-dimensional vision, it becomes challenging at times.

At first we have trouble getting it to start, but then discover that the "trick" is to insert the fob (not a key) into the ignition slot, push it in, step on the brake, and pray. Most of the time it works. I begin driving from the airport, heading north toward the Lake District, about 90 miles.* On the motorways (which are

*Yes, children, like the U.S., but unlike the rest of Europe, England uses miles and not kilometers. Nevertheless, everything but distance is metric (kg for food purchases, liters - oops, litres for volume, pence for coinage, and so on.)

like our interstate highways), the lanes are wide (whew!), and signage is excellent (overhead, on the side of the road, and painted on the road). U.S. traffic engineers could take lessons from these people.

I manage to keep the car in one lane (it gets easier as I drive more); after only about 30 miles, it begins to rain. And the rain is really hard more often than not. We stop at a service exit of the Motorway to have a coffee and to change drivers (and to get drenched). The rain persists, often very hard, for the remainder of the drive (Lee now driving) to Gilpin Hotel. Nearly the entire trip is on motorways, but eventually one needs to drive about five miles on a minor road (A591) and then another five miles on an even more minor (B5284).* The latter is not a single track, *Gott sei dank*, but a narrow, winding, two-way road with

*Some 70 years ago, the better A roads received the designation M as did the major highways built in the intervening years. A roads can have one-, two-, three- or even four-digit designations depending on their importance; our A591 is, clearly, of minor importance. According to Wikipedia, "B roads are numbered local routes, which have lower traffic densities than the main trunk roads, or A roads. This classification has nothing to do with the width or quality of the physical road, and B roads can range from dual carriageways to single track roads with passing places." That may be true, but the B5284 is, by any measure, a very minor thoroughfare (although the locals might disagree).

moderate traffic coming toward us from the opposite direction. In the rain. On slick pavement. And on the "wrong" side* of the road! Prior to embarking on this trip, I had used Google Map's street view to

*Rick Steves, in *England 2013*, writes "Outside the big cities and except for the motorways, British roads tend to be narrow. In towns, you may have to cross over the center line just to get past parked cars. Adjust your perceptions of personal space: It's not 'my side of the road' or 'your side of the road,' it's just 'the road' - and it's shared as a cooperative adventure." In fact, we will (over the next two weeks) encounter this challenge of avoiding cars whose drivers have only the most notional concept of what it means to park them at the curb (or kerb, as they say in England). And this is true, not only in towns but also in cities of moderate size. It's a miracle that we (and our rental car) survived without a dent or scrape.

"drive" this B-road and was eagerly looking forward to seeing the rolling hills, green pastures, handsome country houses, stone walls, livestock, pubs and inns; but confronted by the driving rain and oncoming traffic, the trek turns out to be much less pleasant than I anticipated. Am I glad that Lee is driving this final leg? Yes, I am! We arrive, at about 1:30, at the entrance road to Gilpin Hotel and, following their instructions, pull into the first parking area and go to the reception desk. We are met by a young woman named Kate who instructs us to drive up the hill and turn to the left to another parking area. She'll meet us there and shows us to our room. We arrive and so does she (sporting a huge umbrella) and we slosh along the stone walk to the entrance which is on the second floor* of the hotel.

*According to European custom this, of course, is called the first floor; whereas what we would call the first floor is called by them the ground floor. We have been fooled by this in the past, most notably in Munich when our second-floor room turned out to be on the third floor of an un-airconditioned hotel which provided no strong-armed help to assist with the luggage.

All of the guest rooms are named after small towns in the Lake District. Ours (the Patterdale, see <http://thegilpin.co.uk/the-hotel/sleep/junior-suites/patterdale/>) and the public spaces of the hotel are beautiful, as the pictures at Picasa and at the hotel web site (<http://thegilpin.co.uk/>) will confirm.* The

*And this is a good thing because we're staying here for four nights and having dinner here twice.

hotel is operated by the Cunliffe family (one of whom will chat with us in the lounge) who have been running the facility for 20 years. You can read the history of the building and the family's involvement in it at <http://thegilpin.co.uk/about-us/family-history/>, including the deliciously ungrammatical sentence "Built as a private house in 1901, John Cunliffe's grandmother moved to Gilpin in 1919 ..." (I doubt that J.C.'s mother would appreciate being described as a house.) Kate takes us on a tour of the common areas: the lounge, the bar, the several dining rooms, and when we ask her to recommend a local pub where we can authentic "pub food" she makes a 6:30 reservation for us at The Punch Bowl, a 10-minute drive from here.

Her instructions for getting to the pub are somewhat vague but with our Google map on Lee's iPad and with the assistance of a huge Lake District map that Kate lets us borrow, we think that we can find the place. Although the sun had come out earlier in the afternoon, we are driving in rain (squalls, really) through large puddles of water (no wonder it's called The Lake District) on roads even more narrow than the B5284 (frequently the passenger side of the car brushes against brambles that line the highway and often cover stone walls). At least it is still daylight when we arrive, but it will be dark when we are ready to return to the hotel.

We share a cured salmon* appetizer; I follow it with guinea fowl and a local ale (at room temperature, of

*Lee's description is, of course, much more elaborate and detailed than mine, as it always is when

talking of food. From her journal: "We share an appetizer special - beetroot-cured salmon (gravlax-like) with a spicy celeriac remoulade with mustard seeds, candied walnuts, and nasturtium flower to garnish. This was served on a plank of polished granite; the walnut/salmon interplay was pretty amazing." See what I mean? This is the *last* time I'll give her the floor.

course). Fortunately, it's raining only lightly as we return to the hotel and there are but a few oncoming cars, although we do have to dodge fallen branches, leaves, and surprisingly deep puddles. We're back in our room by 8:30 and, exhausted by the trip, I read a bit and go to bed at 9:30. We set the alarm for 7:30 in the hope that I can actually sleep the entire night. (On previous overseas trips, I've managed only a few hours of shut-eye, even after an essentially sleepless plane flight.)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

I'm delighted that I actually get a good night's sleep. Although I awaken after only four hours and remain awake for an hour, I then fall asleep from 3:30 to 4:30, then awaken for another hour, and finally sleep from 4:30 to 5:30. And although I don't make it until the alarm setting at 7:30, this does add up to six hours of sleep. So I get up to read and wait until 7:30 to awaken Lee. The morning starts out sunny but shortly changes to rain.

We are ushered into one of the dining rooms for breakfast. It seems that the servers outnumber the customers. We have coffee and juice and then order from the menu. SWMBO has apricot/prune compote and Cambrian Rarebit (very different from the Welsh rarebit with which I'm familiar) and I have the Gilpin Full Breakfast: bacon (which is chewy, not crisp like what we get in the U.S.), sausage, blood pudding (just as salty as I remember it, but I had to try it again), grilled tomato, grilled portobello mushroom, rosti (which tastes like cheese), and fried egg. Burp! Both of these meals are described in the online menu, but I would challenge their description of the bacon as "crispy": <http://tinyurl.com/lwo2cx9>

At 10:45, we head north along Lake Windermere in the rain - in fact the rain will persist throughout the day, quite heavy at times; and the day is quite chilly (about 10°C). It reminds us of Gig Harbor. Our first stop is at the visitor center (oops, I mean centre) for the Lake District National Park in Brockhole, (<http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/>) just six miles from Gilpin Hotel. We watch a film about the park and its pleasures, but today is not a pleasant day to spend outdoors, so we decide to visit Dove Cottage in Grasmere, the home of "local boy made good" William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, his wife Mary, *her* sister Sarah, and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) all lived here from 1799 to 1808. Cozy, eh? Oh, yes, there were also the five children of William and Mary. After the entourage left, the poet Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) lived there; his best known work is *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. (Coleridge, too, was a long-time consumer of opium, which certainly affected his health and longevity.)

Before visiting the cottage (we were required to make an appointment for a guided tour), we spend some time in the adjacent Wordsworth Museum where there are portraits, manuscripts, and other paraphernalia that one would expect for a famous writer and poet.

Wordsworth and Coleridge are viewed as the founders of the English Romantic School, although during their lifetime other poets (e.g., Robert Southey,* 1774-1843) were better known. While at Dove Cottage,

*When the tour guide at Dove Cottage told us about him, Lee and I both thought he said Selvey or Sibly. Only afterwards did we discover the actual name.

the two friends published *Lyrical Ballads*, an unsigned collection of poems among which were Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Let us stipulate that I am unfeeling boor who doesn't understand or appreciate poetry. So stipulated. But

reading selected verses of Coleridge's poem, with its sing-songy meter, puts me in mind of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*. See if you agree:

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As it had been a Christian soul
We hailed it in God's name.

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead and with its head
He went galumphing back.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
But not a drop to drink.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy.
O frabjous day! Calooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

See what I mean? And if you don't agree that *Jabberwocky* is a close model, how about this familiar ditty: "Mary had a little lamb,/whose fleece was white as snow./ And everywhere that Mary went,/the lamb was sure to go./ It followed her to school one day/which was against the rule./It made the children laugh and play,/to see a lamb at school." Or the opening stanza from another Lewis Carroll gem, *The Walrus and the Carpenter*: "The sun was shining on the sea,/Shining with all his might:/He did his very best to make/ The billows smooth and bright—/And this was odd, because it was/The middle of the night."

Roy Blount Jr., whose writing I admire very much, is an enthusiastic fan of Coleridge. (See, I told you that I was an unfeeling boor.) In his lovely *Alphabetter Juice*, Blount writes:

One of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's pet peeves was "that vile and barbarous vocable *talented*" ... Coleridge's objection was grammatical: "The formation of a participle passive from a noun is a licence that nothing but a very peculiar felicity can excuse." OED cites this as an example of "groundless objections ... by writers ignorant of the history of the language."

I can't say that "talented" raises warning lights in my mind. On the other hand, the modern practice of making nouns out of verbs drives me to distraction. Remember when Al Haig wanted to *caveat* a proposal? Or when Frank Broyles, former Arkansas football coach, said "He *collisioned* the ball carrier"? I'd love to know who is the wag who said, "There is no noun that can't be verbed"? Brilliant!

By the way, a Gig Harbor friend told me of a web site in which *Jabberwocky* is translated, if you can imagine it, into a some thirty languages, ranging (alphabetically) from Afrikaans to Yiddish, including, of course, Klingon. See <http://tinyurl.com/2alzg5> My favorite, because it works so very well, is a French version penned by a *New Yorker* magazine contributor in 1931: <http://tinyurl.com/yfpxwb3>

Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* poem, *Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, is much much better:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
 Which on a wild secluded scene impress
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

Probably Wordsworth's most familiar poem, also written at Dove Cottage but revised in 1815, begins:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd,
 A host of golden daffodils;
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

But I'll bet that he wasn't being pelted with rain and whipped with gale-force winds, as we were, when he viewed this bucolic scene!

So, after spending about an hour in the Wordsworth Museum, we slosh across the very wet parking lot for our 1:00 tour of Dove Cottage. A group of 15 visitors is led through the house,* guided by a young man

*The rooms are small and the light is very poor. It's hard to imagine how the entourage managed to function under these conditions, but, as my first mother-in-law would say, "They don't know no better."

(college age) with a delicious sense of humor and irony. Among the many "fun facts" that he shares with us are these: (1) Wordsworth recited his poems from memory and his sister Dorothy wrote them down; he was said to have been able to keep 80 lines of poetry in his head; and rarely did he make any corrections to the transcribed text. (2) The family all slept sitting up in chairs, the idea being that this would prevent the development of consumption. (3) There was a dresser with a double sink for him and for his wife, a shocking arrangement in this pre-Victorian era that insisted on separation of the sexes. (4) Wordsworth didn't believe in washing his body when he traveled; he packed only two shirts, one for day and one for night. (5) His teeth and those of his "roommates" were terrible. Dorothy, for example, lost all of her teeth before age 40. Their false teeth were either made of porcelain or wood, but sometimes they were extracted from corpses on the battlefield and were called "Napoleon teeth." (6) Prior to his marriage to Mary, he had a relationship (as they say) with a French woman, Annette Vallon; this "relationship" produced a daughter, Caroline. He provided financial support for the two over the following years. (7) In 1843, Robert Southey (Poet Laureate of England) died and the title was offered to Wordsworth; he declined because he considered himself too old, but finally accepted the honor and the stipend when he was assured that he'd have to do nothing to justify the award; and nothing he did, thus fulfilling the terms of the deal.

We drive south into the town of Grasmere in search of its main attractions, the Gingerbread Shop, where, according to Wikipedia, gingerbread "is made to a 'secret recipe' popularized by Sarah Nelson (1815-1904)." We stop in a café for coffee and a flapjack, a local "delicacy": a bar cookie made with oatmeal, brown sugar, and butter.

From there, it's but nine miles due south to the town of Hawkshead which claims for itself the title "Prettiest Village in the Lake District."* Perhaps, but it doesn't look so good in the rain. Even this small

*Well, Auburn AL declares itself "The Loveliest Village on the Plains." There are contrary opinions, principally from University of Alabama football fans.

town requires us to buy a pay-and-display sticker for the car (a hefty £1.50 for just one hour), the third such we've purchased today. I'm beginning to suspect that free parking does not exist anywhere in

England. Hawkshead's most famous resident was Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) who was a child of privilege, well-educated in the classics and in science. In fact, she became fascinated with insects and mushrooms, made microscopic drawings of each, and included them in some publications. But in 1901, she achieved her major fame by writing and illustrating *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Over twenty years, she produced a slew of similar books with titles like *The Tale of Miss Tiggy-Winkle* and *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson*. Hawkshead sports a store named *Peter Rabbit and Friends* - I take a picture, but we don't go inside.

Throughout the day, the driving is very challenging, made all the worse by the incessant rain. The roads are curved and narrow, there is considerable oncoming traffic, and there are unyielding stone walls (often hidden by brush) on the left. As if this wasn't stressful enough, halfway from Grasmere to Hawkshead we pass through the town of Ambleside in which the streets are lined with hundreds of people, many of them youngsters wearing school uniforms (e.g., University of Cumbria at Ambleside). Many of the spectators are clapping those annoying noise-making paddles that are now common in U.S. baseball games. The traffic essentially comes to a crawl. The reason? The Tour of England bicycle race is about to pass through the town. This is a seven-day race, going from Scotland to London; stage two of the race, from Carlisle to Kendal, comes through Ambleside today and will eventually proceed along the B5284 where Gilpin Hotel is. Fortunately we arrive in town ahead of the bikes.

Hawkshead is to the west of Lake Windermere, a long, narrow body of water stretching some 15 miles along a north-south axis. Our hotel is to the east of the lake, so in order to return we must travel north to Ambleside (at the top of the lake) before heading south again. Fortunately, the bicyclists (most of them) have passed through, but still the traffic is horrendous. We choose some minor roads to avoid the center of town, but still it is bumper-to-bumper and stop-and-go for a considerable distance. We make it back to the hotel at 4:15, two hours after leaving Hawkshead just 15 miles away.

It's nice to relax for a while ... indoors ... as the outside weather is turning rainier and colder (9°C when last we checked). We have a dinner reservation for this evening (and another for two days from now) in the well-regarded restaurant of the hotel. At 6:30, we head to the lounge where we order a couple of drinks (single malt scotch for each of us) and are given menus. I note that there is a five-course and a three-course menu; the former costs about £60 (depending on what is chosen), the latter £? (because no price is shown on the page). I opt for The Green Egg Charcoal Menu, so described not in deference to Dr. Seuss but because one of those bulbous Green Egg cookers is used. I choose the soup of the day, the chicken, and the rhubarb crumble, along with coffee. The full descriptions of these courses are on the third page at <http://tinyurl.com/kyfq3fk>

But this brief description does not do justice to the "theater" that accompanies the food. While we sit in the lounge, a small tray of three unrecognizable food objects is placed before us. A helpful employee comes over and tells us, too rapidly to comprehend, what each item is. His manner and "pinky technique" are nearly identical to what is described in Herman Koch's brilliant novel *The Dinner*, first published in 2009 in Dutch, then translated into English and released just this year. The narrator is having dinner at a very upscale restaurant in Amsterdam and he is horrified by what he observes. Here is one of his rants:

The floor manager – or maitre d' or supervisor, the host, the headwaiter, or whatever you call someone like that in a restaurant like this – wasn't wearing a black pinafore. He had a three-piece suit on. The suit was pale green with blue pinstripes, and sticking out of the breast pocket was a blue hankie. What they call a pocket square ... The floor manager stuck out his little finger and pointed at something on our table. At the tealight, I thought at first – instead of a candle or two, all the tables had a tealight – but no, the little finger was pointing out the plate of olives he had apparently just put there ... "These are Greek olives from the Peloponnese, lightly dressed in first-pressing, extra-virgin olive oil from Sardinia, and polished off with rosemary from ..." Normally I don't give a damn about that kind of information – as far as I cared, the rosemary could have come from the Baltic or the Ardennes, but it seemed like far too much fuss over one little plate of olives, and I had no intention of letting him off the hook that easily.

And then that pinky. Why would anyone point with their pinky? Was that supposed to be chic? Did it go with the suit with blue pinstripes, like the light-blue hankie? Or did he simply have something to hide? His other fingers, after all, were hidden the whole time. He kept them folded against the palm of his hand, out of sight – perhaps they were covered with flaky eczema of some untreatable disease?

"Polished off?" I said "Yes, polished off with rosemary. Polished off means that they –" "I know what it means," I said cuttingly – and perhaps a little too loudly as well ... "Polished off," I repeated a little more quietly. "I know that it doesn't mean that someone 'polished off' the olives. As in 'getting rid of them' or 'blowing them away.'" ... "I'm sorry," he said, raising his hand to his mouth; the fingers were still curled up as they had been when he pointed at the olives a minute ago; the pinky was still sticking out. "I never thought about it like that."

At 7:00, we are invited into the dining room. As was true at breakfast, the large number of staff amazes - and each of them, whether male or female, is wearing a tie that is the same orange color that is rarely seen more than 100 miles from Knoxville, TN. (Uninitiated readers may not know that the dominant color of the University of Tennessee's sports teams is a bright and gaudy orange) Our meal begins with an *amuse bouche* for each of us, another unrecognizable food object which, of course, a pinky-pointing server comes over to explain. As for the presentation of the main course, another description from *The Dinner* seems apt:

"The lamb's-neck sweetbread has been marinated in Sardinian olive oil, and is served with arugula," said the manager, who had by now arrived at Claire's plate and was pointing with his pinky at two minuscule pieces of meat. "The sun-dried tomatoes come from Bulgaria."

The first thing that struck you about Claire's plate was its vast emptiness. Of course, I'm well aware that, in the better restaurants, quality takes precedence over quantity, but you have voids and then you have voids. The void here, that part of the plate on which no food at all was present, had clearly been raised to a matter of principle. It was as though the empty plate was challenging you to say something about it, to go to the open kitchen and demand an explanation. "You wouldn't even dare!" the plate said, and laughed in your face ... "This is warm goat's cheese with pine nuts and walnut shavings." The hand with the pinky was above my plate now. I fought back the urge to say "I know, because that's what I ordered," and concentrated on the pinky ... "This is lamb's lettuce," the manager said; I looked at the pinky, which was no more than a centimeter away from the three or four curly little green leaves and the melted chunk of goat's cheese, and then at the entire hand, which was so close that I would only have had to lean forward a little to kiss it.

It isn't quite this extreme at Gilpin, but I love the description so much that I feel the need to include it here. (Oh, yes, between the main course and the dessert is the "pre-dessert" – why isn't it called "post-main course"? – but I fail to write down what it is.) The word descriptions on the menu hardly do justice to the appearances of the various courses, but you can get a general idea of what they might look like at <http://thegilpin.co.uk/gilpinlife/menus/hotel-menus/>. As for the details of what we actually eat (the canapés, the main course, the pre-dessert, the *amuse bouche*, the dessert, etc.) you'll have to ask Lee to show you her journal; as I promised on pp. 5-6, I'm going to eschew quoting her elaborate descriptions. Suffice it to say that her description of this meal at Gilpin filled more than two handwritten pages in her journal.

Stuffed with food and worn out from the arduous driving, we are back in our room at 9:00 and in bed at 10:00. Alas, I am awake at 2:00 and, unable to get to sleep, get out of bed to get the thoughts that had been swirling through my brain onto paper - and here they are.

UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION (but that doesn't make it any less true): The English, through centuries of self-congratulatory books and poems, have gained the reputation of being polite, reserved, and soft-spoken. We are finding the reverse. This evening, for example, the early diners were ushered to separate dining rooms (each of which had an excessive number of staff ... but I digress). In our small room, the couple behind me and the woman to my right were very quiet; in fact, the single woman had an

e-reader that occupied her and, besides, it would have been very strange had she started conversing with someone who wasn't there. But after a while, a party of four (two thirty-somethings and two fiftyish) were seated at the table behind SWMBO. Their conversation was loud and increasingly boisterous as they consumed various spirits. Without exaggeration, it got so noisy that I could not hear Lee, who was sitting no more than three feet from me. Surprisingly, the four all had cultured accents (or so they sounded to me) and seemed to be discussing "lofty" topics (politics, society, religion). The British are, and always have been, very class-conscious - I imagine that these four would consider themselves *upper class* or, *upper-middle class* (but probably not *lower-upper-middle class*, the description George Orwell gave to himself in a book that I'll mention when we get to Ironbridge Gorge on September 19).

UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION (continued): Regardless of the topic under discussion, the four diners all possessed a speech pattern (perhaps learned from watching too many sit-coms) that we'd heard often. For example, say that A, B, C, and D are gathered and A says something (profound or trivial) and B, C, and D all reply, simultaneously, with "Yessss." Or, B will say something like "Wordsworth is England's greatest poet, isn't he?" or C will say "This is our nicest summer, isn't it?" and the remaining three will offer assent with "Yesss." The attachment of "isn't it" to a declarative sentence is not really meant as a question but rather to assert that the sentence is true and no one had better disagree. We noticed this affectation four years ago when we visited Sylvia McLain (about whom much more when we arrive in Oxford on September 28); for now, suffice it to say that Sylvia is Tennessee-born-and-bred, but living in England for several years she, too, completed her sentences with "isn't it." I wonder if this will still be true when we see her at the end of next week.

UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION (continued some more): It's not just the upper class folk who can be rude and loud. We observed similar behavior in the cafés that we visited yesterday and today and at the pub where we had dinner last night. But somehow, it doesn't seem as objectionable when it occurs in a more casual place than a fine restaurant's dining room, *isn't it?*

CHARITABLE OBSERVATION: Dogs are allowed in restaurants (or at least the motorway rest stop and the café where we had coffee yesterday and today). The British love their dogs. The streets of Hawkshead, wet and puddle-filled as they were, were filled with people walking their dogs. It's impossible to dislike a people that do honor to their dogs. Furthermore, we gathered that the British are great walkers and strollers, as evidenced by the number of them who were not dissuaded by the rain and who could be seen not only in town but along the country roads that we were driving. One had the impression that they would have sought protection from umbrellas (*brollies* as they're called on this side of the ocean) but in fact most just wore water-proof pants, slickers, and rain hats.

OBSERVATION ABOUT LANGUAGE: George Bernard Shaw is usually credited with the line "The United States and Great Britain are two countries separated by a common language." Bertrand Russell amplified on this: "It is a misfortune for Anglo-American friendship that the two countries are supposed to have a common language. A Frenchman in America is not expected to talk like an American, but an Englishman speaking his mother tongue is thought to be affected and giving himself airs. Or else he is taken for a German or a Dutchman, and is complimented on his grammatical mastery of the language of another nation." There are many words that one hears in England that have different meaning or are spelled strangely or are pronounced differently from what we're accustomed to in the U.S.; and many that are not ever found in our country. There are several well-organized web sites that try to educate Americans about Britspeak and vice versa. Among these are ten pieces of British slang that *should* be imported into the U.S. (<http://tinyurl.com/kzqxzt1>) and ten words that *shouldn't* ... ever (<http://tinyurl.com/lefwd23>) For comprehensive lists of British slang (including scatology of all sorts), check out <http://tinyurl.com/6qrg3> and <http://tinyurl.com/6fk2xsq> And, of course, one can count on Wikipedia for a learned comparison of American and British English (<http://tinyurl.com/kvclpnc>) as well as for lists of words that have different meanings in the two countries: <http://tinyurl.com/mqchhhp> and <http://tinyurl.com/36urcb5> Master all of these and you, too, can become bilingual (as well as a bit batty).

OBSERVATION ABOUT OUR HOTEL ROOM: Although very elegant and upscale, the bed is surprisingly

short. At night, my toes hang over the edge - and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar I am *not*, not by any stretch (pun intended) of the imagination.

So, writing down these thoughts occupies me until about 3:15. I read a little of *TransAtlantic* on my Kindle before returning to bed at 3:45. (I receive an email from Pierce County Library that the five-book set of Tuesday Next stories by Jasper Fforde is now available for download; I'll wait a few days before doing this.) And I surprise myself by sleeping until the alarm goes off at 7:00. Hooray ME! I manage to get about seven hours of sleep.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

The morning begins as cloudy, rainy, and cool. Big surprise, eh? We have breakfast in the dining room (mine is the same as yesterday's). The newspaper that is delivered to our room is *The Independent*, described by Wikipedia this way: "*The Independent* is regarded as coming from the centre-left, on culture and politics, but tends to take a more pro-market stance on economic issues. It has not affiliated itself with any political party and features a range of views given on its editorial and comment pages." Given its serious nature, it comes as a surprise to see an article with this headline:

Russians fail to see reason after argument about Kant ends in shooting

It's not often that one encounters such news with his/her morning coffee. The article begins:

A philosophical argument about Immanuel Kant descended into violent mayhem in southern Russia, leading to a man being shot several times ... It is not known which of Kant's many theories was the subject of the debate. However, it is highly unlikely that the violent nature of the argument would have pleased Kant, the widely revered philosopher best known for his writing on ethics and his habitually sedentary lifestyle.

And we thought that members of the Tea Party were crazy! (Well, they are, but it's hard to imagine their getting into a fight over an 18th-century philosopher. Immigration policy? Sure. Obamacare? Certainly. Death Panels? Of course. But the Categorical Imperative? Not bloody likely.)

Also in *The Independent* is an obituary for Jon Manchip White, a widely-published fiction writer and amateur anthropologist, who was born in Wales in 1924, was educated at Cambridge, and served on the English Department faculty at The University of Tennessee for many years. Lee and I knew of him, although I don't recall that we'd actually met. What I didn't know, until reading the obituary, was this:

His right-of-centre politics – he sneered at "socialists and crypto-socialists" and was especially caustic about *New Statesman* readers – were expressed in *What to Do When the Russians Come: A Survivor's Handbook* (1984), an hysterical tract warning that the Soviet Union was about to engulf the world.

The obituary covers a full half-page in the newspaper, more space than he received in Knoxville's newspapers when his death was announced.

At 10:30, we venture forth and head north toward Carlisle (about 60 miles) and then east (another 20 miles) to view two remains of Roman settlements and Hadrian's Wall. During the drive, it is cold (9-10°C) and spitting rain, but there are no downpours. At about 12:30 we arrive at Roman Vindolanda, described at its web site: "Vindolanda was occupied for over 300 years and was an important frontier fort and village long before the construction of Hadrian's Wall. Indeed, Vindolanda saw nine forts come and go in those three centuries when generations of soldiers and their families called this place home." It was abandoned by the Romans (but probably not the locals) in 480 AD. The archaeological site allows one to see the ruins of dwellings, granaries, stables, barracks, and military headquarters. (And much to my delight, the

path leading to the excavation site is lined with 21st-century sheep.) There is an indoor museum that contains numerous artifacts from the site plus descriptions of the history. Among the most interesting artifacts unearthed by the excavation are the writing on wooden tablets, photographs of which are on display. Many of the messages are mundane: an invitation to a party, an inventory of supplies.

After a snack and coffee, it's but two miles to Housesteads Roman Fort and Museum. Like Vindolanda, this fort lasted for some three centuries. Its northern perimeter is Hadrian's Wall, whose construction was begun in AD 122 under the rule of Emperor Hadrian. Here is Wikipedia's description: "Hadrian's Wall was 73.0 miles long: its width and height were dependent on the construction materials which were available nearby. East of the River Irthing, the wall was made from squared stone and measured 9.8 feet wide and 16 to 20 feet high, while west of the river the wall was made from turf and measured 20 feet wide and 11 feet high. This does not include the wall's ditches, berms and forts."

The path up the steep hill from the carpark is, again, "guarded" by fierce sheep. The plan of the fort is much like the one at Vindolanda (it was essentially a small village, populated by soldiers and civilians). Portions of the wall are still intact, essentially unchanged over the intervening 1800 years. We are just a few miles south of the border with Scotland, but we are not fearful of being attacked by wild men, faces painted blue, and led by Mel Gibson.

The good news is that the morning's rain has ended. We are outdoors for a considerable time at Vindolanda and at Housesteads. Aside from grey skies and some cool winds, we manage to stay dry.

I had done the driving from Gilpin to the two destinations; Lee drives us back to the hotel. Some of the roads, especially those near the two forts, barely qualify as roads: they are narrow, nearly devoid of passing places, and have even more potholes than found in Tacoma. In the morning, getting from Gilpin, on the B5284, to the main highways (A6 and then M6), requires traversing unmarked roads on a route plotted by SWMBO. And even though we managed to get to the A6 in the morning, we have difficulty retracing the route in the late afternoon. We would see signs to Windermere (just west of Gilpin) but then further signs would not show up. Several curses and U-turns later, we switch drivers; Lee gets out the iPad and plots a route to get us "home" while I do the driving.

During our drives, today, we make a *fantastic* discovery. To avoid consuming "roaming time" by connecting the iPad to the 3G network, Lee caches the relevant section of the map onto the iPad's hard drive; this cached map could then be opened without having to reconnect to the internet. Like any Google map, one can expand it (to see the names of roads) and move the display in all four linear directions. That much we knew. What startles us is to discover that the GPS tracking was still active, even though we had severed connectivity. Thus, a small blue dot shows our location as we move along. (On occasion, the dot would get "lost" and either show us in the middle of a field or a lake; and sometimes it would appear as a very large light-blue circle whose accuracy was in doubt.)

Rather than returning to the hotel, we stop at The Wild Boar Inn (on the B5284, just east of Gilpin) at 6:30. (I had hoped that Lee would be driving the curving B5284, but as luck would have it, it's my responsibility.) We arrive at the inn as a van unloads a large number of elderly guests, mostly British women and a few men. Fortunately, they are checking into the hotel rather than going to the restaurant, so I push through the throng and find a waitress who leads us to an open table. Lee has soup and braised lamb. I have a traditional meal of fish and chips, a mistake given that these items were fried and breaded and, therefore, the source of my indigestion later in the evening. Not even two local ales could soothe the "evil" nature of the food. At a nearby table in the inn, an American (by his accent) was showing cell phone pictures, taken from a helicopter, of the flash flood that destroyed his Colorado home this week.

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF BRITSPEAK: ● A road sign SEVERE DIP AHEAD, alongside a meadow filled with sheep. Sheep dip? ● Another road sign LIABLE TO ICING. The grammar seems awkward; we would say "subject to icing" or "liable to ice over" or "possibility of icing." ● A road sign GIVE WAY is their equivalent of "yield"; I don't know which is preferable. ● My favorite road sign is HUMPS FOR NEXT

HALF-MILE; are we entering a red-light district? ● And how about the sign LOOSE CHIPPINGS? ● Trucks are "lorries," jewelry is pronounced *jewellery*, divided highways are "dual carriageways," and sidewalks are "foot paths." ● Of course, there are also the warning signs that one sees posted here and there: "Mind the step," "Mind the doorway," "Mind the poop" (OK, I made the last one up). ● And then there are the parts of a car: trunk = boot, hood = bonnet, gas = petrol, and sedan = saloon.

THE COLLECTIVE NOUN: This is unknown in the U.K. So, whereas Americans would say "The orchestra is tuning" or "The government is corrupt" or "Microsoft is a large company," the Brits would say "The orchestra *are* tuning," "The government *are* corrupt," and "Microsoft *are* a large company." Of course we're somewhat conflicted ourselves, changing from singular to plural depending how it sounds to our ears: "New York *is* a terrible team" but "The Mets *are* a terrible team." A nice discussion of this and other differences between the languages can be found in Wikipedia: <http://tinyurl.com/kvclpnc>

FURTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR "COMMON" LANGUAGES: Not only do we use different words and different verb forms (e.g., "I lit a cigarette" in the U.S. vs. "I lighted a cigarette" in England) but many words are pronounced differently: TELEvision in the U.S. - teleVISion in the U.K.; LABoratory in the U.S. - laBORatory (or even laBORatree) in the U.K.; or CONTrovery in the U.S. - conTROVersy in the U.K. And I'm convinced that the Brits are hiding deficiencies in their school system when they refer to "fifth form" or "upper sixth" or when they "sit an exam" or when they distinguish between A-levels and O-levels. Finally, our guide in the Cotswolds (see p. 26) told us that he knows his weight in stones (1 stone = 14 pounds) but not in kilograms or pounds. Should I even mention the different spellings: colour, centre, realise, etc.? Nah, these are well known and, besides, don't cause much trouble.

MORE ABOUT ROADS: Several times today we found ourselves on that great invention, the single-track road. We first encountered these when driving through Scotland in 2001, but those roads had clearly defined passing places (signified by a flag that could be seen from a distance) and clear rules as to which of the approaching cars should pull over to let the other pass. Such rules are in effect in England, but the flags denoting passing places are much harder to see from a distance; and even when close to one it's often hard to tell if a small dirt area really is wide enough to pull into. I would describe many of these passing places as "notional." In fact, Wikipedia says that they are often "simply wide spots in the road, which may be scarcely longer than a typical automobile." One other point: somewhere I read an online travel guide to which an American sent a question: "Is it legal to turn *right* on a red light in the U.K.?" The answer essentially said, "NO! Are you out of your frigging mind? But since you raise the question, you should also know that it is not even legal to make a *left* turn on a red light in the U.K."

THAT GREAT INVENTION, THE ROUNDABOUT: In the U.S., we refer to these as traffic circles or rotaries, but British traffic engineers argue that the roundabout is quite different from a traffic circle. Perhaps. These are common throughout the United Kingdom and can even be found on fast motorways. The rule is the same as in the U.S.: cars entering the round-about must yield to cars already within it. What makes them so confusing (even terrifying) is that traffic flows counter-clockwise and new traffic enters from the left, both of which are contrary to what occurs in our country. Some of these are huge, consisting of three or four lanes of traffic; fortunately they tend to be well-marked with posted signs before one enters and with white painted instructions on the road surface. Still, it's possible to get confused and miss one's exit - the strategy, then, is to continue around the circle until one reaches the proper exit spoke again. There are two types of roundabouts that deserve special mention: there is the double roundabout in which, as the driver exits from the first one he/she is immediately directed into the second; and there is the mini-roundabout, found in smaller towns and villages, which is nothing more than a circle (10 feet diameter or less) in the middle of an intersection - the rule is that one still needs to go around it on the left and to yield to traffic already there. It's tempting to drive straight ahead, crossing the circle. Somehow this all works out, more or less, and most drivers seem tolerant of those of us who get confused and wind up in the wrong lane.

Following our dinner at The Wild Boar Inn, we return to our hotel room, read for a while, do some internet browsing (e.g., *New York Times*), and head to bed at 10:45. At 2:00, I'm wide awake, and about to get out

of bed at 2:45 when the next thing I hear is Lee's voice, "Is it possible that it's past 6:00?" Indeed it was, which means that I got a good six-and-a-half hours of sleep during the night. And she got even more.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

When we open the curtains in the bedroom window at 7:30, we are somewhat pleased: there is no rain right now and the sky is blue with only widely scattered clouds. Having packed sun screen might not seem like such a dumb idea, after all.

We have breakfast in the dining room, but I switch to the smoked salmon and scrambled eggs breakfast, along with juice, toast, and coffee. There are some new staff in the restaurant to join the ones we'd seen before; when combined with the number of staff in the office, housekeeping detail, bar, etc. it's no wonder that the room tariff is so high.

MORE BRITSPEAK: I confess that I have a great deal of trouble understanding the regional accents of some of the people we've encountered. This was true about the ticket-selling clerk at Vindolanda yesterday (Lee* couldn't understand her either), the person at the Avis counter at the Manchester airport,

*And this is surprising, given that Lee almost always understands speech much better than I. This is true even in France. I've not only studied the language in school (six years worth) and have purchased tapes from the Foreign Language Institute and, most recently, DVDs from *Fluency*, whereas she has never studied the language. Nevertheless, she can usually figure out what someone is saying, relay it to me, and I have the facility with grammar and vocabulary to formulate a response. I know what my problem is and, despite my attempts to correct it, I fall into the same trap: if I don't understand a word or two at the beginning of a sentence, I devote so much thought to trying to translate it that the rest of the sentence passes by without my hearing it. Nevertheless, the northern accents that we're encountering (in some semblance of our own language) are causing troubles for both of us.

and others. It seems that the speech of these northern Englanders is very close to that of the Scots. Even the upper class accents of some of the staff and guests are heavily accented. Why, I ask you, Why can't the English learn to speak clearly? Well ... why???

Did I say that the weather looked promising? Well I was wrong. As we get to the car at about 10:00, the rain begins. We have rain and clouds and drizzle throughout much of the day. We are heading north, past the familiar towns of Ambleside and Grasmere, to Keswick, some 25 miles from Gilpin Hotel. The road, while not a major highway, at least is not as frightening as some of the roads we've traversed. As we observed yesterday, the sides of the roads, both in town and the countryside, are populated with locals who ignore the liquid precipitation falling on them and are gaily engaging in their morning walks.

Keswick (pronounced Kezzick), a moderate-sized town (population about 5000), is the home of a Christian convention every July and August (which typically attracts about 6000 visitors plus notable speakers like Billy Graham) and an annual beer festival in June, typically attended by about 5000. What a pity that the two events are not held simultaneously! One's breath is taken away when reading, in Wikipedia, "The town is also the site of the Cumberland Pencil Museum. This details the manufacturing history of pencils and shows how pencils have been used through the ages. One of the exhibits is what is claimed to be the world's largest pencil." We pass this up, not that we know about it when we arrive. Wikipedia also informs us that "The Keswick dialect is a variant of the Cumbrian dialect spoken around the Keswick and Cockermouth area." It's tempting ... but I'll leave resist commenting on that last factoid.

Our goal is not to tour Keswick but to get to its tourist information centre (sic) for information about the Newlands Pass Road, a twisty mountainous seven-mile adventure that goes from Braithwaite (8 miles west of Keswick) in a southwesterly direction to Buttermere. With the aid of a local map, we locate the

center, but are unable to find a parking place in the carpark or nearby streets. We wander hither and yon, unable to figure things out, and finally pull onto a side street where we can spread out the large map that the hotel had given us and reconcile it with the Google map on the iPad. It turns out that we are parked in front of a facility that doubles as a youth hostel and a cadet training academy. The chef, who is also the manager and janitor at this facility, senses our bewilderment and comes to the car to help us out. His name is Mark and he assures us that the Newlands Pass Road is very safe (despite our qualms after having read about it) and that we will have no trouble. He did allow that there are some tight places (gulp!) where it is good to slow down and pass an oncoming vehicle very slowly with as little contact as possible.*

*Wanna feel queasy? There's a video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APQaVflxMuM>) taken by a bicyclist as he traverses green fields and eventually gets to the highway, eventually reaching a speed of 58 mph. I doubt that we ever went more than 25 mph in our car.

He's a delightful young man and we have a conversation that I can actually understand! In the course of our talk, he tells us about a friend of his who had completed her college degree and moved to Seattle to be close to the Victorian Steampunk culture. She has posted pictures of herself on social media - Mark describes them as goth, but I do believe that they are infinitely more bizarre than that (e.g., <http://tinyurl.com/l5twu9m>)

Thus "armed" with information, we have no need to find the tourist center, but head directly to Braithwaite and the Newlands Road. In Braithwaite, at one point, we seem to be on a narrow driveway between two houses. But we soldier on. The road through the mountains is challenging (I have the "good" fortune to be the driver), but also beautiful as it curves left and right, ascends and descends, and passes waterfalls, lush fields, and numerous cattle and sheep. We stop at the summit (a meager 1100 feet, but hey - this is not the Cascades!) for pictures. We make it to the end, unscathed. During the drive, there has, of course, been intermittent rain, wind, and some squalls.

It's another three miles along Honister Pass Road to the Honister Slate Mines, where we arrive a little after noon. We park and make our way past (and through) numerous puddles to the Honister Sky Café where we can buy some lunch (coffee and pastries). The "dining room" consists of a few long tables and wooden benches that is open to the outdoors and is unheated; according to the car's thermometer, the temperature is about 9°C. After our snack, we wander through the display rooms and shops (both indoor and outdoor) of slate in various colors, sizes, and shapes that can be purchased. Tours are available (we are not tempted) of the underground mine and quarry. As Wikipedia describes it, "The mine boasts England's first *via ferrata*, a collection of steel cables that are anchored into the mountain side allowing visitors to traverse the rock face whilst wearing a safety harness." Thanks, but no thanks. (Most distressing is a display of little bags of Romney's Kendal Mints for 95 pence. Now we know where he disappeared to after the election!)

We leave Honister at about 1:30 and drive further along Honister Pass Road (where we never achieve a speed of over 15 mph) and drive north, but on the east side of Derwentwater (strange name for a little lake, eh? - sounds like There Went Water) to Keswick, then back to Gilpin Hotel. Lee is driving this last leg. There is a sign pointing to Cockermouth, but she refuses to go there; however, we are very close to Cockshot Wood, so I'm happy. We arrive at Gilpin at about 3:30.

As we did two days ago, we have dinner at the hotel. We sip scotches in the lounge at 6:30 and place our dinner orders from the menu. Again, a mysterious set of three unrecognizable food objects is placed before us, and the hovering pinky is used to describe each item in words that either can't be understood or can't be remembered. Another passage from *The Dinner* would seem to capture the scene:

"The crayfish are dressed in a vinaigrette of tarragon and baby green onions," said the manager: he was at Serge's plate now, pointing with his pinky. "And these chanterelles are from the Vosges." The pinky vaulted over the crayfish to point out two brown toadstools, cut lengthwise; the "chanterelles"

looked as though they had been uprooted only a few minutes ago: what was sticking to the bottom, I figured, could only be dirt.

It was a well-groomed hand ... Despite my earlier suspicions, there was nothing for him to hide: neat cuticles without hangnails, the nail itself trimmed short, no rings – it looked freshly washed, no signs of anything chronic. For the hand of a stranger, I felt like it was coming too close to our food – it hovered less than an inch above the crayfish; the pinky itself came closer, almost brushing the chanterelles.

This evening, I order from the five-course extravaganza which begins, of course, with an *amuse bouche* that was probably some sort of fruit-laced sherbet, but I forget. For my appetizer, I choose *Liver, Bacon & Onion* which is described as "Foie gras torchon, 'Richard Woodalls' Cumbrian ham, onion marmalade"; I don't know who Richard Woodalls is nor how we acquired his piece of ham, but I don't feel guilty about consuming it. For my main course, it's *English Rose Veal** described on the menu as "Fillet, tongue and

*Rose veal, I learn about from Wikipedia: "Rose veal in the UK (generally called young beef in Europe), is from calves raised on farms in association with the UK Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' Freedom Food programme. Its name comes from its pink colour, which is a result of the calves being slaughtered at or after 35 weeks (8 months up to 12 months)." Sounds pretty cruel to me, but ...

cheek, horseradish, borscht." Fillet of what - a young calf? And what's with this tongue and cheek? Where's the rest of the animal? Borscht, I understand, although any resemblance of this to the Russian-Jewish borscht that I know is at best accidental. Following this is the *Pre-Dessert* (whatever). And for the real dessert, I choose *Crème Caramel* which is subtitled "Walnut, pear, beurre noisette, sage." Beurre noisette, I learn from Wikipedia, is hazelnut butter and is often used warm for main courses (vegetables, fish, pasta, etc.) So where's the caramel? Damned if I know. We retire to the lounge where we have coffee and a plate of *petits fours*, once again explained with a hovering pinky.

Sated, we return to the room at 8:30 and are in bed by 11:00. Again, I awaken at 3:30 but manage to fall asleep again at 4:00 and not awaken again until the alarm goes off at 7:00.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

This is our last breakfast at Gilpin Hotel. I start with tomato juice and then get bold by ordering *Florida cocktail* (Grapefruit, orange, lime granite*). I then choose the same smoked salmon and scrambled eggs

*From this, I know nothing! I assume that it will not have chunks of granite in it, but modern gourmards do have eclectic tastes. What I learn from a website called *Sir Cookalot* (probably not a real person) is that it is prepared thus: "1 c sugar, 1 c strained fresh lime juice, 1 c water, about 7 large limes, 1 tb torn fresh mint leaves, fresh mint sprigs. Cook sugar and water in heavy small saucepan over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Bring to boil. Add 1 T mint leaves. Cool syrup. Whisk lime juice into syrup. Strain into ice cube trays (with dividers) and freeze until solid. Transfer cubes to heavy-duty plastic freezer bag. Freeze. Just before serving, place cubes in bowl. Using fork or knife, break cubes into coarse crystals. Divide granite among glasses. Garnish with mint." And now I know ... and so do you.

breakfast, along with juice, toast, and coffee, that I had yesterday.

We check out of the hotel early because we have a 155-mile drive due south to the small town of Telford and our hotel for the next two nights, The Calcutts House <http://www.calcuttshouse.co.uk/location.shtml> Our reason for going there is that this is the site for Ironbridge Gorge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The day is cloudy with occasional rain as I begin the drive, initially on the miserable B5284 but then on the better A591 and finally on the M6 that gets us within 15 miles of our destination. The hotel's web site has

specific driving instructions which tell visitors not to follow a SatNav route: "Be warned it may bring you into Ironbridge towards Jackfield down some very steep and narrow lanes." Thanks.

As we head south, we are leaving the bucolic and verdant part of the country and heading into the industrial middle. The highway takes us just to the west of Manchester and quite near Wigan. Earlier this year, I had read George Orwell's brilliant *The Road to Wigan Pier*. I'll now show off my erudition by discussing the book for a while. I'll eventually return to this travelog.

I had borrowed the book from Pierce County Library, but you can read it online and intact at: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200391.txt> The background: Orwell* was in his 30s when members of

*His best known books, *Animal Farm* and *1984*, would not be written until 1945 and 1949, respectively.

the Left Book Club (the name explains it all) sent him to investigate living and working conditions in Wigan and other industrial towns. Half of the book that he wrote, published in 1937, is devoted to his assigned mission; the second half is a polemic against the upper classes, including "do-gooders" of the organization that sent him. He argues that socialism (which he supports) would alleviate the major ills of society, but that those who give lip service to it actually work against it.

It is a profoundly depressing book. Orwell roomed in the house of a coal mining family. Here is part of his description:

There were generally four of us in the bedroom, and a beastly place it was, with that defiled impermanent look of rooms that are not serving their rightful purpose. Years earlier the house had been an ordinary dwelling-house, and when the Brookers had taken it and fitted it out as a tripe-shop and lodging-house, they had inherited some of the more useless pieces of furniture and had never had the energy to remove them. We were therefore sleeping in what was still recognizably a drawing-room. Hanging from the ceiling there was a heavy glass chandelier on which the dust was so thick that it was like fur. And covering most of one wall there was a huge hideous piece of junk, something between a sideboard and a hall-stand, with lots of carving and little drawers and strips of looking-glass, and there was a once-gaudy carpet ringed by the slop-pails of years, and two gilt chairs with burst seats, and one of those old-fashioned horsehair armchairs which you slide off when you try to sit on them. The room had been turned into a bedroom by thrusting four squalid beds in among this other wreckage.

My bed was in the right-hand corner on the side nearest the door. There was another bed across the foot of it and jammed hard against it (it had to be in that position to allow the door to open) so that I had to sleep with my legs doubled up; if I straightened them out I kicked the occupant of the other bed in the small of the back. He was an elderly man named Mr Reilly, a mechanic of sorts and employed 'on top' at one of the coal pits. Luckily he had to go to work at five in the morning, so I could uncoil my legs and have a couple of hours' proper sleep after he was gone. In the bed opposite there was a Scotch miner who had been injured in a pit accident (a huge chunk of stone pinned him to the ground and it was a couple of hours before they could lever it off), and had received five hundred pounds compensation. He was a big handsome man of forty, with grizzled hair and a clipped moustache, more like a sergeant-major than a miner, and he would lie in bed till late in the day, smoking a short pipe. The other bed was occupied by a succession of commercial travellers, newspaper-canvassers, and hire-purchase touts who generally stayed for a couple of nights. It was a double bed and much the best in the room. I had slept in it myself my first night there, but had been manoeuvred out of it to make room for another lodger. I believe all newcomers spent their first night in the double bed, which was used, so to speak, as bait. All the windows were kept tight shut, with a red sandbag jammed in the bottom, and in the morning the room stank like a ferret's cage. You did not notice it when you got up, but if you went out of the room and came back, the smell hit you in the face with a smack.

See what I mean? Orwell has enormous respect for the men who go into the mines to extract the coal. I could paraphrase him, but it's best to let him say it himself:

Our civilization, *pace* Chesterton, is founded on coal, more completely than one realizes until one stops to think about it. The machines that keep us alive, and the machines that make machines, are all directly or indirectly dependent upon coal. In the metabolism of the Western world the coal-miner is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil. He is a sort of caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported. For this reason the actual process by which coal is extracted is well worth watching, if you get the chance and are willing to take the trouble.

Probably you have to go down several coal-mines before you can get much grasp of the processes that are going on round you. This is chiefly because the mere effort of getting from place to place makes it difficult to notice anything else. In some ways it is even disappointing, or at least is unlike what you have expected. You get into the cage, which is a steel box about as wide as a telephone box and two or three times as long. It holds ten men, but they pack it like pilchards in a tin, and a tall man cannot stand upright in it. The steel door shuts upon you, and somebody working the winding gear above drops you into the void. You have the usual momentary qualm in your belly and a bursting sensation in the ears, but not much sensation of movement till you get near the bottom, when the cage slows down so abruptly that you could swear it is going upwards again. In the middle of the run the cage probably touches sixty miles an hour; in some of the deeper mines it touches even more. When you crawl out at the bottom you are perhaps four hundred yards underground. That is to say you have a tolerable-sized mountain on top of you; hundreds of yards of solid rock, bones of extinct beasts, subsoil, flints, roots of growing things, green grass and cows grazing on it--all this suspended over your head and held back only by wooden props as thick as the calf of your leg. But because of the speed at which the cage has brought you down, and the complete blackness through which you have travelled, you hardly feel yourself deeper down than you would at the bottom of the Piccadilly tube.

What is surprising, on the other hand, is the immense horizontal distances that have to be travelled underground. Before I had been down a mine I had vaguely imagined the miner stepping out of the cage and getting to work on a ledge of coal a few yards away. I had not realized that before he even gets to work he may have had to creep along passages as long as from London Bridge to Oxford Circus. In the beginning, of course, a mine shaft is sunk somewhere near a seam of coal; but as that seam is worked out and fresh seams are followed up, the workings get further and further from the pit bottom. If it is a mile from the pit bottom to the coal face, that is probably an average distance; three miles is a fairly normal one; there are even said to be a few mines where it is as much as five miles. But these distances bear no relation to distances above ground. For in all that mile or three miles as it may be, there is hardly anywhere outside the main road, and not many places even there, where a man can stand upright.

You do not notice the effect of this till you have gone a few hundred yards. You start off, stooping slightly, down the dim-lit gallery, eight or ten feet wide and about five high, with the walls built up with slabs of shale, like the stone walls in Derbyshire. Every yard or two there are wooden props holding up the beams and girders; some of the girders have buckled into fantastic curves under which you have to duck. Usually it is bad going underfoot--thick dust or jagged chunks of shale, and in some mines where there is water it is as mucky as a farm-yard. Also there is the track for the coal tubs, like a miniature railway track with sleepers a foot or two apart, which is tiresome to walk on. Everything is grey with shale dust; there is a dusty fiery smell which seems to be the same in all mines. You see mysterious machines of which you never learn the purpose, and bundles of tools slung together on wires, and sometimes mice darting away from the beam of the lamps. They are surprisingly common, especially in mines where there are or have been horses. It would be interesting to know how they got there in the first place; possibly by falling down the shaft--for they say a mouse can fall any distance uninjured, owing to its surface area being so large relative to its weight. You press yourself against the wall to make way for lines of tubs jolting slowly towards the shaft, drawn by an endless steel cable

operated from the surface. You creep through sacking curtains and thick wooden doors which, when they are opened, let out fierce blasts of air. These doors are an important part of the ventilation system. The exhausted air is sucked out of one shaft by means of fans, and the fresh air enters the other of its own accord. But if left to itself the air will take the shortest way round, leaving the deeper workings unventilated; so all the short cuts have to be partitioned off.

At the start to walk stooping is rather a joke, but it is a joke that soon wears off. I am handicapped by being exceptionally tall, but when the roof falls to four feet or less it is a tough job for anybody except a dwarf or a child. You not only have to bend double, you have also got to keep your head up all the while so as to see the beams and girders and dodge them when they come. You have, therefore, a constant crick in the neck, but this is nothing to the pain in your knees and thighs. After half a mile it becomes (I am not exaggerating) an unbearable agony. You begin to wonder whether you will ever get to the end--still more, how on earth you are going to get back. Your pace grows slower and slower. You come to a stretch of a couple of hundred yards where it is all exceptionally low and you have to work yourself along in a squatting position. Then suddenly the roof opens out to a mysterious height--scene of and old fall of rock, probably--and for twenty whole yards you can stand upright. The relief is overwhelming. But after this there is another low stretch of a hundred yards and then a succession of beams which you have to crawl under. You go down on all fours; even this is a relief after the squatting business. But when you come to the end of the beams and try to get up again, you find that your knees have temporarily struck work and refuse to lift you. You call a halt, ignominiously, and say that you would like to rest for a minute or two. Your guide (a miner) is sympathetic. He knows that your muscles are not the same as his. 'Only another four hundred yards,' he says encouragingly; you feel that he might as well say another four hundred miles. But finally you do somehow creep as far as the coal face. You have gone a mile and taken the best part of an hour; a miner would do it in not much more than twenty minutes. Having got there, you have to sprawl in the coal dust and get your strength back for several minutes before you can even watch the work in progress with any kind of intelligence.

Orwell goes on to describe the poor hygiene, lack of medical attention, pitiful stipends for miners who are injured or are suffering from lung diseases, lack of good nutrition, lack of job security (one can get fired without cause), impossible prospects for escaping from the life that is left to you ... and on and on and on. I recommend, most strongly, that you read the entire book, but if you decide not to do that you can at least learn about its contents at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_to_Wigan_Pier

So, back to our trip to Telford. I drive the first 90 miles. We stop for lunch at an M6 service station with its food court that makes one almost feel at home: Burger King, KFC, Krispy Kreme donuts, etc. After coffee and a pastry, Lee takes over the driving. Lucky girl - it may have only been drizzling during my drive but she gets to experience occasional heavy rains and squalls. We arrive in Telford at about 2:00.

Calcutts House is a cut or two (maybe more than two) below Gilpin Hotel, but considerably cheaper (about 1/3 the price) and, thank heavens, astronomically more copacetic than the housing that Orwell encountered. We are met by James, one of the owners, and Seren, his wonderful Airedale. James is very tall and slender (think Basil Fawlty, aka John Cleese) and initially he shows us to a miserable room that is not in the main house but in an out-parcel, probably a carriage house. Lee reminds him that we have booked the "Lord Dundonald double en-suite room" and this ain't it! Aha, he realizes his error and helps us carry the luggage (he totes the two heavy cases) to our first-floor (read "second" floor) room in the main house. He explains that his wife and daughter are going on a visit to prospective colleges, so he'll be in charge of preparing our breakfast. The choices are simpler (and in much more comprehensible English) than at Gilpin, for which we are relieved. We make our selections on a sheet of paper and leave the note for him. Our room is very rustic and has an old four-poster bed; the floors creak and sag, but at least the bathroom is quite modern.

James gives us a few recommendations for dinner for tonight and tomorrow. A short walk from the hotel is *Black Swan Inn*, so we decide on it for today. Another recommendation is for *Robin Hood Inn*, just

across the river; we keep it in mind for tomorrow. Then, without even unpacking, we drive into town and head for the Museum of Iron, one of two related museums that tell the story of Ironbridge Gorge. The drive is along narrow, winding streets, and up some steep inclines with severe drop-offs. To quote from the museum's website:

The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage property covers an area of 5.5 km² and is located in Telford, Shropshire, approximately 50 km north-west of Birmingham. The Industrial Revolution had its 18th century roots in the Ironbridge Gorge before spreading across the world, bringing with it some of the most far-reaching changes in human history. The site incorporates a 5 km length of the steep-sided, mineral-rich Severn Valley from a point immediately west of Ironbridge downstream to Coalport, together with two smaller river valleys extending northwards to Coalbrookdale and Madeley.

The Ironbridge Gorge offers a powerful insight into the origins of the Industrial Revolution and also contains extensive evidence and remains of that period when the area was the focus of international attention from artists, engineers, and writers. The site contains substantial remains of mines, foundries, factories, workshops, warehouses, ironmasters' and workers' housing, public buildings, infrastructure, and transport systems, together with traditional landscape and forests of the Severn Gorge. In addition, there also remain extensive collections of artefacts and archives relating to the individuals, processes and products that made the area so important.

In the early 18th century, a Quaker named Abraham Darby decided to build an iron works in a town called Coalbrookdale. According to an information board at the museum, "Coalbrookdale lies on the western edge of the East Shropshire Coalfield, a thick sandwich of rocks including seams of coal, ironstone, and clay ... Coalbrookdale also lies at the northern end of Wenlock Edge, a great wave of Silurian limestone, another ingredient in iron making. At the end of the valley, the River Severn provided the iron makers with a highway to the markets spread along it, especially the great port of Bristol."

Again quoting from the web site:

The Coalbrookdale blast furnace and Ironbridge exerted great influence on the development of techniques and architecture. Ironbridge Gorge provides a fascinating summary of the development of an industrial region in modern times. Mining centres, transformation industries, manufacturing plants, workers' quarters and transport networks are sufficiently well-preserved to make up a coherent ensemble whose educational potential is considerable. The Coalbrookdale blast furnace perpetuates in situ the creative effort of Abraham Darby I, who discovered coke iron in 1709. It is a masterpiece of man's creative genius in the same way as Ironbridge, which is the first known metal bridge, built in 1779 by Abraham Darby III from the drawings of the architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard.

We wander through the Museum of Iron from 2:45 to 4:00. Not only is the Darby process described and the history of the region delineated but we see outstanding examples of wrought iron, some used for tools others for indoor decorations. I was not familiar with AGA stoves, but here is where they were (and still are) made. These are high-end ovens and stoves, very industrial looking but also superb for even distribution of heat. <http://www.aga-ranges.com/>

After the museum, we visit the restored Darby Houses where the descendants of Abraham Darby lived. Here we encounter women with upscale accents who serve as guides and hostesses in the two buildings. The houses stand in contrast to the very much blue-collar aspect of the town and, of course, of the activity that lends the town its name.

We return to the hotel, unpack, and walk to *Black Swan Inn*. After taking a table and sitting for a while, we realize that we need to order at the bar. So I walk over, order a couple of local ales (these are filled to the top and allowed to overflow so that the foam is skimmed off and more ale can be added - just try carrying these to the table without spilling!) I order the "Ironbridge Melt" (chewy chicken breast, bacon, cheese, new potatoes, and salad) while Lee has a Shepherd's Pie with mushy peas and chips. Down-market, to

be sure, but also a pleasant relief after the *fancy foods* at Gilpin.

We return to the room where there is coffee and cookies. Lee checks TripAdvisor and learns that *Black Swan Inn* is rated as number 4 of 30 in Telford, with a rating of 4.5 out of 5. Really? My review would be "Okay" but no more than that: the chicken was tough, probably because it had been in too many fights during its short lifetime. Of course it was noisy, especially near the bar; and it was difficult to get close enough to place the order for food and to pay the check.

We read until 10:45. I have a restless evening (the bed is too soft, the room is too warm, I'm too grumpy) but I do manage to sleep until the alarm clock goes off at 7:00.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

We go to the pleasant breakfast room at 8:00. Like our bedroom, it is quite rustic, with floors that slope downward and that creak when someone walks by. There are rather gloomy pairs of fellow guests* at two

*Lee has written "The other tables at breakfast [are] occupied by thoroughly middle-class folks – lumpy, poorly color-coordinated, and/or bad haircuts." In an apologetic mood, she adds "catty, catty!"

other tables. Yesterday I had placed an order for fried egg, bacon, toast, and coffee. (Fruit, juices, and yogurt are on a side table, so there's no need to order them. There's also cold cereal,* but I don't take

*When we get to the Cotswolds, I'll relate a funny story (p. 30), told by our guide, about an inn that offered cold and hot foods at breakfast. Be patient.

any.) Lee's poached egg came out looking like my fried egg, and my bacon is like the breakfast meat served at Gilpin: soft and chewy, not crisp as we serve it in the U.S. There are also some mushrooms on my plate along with two kinds of toast; butter and jam are on the table. Coffee is served in a French press, which seems to be the norm in every hotel we visit in England during this trip. Unlike the glass coffee urn at Gilpin, this one is metal - the coffee seems to stay warm longer. There's some truly sappy music coming through the P.A. system - I'll have more to say about this on p. 69.

The sky is cloudy, but there is a promise of some blue skies and mercifully there is no rain. We consult with James and ask him to reserve a table for us at D'Arcy's, an Italian restaurant at the train station, this evening. Lee tries to connect to it via her iPad, but the internet in the room is much too slow. Here in Gig Harbor, I can see that the web site is <http://www.darcysironbridge.co.uk/>

Because of the narrow streets, with cars parked every which way,* I ask Lee if she'll do the "honor" of

*If you go to the old style Google Maps and hone in on Telford, UK, then pan down to the River Severn and B4373 bridge that crosses it, then use the "street view" to "drive" along Waterloo Street, then High Street, and finally The Wharfage, you should make note as you go through the town of how narrow the two-way streets are and how haphazardly cars are parked. The museum that we're going to is the castle-like structure across the street from the Tourist Information Centre.

driving to the Museum of the Gorge, which is on the banks of the Severn. She accepts the challenge. The museum's displays are, largely, about the history of the town and its most famous visitor in 1796, Prince William of Orange (cousin to George III, whom all Americans know) and his bride, Princess Wilhelmina. Thrilling, eh? We stay for about 45 minutes, then stroll along the banks of the Severn and back into town. Along the way, we get closeup views of the famous Iron Bridge (built in 1779) and walk across it to visit the Ironbridge Tollhouse on the other side. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironbridge>

While in town, we seek (in vain) an ATM, as our supply of British currency is running low. We learn that

there is no bank in this town, but that the post office has an ATM; alas, it is not working. Nor do our bank cards work when we try them in two commercial cash-dispensing machines located inside a pharmacy and a convenience store. One of the clerks tells us that a real bank(!) is in the nearby Madeley shopping center which, fortuitously, is not far from our next tourist destination, the Blists Hill Victorian Village. We arrive at the village shortly after noon and don't leave until 3:00.

Unlike many such historical recreations in the U.S. (e.g., Mystic Village in Connecticut, Williamsburg in Virginia), this open-air museum grabs one's attention with its careful regard for detail, with regard to architecture, road surfaces (lots of muddy puddles), and employees who are dressed in period outfits and are trained to answer questions in the various shops that they are in charge of. The stores have posted old-timey signs, my favorite of which is for "Matron Milly's Female Mixture: The only known Safe Remedy that will remove all obstructions from whatever cause arising, and bring about all that is required." Pretty cautious language, eh?

Among the buildings are a post office, pharmacy, men's and women's clothing stores, grocery, butcher, draper, dentist, photographer, school house, confectioner, fish monger, tavern, plumber, and so on. There are some farm animals (pigs, chickens, horses) and working shops for a blacksmith, tinsmith, carpenter, and iron worker. We are given a demonstration of the elevator (much like the one described by Orwell on p. 19) that delivered workers to the mines. All in all, a wonderful experience - and the rains has mercifully held off!

We try to get to the bank in Madeley Center, but cannot find a parking space anywhere. So we park in the lot of the Tesco grocery store, go inside to buy some "biscuits" (cookies to us) - we do want to look like actual customers - then stand in line outside the store at an ATM that is actually working. Our cards are rejected at first (this is getting annoying!), but at least we see an on-screen message "beyond the limit" so we now know to ask for £100, instead of £200, and it works. Apparently this had been the problem with all of other ATMs that rejected us (aside from those that were truly broken) but as they displayed no message we could not learn the reason.

At about 3:30 we return to the hotel and ask if our dinner reservation for d'Arcy's has been made. Yes it has, for 6:30. We then walk to the nearby Jackfield Tile Museum, which surprises me by its excellent displays and variety of tiles <http://www.ironbridge.org.uk/our-attractions/jackfield-tile-museum/> I take numerous pictures that the interested reader can view at the Picasa web site. (I would have taken more pictures, but the battery of the camera was running on low after this long day.)

At about 4:45, we return to the hotel and learn that our dinner reservation at d'Arcy's has been canceled because the chef is sick and the restaurant is closed, so James has made us a different reservation at Woodbright Inn in Coalport, on the banks of the Severn, some distance out of town. Most of their tables are reserved for people staying at the inn, but they do have a few for drop-ins if they arrive early ... which we do (at 5:30), once we find the damned place. (As backup, just in case no table is available, there's also "The King and Thai" near the Woodbright.)

This is a real find. The grounds are beautiful and the dining room is handsomely appointed (and, contrary to what James was told, has ample seating for drop-ins). We are seated near a bookshelf; among its treasures are a university physics textbook from the 1930s and a history of England from George III to George VI, nothing earlier nor later. Because of the low battery on the camera, no pictures are available except for those at the web site <http://www.brunningandprice.co.uk/woodbridge/> As in other restaurants, I learn that I need to order at the bar, so first I ask the attendant to draw two local ales* for us. Then for

*A quaint shtick: there is a wall slate that describes the cask ales in terms of their percent alcohol and "beer miles"; the latter is the distance the beer/ale traveled from the brewery to the restaurant's casks. Our chosen ales traveled 21.7 miles.

dinner, I begin with liver paté while Lee has scallops. My main is a chicken breast accompanied by

mushrooms, bacon, and papperdelle; Lee has pork loin with suitable accompaniments. Satisfied both with the quality and quantity of the food, we return to the hold where we read and do some internet work before retiring.

Two of the more entertaining road signs that we saw, yesterday and today, are "HUMPS for 500 Yards" and "Elderly People," the latter with a pictograph of stooped-over people with canes. I manage to get a picture of the former but not, alas, of the latter. However, on September 23 on the way to Cirencester I do get a picture of the Elderly People sign; it is posted at the Picasa web site.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

It is a cloudy morning, no rain. After a quick breakfast (this time we are the only guests present), we check out at 9:00 (ably assisted by James who helps with the luggage) and head west on the M54 toward Shrewsbury,* (population about 102,000), some 15 miles away. The town is built on a peninsula with The

*We learn from Wikipedia that "The town was possibly the site of the capital of Powys, known to the ancient Britons as Pengwern, signifying 'the alder hill'; and in Old English as Scrobbesburh (dative Scrobbesbyrig), which has several meanings: 'fort in the scrub-land region,' 'Scrobb's fort,' 'shrubstown' or 'the town of the bushes.' This name gradually evolved in three directions, into Sciropscire, which became Shropshire; into Sloppesberie, which became Salop/Salopia (an alternative name for both town and county); and into Schrosberie, which eventually became the town's name, Shrewsbury. Its Welsh name Amwythig means 'fortified place.' " And now you know! (But I'll bet that you didn't know that town names can have a dative case!)

River Severn ringing it on the west, south, and east.

We arrive in town at 10:15* and park, then walk about the central area, stopping in at the Indoor Market, a

*"What? You took 75 minutes for a 15-mile trip?" I hear you ask. Well, sort of. You see, we got lost leaving Telford, finding ourselves near (but not on) the fast M54 and winding through truck stops and who knows what else. Even the faithful iPad wasn't very helpful. Eventually we found our way.

jumble of unrelated shops and stalls ranging from flowers to groceries to clothing to meats to cheeses to carpets to books and even to long-playing vinyl records. Alas, The Psychology Shop is unmanned, but it is right next to a sign KEEP CALM AND HAVE A CUPCAKE. Leaving the market, we wind through city streets, both wide and narrow, and admire the many half-timbered houses (many of which are poached out as if a huge balloon had opened inside).

About an hour after arriving, we are at the Shrewsbury Public Library, fronted by a statue of the city's favorite son, Charles Darwin. Darwin attended Shrewsbury school, the building which is now the library. Visitors are welcome and, after one passes through library space (stuffy and over-heated) we visit rooms where Darwin (and his pals) studied, yet took time to carve their initials in desks and window frames.

At noon, we head east on the M54, then south on the M5 some 100 miles to The Cotswolds and, specifically, to The Lords of the Manor (our "home" for the next three nights) in Upper Slaughter,* about a

*Ya gotta love those English town names. But, sad to say, the name has nothing to do with mayhem and murder. According to a tourist web site, "The name ... is derived from the old English word Slohtre meaning a muddy place, which it may once have been but not anymore."

mile from Lower Slaughter. We pass to the west of Birmingham (and the very heavy car and truck traffic heading toward the city) and stop at a service station at noon, just to the south of the city for coffee and pastry. I discover that I do have a cell phone signal (four bars) but that I cannot connect to a network.*

*I've been disappointed to find that I've had no cell phone service since arriving in England. I never checked when we were at the Manchester airport, but there has been no signal in the Lake District nor Ironbridge Gorge nor at any of the points in between. Granted it's not a "smart" phone but this dumb phone (which is designated "world phone") did have connectivity when we traveled in urban and rural areas of France in 2011. There's a long and not very illuminating story about this, but here's the short version. In early 2012, the phone failed; because it was under warranty, Verizon sent me a replacement but never told me to transfer the SIM card from the old phone. So, as we cruised the North Sea and then drove through Netherlands and Belgium that summer, the phone would not connect to any local network. When I discovered that I had no SIM card, I purchased one in the U.S. later in the year, hoping that it would work during this fall 2013 trip. So what's wrong? Upon returning home, I went to the original Verizon store in Tacoma - they ordered a replacement SIM card, although probably nothing was wrong with this one, and told me that I had to call Verizon before foreign travel to get authorization for using the phone overseas. Nowhere is this mentioned in their literature, but I'll give it a try before we go to Australia in March, 2014. I have no confidence that it will work. As it will turn out during the remainder of this trip, I will see cell phone bars at the Basel airport but not anywhere on the Rhine cruise nor in Amsterdam, even at the airport.

As we head south toward the Slaughters, the weather takes a turn for the worse: cloudy with dropping temperatures but no rain. The driving instructions from the hotel tell us to exit the M5 at Junction 10 or 11 and drive through Cheltenham and then onto the A40, then the A429, and so on. What the instructions do not tell us is that the mellifluously named Cheltenham is a traffic nightmare. Large numbers of cars are negotiating the narrow city streets with their many turns (to stay on the main arteries) and stop lights and pedestrians and shopping malls and big box stores, even a Whole Foods. A charming country village, it most definitely is not. After much cursing and gnashing of teeth (or was it gnashing and cursing of teeth?), we emerge from the traffic and are on free-flowing roads.

BRITISH RADIO: In the car, we've been listening either to BBC2 (talk and news) or BBC3 (classical music). The announcers or programmers for the latter seem to have a fascination for movie music, as we hear many soundtracks over the past few days. Today they played Erich Korngold's music for *The Prince and the Pauper*. "Whoa," sayeth I to my bride, "That's the theme for his violin concerto, not for some silly movie." At the conclusion of the piece, the announcer said "Those of you with good ears may have recognized the theme from Korngold's violin concerto." Yep, that's me, Old Good Ears.

The last leg of the journey is on a single track road (or a very narrow two-way road) from Lower Slaughter to Upper Slaughter, past meadows and farms, but eventually we arrive at the parking lot of our hotel: <http://www.lordsofthemanor.com/> The main building of Lords of the Manor and its grounds are spectacular, quite an improvement over Calcutts House (but, then, it should be given that the room tariff is about what we paid at Gilpin Hotel). One of the office staff comes out to greet us and ushers us inside. His accent is different from those that we encountered in the north of England, but still he is difficult to understand. He arranges for our luggage to be brought up to the room and for our car to be parked ... somewhere. (In a day or two, I'll discover that the "secret" parking lot is just beyond the garden at the back of the hotel.) He takes us on a tour of the lounges and restaurants, then guides us to our "first-floor" room which is up a full set of stairs followed a half-flight (26 steps in all); so it's really on the 2nd or 2nd-and-a-halfth floor .

The entire hotel is very warm. One reason is that the various large radiators (in the common rooms, in the hallway outside our room, etc.) are going full blast even though the day is not especially cool. We open the windows in our bedroom, but the cooling effect is minimal. To get away from the intense heat, we go for a brief walk on the grounds. The room is very beautiful and surprisingly large. The appointments are traditional (i.e., not to our modern taste) but that's what we expected. A card in the room tells us about the amenities that can be ours ... for a price. Among these are Indian Head Massage at £45, Eyelash Trim at £23, Eyelash Perm at £40, and Clay Pigeon Shooting at £50 (cash only). Also available are Archery,

Paintballing (really!), Squad Biking (whatever that is), Helicopter Treasure Hunt, Horseback Riding, Group Hacking at £29/hour, and Private Hacking at £49/hr. We decide to pass on these.

The same office person calls several restaurants, trying to get us a reservation for dinner tonight. He secures a table at 6:00 at Wheatsheaf in Northleech, but only after we promise to vacate it by 7:30 for the guests who have a reservation. He describes the food as good, but not "fine" dining. He says that it's about 15 minutes from here. We give ourselves some extra time by leaving for the restaurant at 5:25. While waiting for the car to be delivered, we chat with Paul Thompson, the hotel's general manager. He says that we were upgraded from the room we expected to have (called a rectory room) to the Lords Room, the best room in the hotel at no increase in cost, because our travel agent had told him that we were VIPs. When I finish laughing, I tell him that we are, by no stretch of the imagination VIPs, but that we're not going to give up our room.

Lee is driving and I have a notional map from the front desk, but still we get lost. We make our way back to the A429 without difficulty and from there to its intersection with the A40. From my reading of the map, I had us make a left turn toward Oxford and London, which turned out to be correct, but we drive much too far and soon find ourselves in the open countryside. We can't call the restaurant, even though we have its phone number, because neither of us remembers the country code for England! So we retrace our steps on the A40 and Lee spots a turnoff to Northleech. *Sure and begorrah* (oops, Irish coming out) we find the restaurant on the main street. Of course their parking lot is full ... and there is no on-street parking, so Lee leaves me at the restaurant to secure our table while she searches for a parking lot.

Eventually our little family is reunited inside the restaurant. The Wheatsheaf is a gastro pub that gets pretty good reviews on TripAdvisor. I have a pea and ham soup followed by a main course of calves liver (with polenta and figs). The food is good and the prices are moderate. We return to the hotel and, because the WiFi signal is essentially nil in our room, repair to the lounge and do our internet thing, Lee on the iPad and me on the laptop. We sit near an open window, but it is not enough to dissipate the heat from an adjacent radiator.

We return to the room and have cookies and coffee (a French press, again; Lee says it's called a *cafetière* in the UK, but what do I know? A Google search tells me that it's called a *cafetière à piston* in France.) The room is a bit cooler than earlier in the evening, but not much.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Before coming to England, we had reviewed the web sites of people who offer tours in the Cotswolds and we decided upon Ken Fowler, a native of the region and highly recommended both by testimonials at his web site <http://www.fowler-tours.co.uk/> and also at TripAdvisor. We arranged to have him drive us around in his Nissan SUV so as to see as many sights in the area as possible.

But first, what is meant by The Cotswolds? According to Wikipedia, "The Cotswolds are a range of hills in southwestern and west-central England, an area 25 miles across and 90 miles long. The area has been designated as the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty." But this is rather indistinct, and a great many towns and villages claim to be in The Cotswolds even if not within these boundaries. And where does the word come from? According to an official tourist web site and confirmed by Ken Fowler, "The name 'Cotswold' is the meeting of two English words — 'wold' meaning gentle hills and 'cots' referring to sheep enclosures." In contrast to the industrialized region that we had spent the past two days in, this region is known for its natural beauty, handsome towns, and thatched roofs.

A welcome change from the gloom and rain of the past few days: this morning, the sun comes blasting into the room and the skies are cloudless. Alas, this probably means that it will be a warm day (which means a hot day inside this hotel) but it's far preferable to the rain for picture-taking and sight-seeing. There is some low-lying morning fog on the grassy area outside our window - I take a picture that shows it

very well.

Breakfast is in one of the larger dining rooms. Fruit, juices, cold cereal, cold meats, and cheese are available on a side counter. At our table, we order coffee (French press again) and we each have smoked salmon and scrambled eggs; the display is not as artistic* as at Gilpin but (surprise!) tastes the same.

*At Lords of the Manor, the eggs and slices of salmon are arranged side-by-side. How boring! At Gilpin, the mound of eggs was corralled by salmon slices, wrapped all around.

Before meeting Ken Fowler, I go out to the back garden to take pictures. There are numerous paths, flowers, bushes, herbs, and fruit trees (pear, apple) that are depositing their goodies on the pavement. (As I walk around the side of the building, I see a pair of road signs at the corner: above is a red-bordered triangular sign with the word FORD; below is a rectangular sign with the words UNSUITABLE FOR MOTOR VEHICLES. I can't help wondering if Chevrolet or Chrysler paid for this.) Along the edge of the garden are small stone sculptures in the shape of toadstools (also called staddle stones), something that we'll see often in the next several days. And guess what? You can order one for your very own home from eBay: <http://www.ebay.co.uk/bhp/stone-mushroom> Later today, I'll explore the huge front lawn, the stream that runs past it, the pond with swans and ducks, and take pictures. All of the pictures are, of course, at Picasa.

Ken arrives at the hotel at 9:20 and we set out. Our first stop, some eight miles to the north, is Snowhill (pronounced *snozzle*), a lovely town with attractive neighborhoods and many houses with characteristic thatched roofs. We note, both here and in the other towns, that there is wire mesh over the thatching to prevent birds from eating the insects who inhabit the thatch. Fact or just a fable, I can't tell, but Ken tells us that the purpose of four-poster beds was to protect sleepers from bugs that fell out of the thatch. And we marvel at the magnificent stone walls, seen all over the region, that have stood for centuries even though no mortar is used to hold the stones together.

From there, it's just four more miles to Broadway (not to be confused, not by any stretch of the imagination, with the Great White Way of NYC). It is a picturesque town (as are most of the towns and villages that we'll visit today), but its most famous (and imposing) sight is Broadway Tower, a stone faux-castle built on a hill and reaching a height of 65 feet above ground level. There are indoor spiral staircases that stop at various intermediate levels where one can ooh and ahh (if one is prone to oohing and ahing) over William Morris (1834-1896) textiles. From the top of the tower, there is a spectacular view (well, not so spectacular this day because of the mist) of distant fields and mountains. According to the tower's web site, "Broadway Tower was the perfect choice for the Royal Observers Corps to track enemy planes over England during the wars of the 20th Century. In 1943 a bomber crashed into Beacon Hill 200m from Broadway Tower and the tenant farmer, who was also a member of the Royal Observer Corps, tried to save the lives of the men in the plane. He was later recognised by Sir Winston Churchill for his efforts." Furthermore, adjacent to the tower is a nuclear bunker, one of many built in the 1950s to protect from radioactive fallout of a nuclear attack; we choose not to visit it.

Seven miles to the east is Chipping Campden (oh, those evocative ... and, frankly, strange ... English town names), now a market town but, in the middle ages an important center for wool trading. In fact, wool will play a major role, not only in the history of this region but also in headstones in the shape of sheep for wool merchants over the centuries. Ken Fowler, our guide, is a descendant of wool merchants, as he recounts in his family history:

Weaving and its related trades are known to have been carried out as a cottage industry in the Cotswolds, more precisely in West Oxfordshire, for many hundreds of years, since before the Norman invasion in 1066. My family were very much part of this industry and we know that one particular ancestor, my great, great, great, great grandfather, Joseph Fowler, a "tucker,"* wrote the Witney

*Please be careful when spelling this word and saying it out loud.

Tuckers' song, "Wonderfully Curious," in or around 1840. The following explains his role in more detail, and later I explain more about what a "tucker" actually did.

Joseph Fowler, was a tucker in the Witney blanket industry and worked at West End Mill, in Witney. He is thought to have been born around the time of the Battle of Waterloo (1815). The song was sung by him at the annual Tuckers' Feast which was held on Shrove Tuesday and was a very old custom in the town. He sang the verses, with the tuckers joining in the choruses. The song was performed every year at the annual Witney Feast for over 140 years. It was last performed in the 1980s, when the Feasts came to an end. I remember my father, Jack Fowler, the Burford builder, taking me to see this song being performed at "Witney Feast" when I was a boy. When I meet you I could be persuaded to sing* a verse for you!

*We resisted the temptation to ask ... and he was gentleman enough not to offer.

Ken goes on to write, perhaps in more detail than you'd care to know, about the occupations of his ancestors:

When he had woven a length of cloth the weaver would generally pass it on to a group of people known as fullers or tuckers to be fullled and finished. Straight from the loom, a piece of woollen cloth is a coarse, sacking-like material with little substance. After it has been fullled, dried, stretched and raised it is transformed into a softer, thicker and fluffier cloth. In the fulling process the cloth was repeatedly pounded in water with fuller's earth (or a similar substance) added to scour and shrink it. The fuller's earth removed the grease added to the wool before spinning, while the beating action matted together the woollen fibres until the cloth looked like felt and the weave pattern became less obvious. In Witney fuller's earth was probably always used as there was a natural supply available in the Cotswold region.

The earliest method of fulling was to trample the cloth by foot in vats, and this way was certainly used by the Romans. By Medieval times (as early as the 12th Century) the fulling mill had been invented. Sited on good fast flowing river stretches, water power was used to drive a wheel which alternately raised and dropped pairs of heavy wooden hammers called fulling stocks onto the cloth. Fulling thus became the first power-driven process in the wool industry, able to pound away at the cloth by day and night and replacing the work of several people.

The tuckers were independent of the master weavers but were employed or contracted by them to finish the blankets and were paid twice yearly. This arrangement may have arisen because fulling was the first process in the woollen industry to become mechanised and fulling mills required a lot of capital to build and maintain, so that specialisation was necessary. Another reason was that fulling and finishing were skilled procedures that were critical to the quality of the finished cloth and required several men to them carry out. Like weavers, tuckers were organised into masters and their journeymen employees. The master tucker was responsible for all losses and damage to the blankets while they were entrusted to him for finishing. Many other members of my forebearers worked in the wool trade or the building industry in the Burford and Witney area.

Many of the homes in Chipping Campden have minuscule (well, that's maybe an exaggeration) doors, seemingly built to accommodate a Hobbit but not a human being. Ken also points out iron crosses, some in the shape of an X and others like a plus sign, in the outer walls of commercial and residential buildings. These are structural elements to keep the walls from bowing out. One of the homes has stone "guard dogs" protecting the entrance while another has a stone fox chasing a hare on the roof and yet another has two stone owls on its thatched roof.

From there, it's but 10 miles to the south to reach Stow-on-the-Wold, another small market town and the site of a massacre during the English Civil War of 1646. According to a commemorative plaque, some 200 Royalists, having been defeated in the Battle of Stow, were slaughtered in the town square and their blood was allowed to run down the street; another 1500 were imprisoned in the church. In the town square is a stock in which I am required to incarcerate myself so that others might take a picture. No blood runs down the street, however.

Heading south an additional 10 miles we are in the town of Swinbrook. (As Ken navigates these narrow roads, many of them single-track, I am delighted that we have chosen to let him do the driving. He seems quite unconcerned by the close passing of oncoming cars and by the bushes that are scraping against his van.) We visit the village church, begun in the 1200s and added to over the years, and can't help but giggle at the tombs of various warriors, recumbent with one arm propping up the head, the other arm on the hip. One of these is William Fetiplace whose inscription tells us that he was a knight who died in 1562. In the graveyard are the tombstones for four of the six Mitford* sisters: Nancy, Unity, Diana, and Pamela.

*According to Wikipedia, "The Mitford family is a minor aristocratic English family whose main family line had seats from 1828 at the then-newly-built Mitford Hall. Several heads of the family served as High Sheriff of Northumberland. A junior line, with seats at Newton Park, Northumberland and Exbury House, Hampshire descends via the historian William Mitford (1744-1827) and were twice elevated to the British peerage, in 1802 and 1902, under the title Baron Redesdale. The Mitford sisters are William Mitford's great-great-granddaughters.

The sisters, six daughters of David Freeman-Mitford, 2nd Baron Redesdale and Sydney Bowles, became celebrated and at times scandalous figures that were caricatured, according to The Times journalist Ben Macintyre, as 'Diana the Fascist, Jessica the Communist, Unity the Hitler-lover; Nancy the Novelist; Deborah the Duchess, and Pamela the unobtrusive poultry connoisseur.'

Nancy (1904-1973) I knew about from her novels, not that I've read any of them. I'm intrigued by Pamela (1907-1994) because an "unobtrusive poultry connoisseur" is not a type that one often encounters. While writing this travelog, I tried to figure out why she had been given his sobriquet and found the following in her obituary in *The Independent*: "She had a great way with animals and introduced the Appenzeller Spitzhauben breed of chicken to Britain from Switzerland. She knew all about the mysteries of home-made yoghurt, compost heaps, 'curing own hams,' 'making soup out of one's head,' and growing rare varieties of vegetables long before such things became fashionable." Diana (1910-2003) divorced her aristocratic first husband in 1933 and married Sir Oswald Moseley, leader of the British Fascists, and like Pamela, a rabid anti-Semite. Jessica (1917-1996) moved to the U.S. and was a member of the Communist Party, but is best known for her book, *The American Way of Death* (which I have, indeed, read). Deborah (1920-) married an aristocrat and wrote a number of books, and is, therefore, much less interesting than her siblings. I've saved for last Unity (1914-1948) whose name Lee and I first encountered when traveling in Scotland in pre-9/11 2001. Here is a passage from my 2001 travelog:

Off the shore in Loch na Keal is an island called Inch Kenneth. ("na Keal"? "Inch"? Why don't they use words that Americans understand? After all, we're the world's only super power and we have a president who worries about "subliminal" messages.) Inch Kenneth is of interest as the residence (from 1937 to 1948) of one Unity Valkyrie Mitford. Now there's a name! The youngest daughter of Lord Redesdale, she moved to Germany in 1934 and was "one of Hitler's closest companions, accompanying him on official functions, and even addressing Nazi rallies" (according to *The Rough Guide*). On the day that England declared war on Germany, she tried to kill herself with a gun provided by der Führer, but only succeeded in lodging the bullet in her brain, leaving her paralyzed. She made it back to Britain and lived out her remaining years, bullet still safely ensconced, on Inch Kenneth, an island that the family had fortuitously purchased in 1937.

What a family!

During the morning's drive, Ken discovers that we are fans of *Downton Abbey*.^{*} We had already planned

^{*}Season 4 of this British soap opera begins, here in England, tonight on TV, but we decide not to watch because we'll have no chance to see episode 2 and beyond. Nevertheless, we will read in tomorrow's newspaper that English enthusiasts of the show were incensed because the 90-minute broadcast had a full 27 minutes of commercials! So, although we have to wait until January to see all of Season 4 in the U.S., at least it will be commercial-free. Until, that is, the evil Republican House of Representatives withdraws all funding for NPR and PBS, thus forcing them to show ads.

to try to get a glimpse of Highclere Castle, some 65 miles away, on the last day of our drive through England, but had no idea that so much of the show was actually filmed in the Cotswolds. In particular, Ken has booked a table for us to have lunch at Swinbrook's *The Swan Inn* (where I have pea soup, a salad, and an ale) which location, it turns out, served as the setting where Lady Mary and Lady Edith try to "rescue" their sister, Lady Sybil, who is determined to run off with the Crawley family's chauffeur. Shocking, I tell you. Shocking! We will encounter other Downton-related venues later today.

Ken Fowler relates several interesting stories. One of the most entertaining may be difficult to relate on the printed page, but I'll give it a try. I'll use the first person as if I were Ken.

I had taken a party of three women on a tour of the Lake District. Because there was no room for me at the hotel where they were booked, I chose a nearby bed-and-breakfast. When I came down the next morning, there were two other men in the breakfast room: an English man and a Chinese man. The proprietor, a tall and lanky Basil Fawlty^{*} type entered the room and noted that the Chinese man

^{*}Basil Fawlty, played by John Cleese, was the owner of Fawlty Towers in a British sit-com that ran for several years. Fawlty was physically and emotionally inept, in contrast to his stolid wife Sybil (played by Prunella Scales). Typically the show began with some mischief-maker rearranging the letters of the inn's name; the most entertaining of these anagrams was Flowery Twats.

had not helped himself to fruit, cold cereal, and pastries. So he said, "Please help yourself at the sideboard. I'll come back later to take your order for eggs and sausage and whatever other hot food you'd like." The man just sat there. When Basil returned, he took note of this and, with a louder voice, told the man that he should help himself to fruit and cereal; he can order the hot food later. The man sat still. So Basil, getting really frustrated and talking in a very loud voice (which people often do when they think that the person to whom they're speaking doesn't know English), said "YOU HAVE TO TAKE YOUR COLD FOOD FIRST. ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE ALLOWED TO ORDER HOT FOOD." At which point the guest smiled and said, in perfect English, "I prefer to have my cold cereal with my eggs." Wonderful!

We are finished with lunch at 1:45, so Ken next takes us to Bampton, 8 miles to the south. (It's interesting how closely spaced these towns are.) We see the town library (which served as the exterior shots of the hospital in *Downton Abbey*); the town square (which was *Downton*'s town square); the house where Mrs. Crawley, Matthew's mother, lived; and most important, St. Mary the Virgin church which was the venue for the marriage of Lady Mary and Matthew as well as the place where Lady Edith was jilted at the altar by the much-too-old Sir Anthony Strallan. The cad!

It's just 14 miles from there to Coln St. Aldwyns, a village solely owned by an earl who is in the process of selling it. We stop for some coffee and a pastry in the village shop, a scant 15 minutes before its closing (at 3:30 in the afternoon!). According to Lee's journal, "The stone cottages with cream-colored window trim are owned by the estate. And the inhabitants of the village work on the estate. The main house, protected by high stone walls and vast grounds, is not visible. Michael ("Mickey") Hicks-Beach is the current earl; while in boarding school, Ken gave his brother the measles. (Ken hadn't a clue about the eminence of the family.) ... When Mickey's father died, he was able to pay the death taxes and keep the estate together because he had married a Shell Oil heiress. Unfortunately, he is now getting a divorce

and having to raise money for his ex-wife's settlement. He has transferred all the cottages' ownership to the people living in them."

From there, it's two miles to the west for Bibury (ground-zero for Japanese tourists* and their buses), then

*The garden of one home has a sign STAY OUT OF MY GARDEN, translated into four Asian languages.

14 miles north to Bourton-on-the-Water (not to be confused with Bourbon and water), and finally 10 miles south to Burford, where we arrive at about 4:15. This is Ken's home town and he's very proud of it and eager to show its highlights. We drive along The High Street, a relatively busy thoroughfare lined with shops of all sorts. Most impressive is the Oxford Shirt Co. which is three full storefronts wide. Ken takes us to St. John The Baptist church where his father, a prominent builder and architect, served as church warden and where Ken was confirmed and his sister was married. The building was begun in the 12th century and added onto over the succeeding centuries. Inside the church is a font with a man's name, Anthony Sedley, scrawled onto it. It turns out that in the 1640s, a group called The Levellers staged a rebellion against the crown. Most of them were rounded up and jailed in the Tower of London. A group of 340 took refuge in the Burford church and were promised no harm, but in 1649 Cromwell's troops attacked and murdered them. Sedley was one of these.

Having made a huge circular route through the Cotswolds, Ken drives 13 miles to the north and gets us back to the hotel at 5:15. We are not, however, finished with Burford or Bourton-on-the-Water (see the return visit on September 23). We are relieved that we had mild weather throughout the day with alternating periods of sunshine and overcast skies.

We have some time, before dinner, to assess the quality of the hotel. In truth, it's seen better days. It's an old building that has been "modernized" to some extent, but in our room (for example), one of the sinks doesn't drain, there is a pull cord from the bathroom ceiling that seems to do nothing (i.e., no lights come on nor does a housemaid appear), we can't turn off the heated towel rack, a doorknob is close to falling off, and there's that damned radiator in the hallway that is causing the entire area to overheat. Nevertheless, we are eager to sample the goods from their Michelin star restaurant, where we have booked a table for tonight.

At 6:45, we descend to the (overheated) lounge for a drink (Laphroaig, if you please) and to order dinner. We are offered canapés (of some variety). From the menu (£69 for a three-course dinner), which has one-word titles for the various courses, I order for my first course "Chicken" (which is described as "Braised Chicken Wings, Sweet Corn Purée, Hand Rolled Macaroni, Girolles, Tarragon"), for my main course "Halibut" (described more fully as "Braised Halibut, Cornish Crab, Iceberg Lettuce, Farfalle, Truffle Butter Sauce"), and for dessert "Chocolate" (which turns out to be hot chocolate in a chocolate tart with vanilla ice cream, mandarin oranges, and pistachios). We are ushered into the dining room where there is, of course, an *amuse bouche* (before the meal) and a pre-dessert (after the main course). Following dinner, we go to the lounge at 8:45 for coffee and *petits fours*.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

The morning begins as grey and misty, but it's hard to predict what the day will be like once the sun gets a chance to shine. Following breakfast, I take Lee outside in the drizzle so that she can see the lovely back garden with its pear and apple trees (several more than I had found yesterday).

We set out, in the drizzle, to revisit nearby (just four miles away) Bourton-on-the-Water (modestly nicknamed "Vienna of the Cotswolds") where we park and wander about, admiring the town, its river, and its many water fowl. There are five bridges over the river, all made of local stone. Some carry vehicles but others are for pedestrians only.

We then drive 19 miles to Cirencester (the first vowel is a long i), the largest town (population 19,000) in the Cotswolds; we arrive at about 10:45. Our destination is the Corinium Museum with displays tracing the history of the region from paleolithic times to the middle ages. There are many artifacts from Roman times (weaponry, tombstones, jewelry, mosaic floor tiles). The Romans withdrew from Corinium (their name for this town) in 407 and were replaced by the Saxons from northern Germany. After the Norman conquest of 1066, a king, his lords, and the church ruled the country. There are artifacts and displays from all three time periods. (While walking through the exhibits, we encounter a crew that is taking still pictures for a BBC program and making a video presentation of an announcer reclining on one of the old Roman couches - very anachronistic.) We have coffee and pastry at Jack's Café, the restaurant attached to the museum. On the streets outside the restaurant and on the way to the car, we are reminded (again!) of how much the Brits love dogs. The little animals (the dogs, that is) are everywhere!

And then there is this scene: in the CarPark where we had stashed our car, there is a woman and her SUV and her enormous Great Dane. She is trying to get the dog (a pup, she reveals when I ask) to climb in through the lowered tailgate. When the dog puts its front paws on the gate and stands upright, it is taller than the woman. But either the dog is not strong enough to pull itself through the opening or just doesn't want to exert the effort*; and so the woman is pushing and pulling, but to no avail. I and other

*The woman explains to those of us who have gathered around that this is her husband's dog. It's not unusual for the animal to express displeasure at not being with the "preferred" owner by refusing to do simple tasks that it does easily when the man is present.

passersby offer to help push and pull, but she rejects our efforts and does what she should have done from the start: from the back seat she grabs an inclined plane that the dog is able to walk up and into the car. My only regret: why didn't I think to take any pictures?

From here, it's a mere 17-mile drive for us to return to Burford where we arrive at about 2:00. After taking pictures of the local swans and ducks, we head to a needlepoint store that Ken Fowler told us about. It's Burford Needlecraft Centre, at the north end of The High Street, owned and operated by his long-time friend David Cohen. So while Lee browses in the store, I have a wonderful conversation with David. We discover very quickly that our politics are very similar, and we agree that all of the faults of the world could be cured by putting one or the other of us in charge. (We never do agree, however, about which of us should be chosen.) We talk about the evils of racism and anti-Semitism (several of his family members were annihilated in The Holocaust). And we note (without coming up with simple solutions) the increasing income disparity between the top income 1% and the rest of us. David and Ken had been boyhood friends. As a young man, Ken had gone to New Zealand where he served in their military, but eventually he returned to his home town and reestablished his friendship with David.

At 3:00 we drive to Lower Slaughter, where we wander about the town, admiring some of the homes and the church, and taking pictures (too many pictures) of the resident swans and ducks. When we return to the hotel, *mirabile dictu* the heated towel rack has been turned off, the coffee and cookies replenished, the slow-draining sink fixed, but, alas, not the radiator in the hall which continues to pour out heat. I take advantage of the relatively sunny day to wander over the front lawn, down to the stream (more ducks!), over the little bridge, and toward the pond. I take lots of pictures. We then head to the WiFi accessible (overheated) lounge to connect to the internet.

Lee had saved a 2003 New York Times article, written by their long-time political columnist R. W. Appel, Jr., about the Cotswolds: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/31/travel/the-very-picture-of-rural-england.html> He and his second wife purchased a home in the Cotswolds (Lechlade, to be specific) and spent considerable time there; he also wrote about life in the region. He is a realist when he writes:

Lechlade isn't postcard-perfect -- there's too much traffic for our taste, and a few sad buildings dot its streets -- but it's attractive enough to win a modest encomium from the architectural historian John Julius Norwich. "A pretty town," he calls it, "with many pretty 18th- and early 19th-century houses."

We wouldn't be happy anyway in showplaces like Bourton-on-the-Water and Broadway, which are overrun even on winter weekdays.

Some of the fairest, least-spoiled villages have names that chime in the mind, perfect expressions of English eccentricity -- Great Tew, a triumph of the thatcher's art; Coln St. Aldwyns, Lower Slaughter, Upper Swell.

But of special interest to us in the Appel article, based on what Ken Fowler talked about, was the importance of wool:

Wool made England's fortune, as attested by the fact that the lord chancellor sits on a scarlet pillow called the Woolsack when presiding in the House of Lords. "Wool was the oil of medieval Europe," the British journalist Simon Jenkins wrote last spring, "and the Cotswolds were its Gulf."

From the 15th to the 17th century, wool merchants built not only houses for their families but also imposing Perpendicular churches, so-called because of their soaring vertical lines. St. Peter and St. Paul's at Northleach, site of a great medieval market, is one of the noblest of these "wool churches," elaborately ornamented (on one corbel, a cat is shown playing a fiddle to an audience of three mice). Its grandeur is emphasized by a stout, battlemented tower.

Ken confided that the Woolsack smells bad ... but tradition is tradition, you know!

We drive some six miles to The Fox Inn in Lower Oddington (which we find with surprising ease), recommended by the Lords of the Manor staff. It is a charming place, as the out-of-focus pictures I've posted at Picasa will attest. I order chicken liver and foie gras parfait to begin, then partridge with bread sauce, Armagnac gravy, porridge(??), au gratin potatoes, garlic and green vegetables. We return to the hotel at 8:30 (the bed was not turned down - shocking! - but who really cares, eh?). But, then, the house maid does show up around 9:15; having already "suffered" with the lack of turn-down, we choose to dispense with the service. This evening, I finish reading the Kindle version of Colum McCann's *TransAtlantic*.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

It is very foggy this morning and quite cool, but at least our room is cool (even cold). In the breakfast room, we hear someone make a comment about a football (i.e., soccer) team: "United are(sic) not good enough at the moment."

PUN ALERT: When in Germany last December, I worried that I had gone four full days without recording a single pun. The present voyage is even worse: we've been in England for nine days and all that I've been able to do is comment on the quaint BritSpeak that we hear - e.g., see the preceding paragraph. But finally, I create a pun! Lee has been ordering poached eggs at almost every breakfast and has commented about how bright-orange the yolks are for these free-range eggs. But this morning, the egg is very runny and she worries about getting some of it splashed on her clothes. "No worry," says her helpful spouse, "It that happens, people will just say that the yolks on you." (Weak, huh? Well, I'm just warming up.)

At 9:30, prior to checking out, we stroll through Upper Slaughter and take some fog-shrouded pictures of homes. There's even a traditional red telephone box (*sans* telephone, alas) and the parish church of St. Peter; the adjacent cemetery is made all the more atmospheric because of the fog. Inside the church there are tombstones of notables from the 16th century. One bears the words "Here lyeth the body of Paris Slaughter sonne and heire vnto John Slaughter Esquire who died the XVIIIth of Febvary in the yere of ovr Lord 1597 and in the 55 yere of his age." (Take THAT, Spell Checker!) We also photograph another of those wonderful stone walls as well as the sides of houses with the iron crosses that serve as

support (see p. 28).

We leave the hotel at 10:15 (we appreciate the assistance of the staff in carrying our luggage downstairs) and head toward Bath, Lee driving (slowed down because of the fog), some 70 miles distant. We pass charming town names like Chipping Sodbury, Frampton Cotterell, Fishponds, and Hucclecote, but resist the temptation to stop. Bath, the largest city we've been in a for a while (population about 90,000) is crowded, noisy, overrun with tourists (including us), and rather dirty. Bath can use a bath, I remark. (By the way, Bath is pronounced Bahhhth, but I think that bath is pronounced with our short a. Go figure. More BritSpeak!) We find a large car park, then walk to the Roman Baths. According to Wikipedia, "The city was first established as a spa with the Latin name, *Aquae Sulis* ('the waters of Sulis') by the Romans sometime in the AD 60s about 20 years after they had arrived in Britain (AD 43), although oral tradition suggests that Bath was known before then. They built baths and a temple on the surrounding hills of Bath in the valley of the River Avon around hot springs."

The Roman Baths are a major tourist attraction. We stand in a long line to buy tickets, but eventually we get inside. It's a place that lends itself to lots of picture-taking, in which I indulge (see the Picasa site). The steaming baths are, themselves, interesting but even more breathtaking are the sculptures and stone slabs that have been restored during archaeological efforts. The official tourist site will tell you more than I ever could: <http://www.romanbaths.co.uk/artefacts.aspx> After nearly two hours at the baths, we take advantage of the Hop On - Hop Off bus that tours the city and visits neighborhoods, some with Roman artifacts, others more modern (churches, city stores, etc.) Of special interest is the Royal Crescent, described by Wikipedia:

The most spectacular of Bath's terraces is the Royal Crescent, built between 1767 and 1774 and designed by the younger John Wood. But all is not what it seems; while Wood designed the great curved façade of what appears to be about 30 houses with Ionic columns on a rusticated ground floor, that was the extent of his input. Each purchaser bought a certain length of the façade, and then employed their own architect to build a house to their own specifications behind it; hence what appears to be two houses is sometimes one. This system of town planning is betrayed at the rear of the crescent: while the front is completely uniform and symmetrical, the rear is a mixture of differing roof heights, juxtapositions and fenestration. This "Queen Anne fronts and Mary-Anne backs" architecture occurs repeatedly in Bath. Other fine terraces elsewhere in the city include Lansdown Crescent and Somerset Place on the northern hill.

The bus tour (which consumes about 50 minutes) confirms our earlier impressions from when we walked to the baths: the city is crowded, the residents seem surly and self-centered (is this the New York of England?), and the streets could use a good cleaning as could many of the buildings (especially those from the Georgian era). Were we to spend more time in town, we could visit The Jane Austen Centre and Regency Tea Room, but never having read a word of Ms. Austen's prose (although we have seen many renditions of her books on TV and in the movie theater) we head toward our next destination, Bradford on Avon, and to the Old Manor Hotel, our "home" for the next four nights, which is but eight miles away.

We arrive at 3:30, earlier than expected. The hotel is in the countryside on the Trowbridge Road, closer to the larger town of Trowbridge (population 32,000) than to Bradford on Avon (population 10,000). Compared to Lords of the Manor and Gilpin Hotel, it's several steps down (as the Picasa pictures of its furnishings will show) but it does have the advantage of being a fraction of the cost and, as it turns out, the grounds and the buildings associated with the hotel are quite interesting (see Picasa again). There's no air conditioning, of course, but opening the rear window allows the pungent air of an adjacent cow pasture, not to mention flies, to waft in. Surprisingly, the lighting in the room is better than any of the places that we've stayed. Also, the internet connection is faster and more reliable than in the other hotels, although I still have no cell phone signal. Oh, yes, there are construction crews outside, building a stage (for weddings) and landscaping the area right outside our door - they do make a lot of noise.

Before dinner, we do our internet reading and I read some more of Brookhiser's *James Madison* on my

Kindle. For dinner, we go to the dining room of the hotel. This turns out to be a culinary disappointment, but at least we don't spend a great deal for the salad or soup and an individual pizza for each of us.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

The bathroom shower presents a challenge. Its floor is at the same level as the bathroom's and there is no railing to keep water within; thus, despite my most sincere efforts to direct all water toward the wall, a great deal winds up outside of the nominal shower stall. Yes, there is a shower curtain but it stops about one foot higher than floor level. On the other hand, OBLON reports that the bathtub is satisfactory (if also designed for a shorter, narrower gnome). Of interest only to the man of the couple, the toilet seat does not stay up by itself. Thus, it is necessary to hold it upright with one hand while using the other to ... (well, you get the picture).

It is foggy (see the Picasa pictures of the grounds) and cool this morning. Breakfast is in the same place as dinner was served last night. Unlike the late risers whom we encountered at the other hotels, many guests are already sitting at tables when we arrive. There are cold items on the buffet table (juice, fruit, cereal) and one can order hot items from the menu; I have scrambled eggs and bacon (or that strange chewy piece of meat that is called bacon in every restaurant we've eaten in). I avoid, but Lee orders, "poached egg and toy soldiers" which turns out to be rectangular pieces of toast stuck in the egg and suitable for dunking.

Seated at a table near us are six business associates with loud voices - and so we cannot avoid overhearing almost everything they are saying. Is this eavesdropping? No, it is not! The leader of the group is a brassy woman who reminds them that they are re-using a document that was written for an earlier consulting session so they need to be sure to change the title, date, details, etc. (And to think that educators complain when students download articles from Wikipedia and call it "research")

The WiFi connection in our room is problematical, in contrast to last night. There appear to be two likely connections: the one called Old Manor House Guests fails; the other, called Old Manor Guests, worked last night but Lee doesn't "see" it on her iPad. She had reported this to the desk people when we went to dinner last night; of course, when she tried to demonstrate it in the reception area, it worked perfectly (Ain't that always the case with technology?) but on returning to our room it disappeared again. This morning, the connection is established in the breakfast room but breaks down several times.

We head to Salisbury, about 45 miles to the southeast, where we arrive at 10:30 in bright sunshine! From the car park where we stow the car, we cross a bridge over River Avon and stop to admire the resident water fowl. As we enter the center of the city (population 40,000), the cathedral (with the highest spire in England) can be seen in the distance. Ignoring such American exports as Starbucks and Burger King, we walk along High Street, pass through a stone portal, and find ourselves on the grounds of the cathedral. It is a magnificent structure as viewed both from outside and from within. The main body was erected in just 38 years in the 13th century; the tower and spire were built some 75 years later.

We arrive at the cathedral at 11:30, just in time to join a mini-tour with one of the cathedral's guides. I don't know how good the other tour leaders were, but ours is excellent: clear speaking, knowledgeable, equipped with a laser pointer, and able to answer questions of all sorts. I take numerous interior photos, both during the tour and afterwards when we are on our own. Among the highlights is the oldest working mechanical clock (from 1386) which rings the hour but has no clock face (as was the custom at the time). An amazing interplay of cogs and gears and weights keeps the clock mechanism moving; it even has an ingenious device for taking note of the longer days when the summer solstice arrives. In the center of the cathedral there is an octagon inscribed on the concrete floor that mimics the octagonal shape of the tower spire high above; a plumb line dropped from above shows just how much the walls are sagging and leaning in. (At noon, a cleric steps to one of the podia and reads a brief lesson - most of the visitors are polite enough to stop and listen.) Nearby is a stone for the crypt of Edward Heath, prime minister during

the 1970s and an accomplished symphony conductor.

PUN ALERT: He grew up on the top of a hill. It was called Heathcliff.

There are tombs for all sorts of distinguished folk, such as John, Lord Cheney (unrelated to you-know-who, we are told) who was "Bodyguard and Chief Henchman to Kings Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII." Several of the marble tombs have been defaced over the years by people inscribing their names on them. I especially like "the bumping stone" that is used in the initiation rite for new members of the youth choir. Talk about different treatment for the two sexes: only the heads of the male choristers are banged against the stone; the girl initiates are merely tapped on the head with a bible. Not fair!

An especially elaborate display is involved in the tombs of several interesting historical figures: at the bottom (because he wasn't a Royal) is Edward Seymour (1539-1621) who married Lady Catherine Grey (whose tomb is above); according to Wikipedia:

She was a potential claimant to Elizabeth's throne, and law established that it was a penal offence for her to marry without notifying the Sovereign. They were married by an anonymous clergyman at Hertford House, Canon Row, before 25 December 1560. The marriage was kept secret until August nearly a year later when Catherine became visibly pregnant and she confided the reason to Lord Robert Dudley. Each was ordered to confinement in the Tower; Catherine was confined immediately, and Seymour imprisoned upon his return. While in custody, they were questioned about every aspect of their marriage, but they both claimed to have forgotten the date.

A commission was begun, headed by Archbishop Parker in February 1562. Under this pressure, Lady Catherine finally declared that they had waited for Elizabeth to quit the capital for Eltham Palace. Servants were questioned, and none of them could remember the exact date either. John Fortescue said it was 'in November'. The priest could not be located, but by consulting the accounts of the Cofferer of the Household the marriage date was decided to be 27 November.

His son Edward was declared illegitimate and the father was fined 15,000 pounds in Star Chamber for "seducing a virgin of the blood royal." Despite all this, the Earl apparently found a way to continue marital relations with his wife in the Tower. In February 1563, Thomas Seymour was born. Lady Catherine died in 1568, and Seymour was finally allowed out of the Tower and allowed to re-appear at court. Officially his sons remained bastards. In 1576 he carried the sword of state at Elizabeth's procession of the knights of the garter. His eldest son was Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp (1561–1612) whose son William Seymour, 2nd Duke of Somerset was imprisoned for secretly marrying Arbella Stuart. In fact, Edward, William, and William's elder brother, another Edward, were all, at various times, considered possible matches for Arbella. Among his descendants was Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, mother of Queen Elizabeth II.

Got that? There'll be a quiz next period.

We leave the cathedral at about 1:00 and walk to the adjacent Chapter House which houses one of four surviving copies of Magna Carta from 1215. Feudal barons forced King John to sign the document which proclaims various liberties and limits the rights of the king. It's a strange document, as several wall displays indicate. Again, according to Wikipedia:

The 1215 document contained a large section that is now called clause 61 (the clauses were not originally numbered). This section established a committee of 25 barons who could at any time meet and overrule the will of the King if he defied the provisions of the Charter, seizing his castles and possessions if it was considered necessary. This was based on a medieval legal practice known as distraint, but it was the first time it had been applied to a monarch.

Distrust between the two sides was overwhelming. What the barons really sought was the overthrow

of the King; the demand for a charter was a "mere subterfuge." Clause 61 was a serious challenge to John's authority as a ruling monarch. He renounced it as soon as the barons left London; Pope Innocent III also annulled the "shameful and demeaning agreement, forced upon the King by violence and fear." He rejected any call for restraints on the King, saying it impaired John's dignity. He saw it as an affront to the Church's authority over the King and the 'papal territories' of England and Ireland, and he released John from his oath to obey it. The rebels knew that King John could never be restrained by Magna Carta and so they sought a new King.

England was plunged into a civil war, known as the First Barons' War. With the failure of Magna Carta to achieve peace or restrain John, the barons reverted to the more traditional type of rebellion by trying to replace the monarch they disliked with an alternative. In a measure of some desperation, despite the tenuousness of his claim and despite the fact that he was French, they offered the crown of England to Prince Louis of France.

As a means of preventing war, Magna Carta was a failure, rejected by most of the barons, and was legally valid for no more than three months. The death of King John in 1216, however, secured the future of Magna Carta.

There are several "translations" of Magna Carta into modern English (or some semblance thereof) - for example, see <http://www.constitution.org/eng/magnacar.htm> But in addition to major ideas and ideals, the document also resorted to banalities and has survived in the form of numerous tongue twisters. For example:

7. A widow, after the death of her husband, shall forthwith and without difficulty have her marriage portion and inheritance; nor shall she give anything for her dower, or for her marriage portion, or for the inheritance which her husband and she held on the day of the death of that husband; and she may remain in the house of her husband for forty days after his death, within which time her dower shall be assigned to her

12. No scutage nor aid shall be imposed on our kingdom, unless by common counsel of our kingdom, except for ransoming our person, for making our eldest son a knight, and for once marrying our eldest daughter; and for these there shall not be levied more than a reasonable aid. In like manner it shall be done concerning aids from the city of London.

23. No village or individual shall be compelled to make bridges at river banks, except those who from of old were legally bound to do so.

26. If anyone holding of us a lay fief shall die, and our sheriff or bailiff shall exhibit our letters patent of summons for a debt which the deceased owed us, it shall be lawful for our sheriff or bailiff to attach and enroll the chattels of the deceased, found upon the lay fief, to the value of that debt, at the sight of law worthy men, provided always that nothing whatever be thence removed until the debt which is evident shall be fully paid to us; and the residue shall be left to the executors to fulfill the will of the deceased; and if there be nothing due from him to us, all the chattels shall go to the deceased, saving to his wife and children their reasonable shares.

Linda Greenhouse, writing in the December 26, 2013 issue of *The New York Times*, relates a conversation that she had with one of the curators at an exhibit at the National Archives that compared the U.S. Constitution with Magna Carta:

Alice Kamps, one of the five in-house curators who put the exhibit together under the direction of the archivist, David S. Ferriero, explained this to me when I called the archives after my visit. Magna Carta was written by and for "landed barons, noblemen who were a very small part of the population," Ms. Kamps said, and by the same token, it was only "white, property-owning Americans" who fully enjoyed the rights granted by the new Constitution. The goal of the exhibit, she explained, was to show how

people have used law to claim rights, and also to show the conflict that these claims engendered along the way. Evolution, the exhibit demonstrates, has not been a straight-line progression. The curators see the story as "inspiring, not discouraging," Ms. Kamps said.

We have some coffee and pastry in the adjacent cafeteria.

From Salisbury, it's but a few miles to Old Sarum, original site of the cathedral and, now, an English Heritage site whose history spans 5000 years from the iron age through conquests by the Romans, Normans, and Saxons, all of whom left their mark on the site. Here is its history, as related by Wikipedia:

Old Sarum (Latin: Sorviodunum) is the site of the earliest settlement of Salisbury, in England. The site contains evidence of human habitation as early as 3000 BC. Old Sarum is mentioned in some of the earliest records in the country. It is located on a hill about two miles north of modern Salisbury next to the A345 road.

Old Sarum was originally an Iron age hill fort strategically placed on the conjunction of two trade routes and the River Avon. The hill fort is broadly oval in shape, 400 metres in length and 360 metres in width; it consists of a double bank and intermediate ditch with an entrance on the eastern side. The site was used by the Romans, becoming the town of Sorviodunum. The Saxons used the site as a stronghold against marauding Vikings, and the Normans built a stone curtain wall around the Iron age perimeter and a centrally placed castle on a motte protected by a deep dry moat. A royal palace was built within the castle for King Henry I and subsequently used by Plantagenet monarchs. A Norman cathedral and bishop's residence were built at the western end of the town.

In 1219, the cathedral was demolished in favour of the new one built near the river and the townspeople moved down to the new city, then called New Salisbury or New Sarum. The castle fell out of use and was sold for materials by King Henry VIII.

It's a warm day and reaching the stone walls of the old fort require climbing a good-sized hill. The lady of the family is enthralled by the history of the place whereas the gentleman finally admits defeat and after "admiring" several remnants of iron-age buildings, forts, and a more modern church takes a seat while Mrs. Tourist continues her navigation of the site. The place is also overrun with school kids, noisy and annoying little monsters they are. A touch of breeze, merely a wisp, would have been welcome, but none arrives.

We leave Old Sarum at 3:00 and drive some 25 miles in the general direction of Bradford on Avon,* but

*On the route, there are three signs warning TANK CROSSING, but (alas) we don't have the camera ready to take a picture. There are other signs warning APPROACHING CARS IN MIDDLE OF ROAD, but we are fortunate not to encounter any. And another sign: DANGER - MINISTRY OF DEFENCE RANGE!

with a stop at Devizes (a strange name for a town, eh?) to see the Kennet and Avon Canal, described by Wikipedia as:

„, a waterway in southern England with an overall length of 87 miles, made up of two lengths of navigable river linked by a canal. The name is commonly used to refer to the entire length of the navigation rather than solely to the central canal section. From Bristol to Bath the waterway follows the natural course of the River Avon before the canal links it to the River Kennet at Newbury, and from there to Reading on the River Thames. In all, the waterway incorporates 105 locks.

We park the car and, taking our lives into our hands, dash across a busy highway to get to the canal where we can observe one of the locks. A small river boat (the *Moomim II*) with two men on board

approaches. One man gets out of the boat, climbs to the shore, and closes the lock by a large hand crank. Water flows in and the boat exits the other end of the lock. We have a nice conversation with the two men during the time that it takes for the lock to fill.

RADIO: During this day and the few preceding we've been listening to BBC2 which has had a series of interviews with the actor Tim Piggot-Smith. He is very knowledgeable about music and has many interesting things to say, but we can't help feeling revulsion because of his portrayal of that despicable racist pig, Ronald Merrick, in the 1980s British TV series "The Jewel in the Crown."

MORE RADIO: BBC3, when it isn't playing movie theme music (see p 25), does play classical music. We are amazed (and relieved) not to hear Rodrigo's guitar concerto *Concierto de Aranjuez*, a melodic work whose very traditional style belies its having been written in 1939. Why do I mention this? It's because KING-FM in Seattle seems to know the moment that I get into my car because that damned piece is on the air much too frequently than to be just a bad coincidence. And we encountered it on the radio in Wales in 2009 and on other foreign trips.

We spend about 30 minutes observing the activities on the canal before leaving and returning to the hotel at 5:00. In the morning, we had asked the desk clerk to reserve a table for us at The Longs Arms Inn in South Wraxall, some five miles away. When we return from the day's activities, a different person is at the desk and she has no idea if the reservation was made. She roots around through some papers and says, "Yes, you have a reservation." (We are not convinced.) But she adds, "In the event that there is no reservation, just show up at 6:00 and you'll be seated." (We're even more unconvinced.)

The driving route takes us north of River Avon and through the heart of Bradford on Avon. The streets are crowded (cars and people leaving work) and some of the passageways are perilously narrow, with stone walls on each side and big yellow crossed lines painted on the street (indicating that two cars should not try passing one another here, I assume). After what felt like hours of peril, we finally open our eyes and find ourselves driving through a nice residential area and then in the open countryside. Eventually we enter the village of South Wraxall and find the restaurant (<http://www.thelongsarms.com/>). It has a lovely, rustic interior and the bar area is already filled by well-lubricated locals. It turns out that today is the chef-owner's birthday and his friends have come to help him celebrate. (That is, they'll do the drinking while he's hard at work in the kitchen.) At one point, he emerges with a plate of Wiltshire truffles that a friend had dug up and presented to him. One of the people at the bar, thinking that these were chocolate truffles, popped one in his mouth. I don't recall his reaction, but it caused great merriment among his companions.

At our table, the waitress begins with a complimentary appetizer: baronet's cheese fritters; and we order Wadsworth beer (a local brewery, brewed since 1875 in Devizes). I order lobster soup followed by cottage pie, carrots, and peas. Lee has spelt* risotto with lobster and samphire onto which the chef has sprinkled

*I hope that's "spelt" correctly. According to Wikipedia, "Spelt, also known as dinkel wheat or hulled wheat, is an ancient species of wheat from the fifth millennium BC. Spelt was an important staple in parts of Europe from the Bronze Age to medieval times; it now survives as a relict crop in Central Europe and northern Spain and has found a new market as a health food. Spelt is sometimes considered a subspecies of the closely related species common wheat (*T. aestivum*), in which case its botanical name is considered to be *Triticum aestivum subsp. spelta*. It is a hexaploid wheat, which means it has six sets of chromosomes." And now you know.

some shavings of his truffle supply. It is an excellent meal. We return to the hotel, once again through the narrow walled passageways, but at least the rush-hour traffic is ended.

Every hotel we've stayed in has had a coffee service in the room. The style ranged from the cafetière at Lords of the Manor to small individual packets of instant coffee here at The Old Manor House and at Gilpin Hotel. At Calcutts, there were jars of loose instant coffee. This evening, the coffee is accompanied

by some cream-filled cookies; at Calcutts, there were plain cookies in cellophane wrap; Gilpin had homemade shortbread cookies; and the most expensive place, Lords of the Manor, had nothing. Boo!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

It is a grey and cool morning with intermittent rain. Our breakfast is the same as yesterday's except that Lee changes her warm selection to mushrooms and toast. Before setting forth, we ask the desk clerk to print Google driving instructions and maps for the last two legs of our trip: from Uffington to Oxford (on September 28) and from Oxford to the Heathrow Airport Hilton later the same day.

We leave at 9:00, drive the familiar route through Trowbridge past Devizes and then to the West Kennet Longbarrow, some 22 miles distant. It is a World Heritage Site and is exactly the sort of place that sets the juices of SWMBO running, but leave me asking WHY? According to Wikipedia:

The West Kennet Long Barrow is a Neolithic tomb or barrow, situated on a prominent chalk ridge, near Silbury Hill, one-and-a-half miles south of Avebury in Wiltshire, England. The site was recorded by John Aubrey in the 17th century and by William Stukeley in the 18th century. Archaeologists classify it as a chambered long barrow and one of the Severn-Cotswold tombs. It has two pairs of opposing transept chambers and a single terminal chamber used for burial. The stone burial chambers are located at one end of one of the longest barrows in Britain at 100 m: in total it is estimated that 15,700 man-hours were expended in its construction. The entrance consists of a concave forecourt with a facade made from large slabs of sarsen stones which were placed to seal entry. The construction of the West Kennet Long Barrow commenced about 3600 BC, which is some 400 years before the first stage of Stonehenge, and it was in use until around 2500 BC.

I would have been satisfied just to read about it, but my travel companion insists that we visit it. As the Picasa pictures will confirm, it does, indeed, consist of large rocks and a tomb entrance and the top of a long (but not too steep) hill. The literature suggested that the walk was but a quarter-of-a-mile each way, but I don't believe it. Maybe these were "stone age miles" (which are at least three times longer than our modern ones). (I made that up.) It is spitting horizontal rain as we arrive at the site at 10:30 and stay until 11:15. As we traipse down the long path back to the car, we see a caped woman walking across a nearby field: she is too distant to make out clearly, but both we and an Australian couple whom we encounter on the path are convinced that she is a wiccan.

It's just a short drive (about 10 minutes) to Avebury (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury/>) another World Heritage Site. Our drive is alongside the West Kennet Avenue, a straight-line procession of stones that lead to the main entrance and an admission fee (which, presumably, stone age people did not have to pay). Avebury's description in Wikipedia is not vastly different from that for the Long Barrow:

Avebury is a Neolithic henge monument containing three stone circles, around the village of Avebury in Wiltshire, in southwest England. Unique amongst megalithic monuments, Avebury contains the largest stone circle in Europe, and is one of the best known prehistoric sites in Britain. It is both a tourist attraction and a place of religious importance to contemporary Pagans. Constructed around 2600 BCE during the Neolithic, or 'New Stone Age,' the monument comprises a large henge (that is a bank and a ditch) with a large outer stone circle and two separate smaller stone circles situated inside the centre of the monument. Its original purpose is unknown, although archaeologists believe that it was most likely used for some form of ritual or ceremony.

I'm intrigued by the mention of "contemporary Pagans" (perhaps that really was a wiccan whom we saw?) but I dutifully follow OBLOTN as we walk past and among the various huge stones. As the Picasa pictures will reveal, the weather had turned windy and wet - either that, or we've zipped up our jackets and donned hoods for no reason. There are two museums on the premises, but one (the barn), devoted to life of ancient peoples in Avebury, is closed for renovation (to the great sorrow of my companion). The other

(the stable), much smaller, is open and we are charged half-price because the barn was not available. Its focus is on building materials and techniques that were used by early settlers: I demonstrate how a deer's antlers can be used to chip stone (see Picasa).

PUN ALERT: Lee: "There's a famous manor house here." Ron: "What manner of house is it?"

From there, we wander to the Saxon-Norman Parish Church of St. James, which dates from AD 1000: (<http://greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/avebury.html>) Its simplicity is a delight after all of the other churches and cathedrals we've visited. I take Picasa photos of a notable kneeling cushion: it is devoted to men of science (Isaac Newton, Plato, Thomas Moore, Francis Bacon) and geographical locations (Everest, Grand Canyon, Ayers Rock, Mount Kenya). Amazing how much can fit on a cushion! And we stop at a café on the grounds for coffee and pastry.

We drive five miles to the west to Cherhill where we hope to get a view of the Cherhill White Horse. Again, because I'm too lazy to write it myself, I resort to Wikipedia: "The Cherhill White Horse is a hill figure on Cherhill Down ... Dating from the late 18th century, it is the third oldest of several such white horses in Great Britain, with only the Uffington White Horse and the Westbury White Horse being older." Well, of course we drive right past it and fail to see it, but after stopping in nearby Marlborough,* a town

*It's an interesting place in several regards. First, it must be the location of several boarding schools because the streets are filled with students of all ages, all wearing uniforms that range from modest jackets and jumpers for some of the younger kids to ankle-length black dresses (for older girls) and three-piece suites (for boys). Second, as I stop to take pictures of the stores on the main street, the accents that I hear (from the students and from the adults) are much more high class than what we've heard throughout much of the English countryside.

of about 8,000 and but eight miles away, for some pictures, we head seven miles to Pewsey (maybe just for its name?), and we find its own white horse.* And take pictures of it. Big whoop!

*Actually, it isn't this simple. The white horse in Cherhill is off the main road and behind trees, so there is no opportunity to see it. We arrive in Pewsey at 2:00, fail to see the white horse, retrace our steps, and at 2:45 find the damned equine, but only after the intrepid Lee climbs over a small white fence and ascends a small hill. Good for her!

MORE BRITSPEAK: • Words related to vehicles: *tyres* and *waggons*. • Words overused in normal conversations: *brilliant!* and *lovely!* These are used at unexpected times. For example, I might say "I think I've got the exact change" to which the clerk says "Brilliant!" or I might say "I've like a pint of ale" to which the bartender replies "Lovely!" • And on the radio, the announcers pronounced a French composer's names as de-BUSE-y (which may well be correct, given that Daniel Berry at WUOT-FM also insisted on this pronunciation). • Finally, when giving the time of day, a Brit might say "Half Eight." Does this mean half-an-hour past eight or half-an-hour before eight ... or does it, possibly, mean four?

From Pewsey, it's just 13 miles to Devizes. Today, unlike yesterday, we head to an *official* viewing place for the locks that does not require our running across a busy road. First, we approach on a very bumpy road, made bumpier by numerous speed bumps. We park in the large parking lot but are attacked by little midges. It's then a long walk to the canal and the café where we're supposed to pay for parking. But when we get to the canal, there are no boats to be seen. So we snap a couple of pictures and leave without paying. It's a shame that we don't see any canal traffic because this section of the canal is called the Caen Hill Flight. Within a two-mile section, there are 29(!) locks with an overall increase in height of 237 feet. My picture at Picasa does not really show how close together these locks are, but an information sign (which is at Picasa) and the official URL (<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/directory/3044/caen-hill-locks>) show the scene much better.

We return to our room at 4:15, and at 5:40 leave for the restaurant Seven Stars in nearby Winsley (<http://www.sevenstarswinsley.co.uk/>). Although only 4 miles away, it's a much more challenging drive than last night. Not only do we need to go through the high-traffic, very narrow, rush-hour congested streets of Bradford but then we are on even narrower two-way streets with cars parked on the side and with significant blind spots because of the many curves. We breathe a sigh of relief when we find ourselves in the open countryside, only to drive a little further and wind up in built-up areas with narrow streets (almost alleyways) and stone walls on each side. To get a sense of this, I suggest going to the street view of Google maps and "drive" the route from the Old Manor Hotel to the restaurant.

But finally we make it. I start with "oven-baked camembert with lemon zest, garlic, honey, and thyme on toast" (whew!) followed by "pan fried breast of duck, braised savoy cabbage with crispy bacon, griddled sweet potatoes, and orange sauce." The food is excellent. Lee and I both have Moles beer draft, a local brew from Wiltshire. For the return to the hotel, we choose a less harrowing route, although it takes longer and still has its challenges.

Back in the room, I read two magazines that I had brought (*Atlantic* and *The Progressive*) along with *James Madison* on the Kindle. And I begin another Kindle book, Jasper Fforde's *Shades of Grey*. (Alas, it doesn't appear that it will prove as exciting as *Fifty Shades of Grey*!) A bad omen? I had some sniffles and sneezes, beginning this afternoon. Surely I'm not getting another overseas cold. Surely?

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

It is a cool morning, partly sunny, no hint of rain - yet. After the usual breakfast, I walk around the hotel grounds to take pictures. It's actually an interesting place: the building units are typical of the region (e.g., one is called The Milking Parlour), the grounds are lush with flowers, there are outdoor artifacts such as an old milk can, and indoor objects, such as an old stove and sewing machine.

At 9:30, we leave and drive to Castle Combe, some 14 miles to the north, where we arrive at 10:30. Wikipedia informs us:

Castle Combe is a small village in Wiltshire, England, with a population of about 350. Ranked No. 2 in The Times's 30 best villages, it is renowned for its attractiveness and tranquillity, and for its fine buildings including the medieval church. The 14th century market cross, erected when the privilege to hold a weekly market in Castle Combe was granted, is situated where the three principal streets converge. Some small stone steps near the cross were for horse riders to mount and dismount and close by are the remains of the buttercross.

What, you may ask, is a market cross? What is a buttercross? And why is one two words whereas the other is one. I'm not sure that I can answer these questions because we see only one such structure in the center of town. Besides, Wikipedia's description of the two different words seems awfully similar:

"A market cross ... is a structure used to mark a market square in market towns, originally from the distinctive tradition in Early Medieval Insular art of free-standing stone standing or high crosses, often elaborately carved, which goes back to the 7th century" and "A buttercross ... is a type of market cross associated with English market towns and dating from medieval times."

It is, indeed, a charming place (as the photos at Picasa reveal). We see traditional stone walls, homes (some with thatched roofs), the afore-mentioned market cross (or is it a buttercross?), and the wonderful St. Andrew's Church. Here is how it is described in a tourist brochure:

Originally founded in the 13th century the building has been extended over a long period of time. The nave was added in the 14th century and the tower was completed in the 16th century. In the 1850's much of the church fell into disrepair and had to be rebuilt. On the north side of the church is a superb

monument of a Norman Knight – Sir Walter de Dunstanville, Baron of Castle Combe, who died in 1270. His crossed legs indicate that he went on two crusades. In the window above the tomb you can see the arms of the Scrope family who held the Manor of Combe for over 400 years. The tower was started in 1434 - built from money from wealthy mediaeval wool merchants, particularly from the will of Sir John Fastolf. Above you will see beautiful fan vaulting reminiscent of Bath Abbey. At the base of the tower stands the faceless clock, believed to have been made by a local blacksmith. It is among the most ancient working clocks in the country.

Not mentioned, but worthy of note, is a kneeling pillow with the state of Texas embroidered as a map and with words. Texas? After spending time in the church and its ancient cemetery, we continue wandering about the town, taking pictures of the buildings (residential and commercial), and making note of the Hobbit-sized doorways in some of the homes. Bottom line? If it is "ranked No. 2 in The Times's 30 best villages" I'd love to visit the one that is ranked higher. It is a treat!

It's a mere 14 miles from Castle Combe to Lacock (pronounced Lay-cock, if you please) where we will spend an hour-and-a-half. On the way, we pass through the town of Tiddleywink - and I have the picture to prove it. Just as the Cotswolds provided much of the scenery for *Downton Abbey* and a host of other British TV and movie productions (<http://www.cotswolds.info/film-locations.shtml>), the village of Lacock was used in two BBC TV dramas (*Pride and Prejudice* and *Cranford*) and, most notably, for several of the Harry Potter films.

PUN ALERT: Lee is driving the car and I'm providing guidance using the cached map on the iPad. I inform her, "There's going to be a round about round-about here."

We are heading to Lacock Abbey, described by Wikipedia:

Lacock Abbey, dedicated to St Mary and St Bernard, was founded in 1229 by the widowed Lady Ela the Countess of Salisbury, who laid the abbey's first stone 16 April 1232, in the reign of King Henry III, and to which she retired in 1238. Her late husband had been William Longespee, an illegitimate son of King Henry II. The abbey was founded in Snail's Meadow, near the village of Lacock. The first of the nuns were veiled in 1232.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid-16th century, Henry VIII of England sold it to Sir William Sharington, who converted it into a house starting in 1539, demolishing the abbey church. Few other alterations were made to the monastic buildings themselves: the cloisters, for example, still stand below the living accommodation. About 1550 Sir William added an octagonal tower containing two small chambers, one above the other; the lower one was reached through the main rooms, and was for storing and viewing his treasures; the upper one, for banqueting, only accessible by a walk across the leads of the roof. In each is a central octagonal stone table carved with up-to-date Renaissance ornament.

In the 16th and early 17th centuries, Nicholas Cooper has pointed out, bedchambers were often named for individuals who customarily inhabited them when staying at a house. At Lacock, as elsewhere, they were named for individuals "whose recognition in this way advertised the family's affinities": the best chamber was "the duke's chamber," probably signifying John Dudley, 1st Duke of Northumberland, whom Sharington had served, while "Lady Thynne's chamber," identified it with the wife of Sir John Thynne of Longleat, and "Mr Mildmay's chamber" was reserved for Sharington's son-in-law Anthony Mildmay of Apethorpe in Northamptonshire.

During the English Civil War the house was garrisoned by Royalists. It was fortified by surrounding it with earthworks. The garrison surrendered (on agreed terms) to Parliamentary forces under the command of Colonel Devereux, Governor of Malmsbury, within days of Oliver Cromwell's capture of the nearby town of Devizes in late September 1645.

The Abbey also underwent alterations in the 1750s under the ownership of John Ivory Talbot in the Gothick Revival style. The architect was Sanderson Miller. The house eventually passed to the Talbot family. It is most often associated with William Henry Fox Talbot. In 1835 Talbot made the earliest known surviving example of a photographic negative, a photogenic print of the oriel window in the south gallery of the Abbey. The Abbey houses the Fox Talbot Museum devoted to Talbot's pioneering work in photography and the original photograph of the oriel window he developed.

We wander through the cloisters and admire the frescoes (still visible) and tiled floors. One of the rooms has an old cauldron that was put to use in a Harry Potter film. From there, we enter the Victorian era house through the wine cellar. Adjacent is the kitchen with an 19th century wall display to indicate which supplies need to be re-ordered. There is a modern (i.e., electrical) call button to indicate which of the upstairs rooms (and its inhabitants) needs attention. We wander through the rooms (library, bedrooms, bathrooms, dining room, etc.) where the family lived and entertained. In a large formal room devoted to dancing, there's a young visitor wearing a full-length bunny suit. (I have no explanation.)

After coffee and pastry at the café, we stroll through the village, admiring the homes and commercial buildings. It's quite beautiful, but not as picturesque as Castle Combe. We make our way to St. Cyriac's, a Norman church from the late 11th century. Although restored and added to many times over the centuries, it has the flavor of a very old, very venerable structure.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ABOUT DRIVING IN ENGLAND: • In towns that are large enough to have traffic lights, the yellow lights come on not only when there is a change from green to red (as in the U.S.) but also when red is going to change to green. • And, I'll take a picture tomorrow (when we stop at a service station on the Motorway) of a McDonald's in which the drive-up window is on the left side of the building (viewed from the back) rather than on the right. Ya see, it's because when you circle around the building in a car with right-hand drive, it's necessary to have the drive-up window on the driver's side of the vehicle. Brilliant!

At about 3:15, we leave Lacock and drive back to Bradford on Avon. We are hoping to see some river boats on the river, so we park in the center of town, right next to the bridge. But of boats, there are none, although we do stop to take some pictures of the buildings. Not discouraged, Lee recalls a turn-off in a residential neighborhood, south of downtown on the way to our hotel, that suggests that river boats might be found on that portion of River Avon. And she is right. Several boats that appear to be for hire by groups of 10 or more are moored at the dock. So she takes many pictures.

Shall I air some dirty laundry? Well, why not. I mean, who in his/her/its mind actually reads this drivel that I write, eh? Back in our room, SWMBO unleashes (maybe too strong a word) a torrent of words about what a rotten person I am. I'm accused of paying more attention to the music on the car radio than to her (true enough), of shushing her when trying to hear the name of a composer on the radio (also true), of being a terrible driver on English roads (true, true, true). But in defense of my problems with the car, my lack of three-dimensional vision renders me almost helpless in determining where the passenger-side of the car is positioned relatively to curbs, etc. Years of driving experience in cars with the steering wheel on the left (as surely was intended by god) has trained me (through whatever clues I may unconsciously use) where the passenger side is. I promise to reform. And I gladly relinquish all the rest of the driving in England to her!

Observations from driving through the English countryside: until today, we had seen no homes with solar panels on the roofs; now, at the end of the second week, we finally did see two. We also spotted a monkey puzzle tree in the metropolis of Beanacre on the return drive from Lacock. (As we have a good-sized monkey puzzle tree in our backyard, although much smaller than two that are located in downtown Gig Harbor, we are much enamored of them.)

I am sneezing throughout much of the day. Some of the sneezes have been quite violent. To avoid coming down with a full-fledged cold, as happened last year in the Netherlands, I take some sinus/cold

pills that she has packed. At 5:30, we return to the Longs Arms, where we had eaten two days ago. It's no longer the chef's birthday, so the ambience is a bit more subdued. But the food is, again, excellent. I have cauliflower/cheddar soup followed by fillet steak, blacksticks* blue, runner* beans, and mash. I

*Before allowing such a "thing" to enter my mouth, I had to ask what the hell it was. It is a blue cheese that's produced in Lancashire and is described at one of the many web sites that sell it as "A creamy, smooth, tangy soft cheese. Not too strong, not too mild." (Just right for Goldilocks, eh?) As for runner beans, they are described this way: "*Phaseolus coccineus*, known as runner bean, scarlet runner bean, or multiflora bean, is a plant in the *Fabaceae* family. Runner beans have also been called 'Oregon Lima Bean,' and in Nahuatl 'ayocotl' or in Spanish 'ayocote'." Oh. And fillet steak is what we call tenderloin. So why didn't they say so? Huh?

speak to the chef, congratulate him on his birthday, and also for his announcement that the restaurant will now be mentioned in the Michelin guide.

After turning off the lights and trying to sleep, I have lots of coughing and sneezing. I don't know how much sleep I actually get. Probably having been scolded earlier in the day has worsened my ailment so that I'm now barely hanging on to life.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

It's another cool, cloudy day. The car's thermometer registers 14°C at the start, rising to about 18°C by mid-afternoon. It had rained overnight, but it appears that there'll be no more liquid precipitation for the rest of the day (or as a local TV weather person in Knoxville once put it, "Precip is zip."). Ordinarily, we would have an early breakfast but, because today is a weekend, the breakfast room doesn't open until 8:15.

After checking out, we stop briefly near downtown to take a picture of a sign for the Plough (a local pub) that had intrigued us every time we passed it: NO FOOD CRAP BEER BAD HOSPITALITY. As they say, it pays to advertise.

Our first goal is to get a picture of Highclere Castle, the estate that is used for the exterior shots and many of the interior shots for *Downton Abbey*. It is located about 65 miles due east of Bradford. Although there is evidence of structures on this site from the Iron Age, the modern history of the castle is related in these words from its official web site <http://www.highclerecastle.co.uk/about-us/history-of-highclere-castle.html>

In 1838, the 3rd Earl of Carnarvon brought in Sir Charles Barry to transform his home into a grand mansion which would impress the world. It was a time of energy and change. The young Queen Victoria had just come to the throne, and the whole decade witnessed innovation in politics and cultural life.

The new "Highclere Castle" dominated its surroundings in a most dramatic way. No wonder Benjamin Disraeli's first words on seeing Highclere were "How scenical! How scenical!"* The structural work on

*Perhaps he really was saying "How cynical"?

the interior of the Castle was finally completed in 1878. Once built, the Castle became a centre of political life during the late Victorian era.

In many ways Highclere Castle epitomised the confidence and glamour of the Edwardian period in the first few years of the twentieth century. Visitor books record the house parties full of politicians, technological innovators, Egyptologists, aviators and soldiers. During the First World War, Almina, the 5th Countess of Carnarvon, transformed the Castle into a hospital, and patients began to arrive

from Flanders in September 1914. She became an adept nurse and a skilled healer and hundreds of letters from patients and their families bear testament to her untiring work and spirit of generosity.

The Castle returned to a private home and in 1922 the 5th Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun, the first global world media event. Following the death of the 5th Earl, his son, who then became the 6th Earl, returned to Highclere where he lived until 1986. During the Second World War, the Castle briefly became a home for evacuee children from north London. The current (8th) Earl and Countess of Carnarvon live partly in the Castle and partly nearby but remain closely involved in the Castle's day to day life and future.

Because of its popularity as a *Downton* site, the grounds are open and tours are given in the summer. For a price. But, alas, it is now Fall and the grounds are closed. And gated. And guarded by a woman who informs us that there is no vantage point, neither here at the gate nor on any adjacent road, where one can get even a glimpse of the structure. So we drove here for no reason.

PUN ALERT: Lee has read that the owner of Highclere is a countess who is married to an earl. She asks, "Why isn't he a count?" Ron, "It's because he's a no-account."

So we set our sights on Uffington, about 30 miles to the north, hoping to get a picture of its white horse, the only truly ancient white horse in the country. On the way, we pass some very handsome sheep, who are kind enough to stop whatever they were doing and pose for us. There is a parking lot at the foot of a hill. I ask the man who is running a food wagon where one can get the best view of the white horse. He gives us some good advice because, after a considerable hike, we do see it (and take several pictures). According to Wikipedia:

The Uffington White Horse is a highly stylized prehistoric hill figure, 110 m long (374 feet), formed from deep trenches filled with crushed white chalk. The figure is situated on the upper slopes of White Horse Hill ... The figure presumably dates to "the later prehistory," i.e. the Iron Age (800 BC–AD 100) or the late Bronze Age (1000–700 BC). This view was generally held by scholars even before the 1990s, based on the similarity of the horse's design to comparable figures in Celtic art, and it was confirmed following a 1990 excavation led by Simon Palmer and David Miles of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, following which deposits of fine silt removed from the horse's 'beak' were scientifically dated to the late Bronze Age. Iron Age coins that bear a representation comparable to the Uffington White Horse have been found, supporting the early dating of this artifact; it has also been suggested that the horse had been fashioned in the Anglo-Saxon period, more particularly during Alfred's reign, but there is no positive evidence to support this and the view is classified as "folklore" by Darvill.

From here, it's but 20 miles (but in increasingly heavy traffic) to Oxford where we arrive at 1:00 to visit Sylvia McClain and John Turner. John was our colleague on the chemistry faculty at UT, but left some years ago to return to his native country and to a tenured position at Sussex. Sylvia was his graduate student at UT. For a few years, they lived in Brighton, where we visited them at the end of our Wales-Ireland trip in 2009. Recently they moved to Oxford so that Sylvia would be near St. Peter's College, Oxford where she has a tenure-track position doing research and teaching biophysics and biochemistry. Following their driving directions (which got us lost only once), we make it to their street where we are instructed to wait until John can put a parking permit on the windshield of our rental. (Apparently residents are given one or more of these guest permits, but filling it out requires almost as much time and detail as a passport application.)

Their new home, where they've lived for just a couple of months, is in a busy neighborhood of very closely spaced houses and duplexes, much unlike the spacious suburban neighborhoods that we are often accustomed to in the U.S. To say that the interior needs work is an understatement, but it *is* an old house and they seem eager to undertake the necessary repairs to attic, hallways, staircases, walls, plumbing ... well, really everything.

John describes his research at Sussex and his recent visit to a Labor (I mean Labour) Party Conference where he advised the shadow science minister about research funding. His work in catalysis has led to the formation of a start-up which he hopes will be purchased by Johnson Massey, a large international chemicals company. Sylvia regales us with tales of her teaching (as a tutor, one "guides" the students rather than lecturing to them). Lee writes in her journal:

[Sylvia] eats at the head table about once a month. She describes it as the hierarchy's chance to observe one's social skills: everyone gets a seating chart ... before dinner, one is expected to chat briefly with one's immediate neighbors, in a rapid round-robin. It is a challenge to be interesting and to draw out interesting tidbits about the others. Twitter in the flesh? Before dessert, seating is shuffled and one does it all over. When the port is passed, you pour your own; the bottle must not touch the table. This can be a challenge for the already well-lubricated, because the wine flowed freely during dinner. As you pass the port, you say "To queen and country!" Sylvia claims that once she is tenured, she plans on going with "... and I'll up you a president and democracy!"

We walk to the Oxford campus, perhaps 15 minutes away. We stroll past the Radcliffe Camera, which houses the science library, and into the courtyard of the deservedly celebrated Bodleian Library. The courtyards to the various colleges are either closed or require an admission fee, but Sylvia shows her faculty ID to the porter and gets us admitted to New College (whose full name is The Warden and Scholars of St Mary's College of Winchester in Oxford) and Wadham College. Despite its name, New College traces its origins to 1379; its alumni include well-known persons from William Archibald Spooner*

*According to Wikipedia, Spooner admitted to having uttered only one spoonerism, himself, when referring to a hymn as: "The Kinquering Congs Their Titles Take." But the idea became popular and has led to such gems as "Three cheers for our queer old dean!" and "A well-boiled icicle."

to John Galsworthy to John Fowles to ... Hugh Grant. Wadham is much younger, having been founded as "recently" as 1610 and produced luminaries such as architect Sir Christopher Wren and scientists Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke. After a late lunch at a downtown restaurant (very very very noisy), we return to John and Sylvia's home, plot a route to the Heathrow Hilton Hotel (about 50 miles to the east), leave at 5:15, fill the tank with petrol, and arrive at the hotel at 6:45.

We have an "executive" room on the 4th floor (5th by European counting, I assume) which requires a special key for the elevator and provides access to the executive lounge. We sample the sandwiches, egg rolls, cheese, crackers, etc., but the coffee machine makes espresso only. So we make coffee in our room, using the single serving packets that are provided (for a machine that is surprisingly complicated to operate - but we conquer it, eventually). The hotel is quite crowded because of the large number of guests who are attending a wedding for an Indian couple; the colorful dresses and saris are quite impressive. This is also a place where pilots and flight attendants from a host of airlines come to sleep. The computers in the business lounge do not communicate with the printers, but a helpful employee manages to print tomorrow's boarding passes for us.

SUNDAY, JULY 29

When we flew out of Heathrow in 2009, the rental car was returned to an Avis location that is no longer operative. The new location is on level 4 of the Short Car Park in Terminal 5, the terminal used by British Air. Because we have an early departure (8:50), we get up at 4:45, check-out, and make our way to the Avis location (with only one wrong turn because SWMBO failed to listen to her faithful spouse when he directed her to take a certain exit ramp). We have driven 1314 miles with a fuel consumption of 34.1 mpg.

We turn in the car, check-in and leave our bags at the airline counter, and then walk a considerable distance to the security line. Lee goes through smoothly, but I cannot find my boarding pass (which had

been given to me just minutes ago). After fumbling in my briefcase, I locate the document in a rarely used compartment and (blushing with embarrassment) present the pass to the security people. They use U.S.-like rules here: empty pockets, display liquids in a zip plastic bag, remove jacket, belt, laptop, and camera (that's a new one!) but, surprisingly, not our shoes. And this is the airport from which Richard Reed boarded a plane with explosives in the heel of his shoe??? (Truth check - it was actually an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami in 2002, but that would ruin the story, n'est-ce pas?)

We walk to an airport café for coffee and cookies. When I checked at the hotel to see if my misbehaving cell phone had a signal, there was none, but (uh-oh) I couldn't get the damned thing to turn off. Here at the airport, the phone does display bars for Vodafone, but it refuses to connect to the network. That's the bad news. The good news is that I can finally turn it off. I had had visions of being refused entry to the airplane because my cell phone was on.

We board the Airbus A319 at 8:35. The doors are shut just 15 minutes later, but we are held at the gate by air traffic control. We finally take off at 9:00; the announced flying time is 1 hr, 35 min. We are served breakfast at 9:30 (a croissant with pastrami and cheese, orange juice, coffee) and land in Basel a little earlier than the original estimate and than the published ETA of 11:25. (There is a one-hour time change when we go from England to the continent.)

It is a very grey day with fog covering much of the airport. In fact, we don't even see the ground from the air until just a moment or two before setting down. Apparently our pilot was not spooked. It's a long walk to the baggage claim and, as luck would have it, our suitcases are among the last to appear. At passport control, Lee's passport is scrutinized extremely carefully, the pages flipped, various pages scanned. ("At last," thought I, "Her career as a spy is being discovered") but finally she is approved for entry. I, of course, have no difficulty.

We take seats in the arrival lobby, waiting for an employee from Uniworld (our cruise line) to appear. Representatives from other cruise lines appear and collect their passengers, but we sit and wait. A couple sitting next to us, Grainger and Wendy, is also waiting for Uniworld; they are Canadians, living on northern Vancouver Island near Port Hardy.

At 12:25 (a good hour after landing), we hear our names in an announcement on the PA. It turns out that we have been waiting in France, but the Uniworld representative is in Switzerland. OK, what's going on here? Well, it turns out that the airport's full name (Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg, i.e., French-Swiss-German) gives us a hint. According to Wikipedia "The airport is located completely on French soil; the airport has a Swiss customs area connected to Basel by a border road. The airport is operated via an agreement established in 1946 wherein the two countries (Switzerland and France) are granted access to the airport without any customs or other border restrictions." Who knew?

So we walk from France to Switzerland, et voilà, there is the Uniworld agent. We and the Canadian couple are directed to a full-sized tour bus that carries just the four of us across the border into Switzerland and then across the Rhine to a jetty that is still in Switzerland. Just a few meters north of the jetty is the border with Germany. France is across the Rhine from us. As soon as the ship will leave the Swiss dock, it will cross into Germany. From there on, the middle of the river marks the border between Germany on the east, France on the west. Depending on which port we are visiting, sometimes we will dock on the French side of the river, sometime on the German. It will not be until we've gone some 200 km from Basel that the French-German border veers inland, away from the river, and we will be entirely in Germany until we reach the Netherlands on the final day of the cruise.

Our ship is the S.S. Antoinette. I don't know if it is named for (or in spite of) Marie Antoinette, but its furnishings are redolent of the excesses in taste of the 18th century French court. It's easy to conclude that the queen's close (and bloody) encounter with the guillotine was well-justified. You can get a "whiff" of the grotesqueries by consulting my Picasa pictures or going to the photos at the ship's web site: <http://uniworld.com/boutique-ships/europe/ss-antoinette/photos#ad-image-0>

PUN ALERT: Lee: "I haven't done a study of the piers in Basel to figure out where our river cruise will leave from." Ron: "You mean that you haven't done a proper peer review?"

While waiting for our room to be ready and for our luggage to be delivered, we go to "L'Orangerie" on the sun deck (deck 4), where buffet tables are set up for a light lunch (sandwiches, fruit, drinks, etc.) There are no available tables inside, so we sit in an outdoor area which is only partly shielded from the wind by glass windows. Nevertheless, I am very cold - and, of course, my jacket is locked in my suitcase which is somewhere on the dock. After a while, we descend to Deck 3 ("La Princesse Deck" if you please) to wait inside the "Salon du Grand Trianon") for our names to be called. The opulence of this room cannot be described or exaggerated - please check the pictures at the web site (above) or Picasa.

I take advantage of the WiFi in the lounge to do some web-based reading, but the connection is rather spotty and cuts out from time to time. This does not bode well for the rest of the trip. I can't load Google or my email client (the icon spins and spins and spins ...) but at least I can get to the New York Times web site. After a while, I give up and return to reading on the Kindle. When I finally go to the reception desk on Deck 2 ("La Duchesse Deck") to inquire when our room will be ready, I'm informed that it has been ready for occupancy for quite some time. Thanks.

So we go to our room (307), also on Deck 2. It's considerably smaller (as we knew it would be) than the rooms we've had on the Regent Seven Seas ships, but is very cleverly designed with storage space in places one might not have thought of. One of the staff takes us through the room to explain its features and to show how our suitcases will fit nicely under the bed. We return to the lounge, hoping for a better WiFi signal, but are not thus rewarded; so we return to our room to read.

At 5:45, there is a mandatory safety drill in the lounge where life jackets are donned and muster stations explained. At 6:00, the captain (from The Netherlands) welcomes us and introduces the hotel manager (from Portugal), chef (also Portuguese, they are husband-and-wife), other officers and staff, and most important Tomàs (from Hungary) who is the tour director and who will give a pre-dinner talk every evening. The hotel manager explains the procedures that are followed on the cruise, how to sign up for excursions, the hours when the restaurants are open, and so on.

At 7:00 we descend to Deck 2 and "Restaurant de Versailles." I had suggested to Lee that instead of sitting at a table for two, as we almost always did on our Regent Seven Seas cruises, we should ask to be seated with other guests. It turns out that this is unnecessary. First, there are no tables for two. Second, there is nobody to seat us, so we walk to a table where there are two people already sitting and ask if we may join them. She (Carol) is a native of Florida and a retired elementary school teacher and principal; he (Roy) is a retired structural engineer, originally from New York. They have a son who is a lieutenant-colonel (presumably for the U.S.) based in Stuttgart whom they visited before coming to Basel. Very quickly, it becomes quite clear that we should avoid politics, as he gives unmistakable vibes that he is not only very conservative but also distrustful of Obama and the entire Washington establishment (or at least the Democrats). I do, however, make it clear that he and we do not agree on such issues, so my silence is not an indication of approval but of my being polite.)

The serving staff (tonight and every night) is superb.* They are all male, aged about 25-40, and from a

*One exception is the surly young man who would wait on our table at dinner, a couple of days from now. Not only did he project a "I don't want to be here" attitude, but it was his habit to refill wine glasses to the very top, presumably so that he would not have to return too soon.

variety of countries, mostly in eastern Europe. No matter how many are at the table, they never mess up the individual orders; the food is brought promptly while hot; plates are cleared and new courses are delivered; wine glasses are kept filled; and (most impressive) they all seem to be able to balance large plates and platters and what-not on their arms without spilling anything. At this first meal, I have salad, potato/onion soup, chicken, and a fruit plate for dessert.

The ship leaves port at midnight and will travel about 75 km before it docks in the morning.

PUN ALERT: I thought of a great pun during dinner but I forgot to write to down. And now, this *bon mot* is forever lost to posterity. Poor posterity! (Maybe it will occur to me later? Not bloody likely.)

PUN ALERT: To show off her knowledge of French, Lee reacts to our failure to get a good WiFi signal by saying *Tant pis*. I, who am much more of a Francophone than she, informs her that what she just said translates as "Auntie is sitting on the toilet." She does not believe me. *Tant pis!!*

MONDAY, JUNE 30

It is a cloudy and cool day. It's also unusually cool in our room. The reason? The upper half of our window moves up or down with a command from a wall switch that has three positions: up, off, down. When I finished "playing" with it yesterday, I moved the switch to the "up" position and assumed that the window would stay closed. It didn't. Apparently it re-opened (without my noticing it) and remained that way overnight, out of view behind a curtain. So I close it this morning and move the control from "up" to "off." There, that should tame the critter!

At breakfast, we sit with Debbie and Randy, a delightful couple from Edmonton. (Is everyone on this cruise Canadian?) They work together as compliance consultants to non-profits and government agencies. They are worlds removed (in the best senses of the words) from our dinner companions last night. Breakfast is available in the same dining room as last night, but it is entirely self-service: there are buffet lines of cold cuts, cheeses, eggs, omelettes (on demand by a chef), juices, fruit cups, and so on. Lee, bless her heart (and stomach) has an uncanny memory for what she and I ate at every breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the cruise. I refuse to enter these details here. If you're insanely curious and can't get to sleep at night, you can check with her.

Two excursions are available, but we chose the one that will explore two French wine villages: Kayserberg and Riquewihr, neither of which sounds very French. The ship is docked in Breisach on the German side of the Rhine where we board our bus and meet our tour guide, Véronique. Her English is very good, but she has a nervous laugh that imposes itself at inappropriate times. A human hyena, I think she is. It is a fairly long bus ride (about 40 km) from Breisach to Kayserberg. As we cross the Rhine, Véronique proclaims how much cleaner the air smells when we pass from Germany to France. We passengers are not convinced. During the ride, which takes us through the major city of Colmar,* she propounds on the

*Colmar is the 3rd largest city in Alsace. Strasbourg is number 1 and Mulhouse is number 2. Which reminds me of a bizarre event that took place in UT's Buehler Hall of Chemistry, sometime in the 1990s. It seems that someone thought it would be "amusing" to leave excrement (human excrement) in one of the men's restrooms, not only in the toilet but also in a urinal. The campus police were called, but the chief was too busy to come so he sent his *number two man*. Really. Talk about specialization!

history of this region, Alsace-Lorraine, which has passed back and forth between Germany and France so many times that it's understandable how town names and traditions bear the influence of both countries.

France is subdivided into 22 regions, one of which is Alsace (the fifth from smallest). The capital of the region is Strasbourg, which we will visit tomorrow. Its name is often linked with neighboring Lorraine, but they are distinct regions (except when cobbled together by one or another invading military). Alsace dates its beginnings to Roman times; indeed, there are vines growing here that came from Italy and were planted by the Romans. Beer was also brewed here by monks because of the excellent water. From the 10th through the end of the 17th century, the region was part of the Holy Roman Empire, hence the many German town names. Louis XIV*, the longest ruling of the European kings (1638-1715) captured Alsace

*And you thought that only Super Bowls had Roman numerals. Now, students, how quickly can you tell me the number of years that have elapsed between this year's XLVIII and XXI, the most important of all because it was the New York Giants' first of four Super Bowl victories?

in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years War and made it French where it remained until 1870. The national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, should really be called *La Strasbourgeoise*, because Strasbourg was where it was written in 1792. (And as Casey Stengel used to say, "Yez can look it up!")

Alas, in 1870, France went to war with Prussia (i.e., Germany) and lost Alsace and Lorraine to the victors. And they remained German until 1918, at the end of The War to End All Wars (Ha!) when France reacquired them. But in 1939, when it became clear that WW I did not, in fact, end all wars, Germany annexed the two regions and placed therein the only concentration camp in France. Some 150,000 citizens were conscripted into the German army and forced to fight against France. In 1944, the regions were liberated from Germany after severe Allied bombing of Strasbourg.

The bus takes us along the Alsatian wine road which is lined by vineyards for about 100 km. The vines are never irrigated (to prevent their getting "lazy"), but get their water from rain and the water table. As Véronique explained it, the roots need to work hard to get their minerals and water; they get natural irrigation from runoff from the adjacent Vosges mountains. The wines that are made here are Riesling, muscat, sylvaner, pinot gris, and pinto blanc; pinot noir is the only red wine from the region. It is, in fact, against French law to irrigate vineyards anywhere in the country.

We arrive in Kayserberg (also spelled Kaiserberg) at 9:25 and walk about the town. The half-timbered houses, painted in a variety of bright colors, all sporting flower boxes, are a visual treat, but our guide is much too eager to get us going and moving and seeing what we should see. (This makes her sound Germanic, not French ... but what do I know?) Some of the structures are very old; Véronique points to an inscription above a door from 1608. We pass a boulangerie-pâtisserie with its tempting savories and sweets of all sorts on display. A characteristic of the region is the bretzel (a large, soft-sided pretzel of the sort that one can buy on the streets of major U.S. cities). In the window of an épicerie, there is a sign: "Si Vous Avez Faim, Mange du Pain" (very loose translation: "If you have a woman, expect to have pain.") At about 10:00, we arrive at Notre Dame, relatively subdued in size and interior decor. Of course, it has a mechanical clock as have the various churches and cathedrals that we visited in England.

PUN ALERT: Puns are really good, only when they're not contrived. That notwithstanding, here's one that was spontaneous the first time it was uttered (France 2011) and has been forced a couple of times since (Netherlands 2012, Germany 2012). While touring the interior of the church, Lee remarks "What a big organ!" and Ron replies, "Oops! Is my fly open?"

We return to the bus at 10:45 and drive just 10 km to Riquewihr, a member of *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*. (I think that this designation needs to be earned, not just self-ordained.) On the ride, Véronique has distributed a metal container with *seve du pain* (which sounds better than what it is, pine sap), close to a cough drop but also closer to a hard candy; the locals claim that it keeps them healthy. The city center is much like Kayserberg's: charming half-timbered buildings, bright colors, flower boxes in the windows. I love taking pictures, of restaurants (and their sign boards), groceries, butchers, bakers, and so on. But best of all, we have some free time and so we wander past the town and see the vineyards stretching up into the hills plus the wagons that are used to haul the grapes to market. In fact, at one point of our tour we need to step to the side of the street to allow a tractor that is pulling a wagon with wine casks to pass. We also see a raspberry-sherbet-colored car, a Twingo (if you please); on its dashboard is the weirdest coin holder I've ever seen. You'll have to consult the Picasa photos to see what I mean.

At 12:25 we are back on the bus and at the cruise ship at 1:10. We have lunch with a couple from San Diego - he is an architect, but I don't recall their names. A second couple is from the Chicago area: she (Mary Ann) is a retired oncological nurse and he (Bill), though 72, is still working as an executive for a packaging company. Both are Catholic (I don't know why their religion came up) and are making their first

visit to Europe. As was true at breakfast, lunch was self-service at the buffet tables. During lunch, the ship sets sail for Strasbourg. At 2:30, there is a meeting in the lounge where Tomàs goes over the remainder of the trip: the tours, the procedures for signing up, etc.

Later in the afternoon, we go to the sun deck to watch our passage through a couple of locks. Apparently we had done two locks during last night while everyone was asleep. I ask the captain how much we descend at each lock; the answer, about 50 m each time.

And now a strange tale. While going through one of the locks, I stopped a fellow passenger who was wearing a NY Yankees cap, planning to bawl him out (as I often do when I meet someone wearing the logo of the evil empire). Turns out he grew up in Brooklyn and lived on Avenue I and East 21st Street, just a few blocks from where I lived during the first two years of my life. When I was age 3, my family moved to Bedford Avenue and then, at my age 5, to 2405 Avenue R (between Bedford Avenue and East 24th Street) where we remained until I went off to college at age 16. The man went to Midwood High School, the arch rival of my alma mater, James Madison. So I asked why, as a native of Brooklyn, he had gone over to the dark side. He's a few years older than I and he said that when the Dodgers' catcher Mickey Owen dropped a crucial 3rd strike in the 1941 World Series, allowing the Yankees to win the game and the series, he switched allegiances to the team from the Bronx. "I can't root for a team like this," he says. Turncoat!

Then he said to me, "I have a trivia question for you, but I don't know the answer. Mickey Mantle, of course, wore No. 7 but when he came up he was assigned a different number. I'm pretty sure that it was double digits." Moving ahead in the story, that evening I used our very iffy internet connection to check several web sites and found out that Mantle had, indeed, been issued a different number in 1951 when he joined the team before being sent down for the rest of the year - it was No. 6. The next year he was given No. 7, which he kept for the rest of his career.

So the next day, I reported this information to my "friend" who was quite indignant. He said, "No, it was definitely double digits!!" I countered with the fact that I found No. 6 at several different sources (to be honest, they *could* have been copying from one another) but he wouldn't accept it. I then said that my memory was that Andy Carey wore No. 6 during his years with the Yankees. (I checked later - it was true.) "Who's Andy Carey?" replied this supposedly die-hard Yankees fan.

I related this story to my friend Mait Jones. Mait says that I should have thrown this poseur overboard. Too late now!

Back now to the afternoon of September 30. After watching our progress through the two locks, we return to the lounge, hoping to have a decent WiFi signal in the lounge. Not a chance! I do manage to read a couple of emails (and to send two, I think ... maybe) and to read two Op-Eds in *The New York Times*. I'm unable to connect to NPR.org where I'm eager to find out the answer to last week's on-air Will Shortz puzzle, one of many that I've failed to solve over the years. Alas, I do connect to ESPN.com, thus getting the awful news that my Giants lost yesterday and are now 0-4 for the season.

At 6:15, we return to the lounge for the captain's official reception. The Portuguese hotel manager introduces the entire staff (including her husband, the chef) and Tomàs tells about tomorrow's excursions. Then it's down to the restaurant. We sit with Bill and Mary Anne from Chicago. For dinner, I have foie gras, mushroom soup, and scallops. As was true at the first dinner, the service was speedy and precise. Following dinner, we return to our room to read.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1

During the night, the ship has traveled about 90 km to Kehl, which is on the German side of the Rhine directly across from Strasbourg. The morning is cloudy and cool, but the threat of rain never materializes.

In fact, it turns out to be quite sunny. We have a light breakfast (for me, cold cereal and a bagel); at the table with us is a couple from Adelaide who give us lots of information about the region and its wines (we will be in Australia* from March, 4 to April 3, 2014 and will be in Adelaide for five of those days). Neither

*During the time that this travelog is being written (from December 2013 to January 2014), Australia is experiencing record-breaking heat. Temperatures of over 120° have been recorded, although not near where we'll be. December temperatures in Adelaide reached 39°C (102°F) but are expected to reach the mid 40s (around 110°F) by the middle of January. And Sydney and Melbourne, where we'll start out, are not much better: they, too, expect to reach the mid 40s. Surely it will cool off by March. Please! (All of this, while the upper Midwest in the U.S. is experiencing temperatures of 0°F and below.) Now tell me that climate change is a figment of scientists' imagination!

of us recalls their names, but Lee does remember their telling us that in Australia, by law, one gets six weeks annual vacation and, after 10 years of work, a full 13 weeks. Can this be true? I'm too lazy to check its accuracy.

We board the bus that will take us across the Rhine to Strasbourg at 8:25. Idiot that I am, I discover (too later) that I have forgotten the camera. Thus, all of this morning's tour will be unrecorded for posterity. Lee and I decide that we will return to the city in the afternoon, this time with camera in hand ... if I remember.

The bus takes us to Strasbourg and to the water taxi pier for our tour of the canals of the city. Tomàs is on the bus with us for the short ride (about 15 minutes). He regales us with the tale (which may be apocryphal, but has the ring of truth) that the streets of the city are so crowded and that parking places are so few that owners leave their cars in neutral with the brake off; another driver will maneuver his/her car into the space in front or in back of the first car, nudging it backward or forward to make space. It actually sounds like a great system, although the car being pushed might suffer some damage if the other driver is too aggressive.

Strasbourg is not only the capital of Alsace but also the seat of the European Union. Its population, already large, has increased to nearly 300,000 because of its recent international importance. At the water taxi, we meet Audrey (from Lorraine), our guide for the day. Not only is she more fluent in English than was Véronique but she is prettier and more stylishly dressed. (If only I had brought my camera!) She covers much of the same historical ground that we heard about yesterday. The taxi takes us under several medieval-era covered bridges, past the European Parliament building, past the Palais Rohan (now a museum), past the neighborhood called Petite France, and around the Grand Île, which dates from Roman times and on which sits the cathedral, art museums, hotels, and restaurants that visitors to Strasbourg come to see. (Why oh why did I forget the camera?) The taxi goes through two locks and past a rotating drawbridge that is operated by the lock master.

On the taxi cruise, Audrey relates several amusing "factoids" (which are undoubtedly part of her rehearsed spiel). For example, although Americans tend to lump Alsace and Lorraine into one unit, they are in fact quite distinct; Audrey, from Lorraine, claims that she is often asked by Alsatians if she has a passport to visit. And in the spirit of the relatively good-natured ribbing that goes on between Swedes and Norsemen or (in my own childhood culture) between Litvaks and Galitzianers (don't ask!) she says that Alsatians say that one can detect people from Lorraine by the length of their ears. And why is this? Because, according to the story, mothers from Lorraine take their children to the Vosges Mountains that separate the two regions and hold their children up by the ears so that they can see how beautiful Alsace is.

In my ignorance, I had no idea that the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) are separate entities. The former has 47 members (Lee and I try counting the number of countries in Europe, but wind up far short of 47) whereas the latter has 28. A useful web site explains the difference:

The Council of Europe and the European Union share the same fundamental values – human rights,

democracy and the rule of law – but are separate entities which perform different, yet complementary, roles. Focusing on those core values, the Council of Europe brings together governments from across Europe – and beyond – to agree on minimum legal standards in a wide range of areas. It then monitors how well countries apply the standards that they have chosen to sign up to. It also provides technical assistance, often working together with the European Union, to help them do so. The European Union refers to those same European values as a key element of its deeper political and economic integration processes. It often builds upon Council of Europe standards when drawing up legal instruments and agreements which apply to its 28 member states. Furthermore, the European Union regularly refers to Council of Europe standards and monitoring work in its dealings with neighbouring countries, many of which are Council of Europe member states.

Did you understand that? I didn't. And, according to Wikipedia, "The Parliament is based in three different cities with numerous buildings. A protocol attached to the Treaty of Amsterdam requires that 12 plenary sessions be held in Strasbourg (none in August but two in September), which is the Parliament's official seat, while extra part sessions as well as committee meetings are held in Brussels. Luxembourg hosts the Secretariat of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is the only assembly in the world with more than one meeting place and one of the few that does not have the power to decide its own location."

Audrey points out which buildings are in French style and which in German, as the region (and its capital city) have passed back and forth between the countries for centuries. She adds that during WW II, Alsace was not just occupied but annexed by Germany which imposed extremely strict rules on the populace. People could be sent to concentration camps for such "offenses" as giving their children French names or wearing a beret. As did Véronique, she tells us why *La Marseillaise* should really be called *La Strasbourgeise*, but unlike yesterday's guide she actually sings the entire anthem for us.

Although not part of her prepared spiel, she gleefully informs us that another river ship, the *Viking Sun*, had a serious collision yesterday and had to terminate its Rhine cruise. The passengers, none of whom were injured, were taken off the ship and put on buses for the remainder of their sightseeing. What makes this most interesting is that when we were docked in Breisach, our ship tied up to the *Viking Sun* across which we had to walk to get to the pier. Lee found a web site that reported the details:

October 2, 1:52 p.m. EDT -- Viking Sun has been involved in an accident, the fourth accident involving a Viking boat in the past month. No injuries were reported. The river boat, operated by Viking Cruises, struck a metal pier at a quarry along the edge of the Rhine early yesterday morning.

"Viking Sun experienced a collision* with a docking station on the Rhine, near Strasbourg," a Viking

*Ya gotta love that phrase "experienced a collision"! It would have been more precise to have said "The Viking Sun collided with a docking station" but that would have required that the cruise line acknowledge responsibility. This is in the great tradition of saying "Mistakes were made."

Cruises spokesman told Cruise Critic. "There were no injuries, but a full inspection of the ship afterward would have caused an unreasonable delay." The crash caused a tear of nearly 10 feet in the boat's hull, according to the French paper *L'Alsace*. Viking offered passengers a choice to either return home and receive a refund for the unused portion of their trip or continue on with a modified itinerary via bus and receive a future Viking cruise credit, Viking said. "Some passengers opted to return home, but a vast majority chose to continue with the modified itinerary," the spokesman added.

An investigation is underway to determine the cause of the accident.

And there was this update on November 13:

Viking Cruises is investigating what caused its river boat Viking Sun to ground near Strasbourg,

France, Tuesday. The ship did not experience an engine problem, as previously reported, the company told Cruise Critic. The accident, the line emphasized, was not related to the collision that occurred in October, nor was the boat's captain the same captain.

<http://www.cruisecritic.com/news/news.cfm?ID=5559>

<http://www.cruisecritic.com/news/news.cfm?ID=5614>

<http://www.shipwrecklog.com/log/2013/10/viking-sun/>

It would seem that we made the correct decision to go with Uniworld rather than Viking. When we return to our ship (but have not yet seen the article in Cruise Critic), I ask the person at the reception desk if the story about the *Viking Sun* is correct. She, with a German accent, replies "Vee know nozzing."

At the end of the water taxi excursion, Audrey leads us to the center of *Grand Île* and to the huge square where the magnificent cathedral is located. Lee and I had been in Strasbourg twice in the 1980s, and each time the exterior of the cathedral was covered with construction mesh and scaffolding. Today, it is free of such "adornments." The cathedral dates from the 12th century and is stupendous (in size and style) both inside and out. In Wikipedia we read:

At 142 metres, it was the world's tallest building from 1647 to 1874, when it was surpassed by St. Nikolai's Church, Hamburg. Today it is the sixth-tallest church in the world and the highest still-standing structure built entirely in the Middle Ages. Described by Victor Hugo as a "gigantic and delicate marvel," and by Goethe as a "sublimely towering, wide-spreading tree of God," the cathedral is visible far across the plains of Alsace and can be seen from as far off as the Vosges Mountains or the Black Forest on the other side of the Rhine.

One of its principal features is the Astronomical Clock. Wikipedia, again:

The cathedral's south transept houses an 18-metre astronomical clock, one of the largest in the world. Its first forerunner was the so-called Dreikönigsuhr ("three-king clock") of 1352-1354, located at the opposite wall from where today's clock is. Then starting in 1547 a new clock was built by Christian Herlin, and others, but the construction was interrupted when the Cathedral was handed over to the Roman Catholic Church. Construction was resumed in 1571 by Conrad Dasypodius and the Habrecht brothers, and this clock was astronomically much more involved. It also had paintings by the Swiss painter Tobias Stimmer. That clock functioned into the late 18th Century and can be seen today in the Strasbourg Museum of Decorative Arts.

The clock existing today originated in 1838-1843 and was built by Jean-Baptiste Schwilgué in Dasypodius' clock case, and with roughly the same functions, but equipped with completely new mechanics. Schwilgué made a number of preliminary studies years before, such as a design of the computus mechanism (Easter computation) in 1816, and built a prototype in 1821. This mechanism, whose whereabouts are now unknown, could compute Easter following the complex Gregorian rule.

The astronomical part is unusually accurate; it indicates leap years, equinoxes, and more astronomical data. Thus it was already much more a complex calculating machine than a clock. Often the complicated functioning of the Strasbourg Clock made specialized mathematical knowledge necessary (not just technical knowledge). The clock was able to determine the computus (date of Easter in the Christian calendar) at a time when computers did not yet exist. Easter had been defined at the First Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 as "the Sunday that follows the fourteenth day of the moon that falls on March 21 or immediately after."

On the walk back to the bus that will return us to our ship, I get to talk with Audrey. She says that though she loves France, she is afraid (and so should we be) about the idiot car drivers and bicyclists. "Do not assume, just because you are in a pedestrian crossing path, that you are safe from the approaching vehicles." Good advice.

Audrey tells us an amusing (but true) story. At a 2009 meeting of the NATO heads of state in Strasbourg, a photographer had the idea to take a picture of the world leaders on the bridge between Strasbourg and Kehl. They were to straddle the border so that they were simultaneously in German and France. All were present, except for Silvio Berlusconi, who was spotted at the end of the bridge, talking on his cell phone. Undoubtedly he was arranging the evening's meeting with a bright young thing. So the picture was taken without him.

On the ship, we have lunch with yet another couple from Chicago, Bill and Lydia, who are much more cultured than last night's companions. He retired young as an executive compensation consultant at Towers Perrin. Both are quite liberal, although Lee describes Lydia as a "dogmatic Lutheran" and Bill as "a polymath." Following lunch, we take the bus back to Strasbourg and stay there for an hour-and-a-half, walking the streets of *Grand Île*, poking our noses in the shops, revisiting the cathedral, and taking numerous pictures (see Picasa). (Actually, it's I who goes into the cathedral, while SWMBO goes shopping. I do not mean this in a pejorative sense. OK, yes I do.) I also take pictures of the Hôtel de Rohan, just across the plaza from the cathedral, where we stayed on our two earlier visits and of the nearby restaurant where we ate a *tarte flambée*.

Back to the ship after our afternoon in Strasbourg, there is still no internet connectivity. It's not just slow, it's non-existent. So I ask about this at the front desk. Answer: "We've had no satellite contact at all today." So we sit in the lounge, read books (Kindle for me), work crossword puzzles (me, again), and have liquid refreshments (Lee scotch whisky, me coffee). At 6:20, while enjoying more drinks (scotch for both of us), Tomàs talks about tomorrow's excursion to Speyer. We then have dinner with the Edmonton couple (Randy and Debbie) and are joined by two elderly (maybe 80s) women who are far more spry and energetic than the relatively younger me. Harriet (from Florida) and Bonnie (from Wisconsin) have been friends for years and often travel together. They are decidedly liberal; and Bonnie has no love for Scott Walker, the governor of her state. The conversation among the six of us is delightful (spoken by a not disinterested participant). For dinner I order cheese, onion soup, salmon costarde,* and fruit plate for

*I can't make out my handwritten notes, but none of these words makes any sense when modifying salmon: costarde, costade, crostade, coustarde, etc.

my dessert.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2

After having had no internet connectivity at all yesterday, this morning the signal is very strong. One of my emails comes from my son Steve who tells me that his mother (my former wife) has died. I write to him and Larry via Pegasus Mail, but both bounce, so I send my messages via UT Chemistry's Squirrel Mail. (I learn, too late to be helpful) that my Pegasus messages are bouncing because Gmail, whose outgoing server we use, is worried that someone has hijacked my computer since I'm trying to send mail from an unfamiliar place. Great!

It is a sunny morning. We have breakfast with a couple from Auckland, Natalie and Les. Lee writes "She worked with children and seems to be a bit of a damaged soul." Practicing psychoanalysis without a license is my spouse. Lee is a retired lawyer. After breakfast, we head to the bus for our 20-km drive to Speyer, where we arrive at about 9:00. Our guide is Nicole, who is German (despite the French name) and in perfect command of English, but with a bit of a nervous giggle (à la Véronique the first day), and seemingly detached from her duties. She takes us to the ruins of the 12th century synagogue and down into the ritual bath (led by our 80-somethings from last night, Bonnie and Harriet, who prove to be much more nimble than I on the steep and narrow stone steps). Lee writes "[Nicole] does a pretty good job, considering that we are a small, disinterested group - except for us, Bonnie, and Harriet. There is a threesome from Texas who look like glazed apricots - probably waiting for beer and shopping!" The lady doesn't pull her verbal punches, does she?

Speyer dates itself to some 5,000 years BCE; it was occupied by the Romans in the early part of the first millennium, then was settled by roving Germanic tribes, and subsequently became an important commercial, political, and religious center. Its cathedral dates from 1061. The city was ruled by bishops until 1294 at which time the Emperor granted it the rights of a "free imperial city."

Of interest to me is the involvement of Jews in the history of the city. According to Wikipedia:

In 1084 Bishop Rudiger Huzmann invited Jews to move to Speyer and settled them in the former suburb of Altspeyer which he had surrounded by a wall for their protection.* Along with this invitation

*Or was it to keep them inside? Hmmm?

the bishop granted the Jews rights and privileges which went well beyond contemporary practice. They were confirmed by Emperor Henry IV in 1090 and became an example for Jews' privileges in many cities of the empire. A Jewish quarter soon also developed next to the bishops' district near the cathedral. Its centre, the Jews' Court (Judenhof), contained men's and women's synagogue and the mikveh. The ruins of the Speyer Synagogue are the oldest visible remnants of such a building in central Europe. The mikveh, first mentioned in 1126, has remained almost unchanged to this day and is still supplied by fresh groundwater.

For two centuries the Speyer Jewish community was among the most important of the Empire and, in spite of pogroms, persecution and expulsion, had considerable influence on Ashkenazi culture and the spiritual and cultural life of the town. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism and persecution was no less virulent in Speyer than in other places and with one notable exception the Jewish community shared the fate of most others. The Yiddish surnames of Spira, Shapira, Spier and Shapiro probably derive from Shpira, the Hebrew name of Speyer.

We visit the Holy Trinity Church, which had been Catholic before the Reformation and whose interior decor is surprisingly subdued, and from there to the imposing Speyer cathedral with its impressive spire. By 10:45, Nicole has left us. Lee and I choose to visit the Jewish museum, which houses artifacts and tombstones from the days when Speyer was an important Jewish community. The museum also features an exhibit of the political drawings and art work of one of Speyer's native sons, Bill Spira (1913-1999).

Looking for a place to eat lunch (instead of retreating to the ship), we go into Tor zur Pfalz Kulinarium, a combination restaurant/food store specializing in delicacies of the Palatinate (a Roman word for the region). According to a very crude translation of the restaurant's web site,

The Palatinate cuisine has much more to offer than liver dumplings and stuffed pig's stomach. Regional cuisine with lust and love spiced, long-known rearranged, combined tradition with refinement results in a completely new, lightweight image of the kitchen from grandmother's time.

The pig's stomach has become widely known as a favorite dish of our former Prime Minister. Many of his state guests of Margaret Thatcher to Mikhail Gorbatschow thus came into the enjoyment of the Palatinate Saumagens. Pig's stomach recipes there are many. Depending on the village or household varied again a little when it comes to spices and the amount of potatoes. Today there is the pig's stomach except in its original form for sauerkraut with bread or potatoes in many new variants. The new light in the Palatinate cuisine Culinary dares new combinations such as pig's stomach with ravioli or pudding strudel.

We are eager to partake of the "lust and love-spiced" cuisine. We do not choose pig's stomach, although with the German-only menu and a waitress who spoke no English, who knows what we are having. Well, I think that what I order is safe: Pfälzer Leberknödel, but Lee has Pfälzkeller saumagen* with Leberknödel,

*Surprise! Saumagen translates as sow's stomach.

Lamm bratwurst, sauerkraut, and winzerbrot. This sounds like a hell of a lot of food. Did she really eat this much? She confirms that all of these things were on her plate, but it was a sampler and she had only some of each item.

Following lunch, we walk to the Historisches Museum der Pfalz where there are artifacts from 5000 BCE through Roman times and to the present. It is a surprisingly excellent collection for a not-so-large city. http://www.museum.speyer.de/English/Permanent_exhibitions.htm

We return to the ship at 2:30. The weather is perfect: sunny and not too warm, with a nice breeze. I find an email from Amazon that they're about to retrieve several eBooks from my Kindle so I go to the Pierce County Library site and put a hold on a hard cover version of *James Madison*, which I can read in Gig Harbor. I hope to finish *Shades of Grey* before it's pirated away. (What I discover, later, is that so long as I do not connect the Kindle to the library's web site, there's no way for Amazon to filch the books. In fact, all of the library books are still loaded on my device in early 2014. I'll lose them when I connect to get books for our upcoming Australia trip, but that's OK.)

In the lounge from 3:00 to 5:45, we read, work puzzles, answer emails, etc. But again, all of my outgoing emails fail. By tomorrow, I will have discovered why (see the explanation about Gmail, above). While sitting in the lounge, the damaged *Viking Sun* sails by. I miss seeing the prow where the damage is, but other passengers and crew members do catch sight of it. When we return to our room before going to Tomàs's speech, we note that the window is fully open. This time I am not at fault. It was closed when we left the room earlier today. Mysterious forces are at work, I suspect. I report this malfunction to the front desk and am told, "It is nothing. It's remote controlled." Huh?? But she says that she'll send an engineer to look at it.

Tomàs introduces a student from Heidelberg Universität, who gives a PowerPoint lecture about the growth of German cities over the centuries. (There was an optional excursion, yesterday, to see Heidelberg and the university, but as Lee and I were there as recently as December, 2012, there seemed no point in our going.) Tomàs was in fine form, describing his evening spiels as his "blah-blah" and asking if we've now got ABC overload as well as ABL. (ABC = "another bloody cathedral" ad ABL = "another bloody lock")

At dinner, we sit again with Bill and Lydia. I have tomato/mozzarella salad, consommé, chicken, and (finally rejecting the fruit plate again) cheese cake.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

It is a sunny, cool day when we dock at 7:30 am in Rudesheim am Rhein, a wine-making town with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. We have breakfast with Bill* and Beverly, a couple from Tulsa. He's a criminal

*There seem to be an extraordinary number of Bills on this cruise, not to mention the huge one that we'll be asked to pay by the time the trip is over. (Actually, most of it has already been paid.)

court judge and she's comptroller for the local gas company. The first spouse of each of them died; for 10 years, they've been "living in sin," much to the consternation of their children. Bill's wife was a direct descendent of the Denny family who were the first white settlers of Seattle in 1851. There exists a real estate holding company of which his daughter (a Denny) is a partner; the company owns several high rises in downtown Seattle and Bill visits Seattle regularly to attend meetings of the firm. I tell him that he's the first judge that I've ever met socially; I also tell him how impressed we were with the Superior Court judge in Tacoma who not only ruled against the horrible neighbors of our best friends in Gig Harbor but who lectured them on the frivolous nature of their suit.

After breakfast, I read some email and am "overjoyed" to see Mait Jones's annual letter, sent every

October 3, to commemorate the worst day in the history of Western Civilization: the day on which Bobby Thomson hit his homerun in the 1951 National League playoffs to carry the hated New York Giants over the blessed Brooklyn Dodgers and into the World Series, thereby breaking the heart of a certain not-yet-13-year old who got home in time to see the ending on TV. The email consists of a printed play-by-play of the entire game. Surely there's a place reserved in hell for people like Maitland Jones Jr.!

I am shocked(!) to find that I have a cell phone signal for the first time since the Basel airport, but I'm unable to connect to the local network. This is getting annoying.

Next to the dock, there are two three-car mini-trains that take us through a park to the bus that will deliver us to the town. We have free time until 10:00 to wander through the city; I take ample advantage of this by snapping dozens of pictures of store fronts, signs, people, windows, doorways, restaurants, all of which are decorated in a most pleasing style: old-fashioned but still elegantly neat and unfussy. There are several large groups of Japanese* tourists in town; Asians must be regular visitors as we encounter a

*I think that I'm a tolerant person and that I bear no malice against any group (except, of course, for New York Giants** fans like Mait Jones) but these gaggles of tourists, each one of whom has at least one and maybe more camera(s), clog the center of the streets and have no sense of space or consideration for the privacy of others (i.e., moi!).

**By this, I mean the New York Giants who were a baseball team that absconded to San Francisco in 1957 and were never heard from again. The "other" New York Giants is an NFL football team to whom I've vowed my allegiance, even when they play as poorly as they did this season. It's gratifying that Mait Jones is also a fan of these Giants, so he's not 100% bad. 97% maybe.

wine barrel outside a tavern with its name in German and (I think) Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and Indonesian. Detracting from the quaintness of the village is a tourist trap called Folter Museum (Torture Museum); "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of man?" at such a place (*pace* "The Shadow"). Not surprisingly, the majority of the shops are devoted to wine, in one way or another. (According to the information booklet put out by Uniworld Cruises, this charming street is called "Drosselgasse, a narrow bustling lane of shops and wine bars, as well as its impressive Niederwald Monument, built to celebrate the re-establishment of the German empire in the late 19th century." Somehow we missed this monument, so if you want to see a picture of it, go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niederwalddenkmal>

At 10:00, the bus takes us into the hills for a visit to Castle Vollrads, which traces its lineage to the 14th century. The grounds are beautiful as is the main building which we tour in the company of an employee of the firm. In the courtyard, near the start of our tour, we get to sample a Riesling, a *qualitätswein* (which is the lowest grade and not at all to our taste. But we learn that its glass stopper (the likes of which we've encountered in some wines at home) is a German patented-invention from 2004. We are led through the elegant rooms of the building and finally we are offered another Riesling, *kabinett* grade, which means that it is the highest quality wine made by the estate. We also get an education about the different kinds of Rieslings, what makes some high quality and others not, how the sugar content is a determinant, what sort of chemistry occurs by the enzyme beasties during the fermentation process, etc. Then it is back downstairs to the "leather wallpaper room" from the 17th century - its decor is ornate, to say the least, but we are offered a fruity, sweet *spätlese* Riesling. Following the tour, Lee and I get to talk to our guide a bit about the details of the chemistry. It's interesting that high-sugar-content wine used to be the most popular in Germany, but not any longer. <http://www.schlossvollrads.com/en/castle.htm>

The bus returns us to the ship at noon (no mini-train, so we walk through the little park all by ourselves!). We have lunch with Sarah and Mark (from Wenatchee, WA) and the first pair of Chicagoans from the other day, Bill and Mary Ann. Mark is executive director of the port of Wenatchee and (according to Lee, though I do not disagree, "a very sour person"). His spouse is described by Lee as "a pompous ass" - the lady does not pull her punches, eh? The conversation is not enlightening. When Lee asks Mary Ann about there being enough labor to pick apples and cherries this season, Mary Ann "thought it was a political question from a 206er.* She launched into a non-answer about the two of them participating in

*The state of Washington consists of two diametrically opposed regions, politically. The western part of the state, mostly the Seattle area, is staunchly liberal in spite of the strong military presence of nearby Joint Base Lewis McChord, the Bremerton Naval Base, and the Bangor Submarine Base. The central and eastern parts of the state are conservative, leaning toward libertarian as one nears the Idaho border. Many state-wide elections are very close. For example, Republican Dino Rossi lost his race for governor in 2004 to Christine Gregoire by about 130 votes after two recounts. He ran again in 2008 and was decisively defeated (53 to 47). Lee and I were in central Washington a few months before election day in 2008 - we saw a Rossi billboard that read "Don't Let Seattle Steal The Election Again." So what's with the 206? Well, that's the area code for Seattle and is used disparagingly by central and eastern Washingtonians in the most derogatory manner. Well, I say to them Pffff!

Leadership Wenatchee" (whatever that may be). Indeed, the Wenatchee people seem to have formed an instant dislike of their fellow Washingtonians, which is really hard to understand because Lee and I are such likeable people. I think.

After lunch, I try to take advantage of the four bars shown on my cell phone, but still I cannot connect to any network. Lee is able to connect, but when we call our home phone number to see if there is any voice mail, the call fails to go through. We try a few more times, then give up. We then go to the outside top deck as the ship cruises up the Rhine from Bingen* (adjacent to Rudesheim) to Boppard and passes

*One of my favorite historical figures is Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179). Wikipedia describes her as a "German writer, composer, philosopher, Christian mystic, Benedictine abbess, visionary, and polymath. Elected a magistra by her fellow nuns in 1136, she founded the monasteries of Rupertsberg in 1150 and Eibingen in 1165. One of her works as a composer, the *Ordo Virtutum*, is an early example of liturgical drama and arguably the oldest surviving morality play. She wrote theological, botanical, and medicinal texts, as well as letters, liturgical songs, and poems, while supervising miniature illuminations in the Rupertsberg manuscript of her first work, *Scivias*. Although the history of her formal recognition as a saint is complicated, she has been recognized as a saint by parts of the Roman Catholic Church for centuries. On 7 October 2012, Pope Benedict XVI named her a Doctor of the Church." Several of her musical compositions are available on CD.

27 (count 'em, 27!!) castle ruins, some on the right and some on the left (or starboard and port to us mariners), accompanied by the patter of Tomàs, whose words are broadcast through the PA system. (His English is fluent, but some of his pronunciations bring a smile to my face. For example, he described some of the castle owners as "rubber barons." The most famous of these castles are the Mouse Tower (a toll booth in the middle of the river) and the Lorelei* Rock (an entire culture of poetry, prose, and pseudo-nationalism has built up around the legend of the imaginary Lorelei, who was betrayed by her lover and,

*We took a short Rhine cruise, many years ago, that passed the Lorelei Rock. Every German citizen on board went to the starboard side of the ship and sang the song "Lorelei" - it might have been charming, but I found it frightening.

thus, lures unsuspecting sailors to their death - our ship's captain is not so lured.) After a while, each castle ruin begins to look like every other, but I continue snapping pictures. (It seems to me that Tomàs's definition of ABC = Another Bloody Cathedral could also be expanded to serve as Another Bloody Castle.)

After docking at Boppard, we join Tomàs on a brief walking tour of the town. Charming like Rudesheim, it is not! But it's still worthy of some picture-taking (see Picasa). At 6:15 there is another port talk (this one about Koblenz) followed by an "epicurean dinner" featuring specialties of the region, in German (with English translation, *Gott sei dank*). Our dinner mates are Lydia and the nice Chicago Bill, as well as Karen and Dan from Milwaukee. Karen is a retired school teacher. For eight years, Dan was station manager of Milwaukee's NPR radio station. I enjoy talking with him about NPR and the national figures he met during

his time at the station. The talk around the table is largely political and friendly as we are all hopelessly committed liberals. By the end of dinner, we're convinced that we six could solve the problem of Washington gridlock, if only we were given the chance. My "epicurean" dinner is salad, sauerbraten soup, venison, and appel strudel.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

The ship remains docked in Bopard overnight, but sets sail at about 8:15 am for Koblenz, just 20 km down river, where we arrive at 9:45. At breakfast, we sit by ourselves (I don't recall why); I eat a light meal but Lee chows down on an omelet and pancakes.

It is a cool, partly cloudy morning, with the hope of some sun. Koblenz, a good-sized city with a population of about 100,000, sits at the tip of a peninsula with the Rhine on its eastern side and the Moselle (French spelling, Mosel in German) on its northern and western side. We dock on the Moselle side. Like so many central European cities, Koblenz traces its history to about 1000 BCE. Wikipedia gives some of the following history:

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the city was conquered by the Franks and became a royal seat. After the division of Charlemagne's empire, it was included in the lands of his son Louis the Pious* (814). In 837, it was assigned to Charles the Bald,* and a few years later it was here that

*It seems to me that we are missing the boat by not having leaders with such colorful sobriquets. True, we've had Ron the Forgetful and George the Dumb and Bill the Lech and Barack the Kenyan, but these were not "officially" anointed names.

Carolingian heirs discussed what was to become the Treaty of Verdun (843), by which the city became part of Lotharingia under Lothair I. In 860 and 922, Koblenz was the scene of ecclesiastical synods. At the first synod, held in the Liebfrauenkirche, the reconciliation of Louis the German with his half-brother Charles the Bald took place. The town was sacked and destroyed by the Normans in 882. In 925, it became part of the eastern German Kingdom, later the Holy Roman Empire.

In 1018, the city was given by the emperor Henry II to the archbishop and prince elector of Trier after receiving a charter. It remained in the possession of his successors until the end of the 18th century, having been their main residence since the 17th century. Emperor Conrad II was elected here in 1138. In 1198, the battle between Philip of Swabia and Otto IV took place nearby. In 1216, prince-bishop Theoderich von Wied donated part of the lands of the basilica and the hospital to the Teutonic Knights, which later became the Deutsches Eck.

In 1249–1254, Koblenz was given new walls by Archbishop Arnold II of Isenburg; and it was partly to overawe the turbulent townsmen that successive archbishops built and strengthened the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein that still dominates the city.

At 10:00, we begin our walking tour of the city with a male guide (if he ever gave his name, I don't recall it) whose English is excellent as is his knowledge of the history of the city. We tour the city center, stop in its squares to admire its whimsical statues (see Picasa), especially one in the courtyard of the town hall called Schängelbrunnen (the spitting boy fountain); its name is explained at www.koblenz-touristik.de/en :

The term Schängel originated in the town's 20 year affinity to France (1794-1813). It describes German-French children who were born at this time who were often christened with names such as Jean (German: Johann). The Koblenz dialect changed Jean to Schang. As time passed by, the name became Schängel – a nickname for Schang.

In one of the public squares is a tall sculpture that purports to tell the entire history of the city, with

oarsmen at the base, rising through later history, and culminating in the destruction of Koblenz by Allied bombing and its final restoration.

We tour St. Florins-Kirche ([http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florinskirche_\(28Koblenz\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florinskirche_(28Koblenz))) from 1100 and built in the Romanesque style. It is more understated than most of the European churches that we visit. At about 10:30, it begins to rain, although not too heavily. Our guide says, "It can't be. It wasn't predicted by the radio or TV." Uh-huh.

We are back at the ship at 12:00, just in time for a German lunch (bratwurst, spicy sausage, cheese wurst, beer). We are joined by two couples. Kathy and Tom come from Reno; she is a retired English teacher he is a retired NYC fire chief who was involved in rescuing people from the World Trade Center Towers on 9/11). The other couple (Kathy and John) come from San Diego; Lee has written in her journal "they seem wealthy in an understated way. He is a retired geophysical/structural engineer who might be currently specializing in over-drinking." [So pejorative, is my wife!] I'll now paraphrase from Lee's writing about the San Diegans: The woman is American. The man was born in 1942 in Zürich into a family that goes back to the 9th century and was present at the founding of modern Switzerland. In 1951, his family took a full year to move to Cape Town, South Africa, via Gibraltar and Cairo, driving an ordinary sedan (not a jeep or land rover). He speaks Swiss-German, Afrikaans, and (obviously) English.

At 2:30, we return on our own to the city. Our first stop is the Basilica of St. Castor, Koblenz's oldest church (from the 9th century). Allegedly the head of the saint is there, somewhere, but we can't find it. His legs are in Trier. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_St._Castor

And then it's on to the Ludwig Museum, a surprisingly ambitious and interesting modern art museum. It's one of five so-called Ludwig museums in Germany, founded with funds from Peter and Irene Ludwig. Photography is permitted, so you can see some of the collection at Picasa. There are four floors of artwork, each patrolled by a guard who is sitting as we enter, then stands and follows us. Well, we *are* the only patrons, except for a gaggle of school kids who are engaged in some sort of cooperative project on the top floor. One of the guards speaks excellent English; he tells us to be sure not to miss the Jean Tinguely machine on the next floor. Many of the artists are unfamiliar to us, but there is a very characteristic Jean Dubuffet sculpture, and works by Frank Stella, Robert Rauschenberg, Karel Appel, Willem de Kooning, and Pablo Picasso. As I said, surprisingly ambitious: <http://www.ludwigmuseum.org/engl/museum/concept.htm>

From here, we walk to Deutsches Eck (German corner) at the headland of the confluence of the two rivers where there is a statue of Emperor Wilhelm I on his horse. The statue is ringed by flags of the German states, the European Union, and the U.S. that was installed in memory of 9/11. By 3:45, we are back onboard and take advantage of the good WiFi connection in the lounge.

At dinner, we are joined by Debbie and Randy, the Edmonton couple, and by a mother and daughter, Marilyn and Kathy, respectively; they are from Kalamazoo. For dinner I have Italian wedding soup, beef, and fruit plate (a wonderful description, eh?). The ship departs at 9:45 on the way to Köln, nearly 120 km down river.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

We are docked in Köln (Cologne), the 4th largest city in Germany after Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, with a population of over 1 million. The city began as a Roman settlement. It became a center of commerce, as a city on the Rhine, and also of political influence. During the time of the Holy Roman Empire, it acquired the status of a "free city" with its own military and government. In 1801, it became part of France (along with all of the land on the left bank of the Rhine) and was ruled by Napoleon. In 1815, it was ceded to Prussia, an unhappy marriage between the largely Catholic Rhineland and the protestant Prussia. A turbulent period of conflict, wars, bombing, etc. ensued. During WWII, it was bombed extensively; by the

end of the war, the population had been reduced by 95 percent, partly through death but mostly through evacuation.

Today is the day that Amazon had promised to "claw back" the eBooks that I have on loan on my Kindle. I get as much reading done as possible (*Shades of Grey*, *James Madison*) not yet knowing that the books will remain on my machine as long as I don't connect it to the internet (see p. 58). It is a gloomy, cloudy, cool morning and it looks as if we can expect rain (which, in fact, we will experience on our excursion). Both of us have a light breakfast, joined at the table by Debbie and Randy.

At 8:15, we board a bus that takes us to the city center at 8:30 for the beginning of our walking tour. Our guide is Marcus (or possibly Markus), who proves to be the best of all of the guides we've had. He is a history teacher in a vocational high school populated largely by the children of Turkish immigrants. He proves to be a well-informed student of history and a natural (but subtle) comedian. As part of his spiel, he treats us to several words (not found in any dictionary) that are understood by citizens of Köln but probably nowhere else. I'm sure that I've got these spellings wrong, but he says that *fringsen*, in the local dialect, means stealing; it comes from the name of a Josef Cardinal Frings, archbishop of Köln, who, when people were starving after the devastation of WWII, said that a person who steals to feed his family has committed no sin. We walk through *Gülichplatz*, named for Nicholas *Gülich* who led a protest against corruption in 1680 and was beheaded for his efforts. Marcus says that *gülich* is another piece of local slang, but I forget what it means. The people of Köln call themselves *Kölsch*.

A "fun fact," courtesy of Marcus: one of the public squares hosts a carnival each year. The word actually means "goodbye to meat" (Latin *carne + vale*) and signifies the first day of Lent. Lee is unsure about this tale until I tell here that *vale* is pronounced wal-ay and that one student from my high school Latin class inscribed my copy of the Year Book with "Vale at Yale!"

We walk past the cathedral and will return to tour it after Marcus leaves us at 10:00. But first, he spends time discussing the cathedral, comparing it to the cathedral in Strasbourg (age, height, elegance, interiors, etc.) In each regard, he deems the Köln cathedral as superior.

PUN ALERT: Methinks he suffers from a case of edifice complex, yes?

PUN ALERT: On one narrow street, there is a gaggle of American women, blocking the street by walking eight abreast (i.e., four women).

In one of the many squares, there is a small statue of a mooning boy, affixed high up on the outside wall of an apartment house. According to Marcus, a trombonist who lived there liked to practice his instrument by pointing it through a window and toward the square; a poet who lived nearby objected to the "noise" and retaliated by dangling his bare bum outside his window. Can this possibly be true? I think so.

He then leads us through the city, to the famous perfume vendors (I mean, where do you think our word cologne comes from?), past his favorite brew pubs (he prefers Peters Brauhaus, should you care), past City Hall where couples line up to be married, past statues of dignitaries (like Emperor Wilhelm I), and finally back to the cathedral, where he leaves us (he is not authorized to take the tour group inside). The city is very crowded, despite the rain; most pedestrians are in their own private world, talking on cell phones - and many of the younger walkers are adorned with face-piercing jewelry and wildly colored hair. There are tour buses everywhere, from a variety of European countries, and, therefore, tourists, everywhere, from a variety of European countries. In the square in front of the cathedral, there are several "living statues" doing their thing and collecting money from the tourists (see Picasa).

PUN ALERT: One of the living statues is a Roman soldier. After a while, the rain seems to have gotten to him because he leaves his pedestal and starts roamin' through the crowd.

The cathedral (from 1248) is, indeed, magnificent. It is alleged that the earthly remains of the three wise

men are interred here. Big whoop! But it beats the numerous churches, throughout Germany, Switzerland, and Austria that claim to have the arm bone of St. Benedict. According to Wikipedia

Besides its economic and political significance Cologne also became an important center of medieval pilgrimage, when Cologne's Archbishop Rainald of Dassel gave the relics of the Three Wise Men to Cologne's cathedral in 1164 (after they in fact had been captured from Milan). Besides the three magi Cologne preserves the relics of Saint Ursula and Albertus Magnus.

St. Ursula's legend, probably unhistorical, is that she was a princess who, at the request of her father King Dionotus of Dumnonia in south-west Britain, set sail to join her future husband, the pagan governor Conan Meriadoc of Armorica, along with 11,000 virginal* handmaidens. After a miraculous

*These were not drawn from the ranks of American college co-eds.

storm brought them over the sea in a single day to a Gaulish port, Ursula declared that before her marriage she would undertake a pan-European pilgrimage. She headed for Rome with her followers and persuaded the pope ... to join them. After setting out for Cologne, which was being besieged by Huns, all the virgins were beheaded in a massacre. The Huns' leader shot Ursula dead, in about 383.

Well, I'm not so sure about the magi, despite the similarity of my last name, but St. Ursula is a great favorite of mine from her celebration by none other than Hildegard von Bingen (p. 60) in several vocal works. And, although this will be of interest to practically nobody, an all-female Catholic college in New Haven, not far from the Yale campus, is called Albertus Magnus (or Aggie Maggie, as the Yale men dubbed it). It is now coeducational, so it's probably not Aggie Maggie anymore.

We return to the ship in time for lunch, where our companions are Karen and Dan, Cathy and Marilyn, and Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice. After lunch, I am delighted to find that my Kindle loans have not been canceled; they are still present on my machine - and I'm able to download some more (which I never have time to get to) from Pierce County Library. We read in our room for a while, then go to the lounge for a talk by Capt. Renko about the trip, the ports, travel on the Rhine, points of interest along the way, and so on. As we sail down river, it is getting increasingly foggy. Some factoids: the Rhine is 1034 km long; its main tributaries are the Neckar, Main, and Moselle; we have passed through twelve locks. He tells us that the crew eats the same food as the passengers (although not in the same nice dining room) and have access to the same TV and other amenities. "It creates good moral(sic)," he says.

I am amazed at the amount of traffic that flows in both directions along the Rhine. There is barge after barge after barge, some carrying containers, others cars or trucks, still others coal. I had always assumed that most freight is delivered by train or truck, but obviously 'taint so. This traffic increases dramatically as we get near Dusseldorf, Duisberg, and other cities in the industrial heart of Germany. And, of course, when we enter The Netherlands, there is traffic to and from the port of Rotterdam.

Before dinner, there is a farewell cocktail party given by the captain. An ill-tasting beverage is supplied by the staff. At dinner (foie gras, oxtail soup, prawns, fruit plate) we are joined by two people from Boise whom we had not met, Sally and Steve. She is voluble and fills most of the early time together with relatively mindless chatter. Who knew, until he finally entered the conversation, that her husband is a person of some distinction. Most recently, he was in Washington, D.C., from 2006 to 2009, serving as Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior; in this position he oversaw the Bureau of Land Management, all oil and gas leases on federal land, etc.* Not only that, but he is a cousin of Larry

*Upon our return to Gig Harbor, Lee did some web work to gather information on him. His name is C. Stephen Allred. Earlier in his working life, he was a divisional president, working in cleanup of nuclear and chemical wastes, for Morrison-Knudsen; his division had 3500 employees (\$500 million) that began as a civil engineering company, involved in such projects as construction of the Hoover Dam, the San Francisco Bay Bridge, and the Trans-Alaska pipeline. After his first retirement, he served as

head of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. He then retired from that job, only to be called to Washington for the Interior position. He was a wealth of stories about his time in the Bush cabinet. He testified several times before Congress, but has no love for those elected officials who pontificate at length during these hearings; he particularly disliked Rep. Edward Markey, now Senator from Massachusetts.

Seaquist, who is one of the two state representatives from our district in Pierce County and a really effective legislator.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

We have a light breakfast (cereal, bread, juice, coffee) and are joined by Karen and Dan, from Milwaukee. The morning, here in Amsterdam, begins with clouds, but no rain. I hope that that persists. Our suitcases are packed and placed outside our room at 7:45. We are required to vacate the room by 8:30 so that cleaning crews can come in. So we sit in the lounge until 9:15 when the bus to the airport is ready to board. The trip takes about 45 minutes.

We are not leaving Amsterdam. Rather, we have booked a room at the Hilton Amsterdam Airport hotel where we stayed on an earlier trip. It's a good walk, especially with suitcases, from the airport to the hotel, so we wait for the hotel shuttle bus to show up. And we wait. And we wait. A van pulls up and the driver says that he's taking people to the Hilton and the Hilton Hampton Inn. So we get in, along with two other couples. Shortly we see the Hilton but we drive right past it and keep on going. Are we being kidnaped? Eventually (8 km later, according to the web site) we arrive at the Hilton Hampton Inn. We tell the driver that this is not our hotel. Very grudgingly, he agrees to take us to the Hilton, but even this presents a problem in that there is construction on a new Hilton hotel that prevents the van from pulling up to the door. (We'll find, later on, that a driver who really does come from this hotel, knows that he has to back up a one-way street to the front door.)

Our room at the hotel is not ready, but the front desk staff promise to get it cleaned quickly. Also, because before we changed our original plans, we booked the two nights separately (and therefore have two separate reservations at two different rates); we'll have to check-out tomorrow morning and check-in again. But we are assured that we'll be able to keep the same room. While waiting, we get a map of the city and instructions about how to get to *Museumplein* where all of the art museums are located. We need to take a regional train from the airport to the central train station (Amsterdam Centraal), and from there either Tram 2 or Tram 5 to the museums.

We are supposed to have a room on the 8th floor, but it's 11:30 now and it's still not ready. So we are given an identical room on floor 6, with the assurance that we'll still have access to the executive suite lounge on floor 8. Ten minutes later, we take the van to the airport (again, we *could* have walked, but chose to ride) and locate the area where trains come in and depart. The ticket-dispensing machine rejects our credit cards (no computer chip*) as does the woman at the ticket office; fortunately between us

*Aside from cost, which they claim is excessive, U.S.-based credit card issuers have no excuse for not issuing cards with embedded computer chips. Such cards are now common in Europe, and have been for several years. In France, especially, our cards with the magnetic strip were rejected at toll booths, at self-serve gas stations, and at some stores and restaurants. We've had similar problems in other countries. From time to time, one sees articles in the press in which MasterCard, Visa, AmEx, and so on announce** that they will issue cards with chips in 2015 ... or 2016 ... or ?

**Joe Nocera wrote an op-ed piece for *The New York Times* in response to the hacking of credit and debit card accounts of people who had shopped at Target. He offers a solution to the problem: "The simplest thing we could do to diminish data breaches would be to move away from magnetic stripes, which are relatively easy to copy, and go to a system in which credit and debit cards are embedded

with chips. In widespread use in Europe and elsewhere, such cards are practically nonexistent in the United States (though a rollout is supposed to begin in the fall of 2015)." Sound familiar?

we have enough euros to buy our tickets for today and tomorrow. Penniless (euroless?), we go to a nearby ATM to replenish our supply of money. We manage to take an express train which makes only two stops before reaching the central station. From there, a tram takes us about 5 km through the city to the museum plaza.

There is an incredibly long line to get into the Van Gogh Museum. I stand in line while Lee goes off to find a ticket window. After a while, I discover that the line I'm standing in is for people who already have tickets. So I step out of the line and wait quite a while for Lee to return. (With no cell phone service, I can't even call her.) Eventually she comes back (it turns out that she had to walk a considerable distance to find the office) and has tickets for the 3:00 admission today.

So in the meanwhile, we decide to tour the Stedelijk modern art museum, which is adjacent to the Van Gogh. Peter Schjeldahl writes in the April 22, 2013 issue of *The New Yorker* about the three museums on *Museumplein* that have been completely renovated and are re-opening this year. The Rijksmuseum had been closed for nearly a decade, the van Gogh for somewhat less. He says, "In September, the modern-art Stedelijk—home to touchstone paintings by Mondrian and Malevich—finished a makeover featuring an eccentric new entrance pavilion that not only looks quite like a bathtub, as critics were quick to note and mock; it looks exactly like a bathtub, of some two-tier Jacuzzi sort. Yet, inside, it is spacious and friendly."

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/artworld/2013/04/22/130422craw_artworld_schjeldahl

Well, what about the collection? Not a word from Mr. Schjeldahl! The absence of comment might lead one to conclude that the art within is of not value, but that is far from the truth. I'll be a name-dropper here and tell about some of the artists whose works we saw; photos of many of the paintings and sculptures can be seen at my Picasa site. We encounter such old "friends" as Arp, Cézanne, van Gogh, Kandinsky, Chagall, Braque, Mondriaan, Pollock, Dubuffet, and Picasso. And we discovered, for the first time, the wonderful worlds of Paulina Olowska, Constant, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Carel Willink, and others. We are in the Stedelijk from 1:30 to 2:15. We also indulge in coffee and pie in the museum's cafeteria.

At a little after 3:00 we enter the van Gogh Museum. And it is crowded! There is no doubt but that van Gogh is a superstar (too bad he wasn't so recognized during his troubled lifetime) and that his paintings are, perhaps, more familiar than those of any other artist. The collection is good and well-arranged, grouping paintings by genre, date, style, etc. But I think that we saw more (and better) van Goghs during our visit to the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands' Hoge Veluwe National Park in summer, 2012. Nevertheless, we do spend an extremely enjoyable hour and 45 minutes here, dodging the human traffic, and getting close enough to the paintings to take lots of pictures (see Picasa). Not everything fits our idea of what van Gogh painted. There are several paintings and few sculptures that I would have guessed had been done by someone else. (Also, there are the occasional interlopers: Monet, Gauguin, and Pissarro appear a couple of times.) The most depressing sight is of a father and his sullen teenage son, both of whom sat on a bench and texted with their smart phones while the woman of the family toured the collection. And there were the teenage girls who were also texting and, undoubtedly, doing status updates on Facebook. Sigh.

PUN ALERT: The museum, in addition to the paintings, had a computer display that could be searched to locate particular images or items that were not on display. Lee called me over to see a picture of a van Gogh chicken that she had found, but all that she could locate now was one of a nude man. Said Ron, "Well, at least you found a cock."

In light of the long lines for the van Gogh Museum, we worry that entry to the Rijksmuseum will be difficult when we return tomorrow morning. So we walk over to the Rijks to see if we can buy advance tickets (as smart people in the know had done for the van Gogh). A guard tells us that the box office is closed but

that we can buy tickets with our smart phone. I reply, "I don't have a smart phone. I have a dumb phone. It does only one thing: make/receive phone calls. And to show how dumb it is, I can do neither since we've landed in Europe." He laughs and assures us that if we arrive around 11:00, we will not encounter significant crowds.

Despite its dreary start, the weather has turned out very well today. By afternoon, the skies are clear, the sun is shining, and the temperature is moderate. We reverse the travel scheme that got us here: tram (at 5:15) to the central train station (at 5:45) followed by regional train to the airport (arrive at 6:00). But where is the van that will take us to the hotel? It's supposed to run on a schedule, but we wait and wait and wait ... nada. Vans for all of the other airport hotels come, pick up passengers, and leave, but not ours. Lee notices a call box that she uses to contact the hotel desk; she is assured that a van is on the way. (While waiting for it, we see the same van and driver who took us to the wrong hotel earlier today. He avoids our glances.)

In the hotel, we explore the 8th floor Executive Suite lounge. It has a nice assortment of crackers, cheese, egg rolls, and drinks. We don't eat much because we want to have dinner. The ambience is spoiled by a man who is speaking VERY LOUDLY on his cell phone; I'm saddened to report that he is from the U.S., the first "ugly American" we've encountered on this trip. The hotel's restaurant, to my surprise, is heavily oriented to Indonesian cuisine. In Amsterdam? Well, I should have remembered that from our stay here in 2012. I order consommé, beef short ribs with potatoes, and salad.

Much to my surprise, the internet connectivity in the hotel is awful. We find it difficult to connect and logon, and difficult to open URLs. (My coughing and sneezing, in abeyance the past few days, seems to have returned. And poor Lee is showing signs of getting a cold.)

A brief treatise on toilets: on the cruise ship, a vacuum system ensured a complete and rapid emptying of the bowl. Here in the Hilton, the toilets work as well as they do in the U.S. But in three of the four hotels where we stayed in England, flushing became an art. Either the refill of the tank took "forever" or the plunger had to be depressed several times to get any action

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7:

Yep, my coughing and sneezing are back in full flower, just what I need. And Lee is also feeling it. But we are intrepid voyagers, and so we soldier on. There is a nice buffet breakfast on offer in the dining room, an excellent mixture of hot and cold foods. I have a hot dish (scrambled eggs, beans, mushrooms) and a cold plate (ham, cheese, bread), along with coffee.

We take the hotel van to the airport, a 9:43 train to the central station, and a 10:00 van that gets us to the Rijksmuseum stop at 10:30. We spend until 12:30, admiring the collection. Rembrandt is the main attraction, with works from all of his periods. But other Dutch artists (Vermeer, Hals, Steen) are well-represented as well as other Europeans.

Here's what Peter Schjeldahl has to say in the earlier cited *New Yorker* article:

Upstairs from the atrium, there's art. The literal and nerve center of the museum's exhibits, which total eight thousand or so items, from a collection of about a million, is the majestic Gallery of Honor, which is laid out like a cathedral nave, with chapels, and enshrines the apostles of Golden Age painting. The altarpiece is Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" (1642), which I'm not alone in deeming one of the world's two best paintings, in a tossup with Velázquez's "Las Meninas" (1656), at the Prado. In L.E.D.-enhanced natural light, pouring down through a skylight from the North Sea heavens, "The Night Watch" dreams and blazes. A militia company of vivid individuals disport in velvety deep space, each evincing some particular delight. One joyously flourishes a flag, another dotes on an extremely long spear, and a drummer beams rugged confidence that we like his drumming. They are fronted by

two officers, engaged in affable conversation, who practically step into the room with us. The picture is inexhaustibly alive. Is there something excessive about the popular deification of Rembrandt, as of van Gogh, at souvenir shops throughout Amsterdam? You won't think so in the Gallery of Honor, where I had a moment of fancying the almost hundred-and-eighty-five-square-foot canvas as a raft for the self-respect of Western civilization. One of us did that!

Elsewhere in the gallery, four perfect paintings by Vermeer, who defines perfection in art, share an alcove with exciting pictures by the more nonchalant Pieter de Hooch, his fellow citizen of Delft. Three church interiors and a street view by Pieter Janz Saenredam abolish any doubts about the magical matter-of-factness of the eccentric visionary, an avatar of Giorgio de Chirico. Frans Hals, with vivacious portraits, and Jacob van Ruisdael, with grand yet somehow confiding landscapes, are shown at their best, as is Jan Steen, if, unlike me, you relish his over-the-top bawdry. But Rembrandt rules. On a scaled-down par with "The Night Watch" are "The Jewish Bride" (1667) and "The Syndics of the Clothmakers' Guild" (1662), famous from the Dutch Masters cigar box. The syndics appear startled by your interrupting their proceedings, in a split-second capture of their gazes (uncannily like those of some of the characters in "Las Meninas") which makes the August gentlemen seem as vulnerable as furtive boys. As for "The Jewish Bride," turn it sideways and tell me what you see. It's a Rothko, right? The reds of the woman's dress and the golden browns of the man's attire hover in an unfathomable space, less seen than inhaled. Look at the painting from as far away as possible. It leaps to you. It also renders a small, odd, stunningly intimate gesture: the woman touches the man's hand as he lays it across her breasts, as if to say, "Yes, I'm yours." He is utterly smitten. She appears content but ever so slightly calculating. She may not be quite the unalloyed blessing that he imagines. To understand people better than Rembrandt did, you would have to be the God who invented them.

To answer Schjeldahl's question, No, I did not see Rothko when I tilted my head in front of "The Jewish Bride." But, as we established earlier (p. 6-7), when I confessed my lack of appreciation for the poetry of Coleridge, I am an unfeeling boor. More recently, *The New York Times* published an article about the re-opening of the Rijksmuseum and all of the troubles that were encountered along the way, as recounted in a documentary movie: <http://tinyurl.com/lxqk2ye>

As was true of the van Gogh Museum, the Rijks is very crowded, with people of all nationalities (although it seems that we hear Italian being spoken more than other languages). And I'm reminded of how tall many of the Dutch are; this comes into play when I am trying to look over a shoulder or other body part at some work of art. The Picasa site will show photos of the pictures that I most admired. We run into Debbie and Randy, the Edmonton couple from the cruise ship; and also see some familiar faces of people whom we never actually met.

PUN ALERT: We see one painting by Goya. This reminds me of the time that the TV program *Jeopardy* had a category called *Judaica* and right next to one called *Goya*.

PUN ALERT: The numerous Vermeer canvases put me in mind of the old song, "Vermeer bist du shein" (Yiddish for "Bei mir bist du schön"). I resist bursting into song. And I also resist the 1950s-vintage Andrews Sisters hit with the refrain "Bei mir bist du schön/please let me explain/Bei mir bist du schön/means you're grand" - well, not exactly.

We would have liked to have some refreshment in the museum, but its café is too crowded, so we find a less crowded restaurant in the square outside where we have coffee and a pastry. This place is terribly organized. We have trouble being given a table, more trouble in placing an order, and still more trouble in getting the bill. "But the apple pie was good," says Lee, always looking at the bright side of things. We did not leave a tip.

We take the tram to the Westerkerk stop. This is the Dutch Protestant church where Rembrandt is buried. But our interest is in walking along some of the canals, taking pictures of the canal houses, and finding the Hotel Ambassade where we stayed in the 1980s. Most striking are the huge number of bicycles, not only

being ridden by people but also parked in huge scrums (and, I assume, chained to prevent theft). I note that most of the bikes, whether ridden by men or women, are women's bikes (i.e., no top tube for the frame). The riders, no helmets, tend to sit very erect with the handlebars high and they pedal slowly through traffic (unlike the risk-takers that we see in American cities). They are the antithesis of racers like Lance Armstrong (and, one hopes, they don't tell lies the way he does). We see couples riding by, the man and woman side-by-side and holding hands. Most bikes have baskets (for groceries? for children? for pets?) on the handlebars. Some people ride with only one hand on the handlebar, the other occupied with a cell phone. Clearly these bikes are viewed as practical vehicles for going shopping, going to work, or whatever else is in mind.

A distressing observation: on our several tram rides, often a young person (usually a woman) would offer me a seat. Do I really look so old and decrepit? (Don't answer that!) In every case, I thanked the person but turned down the offer. Am I really so stupidly proud? (Don't answer that!)

We take another tram to Dam Square (no jokes, please) where the department store Bijenkorf is located. Like so many European stores, it is vastly overheated, but we survive. Lee buys a couple of sweaters, then we walk to the central train station rather than take the tram. And I'm glad that we do so because we pass such notable establishments as The Medieval Torture Museum and the Sexmuseum. Directly across the street from them is a five-story building sporting a sign at its roof line: *God Roept U*, which is translated as Jesus Loves You.

The central train station is a magnificent building. We had seen it only on the inside, but the exterior is spectacular (see Picasa pictures), what with its masonry and statues. On the way to the station, I get to observe many more Dutch - they are all very tall and slender - I hate them! We take the 4:25 train to the airport (an express train with no stops) and arrive at the airport just 12 minutes later.

The van picks us up and delivers us to the hotel. The van driver tells us that this mild weather is very unusual for October. We go to the 8th floor lounge, have some munchies (coffee, chips, raisins, shrimp, cheese, smoke salmon, sausage) and fill up. We also use the WiFi, which is working somewhat better. We're not very hungry (surprise!) at dinner time, but we do go to the restaurant; I have chicken teriyaki. Following that, we go to our room to read until it's time for bed.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8

It's a foggy morning. We hope that this will not interfere with our flight, although because it's not scheduled to depart until 2:55 there's ample time for the fog to dissipate. We pack our suitcases, then go to breakfast. I have cold cereal, cold cuts with cheese slices, a roll, coffee, and tomato juice in a Minute Maid bottle that requires a church key to open.

Over the restaurant's PA system, we hear the same damned music that we heard in the breakfast room at Calcutts House (p. 22). It's minimalist, of a sort, played by unidentifiable instruments, and having notes in a more-or-less rising scale, each of them repeated four times: 1111 2222 3333 2222 / 1111 2222 3333 2222 repeat and rinse. Is this generic breakfast room music for England and the Netherlands? Does it exist elsewhere in Europe? Who knows? K Robert Schwarz, in the liner notes to a Nonesuch CD, describes a 1973 Carnegie Hall performance of Steve Reich's *Four Organs* this way:

One elderly lady banged her shoe on the edge of the stage in an attempt to stop the music. Another member of the audience ran down the aisle, screaming "All right, I'll confess!" Others applauded, hoping to curtail, not to encourage the performance.

I wonder if they were hearing the same "tune" that I was.

At 10:45, we take the van to the airport, get through baggage and passport control smoothly, and then

embark on the walk, a very very long walk (assisted by two moving sidewalks) to reach the Business Class lounge. The room is a bit too hot (so what's new?) and quite crowded (we have trouble finding a pair of seats together). And we are surrounded by people speaking Spanish. Loudly. To one another. And over cell phones. ¡Ay, caramba! I have some coffee and cookies, but nothing more because I know that we'll be well-fed on the plane. One of the attendants in the lounge walks up with a tray and asks, "May I offer you a herring?" (This causes me to giggle, I'm not sure why. It does sound like the opening of a Monty Python skit.)

The WiFi signal in the lounge is strong (at long last!), so I take advantage by reading *The New York Times* and sending emails. Our boarding pass indicates that the gate will open for final security check at 1:20 (some 90 minutes before departure) but we are familiar with this routine from last year. There is an intense set of questions from an agent followed by our having to pass through a full body scanner before entering the plane.

So at 1:25 we begin our long walk to the departure gate. Even though we are allowed to use the priority lane, we're still questioned about what we bought, what we packed, had we received gifts, etc. U.S. rules (except for shoe removal) are in effect before going through the scanner: everything out of pockets, laptop removed, belt taken off, and we are patted down (damn, I wanted my "patter" to be one of the young women, but was not granted my wish). We board the Delta plane and find our seats at 2:05. The plane is an Airbus A330 wide body, the same model that we flew on from Atlanta to Manchester.

At 2:20, menus are distributed. Surprisingly, they are not the same as those that we had on the Atlanta to Manchester flight. I start with smoked salmon and grilled shrimp, then caprese salad and thai coconut soup, then roasted chicken breast (with morel mushroom sauce, brown butter broccoli, and egg noodles), followed by a vanilla ice cream sundae with chocolate sauce and chopped nuts.* Now why is it that I'm

*A considerable time after our return to Gig Harbor, we are listening to NPR's *Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me* and the topic for a game, in which a contestant has to decide which is the actual story, is "Hands off me nuts!" The "correct" story involved the Queen (of England) (Elizabeth II) who was upset that visitors were dipping into the dishes of nuts that are positioned throughout the palace. A newspaper, in reporting this, posted the headline HANDS OFF ME NUTS!

able to give such a detailed description of the food, when (typically) I would have written salad, soup, chicken, ice cream? The answer: I purloined the Delta airlines menu. Next question?

Although our announced departure time is 2:55, the doors are closed at 2:40 (tough luck, those of you who are still running through the concourse); we push back at 2:50 and are airborne at 3:07. The day is still foggy and cloudy; most of the trip is above dense clouds. The meal service begins at 4:00, accompanied by severe turbulence (I doubt that there is cause and effect). The rock-and-roll ends after 10 minutes, but the "infotainment" (awful word!) system at each seat is kaput! This requires a re-booting of the computers, and so for a while we are treated to a screen filled with incomprehensible DOS-like commands. The system is restored by 4:55 when I can determine that we are flying over England (the clouds are still obscuring any actual sighting of land).

I switch my watch and camera to PST. At 9:20 am, we are over the east coast of Greenland and have a clear view of magnificent snow-capped mountains from 37,000 feet (see Picasa pictures). During the flight, I work several puzzles, finish the Kindle copy of *Shades of Grey* (I give it a B- rating; I still think I would have preferred *Fifty Shades of Grey*.), read magazines, watch Lee's TV (sans sound, of course) as well as the TV monitor of the man in front who is watching the Superman flick *Man of Steel* (or was it *Buns of Steel*?) I try to finish the Kindle *James Madison*, but wind up three chapters short; I'll finish it in the hard cover copy that I'll get from the library when we return.

At 2:25 pm, a snack is served. The choice is pizza or "black and blue salad" - I reject both, but I do have coffee. We are scheduled to arrive in Seattle at 4:15 pm, but because there were (very unusually) only

mild head winds and even some tail winds, we arrive at 3:40. Lee and I are first(!!!) at Passport Control (a new record) where we are allowed to re-enter the country. We get our luggage, pass through Customs, and call Gloria, who has already arrived and is waiting in the Cell Phone Lot of the airport.

The taxi ride home is uneventful, except that we are amazed that Gloria (who must be in her early-to-mid 70s) is a rather adventurous driver. On highways where Lee or I would make our way toward the right-hand lane in preparation for exiting, Gloria would wait until the last possible moment before negotiating her way into the proper lane. Somehow, it worked. And we make it home in one piece.