

JOURNEY THROUGH BRITAIN 2024

Journey through Britain: England, Scotland & Wales

18 August 2024 – 2 September 2024

Odysseys Unlimited

Audrey J. Lambert's Trip Report

On this wide-ranging tour, we traveled from city to country and back again: from gracious Edinburgh to England's legendary Lake District, from spectacular Snowdonia to the rural Cotswolds and Roman Bath, ending in cosmopolitan London.

This time another couple joined us on this tour through Britain with Odysseys Unlimited. We arrived two days before the tour in Edinburgh to explore on our own. Mike and I had been in Edinburgh in 2018 and knew of some of the sites to visit and researched new places to search out and revisit others for our friends Jeannette & Walt that had never been to Edinburgh.

18th of August: We arrive in the Scottish capital and transferred to Apex Waterloo Place Hotel for our stay. After storing our luggage we went out exploring Edinburgh. We had lunch at Greyfriars Bobby's Bar: 30-34 Candlemaker Row, named after the candlemakers who once occupied the street. Candlemakers' Hall was built in 1722 to hold meetings of the Incorporation of Candlemakers of Edinburgh. Pictured were hung on the walls of people in their shops making candles. After a refreshing drink of raspberry & orange blossom soda with zingy lemon and fish & chips we headed outside to entered Greyfriars Kirkyard to view the graves John Gray and Greyfriars Bobby a loyal and devoted skye terrier dog who became known in 19th-century Edinburgh for spending 14 years guarding the grave of his owner, Auld Jock "John" Gray (1815-1858) who worked for the Edinburgh City Police as a night watchman until Bobby died on 14 January 1872, aged 16 years. Greyfriars Kirkyard is located at the southern edge of "Old Town", with burials from when it's Franciscan friary was founded in 1559, replacing the full St Giles Cathedral cemetery. Greyfriars Kirk is surrounded by Greyfriars Kirkyard a parish church founded in 1620, described as "Survival Gothic". They earned their name from the grey habits that were worn as a symbol of their vow of poverty. We stopped right outside the bar to see the Greyfriars Bobby's statue located on George IV Bridge St., near Chambers St., opposite the Museum of Scotland to rub his nose for good luck.

Quick stop on High St. to rub the toe of the 18th-century Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) to conjure some more good luck though the practice ironically defies the philosopher's vehement rejection of superstition. Due to the statute's placement to the High Court, suspected criminals are also said to rub the prodigious digit to help with their case. We later visited his grave located in the Old Calton Cemetery right across the street from our hotel.

Heading for St. Giles Cathedral. The history of St Giles' Cathedral, has spanned 900 years, from early beginnings as a Romanesque church in 1124 to its current standing as a modern Presbyterian church. It has seen the seeds of civil war sown and been the centre of the Scottish Reformation as John Knox's Parish church. The cathedral was once a roman Catholic church, but became a Presbyterian church of Scotland in 1560. As you

enter to the right there is a large brass plaque covering a wall in tribute to Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). This plaque completed in 1904 is the only memorial of Stevenson in his native country. In front center is the nave with its vaulted ceilings that dates back to the 14th century, but has been altered and extended over time. The arcade of the nave was heightened during a 19th century renovation. A visit to St. Giles' is a fascinating experience, especially a visit to the 'Thistle Chapel', the chapel of the 'Order of the Thistle' an order of chivalry associated with Scotland. The order recognizes sixteen Knights with the highest honor in the country and recognizes Scottish men and women who have held public office or who have contributed in a particular way to national life. The Thistle Chapel was designed by Robert Lorimer and finished in 1911. It contains stalls for the 16 knights, the Sovereign's stall and two Royal stalls. The chapel contains a wealth of detail, both religious and heraldic, and much of it peculiarly Scottish, including angels playing bagpipes. Along the sides of the chapel are the knights' stalls, which are capped by lavishly carved canopies with the helms and crests of the knights rising above. The richest effect of all, however, is reserved for the Sovereign's stall at the west end of the chapel.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe was being celebrated spanning 25 days in August. Featuring more than 51,446 scheduled performances of 3,746 different shows across 262 venues from 60 different countries. Of those shows, the largest section is comedy, representing almost 40% of shows, followed by theatre, which is 26.6% of shows. We took a seat on a bench and watched an acrobat's show and nearby a band were playing. People were crowding the streets, eating, laughing, having a good time or taking a guided tour to parts of the city. We had tickets to enter 'Mary's King's Close' a historic close located under the Edinburgh City Chambers building on the Royal Mile, in the historic Old Town area of Edinburgh. It took its name from one Mary King, a merchant burghess who resided on the Close in the 17th century. A series of lanes and alleyways were formed in the crowded city and these so-called "wynds" and "closes" had gates to protect the residents from thieves (or worse) in the night. Most people lived in Mary King's Close in the 16th and 17th century. The close was named after Mary King a widowed fabric merchant who also sewed for a living. After her husband died in 1629, she and her four children moved into the close. Here, she rented a so-called turnpike house with a cellar. She also rented a shop on high street. As a widow she had to work very hard, but according to discovered papers she led a fairly comfortable life. When she died in 1644, her will was written up in a book, which was found many years later.

19th of August: We went for a walk to Calton Hill, located not far from our hotel. Calton Hill is a hill in central Edinburgh, Scotland, situated beyond the east end of Princes Street and included in the city's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Calton Hill is home to several neoclassical structures, including the National Monument, the City Observatory and the Dugald Stewart Monument. Calton Hill is also home to the Nelson Monument which was completed in 1816 to commemorate the death of Admiral Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The hill's elevated position provides unmatched views of Edinburgh's skyline, including iconic landmarks like the Edinburgh Castle, Arthur's Seat, and the Old Town. It offers a unique perspective of the city's layout, presenting views down to Leith and across the Firth of Forth. Went inside Edinburgh Station to see

the trains arriving and departing. The architecture of the Station is a wonder to behold, with high, vaulted ceilings and designs dating to the late 19th century, including the vast stained-glass dome that towers over the main concourse.

Stepped inside the National Library of Scotland located at George IV Bridge, Edinburgh. The Library's main building contains a visitor centre which offers a range of facilities including an exhibition area, café and shop. Headed over to Victoria St. that curves down towards the Grassmarket and is within Edinburgh's Old Town - recognized as a World Heritage site. The eclectic mix of narrow, medieval buildings and Gothic spires is pure Potter magic. It's easy to see where J.K. Rowling got her inspiration for Diagon Alley. Victoria Street is rightly one of the city's most photographed spots. This charming curve of a street with its colorful shop fronts is the perfect place to step into Edinburgh's past. It was designed by Thomas Hamilton, the man who built much of modern Edinburgh.

We went up and down the street and then went to the second level of building to have lunch at a pub. Exploring more of the city the street curved down to what's called 'The Grassmarket.' The Grassmarket, is set in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle, a place of rich history and its layout retains a historic character. We passed 'The Wee Pub' the smallest pub in Scotland near Currie's Close housed in 'Grassmarket Mission Hall'. Marker on building states, Grassmarket Mission Hall undenominational, marker erected in memory of James Fairbairn founder and first superintendent of this mission died 3rd of May 1894. "His works do follow him". Next door was a pub called 'Maggie Dickson's with a sign on the building with the history of Maggie Dickson known as "Half-Hangit Maggie". Maggie Dickson lived in the Early Eighteenth century as a fish hawker and would certainly have remained an anonymous figure had she not been the subject of a public hanging. Her misfortune began when her husband deserted her in 1723 forcing her to leave the city and move further south to Kelso near the Scottish Borders. Here, she worked for an innkeeper in return for basic lodgings. Soon after she started an affair with the Innkeeper's son which led to her becoming pregnant, not wanting the innkeeper to discover this as it would surely lead to her instant dismissal she concealed her pregnancy as long as possible. However the baby was born prematurely and died within a few days of being born. Still hiding the baby's existence she planned to put the baby into the River Tweed, but couldn't bring herself to and finally left it on the riverbank. Some say she was charged under the Concealment of Pregnancy Act, but it seems more likely she was tried with causing the death of her child. Maggie was hanged at a public execution on the 2nd of September 1724. Her execution was followed by a near riot as friends and relatives fought with medical students for the possession of her body. The friends won and took her remains to Musselburgh for burial. When the party paused en route for a rest the lid of the coffin was seen to move, and Maggie was found to be alive. She was well enough to walk the rest of the way to Musselburgh the next day and lived for another 40 years. Located in the town square is a raised round monument that states "On this spot many martyrs and covenanters died for the Protestant faith". They were executed during the Wars of Religion (1661-68). The Memorial was first opened 25th April 1937, and re-opened by the Duke of Hamilton on 24th October 1954.

We then passed the “Fiddler’s Arms” a traditional Scottish Pub located in the Grassmarket. This area is steeped in tradition, having originally been designed to host Edinburgh's main horse and cattle markets. Cattle from the surrounding fields were driven through the Cowgate to the weekly market which was held here for nearly 500 years until 1911. Historically one of the poorer areas of the city and the site of an Irish slum. It has also seen city riots, burning of witches and public hangings. Frequented in the past by historic figures such as Robert Burns and Wordsworth, today the Grassmarket serves as a convenient meeting point for locals and visitors alike who enjoy fashionable shops, bars and restaurants whilst soaking up the medieval atmosphere of the ancient marketplace with splendid views of the nearby castle.

It was starting to rain a bit but we kept walking to the steps leading to ‘Flodden Wall’. The Flodden Wall was completed in 1560 to protect the city against an English invasion that never came. After Scottish forces were defeated and King James IV was killed at the Battle of Flodden in 1513, Edinburgh officials feared the victorious English troops would soon descend upon the ancient Scottish city. So, as leaders who fear outsiders tend to do, they decided to build a wall to defend their domain. The 24-foot-tall wall encased a 140-acre area. About 10,000 people lived within its confines. Six ports guarded the entrances in and out of the walled city, which also helped control smuggling. The few fragments of the ‘Flodden Wall’ that survive are protected monuments. ‘Flodden Wall’ was extended by the ‘Telfer Wall’ in the early 17th century. The walls never proved very successful as defensive structures, and were easily breached on more than one occasion. They served more as a means of controlling trade and taxing goods.

20th of August: More exploring in Edinburgh today. Took an uber to Sheila Fleet, Orkney designer jewellery shop located on 18 St. Stephen St., Stockbridge. I wanted to visit her store as I remembered buying a pendant she designed at a gift shop in Culloden years ago. I love her Scottish-inspired jewellery. We took another uber to St. John the Evangelist Church, Princes St. in the heart of Edinburgh. The building of St. John's started in 1816 on the site of what had previously been a council-owned market garden. It cost £18,000, and the finished church was consecrated on Maundy Thursday, 19 March 1818. St John's was designed by the eminent architect, William Burn, in the perpendicular Gothic style. We stopped in the square near St. Cuthbert’s Parish Church to look at the ‘Ross Fountain’ a cast-iron structure installed in 1872 and restored in 2018. Local gun maker, Daniel Ross, saw a fountain in London at the Great Exhibition of 1862 and in 1869 purchased a larger version as a gift to Edinburgh. The 122 pieces that make up the fountain were shipped to Leith, and transported to Princes St. Gardens for assembly. The fountain was completed and officially opened in 1872, however David Ross sadly died one year earlier.

Had a nice lunch and then to visit the ‘John Knox House’ on High St. dating back to 1470. The ‘John Knox House’, is a historic house in Edinburgh, Scotland, reputed to have been owned and lived in by Protestant reformer John Knox during the 16th century, originally owned by a family of goldsmiths named Mossman. The house is located in the Netherbow area, which was the site of the medieval Netherbow Port, a large gateway that used to stand over the Royal Mile. It is one of the oldest surviving buildings in

Edinburgh. On the top floor is the 'Oak Room' with its wood-paneling with a 17th century painted ceiling. John Knox the preacher plaque state "John Knox is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blasting in our ear". We walked pass the 'World's End Pub', and looked down on the cobbled pavement where we saw a series of gold bricks. These special bricks mark the location of the original main entrance into Edinburgh. Back then, entrance into the walled city wasn't free. While walking we saw the 'St. John's Cross' a cross on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, put up by the Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem in 1987 to mark the 40th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Order in Scotland. The cross on the roadway marks the site of the original standing cross of St. John which was on the boundary between Edinburgh and the Burgh of Canongate. The ancient order of St. John is thought to have owned land and property next to the cross during the Middle Ages.

We entered Canongate Kirk that served as Queen Elizabeth II's local place of worship when she is visiting, usually the first week in June, around her birthday. A Royal Pew can be located inside, it is demarcated by a miniature crown atop a red pillow in the front row. The building itself with its distinctive Dutch-style gable was designed by the architect James Smith, who was a significant figure in seventeenth-century architecture. The interior space of the church is cruciform in layout, with a Romanesque basilica style painted with an unusual pale blue paint.

Once outside we walked around 'Canongate Kirkyard', the churchyard was used for burials from the late 1680s until the mid-20th century. The graveyard is the final resting place for a few of the country's most notable figures. Among those interred are economist Adam Smith and poet Robert Fergusson. David Rizzio, Queen Mary of Scot's private secretary, who was murdered at nearby Holyrood Palace, is also interred here. Also the man who inspired the character Ebenezer Scrooge. Hi name was Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie, he had been a corn merchant most of his life, and so his tombstone described him as "a meal man." In the dimming light of the evening, Charles Dickens misread the inscription as "a mean man." He later wrote in his personal notebook that "to be remembered through eternity only for being mean seemed the greatest testament to a life wasted." Two years would pass before Dickens dug this name out of his notes, and when he did, he created one of literature's most beloved symbols of redemption and Christmas spirit. Adjusting the name to "Ebenezer Scrooge," the protagonist of 'A Christmas Carol' was born.' Scroggie himself was no saint. In fact, he was best known for goosing the Countess of Mansfield during the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. However, he was far from the cruel old man Dickens created. Outside his lack of candor, Scroggie for two years served as Edinburgh's Lord Provost and provided supplies for Captain James Cook's various endeavors. Sadly, his grave marker was lost during construction work in 1932.

Hard to miss outside of the entrance to Canongate Kirk is a tribute to Robert Fergusson a Scottish poet born in Edinburgh 1750 and died in Bedlam 1774 cast in bronze. Adopting a walking pose Robert Ferguson appears to be walking casually down the street. Jeanette and Walt took a walk with the famous poet.

Last stop of the day was at ‘Dunbar’s Close Garden’ a recreated 17th century garden against a church wall with sheltered parterres, shrubbery & trees. “Close” in Scots means an alley leading into a square or courtyard, and this courtyard garden is a haven of calm, quiet, and refreshing green. This walled garden is divided into five areas. You are greeted by cooling shade; three whitebeam trees stand in the corners, with a large tulip tree centered in the first parterre knot garden. Depending on when you visit, there are colorful flowers, snowdrops, & grape hyacinths in spring and marigolds, agapanthus, and honeywort in summer. Walking into the next garden room you find two more knot gardens with espaliered apple and pear trees framing the entrance. The third-knot garden is punctuated with geometric squares, lines, cone-shaped yews, and box balls of green. Walking to the back of the garden, you arrive in the wilderness area. Visiting here you are likely to find yourself alone. It is such a small garden, but to wander to the back is to remove yourself from the hustle and bustle of the thoroughfare outside. Shade and a choice of benches provide a much-needed place to sit and enjoy the quiet paradise of green.

The end of our busy day in time to join our traveling group for briefing on the journey ahead and our welcome dinner.

21st of August: Morning tour with group includes Edinburg Castle, Scottish National War Memorial, Royal Palace then time on our own. We paid an inside visit to Edinburgh Castle, whose highlights include the Great Hall, with its original hammerbeam roof; the Honors (crown jewels) of Scotland; the Scottish National War Memorial; and the Royal Palace, the one-time apartments of the Scottish royals in the castle. Mike and I had toured Edinburg Castle years ago but enjoyed as much this time with our friends. Went inside St. Margaret’s Chapel the oldest building in Edinburg Castle built in about 1130, this chapel was probably part of a great stone tower. It is dedicated to the saintly Queen Margaret, who lived in the castle in the late 1000s. I also like seeing the Scottish Crown Jewels again: The crown, scepter and sword of state used in the coronation of Mary Queen of Scots in 1543 displayed in the ancient crown room. The castle’s balcony was an ideal spot to get a grand view of Edinburgh and historic sights. The grandstands were set up for the ‘Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo’ that we will be attending tonight with our group.

After the tour this morning we took a walk down Royal Mile a succession of streets forming the main thoroughfare of the Old Town. The Royal Mile contains a variety of shops, restaurants, public houses, and visitor attractions. We were here during the annual Edinburgh Fringe, the High Street becomes crowded with tourists, entertainers, and buskers (street performers). Passed ‘The Witches Well’ a cast iron fountain which pays tribute to those who perished during this terrible period of Scottish history. Possibly hundreds of those convicted of witchcraft were strangled and burnt at the stake on the execution ground now covered by Edinburgh Castle’s Esplanade. Most of the condemned were women. Commissioned in 1894 by local philanthropist Sir Patrick Geddes, it was designed by artist John Duncan. The plaque above the fountain was mounted on the wall in 1912. The inscription reads: This fountain is near the site on which many witches were burned at the stake. The wicked head and serene head signify

that some used their exceptional knowledge for evil purposes while others were misunderstood and wished their kind nothing but good. The serpent has the dual significance of evil and wisdom. The foxglove spray further emphasizes the dual purpose of many common objects.

After walking down Royal Street we had an early dinner at 'The Ivy on the Square', located on St. Andrew Square. We then returned to the hotel to rest before we had to walk to Edinburgh Castle to see the 'Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo' show. The performance started at 9:30 pm and it had been raining steadily for hours. Tonight it was rainy as 'Hurricane Ernesto's' remnants brought heavy rain and strong winds to Edinburgh. We soldiered it out and found our seats. Since the 1970s, on average, just over 220,000 people see the Tattoo live on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle each year (8,800 each evening). The Tattoo performance takes place every weekday evening and twice on Saturdays throughout August and has never been cancelled due to inclement weather. Each performance begins with a fanfare, usually composed for that year's show. The 'Massed Pipes and Drums' then perform, marching through the gatehouse of the castle and performing a traditional pipe band set. Then, the show's featured acts perform individually. Each service is usually represented by bands from the 'British Armed Forces', along with drill and display teams as well. World-class lighting projected against the impressive backdrop of Edinburgh Castle. The show '*Journeys* was the final show from the Tattoo's first dedicated Creative Director, Michael Braithwaite. With the Royal Navy as our 2024 Lead Service, *Journeys* featured performances by the 'Massed Pipes and Drums', 'The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Performers', 'The Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines', 'Majesticks Drum Corps', 'Teamwork Arts India', 'The Citadel Regimental Band and Pipes', 'United States Navy Ceremonial Guard', 'United States Sea Service Band', and the 'Lone Piper'. I thought it was an amazing show and even with the rain and winds the "Show Went On."

22nd of August: Boarded the coach taking our group to the 'Palace of Holyroodhouse' the official residence of the British monarch in Scotland. Located at the bottom of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, at the opposite end to Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood has served as the principal royal residence in Scotland since the 16th century, and is a setting for state occasions and official entertaining. King Charles III spends one week in residence at Holyrood at the beginning of summer, where he carries out a range of official engagements and ceremonies. The 16th-century historic apartments of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the State Apartments, used for official and state entertaining, are open to the public throughout the year, except when members of the royal family are in residence.

After the visit to Holyrood the coach drove us through Holyrood Park where you can see Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. Arthur's Seat is the highest point in the park and the remains of an extinct volcano. After lunch we took an uber to the National Portrait Galleries Scotland an art museum on Queen Street, Edinburgh. Portrait holds the national collections of portraits, all of which are of, but not necessarily by, Scots. It also holds the Scottish National Photography Collection. The library and print room was interesting with the phrenology collection, a group of life and death masks and other artifacts that are on loan from the University of Edinburgh's Anatomical Museum. The

collection offers a glimpse into the 19th century practice of phrenology, which was the study of the skull's shape and its relationship to a person's personality.

23rd of August: Departing Edinburgh this morning, we're bound for the beautiful and beloved Lake District of northwest England. The most-visited national park in the United Kingdom, the Lake District comprises a diverse landscape of lakes, rivers, ancient woodlands, and small towns and villages. Both England's highest peak (Scafell Pike) and its deepest lake (Wast Water) lie within this region, and some of England's most celebrated literary figures called this corner of the country their home, including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Beatrix Potter. Along our drive, we stop at midday for lunch together at 'Mill Inn' a 17th-century country Inn set in the heart of the North Lakes. Nestling in the lea of Blencathra with the Glenderamackin flowing beneath. We then continue our journey through the breathtaking scenery.

Early afternoon, we stopped at Wordsworth Grasmere to visit 'Dove Cottage' a house on the edge of Grasmere in the Lake District of England. It is best known as the home of the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy Wordsworth from December 1799 to May 1808, where they spent over eight years of "plain living, but high thinking". The cottage is a Grade 1 listed building in the United Kingdom, meaning it is of "exceptional interest," and its interior remains largely unchanged from Wordsworth's day. Wordsworth's poetry is synonymous with the unique landscape of the English Lake District. He celebrated our relationship with nature and the importance of taking time to appreciate the wonder and beauty of the natural world. Here Wordsworth produced the most famous and best-loved of his poems, and his sister Dorothy kept her famous Grasmere journals. We were given time on our own to walk around in Grasmere shops and go inside 'Grasmere Parish Church'. The church is dedicated to Oswald of Northumbria, king and champion of Christianity, who is believed to have preached on this site sometime before 642AD when he died in battle. It is a Grade One Listed building of national historic interest. The oldest parts date from around 1300AD, but it is probably the third church to have stood on this ancient site by the side of River Rothay.

Late afternoon we reach our hotel on the shores of one of England's most idyllic lakes, and our home for the next two nights at Low Wood Bay Resort & Spa.

24th of August: Lake District is one of England's most mountainous regions, and home to the nation's tallest peak and largest lake. In addition to its 16 lakes, the region is covered in stunning greenery over summer, but it's also beautiful throughout the year. We stopped at Totterbank Farm in Cumbria for the opportunity to see sheepdogs working with sheep. Today's excursion was a boat ride on picturesque Lake Windermere, England's largest lake at over 10 miles long. After our relaxing cruise, we visited the village of Hawkshead, home to less than 600 people but bursting with character, with cobbled streets winding through tightly packed, whitewashed homes. We walked around town of Hawkshead and had a light lunch. Mike visited "The Little Ice Cream Shop" and came back with a large waffle cone with a big scoop of chocolate and black licorice ice-cream.

We were to meet at a designated time in front of Hawkshead Grammar School & Museum. 'A Grammar School Education: Wordsworth's Inspiration' founded in 1585. We entered the school and took seats at the desks. The founder of the school was Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York (1519-1588). On the death of King Edward VI, the Duke of Norfolk sought to preserve a Protestant monarchy by illegally placing Lady Jane Grey on the throne. He and his followers arrived in Cambridge to raise an army in East Anglia and demanded that Edwin Sandys preach a sermon. When the rebellion failed and Mary Tudor took the throne, Edwin was arrested and taken to the Tower of London. For this, he is mentioned in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Later, he was moved to more comfortable conditions in the Marchalsea Prison, where he made friends with the prison keeper who connived at his escape. Elizabeth I made it safe for him to return to England. Archbishop Sandys was concerned that true religion and sound learning would forever flourish in the land. They saw the necessity of education for religion's sake and the need for Protestants to hold their own in discussion with Catholics. To these ends, Edwin Sandys founded Hawkshead Grammar School in 1585, and endowed it with sufficient land and property for it to offer a free education.

Hawkshead Grammar School taught grammar (Latin grammar) and the principles of the Greek tongue and other sciences necessary to be taught in a grammar school. The sciences included arithmetic and geometry sufficient to meet the practical needs of the businessman, surveyor, or navigator. Ancient history was taught through the classics, and Latin was the medium for modern history. It almost goes without saying that church attendance was compulsory.

The habit of carving one's name in the surface of the School's wooden desks was popular among the pupils, and among those still visible today is that of William Wordsworth, Poet Laureate. In his autobiographical poem, 'The Prelude', William Wordsworth recounted his school-days in Hawkshead, skating on Esthwaite Water and waiting for his father's horses. Another famous scholar that went to this school was Dr. Christopher Wordsworth was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. (He was William Wordsworth's brother). He published a six-volume Ecclesiastical Biography. The classroom houses a collection of historic classroom furniture and artifacts used in the School, some of which date back to the Seventeenth Century.

We left the school house and headed to 'The Armitt' Museum Gallery Library. Founded by Mary Louisa Armitt in 1912 the museum, library and gallery hares the history and heritage of Ambleside and its people. The Armitt holds a varied selection of artworks from the late eighteenth century to the twentieth century, of interest to its location in Ambleside and the Lake District. Among these include important works by Beatrix Potter'early fungi and natural history watercolors, and a significant collection by the artist, Kurt Schwitters.

Beatrix Potter had an early interest in fungi and the natural world. During the 1880s–1890s, while on holiday to the Lake District and Scotland, she collected, analyzed, and painted prolifically. In 1943, Beatrix bequeathed her collection to The Armitt where almost three hundred of these remain. Kurt Schwitters, a German artist, came to

Ambleside in 1945 as a refugee. Part of the pre-war avant-garde in Germany with a developing international reputation, he was denounced by the Nazis. After a flight to Norway and then Scotland, a year in internment and three years in war-torn London, he arrived in Ambleside. He lived and worked in Ambleside for three years until his death in 1948. Over the years his reputation has grown and continues to grow. Paintings in the collection include 'Dr Johnson', 'Silver Howe', and 'Wood on Wood'. We enjoyed looking through the museum. On display was the 'Beatnix Potter A Journal'. This lavish, illustrated journal describes Beatrix Potter's life as a young woman in Victorian England as she struggles to achieve independence and to find artistic success and romantic love. Using witty, observant commentary taken from Beatrix's own diaries, the journal features a wealth of watercolor paintings, sketches, photographs, letters and period memorabilia to recreate the world in which she lived. Mike was thoughtful enough to obtain a copy for me and gave it to me at Christmas. He knows my love for rabbits and Beatrix Potter and knew I would like to have a copy.

Also on display on loan from Cumbria's Museum of Military Life, Carlisle was 'The Milton Shield – Paradise Lost'. Inspired by Milton's epic poem 'Paradise Lost', this shield was originally designed in 1866 by Morel-Ladeuil for Elkington & Co. of Birmingham and exhibited in the Paris Exposition of 1867 where it won a gold medal. The central silver medallion shows the archangel Raphael admonishing Adam and Eve. Two more silver panels either side depict, on the left, loyal angels ascending to heaven, and, on the right, defeated rebel angels descending into hell, which gives the whole composition a sense of swirling, circular movement. Went inside 'The Apple Pie' bakery that was packed and grabbed some bags of pre-wrapped cookies and picked out some yummy bakery items from the cases. Had lost Mike and friends and finally found them looking at a fancy green 'Dolce Vita Classic' car. My friends love automobiles and especially vintage ones. I said on our way back to the coach lets stop by the memorial and bronze stature of "Riley" (2011-2014). Riley loved ratting and was a pigeon fancier. The sign states a much loved feral cat whom lived here in this garden. This statue commemorated her life of freedom and joy she brought into our lives and will never be forgotten. With grateful thanks to all who gave to this artwork and to her creator internationally renowned Lakes artist and sculptor David Cemmick. Window shopping continued back to the coach, looking at the wares of handheld pies, Chorizo, Mozzarella & Cornish Sea Salt and Farmhouse Sausage Rolls, Cornish puddings and Raspberry & White Chocolate Bronuts, a cross between a donut and a croissant. Had to get back to the coach no more time for "eye shopping".

25th of August: Today we embarked on a comfortable coach ride through the splendid British countryside. On our way we had a stop in Chester, England, on the River Dee. A cathedral city and the county town of Cheshire, England, on the River Dee, close to the England-Wales border. Chester is the best preserved walled city in England. Its grade I listed walls originate from 100 AD and form an almost complete circuit around the city. With a total walkway length of 1.8 miles there is only a small 100-metre section which is no longer intact. We went inside Chester Cathedral a Church of England cathedral and the mother church of the Diocese of Chester. The cathedral, formerly the abbey church of a Benedictine monastery dedicated to Saint Werburgh, is dedicated to Christ and the

Blessed Virgin Mary. The building of the nave, begun in 1323, was halted by plague and completed 150 years later. The treasures of Chester Cathedral are its rare fittings, specifically its choir stalls and the 17th-century furnishing of the bishop's Consistory Court in the south tower. The 13th-century Lady Chapel contains the stone shrine of Saint Werburgh which dates from the 14th century and which used to contain her relics.

We entered a beautiful little courtyard and cloister garden, in the middle 'Water of Life Statue' depicting the story of Jesus and the Woman of Samaria, showing their shared bowl overflowing with water. It stands on the site of a well which was the original source of water for the monks of the abbey. Artist Stephen Broadbent, 1994. Around the base are the words: "Jesus said, 'the water that I shall give will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life.'" John 4:14. It was cast in bronze by Chris Butler of Castle Fine Arts in Oswystry, and dramatically craned over the Cathedral into its final resting place.

We left and walked over to steps to the gateway arch. In 1899 a clock was added to the top of the gateway to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria two years earlier. It is carried on openwork iron pylons, has a clock face on all four sides, and a copper ogee cupola. The clock was designed by the Chester architect John Douglas. A sign states at the top 'The East Gate' the site of the Eastern Gateway of the Roman fortress, part of which was incorporated into the 'Medieval Gate'. The present arch was built 1768-0 at the expense of Richard, Earl Grosvenor. From the arch we were able to walk on parts of the ancient walls. The Walls are about two miles long and were first built by the Romans nearly 2000 years ago. They were extended and developed in the Saxon period (10th century). During the 12th century, the Normans rebuilt and extended the Walls so for the first time since the Romans, the Walls formed a completed circuit around Chester.

Next stop was to visit 'Bodnant Gardens', a historic horticultural gem located in North Wales. With its lovely hillside setting, the 80 acres of gardens here are ever changing and encompass everything from manicured lawns and flower-filled terraces to meadows of wildflowers. Bodnant Garden is a National Trust property near Tal-y-Cafn, Conwy, Wales, overlooking the Conwy Valley towards the Carneddau mountains. Founded in 1874 and developed by five generations of one family, it was given to the National Trust in 1949. Early records show that Bodnant (which in Welsh means 'dwelling by a stream') was home to the Lloyd family from the reign of James I, passing by marriage to the Forbes family in the mid 1700s. In 1792 Colonel Forbes built an Italianate mansion to replace an earlier house and developed the parkland around Bodnant Hall, in English Landscape style.

On Colonel Forbes' death in 1820 the estate passed by marriage again to William Hanmer of Bettisfield Park in Flintshire. Hanmer made his own improvements, building the present Old Mill between 1828 and 1837, and extending the garden around the mansion house.

In 2024, Bodnant Garden celebrated 150 years since it was bought at auction by Victorian industrialist Henry Davis Pochin and his wife, Agnes, in 1874. Last year also

marked 75 years since Bodnant Garden was gifted to the National Trust by Henry McLaren, The 2nd Lord Aberconway.

Pochin enlisted the skills of landscape designer Edward Milner to develop the formal Victorian shrub garden around the house, including the famous Laburnum Arch. He also sculpted the sloping valley sides down to the river, planting North American conifers and creating pathways to form the romantic dells and water gardens. Bodnant Garden is home to exotic plants from the Blue Poppy of the Himalayas to the Fire Bush of the Andes, as well as five National Collections – Magnolia, Embotrium, Eucryphia, Rhododendron forrestii and Bodnant Rhododendron Hybrids. It also boasts Wales's largest collection of UK Champion Trees, which provide a year-round spectacle. Rhododendrons are wild shrubs native to South-East Asia. They were first introduced to Bodnant Garden around the turn of the 1900s, many grown from original seed collected by plant collectors including Ernest Wilson and George Forrest during expeditions in central China. We did not have a lot of time to walk the grounds but what we saw was gardens and woods with American and Asian conifers along the banks of the River Hiraethlyn.

Our tour continued to Llandudno a coastal town in north Wales. It's known for North Shore Beach and 19th-century Llandudno Pier, with shops and a games arcade. Northwest of town, the cliffs of Great Orme headland jut into the sea. Ancient tunnels lead to a cavern at Great Orme Mines. Checked in at Llandudno Bay Hotel and found our room. Curious sea gulls were waiting at our window looking for hand-outs. Had a nice dinner with the group and rested up for the next days adventures.

26th of August: North Wales/Snowdonia National Park. Known as both the “land of castles” and the “land of song,” Wales is also a land of fierce natural beauty, as we see for ourselves on this morning's visit to Snowdonia National Park. Named for Snowdon, at 3,560 feet the tallest mountain in England and Wales, the park comprises some 840 square miles of unspoiled wooded valleys, mountains, moorlands, lakes, and rivers. The park was officially created in 1951, making it Wales's first national park, and covers more than 10% of the land area of the country. We visited Snowdonia in style, riding aboard pulled by steam locomotives and provide a scenic ride through dramatic Snowdonia National Park.

Short stop at Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlantysiliogogoch. Originally the town had a shorter, easier to pronounce name: Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. In the 1880s, in a joking attempt to attract tourists, a tailor added the rest of the syllables, bringing the total length to 58 letters, including four letter L's in a row. It translates into English as “St. Mary's Church in the Hollow of the White Hazel near the Fierce Whirlpool and the Church of St. Tysilio near the Red Cave”. Ran into the gift shop to get a t-shirt with the name of the town on in.

Arrived at Caernarfon a royal town, community and port in Gwynedd, Wales. The coach let us out in front of Castell Caernarfon Wales' most famous castle and an UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mighty Caernarfon Castle commands the lion's share of attention,

but the town's narrow streets and stylishly redeveloped waterfront also merit a visit. In the late 11th century William the Conqueror ordered the construction of a motte-and-bailey castle at Caernarfon as part of his Norman invasion of Wales. His invasion failed and Wales remained an independent nation until 1283, when Edward I conquered Wales he began to build a series of powerful castles to reduce the risk of future Welsh rebellion. The castle, built in the 13th century by Edward I as a royal palace and military fortress, was at the core of a medieval walled town. Edward I founded a walled town outside the castle walls as well as a quay alongside the Menai Strait. The Romans left their mark too – 1000 years earlier they constructed their fort of Segontium on the hill above (its foundations still exist). Situated on the banks of the River Seiont, Caernarfon was built on the bones of a former motte-and-bailey castle (typically wood, on a raised area of ground) that dated back to the late 11th century when Edward I decided to replace it with the current stone structure in 1283.

We walked around town and admired the carousel with painted wooden horses located in the main square. The carousel, or merry-go-round, originated in the 12th century as a cavalry training exercise for knights. The word "carousel" comes from the Italian and Spanish word *carosella*, which means "little battle". Knights would gallop in a circle, tossing a ball to each other while wielding swords. In the 16th century, the game spread to France, where it became more elaborate with costumes and tournaments. In the 18th century, the modern carousel emerged. In the 19th century, carousels became a fairground attraction, powered by men or donkeys. American artists began to add more animals to the carousel, such as flowers, bells, and cherubs.

Then we went to the railway station in Caernarfon for a ride on the Welsh Highland Railway formed in 1922. It is a 25 mile long, restored narrow gauge heritage railway in the Welsh county of Gwynedd. The restoration, which had the civil engineering mainly built by contractors and the track mainly built by volunteers, received a number of awards. The modern Welsh Highland Railway is a tourist railway owned and operated by the Festiniog Railway Company. It is longer than the original line and starts from Caernarfon rather than Dinas. Some trains on the Welsh Highland Railway are run on steam, but diesel engines are sometimes used. The railway also operates vintage diesel engines and historic steam locomotives. Our guide gave us a boxed lunch consisting of a bag of naturally delicious 'Brown Bag Crisps', a ham sandwich, boxed quiche, slice of Bara Brith (Bara Brith is a multi-award-winning fruit loaf baked to a traditional Pembrokeshire farmhouse recipe using tea-soaked vine fruits, marmalade and spices). Ate our lunch while watching the scenery and passing some of the rail stations.

This afternoon the group was taken to Conwy Castle a fortification in Conwy, located in North Wales. It was built by Edward I, during his conquest of Wales, between 1283 and 1287. This famous fortress is exceptionally well preserved. It contains the most intact set of medieval royal apartments in Wales. The high curtain wall and eight lofty towers rise almost as impressively as when they were built more than 700 years ago. Blockbuster movies have been filmed in the area including *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword* (2017) and *The Secret Garden* (2020). Thanks to restored spiral staircases in its great towers you can walk a complete circuit around the battlements of Conwy Castle. Despite spending an

astronomical £15,000 on Conwy, Edward I only stayed here once. Trapped by a Welsh rebellion of 1294, he spent a miserable Christmas with just one barrel of wine in the castle cellar for comfort. The eight towers rewards you with views of the River Conwy and down into Conway itself.

The group was invited to a whisky tasting before dinner. Laphroaig a single malt whisky whose distillery on Isle of Islay; Scotland, Rendery is a Welsh whisky distillery and brand, producing the first commercially available whisky made in Wales since the 19th century. The dinner was good and the best desert “Sticky Toffee Pudding”, the pudding has two essential components, sponge cake and toffee sauce. The first is a moist sponge cake which contains finely chopped dates. Usually served with ice-cream. Ours was not but I like it that way.

27th of August: North Wales/Stratford-upon-Avon. Today’s transfer from Wales to Stratford-upon-Avon is long, but we pass through one gorgeous British landscape after another. We arrive midday in Stratford-upon-Avon, the market town famed for its native son, one of the finest craftsmen of the English language: William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

Our touring included a visit to Anne Hathaway's Cottage a twelve-roomed farmhouse where Anne Hathaway, the wife of William Shakespeare, lived as a child in the village of Shottery, Warwickshire, England, about 1 mile west of Stratford-upon-Avon. Spacious, and with several bedrooms, it is now set in extensive gardens and orchards. Due to the house staying in the same family for so long and the Hathaways still living there when the Trust took over, Anne Hathaway's Cottage boasts some of the oldest and most original parts of the Trust's collections. In 1969 the cottage was badly damaged in a fire, but was restored by the Trust.

At the age of 18, in 1582, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman who was eight years older than he, she was several months pregnant with their first child when they got married. William being just 18 yrs. old had to obtain his father’s permission to marry Anne. Anne Hathaway (1556 – 1623) and William had three children, their young son died at the age of 11. We wandered through the cottage to see original furniture including the Hathaway bed. The first Hathaway to live in the cottage was Anne’s grandfather John Hathaway, who was a tenant sheep farmer. The farm was known as ‘Hewlands’ and the family were successful sheep farmers. The garden was a farmyard with some livestock and space to grow herbs and vegetables.

In 1920, horticulturist Ellen Willmott was commissioned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to advise on design and planting in the garden around the cottage. Her designs for the flower garden and orchard were intended to compliment the buildings. Many of the plants chosen were mentioned in Shakespeare’s plays, with pastel combination in borders that remain colorful throughout the year. Much of her layout and plant choices are in place today, including the three flower beds near the cottage entrance, named Miss Willmott’s garden.

Stratford-upon-Avon is a medieval market town in England's West Midlands. Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England has a history that dates back to the 11th century. The town was originally a village, but was granted a charter by King Richard I in 1196 to hold a weekly market. This led to the town's growth as a market town and center of trade. What was important about Stratford-upon-Avon was it was located close to the Cotswolds, Stratford was a major centre for the processing, marketing and distribution of sheep products, which offered a wealth of new business opportunities to the locals. By the time William Shakespeare was born in 1564, Stratford was a successful town.

Stratford-upon-Avon is the 16th-century birthplace of William Shakespeare. Possibly the most famous writer in the English language, Shakespeare is known for his sonnets and plays such as 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Hamlet'. The Royal Shakespeare Company performs his plays in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and adjacent Swan Theatre on the banks of the River Avon.

Just in time for lunch on our own we went to dine at Osteria Da Gino and shared some excellent wood-fired pizzas. Then Mike and I went to Shakespeare's Birthplace, the restored 16th-century half-timbered house and gardens where the "Bard of Avon" William Shakespeare is believed to have been born in 1564. The building has been restored to appear as it would have in Shakespeare's time, complete with period furnishings; Shakespeare's father's glove-making workshop; and a walled garden behind the house containing varieties of flowers and herbs which grew in the 16th century. Afterwards we walked down the streets and looked in stores, tea rooms and restaurants with a stop in the square with a bronze statue of William Shakespeare. Found an interesting antique shop with shelves of Royal Memorabilia. Found the perfect double handled cup for my friend that collects Royal Memorabilia. Mike wanted to step in for a drink at 'The Garrick Inn' believed to be the town's oldest public house, having been established as an inn since 1718, and even earlier medieval inn once stood on the same site from the 1590's. Named after David Garrick who arranged Shakespeares' birthday celebrations with Shakespeares' birthplace just 4 minutes away from here.

Tonight we have (4) tickets for *The School of Scandal* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre: A65,66,67 & 68 Upper Circle Door. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre is a Grade II listed 1,040+ seat thrust stage theatre owned by the Royal Shakespeare Company dedicated to the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare. It is located in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare's birthplace in the English Midlands, beside the River Avon. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre has three permanent theatres in Stratford-upon-Avon: the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Swan Theatre, which both share a building on Waterside, and The Other Place, which is a short walk away on Southern Lane.

The School for Scandal is a comedy of manners written by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. It was first performed in London at Drury Lane Theatre on 8 May 1777. *The School for Scandal* explores how people hide and are exposed, both literally and figuratively. *The School for Scandal* is about good character and slander, honesty, and hypocrisy. Lady Sneerwell, an inveterate gossip, is in love with Charles Surface. She wishes to disrupt the

relationship he has with Maria, and thinks nothing of spreading exaggerated and false rumors about his character.

28th of August: Today we set out for the postcard-perfect Cotswolds. England's south-central region of gently rolling hills dotted with villages of honey-colored limestone, market towns, and unspoiled countryside, the Cotswolds looks much as it did 300 years ago. The region is unique in England, as a rift of golden subterranean limestone bedrock created a series of grassy plains and served as the main building stone for the many hamlets in the area. Though not a National Park, the Cotswolds (which measures roughly 25 miles across by 90 miles long) has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the government of the United Kingdom and is the largest such region in all of England and Wales. The term "Cotswolds National Landscape" was adopted in September 2020, using a proposed name replacement for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The coach took us to an area in the Cotswolds to walk down the row houses of Cotswold stone. streets and admire the homes. Cotswold stone is a yellow oolitic Jurassic limestone. This limestone is rich in fossils, particularly of fossilised sea urchins. When weathered, the colour of buildings made or faced with this stone is often described as honey or golden. The stone varies in colour from north to south, being honey-coloured in the north and northeast.

While walking down the street a Eastbourne Classic Bus stopped in front of one of the houses and a group of men got out. They were on vacation and wanted to visit the Cotswolds. Following them was a man driving a 'Morris Minor'. Long before a certain other British quirky classic appeared on the scene, the Morris Minor held the title of the quirkiest British car on the market. Designed by the legendary British-Greek designer Alec Issigonis, the Minor was one of the first mass-produced British cars to emerge from the shadows of World War II. And it was a huge success. Its no nonsense design was slightly more polished than its biggest rival at the time – the Volkswagen Beetle. First launched in 1948, the car has come to symbol 'englishness' over the years, and was the first British made car to sell over 1 million units. We popped into 'Otis and Belle' an artisan bakery where everything is made and baked to them using traditional methods and the highest quality ingredients. I had a quick look and shopping opportunity to go inside the Broadway Museum.

Continuing on with the tour we went to 'The Anglican Church of St James' at Chipping Campden in the Cotswold District of Gloucestershire, England was built in the 15th century incorporating an earlier Norman church. It is a grade I listed building. St James church in Chipping Campden is one of the finest 'wool' churches in England, a testament to the wealth of local wool merchants during the late medieval period. The earliest church on this site was erected in the Norman period, sometime before 1180. That first church was considerably smaller than the current magnificent edifice. It consisted of a simple nave without aisles, short chancel, and a stolid tower. Around AD 1260 the Norman church was enlarged, a process that continued for the next 250 years. The font was installed in the 1830's. It is a copy of the 15th century font in St. Mary Magdalen's Church in Oxford.

We had lunch at “The Slaughters’ comfort food, real ales & fine wines, located in Upper Salughter a village in the Cotsworth district of Gloucestershire. Our group had afternoon tea with trays of finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and a selection of delicious sweets and fancies. Served with our choice of Newby London teas or coffee.

After tea Mike and I and our friends took a quick look inside ‘The Parish Church of St. Mary’ Lower Slaughter. It was built in the Norman and then the Decorated style. It was rebuilt in the Victorian era in the Decorated Gothic style. The louvered bell tower openings have two trefoiled arches with an encircled quatrefoil. There has been a church standing on this site in Lower Slaughter since the 13th century. When the earlier church had fallen into disrepair, it was rebuilt in 1867 to a design based on the Early English style by Benjamin Ferrey, who also carried out much of the restoration work on Wells Cathedral. The interior is quite unremarkable, with the walls pared back to bare stone, a complete contrast to some absolutely typically garish Victorian floor tiles. There are some original 13th century arches and some quality stained glass windows.

We checked in at our hotel ‘The Francis Hotel Bath’ late afternoon. We had reservations to enter the ‘Thermae Bath Spa’ a combination of a historic spa in a contemporary building in the city of Bath. It provided the opportunity to bathe in Bath's naturally warm, mineral-rich waters as the Celts and Romans did over 2,000 years ago. The combination of therapies involving hot and cold treatments are renowned for relieving muscular aches and pains, detoxing skin, improving body metabolism and increasing circulation. The thermal baths are basically like your hometown swimming pool except the water is around 100 degrees, there are plenty of jets and bubbles to massage away your stress. We had private changing rooms to get in our bathing suits and store our belongings and have a towel. No photos, camera or cell phones permitted. We went to the ‘Minerva Bath’ first named after the Roman Goddess of Health and Wisdom, this is the largest of the thermal baths. Distinguished by flowing curves and grand columns, the thermal waters are complemented by an invigorating whirlpool. Then went to the roof to enjoy spectacular views over the city of Bath and the surrounding hills. The naturally warm, mineral-rich waters are enhanced by air seats and bubbling jets. Later to multi-sensory experiences with a state-of-the-art Infrared Room, a Celestial Relaxation Room, an invigorating Ice Chamber, and two aroma steam rooms, which use imaginative displays to reflect the spa traditions of the Roman and Georgian periods. The relaxation room had chaise loungers with warm steam facing a screen showing space filled with stars, planets, galaxies and other celestial objects and seeing earth from space. Wonderful!

29th of August: The area where the city of Bath now stands shows evidence of habitation from before recorded time, but it is best known as the location where, in 60 CE, the Romans built baths and first “took the waters” at England’s only hot springs. Founded by the Romans as a thermal spa, Bath became an important centre of the wool industry in the Middle Ages. In the 18th century, under George III, it developed into an elegant town with neoclassical Palladian buildings, which blend harmoniously with the Roman baths.

We learn about this historic site on this morning's sightseeing tour as we visit the Roman Baths Museum a complex of buildings which includes the original, Roman-era baths and temple. The Roman Baths collection contains thousands of archaeological finds from pre-Roman and Roman Britain. In this section, found out how the site has changed over the last 2000 years and discover some of the amazing objects in the collection.

'The Roman Baths: Twenty feet beneath from street level stand the remains of the Roman Baths which flourished between the 1st and 4th centuries AD. They were lost beneath the city for hundreds of years and discovered in 1879. This building where you stand was erected in 1973, replacing private baths built in the 1180s by Major Charles Davis who excavated the Roman Baths.

There are several bathing sites, including 'The Great Bath', 'The East Baths', the 'Laconicum', and 'The Cold Plunge Bath'. The "Great Bath" centerpiece of the Roman Baths, this pool was fed by hot water from the Sacred Spring. It was 1.6 meters deep and surrounded by an arcade that was a place for meeting and chatting. 'The East Baths' was a large tepid bath fed by water from 'The Great Bath' "The Laconicum" was a small room of intense dry heat. "The Cold Plunge Bath" was a 1.6 meter deep and on which a water feature, probably a fountain, once stood. The different rooms in the Roman: The public bath was built around three principal rooms: the tepidarium (warm room), the caldarium (hot room), and the frigidarium (cold room). Some thermae also featured steam baths: the sudatorium, a moist steam bath, and the laconicum, a dry hot room.

In the museum is the actual gilt bronze head of the goddess Sulis Minerva is one of the treasures of Roman Britain. Its discovery in 1727 was an early indication that the Roman site at Bath was not a typical settlement. Gilt bronze sculptures are rare finds from Roman Britain as only two other fragments are known. The head is probably from the cult statue of the goddess which would have stood within her Temple beside the Sacred Spring. From there she may have looked out across the Temple courtyard to the site of the great altar, the site of sacrifice, which stood at the heart of that sacred space. The statue may well be an original object from the foundation of the site in the later first century AD, which means that it was probably well over 300 years old when it met its demise. The head is encased in glass and lit from below.

We grouped up in front of the museum for a guided tour. We went walked down 10 York St. pass the 'World Heritage Centre' with views of 'Bath Abbey' that hosted the coronation of King Edgar of England in 973. Along the way was tour include the 'Circus', a circle of Roman-inspired townhouses; the Royal Crescent, a semicircular row of terraced houses lauded as one of the greatest examples of Georgian architecture in the United Kingdom overlooking 'Royal Victoria Park'. It is has a row of 30 terraced houses laid out in a sweeping crescent, built between 1767 and 1775 and designed by the architect John Wood. The series 'Bridgerton' was filmed at the Royal Crescent among other films.

Mike and I and our friends had reservations at 'The Jane Austen Centre' for a formal afternoon tea. We had a table at the Regency Tea Room for afternoon tea with Mr.

Darcy. Each couple had their own tier of exquisite cakes, divine finger sandwiches and warm scones served with tea and most of us had a glass of Bottega Gold Prosecco. We did not tour the museum but were greeted by a reenactor dressed in attire of the period as we entered the building.

After our afternoon tea we went to 'The Abbey Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul', commonly known as 'Bath Abbey', is a parish church of the Church of England and former Benedictine monastery. Construction of the current abbey began in 1499 and was completed in 1616. The abbey is a Grade I listed building, particularly noted for its fan vaulting. It contains war memorials for the local population and monuments to several notable people, in the form of wall and floor plaques and commemorative stained glass. The east stained glass window showed 56 scenes from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The bottom of the window shows his birth and, higher up his death and resurrection. Installed in 1873 thanks to Jerom Murch, seven times mayor of Bath. The magnificent baptismal font was given in 1874 by the people of Bath to recognize the contribution of the Rector Charles Kemble to restoration work in Bath Abbey between 1864 and 1874.

We wanted to climb the tower to the top of 'Bath Abbey' so we paid for the 'Bath Abbey Tower Tour' and waited our turn to see the different, working side of this iconic landmark. We ascended 212 steps to the top, and climbed past the ringing chamber to the bell chamber, had the chance to stand above 'Bath Abbey's' vaulted ceiling and sit behind the clock face. Once we reached the roof, we were rewarded with breathtaking views over the city and surrounding countryside.

Stopped in the Mallory Jewelry shop established in 1898. Mike wanted a brew so we went to Coeur De Lion Bath's smallest pub tucked away in Northumberland Place in the heart of city centre. Small Victorian pub-grub classics, serving ales and pies, with colorful stained glass window on pedestrian alley.

Situated in Northumberland Place which leads off the High Street 'Baths' smallest pub 'Coeur De Lion' Bath originally known as 'Marchants Court' and described by John Wood as entirely new in 1749. A woodcarver called William Batt acquired a license to sell beer around 1860 and number 4 Northumberland Place (across the road from Coeur De Lion'). A few years later he named his beer house the 'Avondale Stores' and we assume he bought his beer from the Avondale Brewery at Batheaston. Around 1880 after many changes of licenses the name was changed to 'Coeur De Lion'. The name baffled many as the name as far as known was the only pub in the country possibly the whole of the UK. In 1886 Stoffel and Co Grocers owned most of Northumberland Place and the company decided it made more sense to move the Coeur across the road to where it now stands. Many years later the Devenish brewery owned Coeur was to close but the Bath city council helped to save the pub. One of the striking features of the Victorian pub is a stained glass front widow and ironically, Devenish, who were thwarted in their attempt to shut the pub are featured on the widow. Now the pub is under the ownership of Baths only 'Brewery Abbey Ales'. Devenish have ceased to exist. *(Story told on the back of the Coeur De Lion menu).*

Mike and I had dinner at 'The Ivy Brasserie & Garden', 39 Milsom St., Bath. We had a nice dinner at 'The Ivy'.

30th of August: Bath/Stonehenge/Windsor/London: En route, we stop to see Stonehenge. Stonehenge is perhaps the world's most famous prehistoric monument. It was built in several stages: the first monument was an early henge monument, built about 5,000 years ago, and the unique stone circle was erected in the late Neolithic period about 2500 BC. In the early Bronze Age many burial mounds were built nearby. Today, together with Avebury, Stonehenge forms the heart of a World Heritage Site, with a unique concentration of prehistoric monuments. Before Stonehenge the earliest structures known in the immediate area are four or five pits, three of which appear to have held large pine 'totem-pole like' posts erected in the Mesolithic period, between 8500 and 7000 BC. It is not known how these posts relate to the later monument of Stonehenge.

At this time, when much of the rest of southern England was largely covered by woodland, the chalk downland in the area of Stonehenge may have been an unusually open landscape. It is possible that this is why it became the site of an early Neolithic monument complex. This complex included the causewayed enclosure at Robin Hood's Ball, two cursus monuments or rectangular earthworks (the Greater, or Stonehenge, and Lesser Cursus), and several long barrows, all dating from the centuries around 3500 BC. The presence of these monuments probably influenced the later location of Stonehenge.

Our group had a time slot for our self-guided visit to Stonehenge. We waited for a bus shuttle to take us to Stonehenge with pathways to walk around Stonehenge. Quite different than the time Mike and I were here years ago with hardly any people around. Now there is a welcome center, shops, shuttles etc. When we were here last you parked by Stonehenge without supervision and walked up to the stones with less restrictions being able to get closer to the stones than you can now even allowing you to touch the stones directly. Still nice to see Stonehenge again.

We were supposed to leave Stonehenge and visit Windsor Castle but the plans were changed because Extinction Rebellion (XR) held a three-day climate change protest near Windsor Castle. The protest was a call for a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice. Campaigners set up tents, stages, and speakers in Windsor Home Park without permission. Activists marched to the gates of Windsor Castle. Some activists held signs asking King Charles III to be more vocal about environmental campaigns. So our visit was to be at 'Hampton Court'. Little did we know that the vintage car show 'Concours of Elegance' was at 'Hampton Court'. 'The Concours of Elegance' at Hampton Court Palace brought together a selection of 60 of the rarest cars from around the world many of which will never have been seen before in the UK. Our friends love automobiles but it did limit where we could go outside at 'Hampton Court'. Mike and I had visited 'Hampton Court' years ago so we decided to skip inside the place and spend more time in the gardens.

The original 'Tudor Hampton Court Palace' was begun by Cardinal Wolsey in the early 16th century, but it soon attracted the attention of Henry VIII, who brought all his six wives here. Surrounded by gorgeous gardens and famous features such as the Maze and the Great Vine, the palace has been the setting for many nationally important events. When William III and Mary II (1689-1702) took the throne in 1689, they commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to build an elegant new baroque palace. Later, Georgian kings and princes occupied the splendid interiors. When the royals left in 1737, impoverished 'grace and favor' aristocrats moved in. Queen Victoria opened the palace to the public in 1838. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, started Hampton Court Palace's transformation from ordinary country house to magnificent palace. Wolsey wanted to create a grand building where he could host not only the King and the royal court but also monarchs from across Europe. Investing huge sums of money, he created a palace fit for the King. Wolsey was so successful in his work that Henry eventually took Hampton Court for himself. By the 1530s,

Henry VIII's Hampton Court was a palace, a hotel, a theatre and a vast leisure complex. The King used it to demonstrate magnificence and power in every possible way, through lavish banquets, extravagant court life and fabulously expensive art. In addition to Henry's state and private apartments, where he slept, ate and relaxed, and the queen's private apartments, the palace contained accommodation for courtiers. The style depended on the status of the occupant, but again, were intended to impress.

Monarchs and their gardeners have all influenced the gardens in different ways. In the early 1500s Thomas Wolsey laid out the first small knot gardens, before Henry VIII took over the palace, strutting through his heraldic privy (private) garden and hunting deer in nearby Bushy Park. From Charles II's elegant Long Water, to William III and Mary II's fine baroque gardens, including the Maze, to dazzling displays of Victorian mass bedding

'The Great Fountain Garden' William III and Mary II (1689-1702) created the Great Fountain Garden on the East Front to complement their elegant new baroque palace. Their gardener, Daniel Marot, created a garden containing 13 fountains and planted two radiating avenues of Yew trees in the fashionable form of a goose foot. After being opened to the public on the orders of Queen Victoria in 1838 'The Privy Garden', meaning private garden, was created to allow a quiet space for the monarch's exclusive use. Henry VIII designed his as a heraldic garden; later, art collector Charles I created a simple Italianate style garden in which to display his classical statues. Bordering the Privy Garden at the river's edge is the magnificent Tjouw Screen, designed by French master blacksmith, Jean Tijou in 1690 and a copy of the statue of Apollo Gazing at the Sun.

'The Pond Garden' - This part of the gardens was once a medieval fish farm, as its rather odd name suggests. The drained, south-facing walled compartments provided shelter for tender exotic plants, particularly those collected by Mary II from all over the world. The English traveller Celia Fiennes visiting the palace in 1691 described seeing 'fine aloes, paricantha, myrtles, oranges and oliantas'.

‘The Great Vine’ at the end of the Pond Garden is a glass house containing the world-famous Great Vine, thought to be the oldest (and largest) in the world. This is a Black Hamburg eating variety, planted in 1768 by Lancelot Capability Brown.

Until 1920, the grapes grown here were exclusively for the royal table; now the delicious ripe grapes are harvested daily in September and sold to visitors.

‘The Royal Kitchen Garden’ in William III’s time, the area of Henry VIII’s old Tiltyard (where the restaurant and Magic Garden are today) was given over to six walled gardens growing food for the royal table. Following Queen Victoria’s opening of Hampton Court to the public, it was decided to devote the space to visitor enjoyment, eventually becoming a showy herbaceous garden. The Royal Kitchen Garden today, which replaced the herbaceous garden, recreates William III’s walled garden. A fascinating (and tasty) selection of old varieties of fruit and vegetables are grown, and in summer, fresh produce is on sale to visitors once a week.

‘The Rose Garden’ as part of the changes to the old kitchen gardens in the early 20th century, one of the walled compartments between the café and the barracks yards was laid out informally as a rose garden. It was planted with old English scented roses to delight visitors. Ten years later it was rearranged into the geometric pattern that exists today, and hybrid roses planted. However, many of the lovely old varieties, with their heady scent, have been re-introduced in the Rose Garden. The statues of Flora and Adonis moved in with Abundance (shown) in 1995, after they were evicted from the restored Privy Garden.

‘The Maze’ the famous Maze is situated to the north of the palace, in the Wilderness area of the gardens. Its precise origins are as lost as the people in it. But it is most likely to have been made for William III in the last years of his reign and completed by Queen Anne’s gardener, Henry Wise. The Maze features in a popular Victorian novel by Jerome K Jerome, ‘Three Men in a Boat’. The author describes a visit by his hero Harris to the Maze, where Harris underestimates the difficulty of solving the puzzle. He and his two friends get hopelessly lost and have to be rescued. When the gardens were thrown open to the public in 1838 the Maze became one of the most popular parts of a day out at the palace, as it remains today!

After our touring of Hampton Court, we travel on toward London, arriving at our well-located hotel early this evening.

31st of August: London: Accommodations: *The Clermont, Charing Cross*. Londinium was established as a civilian town by the Romans about four years after the invasion of 43 AD. London, like Rome, was founded on the point of the river where it was narrow enough to bridge and the strategic location of the city provided easy access to much of Europe. Historically, London grew from three distinct centers: the walled settlement founded by the Romans on the banks of the Thames in the 1st century ce, today known as the City of London, “the Square Mile,” or simply “the City”; facing it across the bridge

on the lower gravels of the south bank, the suburb of [Southwark](#); and a mile upstream, on a great southward bend of the river, the City of Westminster.

London, the capital of England and the United Kingdom, is a 21st-century city with history stretching back to Roman times. At its centre stand the imposing Houses of Parliament, the iconic 'Big Ben' clock tower and Westminster Abbey, site of British monarch coronations. Across the Thames River, the London Eye observation wheel provides panoramic views of the South Bank cultural complex, and the entire city.

Today we discover London, a city that fits nearly every descriptor available: historic yet modern, artistic yet financial, sprawling yet walkable, cluttered yet beautiful. Our morning tour today by coach passes a succession of celebrated London landmarks, including the infamous 'Tower of London', the thousand-year-old castle which has served as everything from a prison to a royal residence; grand Parliament and 'Big Ben', perhaps the world's most famous clock tower; 'Royal Buckingham Palace', for more than 170 years the residence of British monarchs; 'Westminster Abbey', site of royal weddings and nearly every English coronation since 1066; and lovely 'Hyde Park'.

We all got out of the coach and walked to 'The Mall' a ceremonial route and roadway in the City of Westminster, central London, that travels 1 kilometre (0.62 mi) between Buckingham Palace at its western end and Trafalgar Square via Admiralty Arch to the east. We all stopped to look at 'Buckingham Palace' a royal residence in London, and the administrative headquarters of the monarch of the United Kingdom. Located in the City of Westminster, the palace is often at the centre of state occasions and royal hospitality. Here we had a group photo taken by the guide.

We left the group and took off on our own to 'The Cathedral Church of St. Paul', formally the Cathedral Church of St Paul the Apostle, is an Anglican cathedral in London, England, the seat of the Bishop of London. The cathedral serves as the mother church of the Diocese of London. It is on Ludgate Hill at the highest point of the City of London. The cathedral can comfortably accommodate up to 3500 guests at one time. The imposing architecture of the building and the stunning views from its dome are must-see attractions in London. The damage caused by the North Transept bomb in 1941 was even more significant. After crashing through the roof, it detonated in mid-air, rocking the Dome, pushing the south wall of the South Transept outwards and smashing every window. The royal wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer took place on 29 July 1981 at St Paul's Cathedral in London. The day was declared a national holiday in the UK.

The Exterior: 'The Ball and Lantern': The golden ball and lantern crowning the dome of St Paul's Cathedral are striking architectural features, adding to its majestic silhouette. With a cross atop, the ball stands 23 feet tall and weighs 7 tons. Though not accessible to the public, they imbue the cathedral with grandeur. Roosted at the dome's peak, the lantern provides an awe-inspiring view, elevating the cathedral's iconic status in London's skyline.

The Interior: Beneath the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, you'll encounter a captivating sight. Supported by eight sturdy arches, the expansive dome boasts towering paintings depicting scenes from St. Paul's life. These intricate artworks, spanning over 6,000 square feet, infuse the space with grandeur and narrative richness. Natural light pours in through the oculus, illuminating the paintings and enveloping the whole space with a dreamy aura.

We got tickets to climb to the top of the dome. The three-domed construction of St Paul's Cathedral is unique. To see all the galleries in the dome, you must climb 528 steps. There is no elevator or lift access to the dome. Although this number is quite large, the climb to the top of the dome allows you to see the gorgeous skyline of London.

Inside the Dome: 'The Whispering Gallery'

The Whispering Gallery is the cathedral's standout attraction. It is a circular promenade 30m above the ground that hugs the dome's base and provides a dizzying view of the cathedral floor far below. The unique design of this gallery can carry the tiniest of sounds anywhere within. Whisper along the curved wall, and someone can hear you from elsewhere along the same wall, even on the opposite side!

'The Stone Gallery'

Ascend 259 steps to reach the Stone Gallery, a stunning vantage point 30m above ground level. Enclosed by a balustraded balcony, this gallery offers unparalleled panoramic views of London and the cathedral floor. Adorned with alternating pilasters and rectangular windows, it exudes an airy ambiance, providing a captivating perspective of the city's skyline and the cathedral's architectural grandeur.

'The Golden Gallery'

Perched atop St Paul's dome, the Golden Gallery offers panoramic views of London, with views of Blackfriars Bridge, the Faraday Building, the Southbank Tower, the London Eye, and The Shard after a 528-step climb. Its exterior, adorned with gold leaf, glistens in sunlight. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren and completed in 1708, it boasts eight robust pillars of Portland stone, ensuring stability.

Took an uber to take us to 'Hard Rock Café' Piccadilly Circus for lunch to celebrate my girlfriends birthday. Looked at the displays and shop and left. Took another uber to take us to 'Abbey Road Studios' located on 3 Abbey Road, London. Abbey Road Studios is a music recording studio at 3 Abbey Road, St John's Wood, City of Westminster, London. It was established in November 1931 by the Gramophone Company, a predecessor of British music company EMI, which owned it until Universal Music Group took control of part of it in 2013.

Music reveals itself in our house. For 93 years we've welcomed the artists who have shaped music and popular culture. From the greats - The Beatles, Fela Kuti, Pink Floyd,

Kate Bush, Yehudi Menuhin, Massive Attack, Amy Winehouse, Oasis, Nick Cave, Stevie Wonder and Shirley Bassey, to the legends of today - Lady Gaga, Little Simz, The Smile, Florence, Dave, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Frank Ocean, Ezra Collective, Sam Smith, Morgan Wallen and Stormzy.

Studio Three has long been a home for ground-breaking music: The Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows*, George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, The Zombies' *Odessey and Oracle*, Syd Barrett's *The Madcap Laughs*, Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of The Moon*, Deep Purple's *In Rock*, Ravi Shankar and Yehudi Menuhin's *East Meets West*, Donovan's *Sunshine Superman*, Fela Kuti's *Afrodisiac*, Radiohead's *The Bends*, Florence + The Machine's *Ceremonials*, Amy Winehouse and Tony Bennett's *Body and Soul*, Lady Gaga's *Born This Way*, Frank Ocean's *Blond* and Brockhampton's *Iridescence*. Creatively unleashed and then artfully captured within its walls. We can't underplay the importance of The Beatles and their impact on our house. They recorded 190 of their 210 songs here between 1962-1970, working with Parlophone Records producer George Martin. Before naming their last album after the street they'd spent the better part of a decade at, The Beatles changed our culture forever. The strict three-hour session times turned into all-nighters, the technical engineers' formal white coats disappeared, and both the engineers and artists pushed experimentation and creativity to the limits.

We went here to try and get a photo of Mike and I and our friends Jeanette and Walt reenacting the album cover for *Abbey Road* by 'The Beatles' showing the band members walking across the Abbey Road zebra crossing in London. The cover is one of the most famous album covers of all time. People were arriving at the site to do the same thing, some people taking off their shoes to replicate what Paul McCartney being barefoot on the cover. I asked a person at the site if he would use my camera to get the shot. He was patient as it took several shots to get it right. We were too eager to walk fast crossing the street and did not stay in line. Finally we got it right. You had to stop and freeze a second in the position of walking across the street to get the stunt right. Drivers are sometimes not patient for fans doing the stunt.

Abbey Road Studios has a webcam pointed at the famed crosswalk and you can watch 24/7 as Beatles fans hold up traffic by making their way across the road. You can see the crossing live on EarthCam.com. One live cam showed a man in a submarine suit and real penguins crossing the road. On August 8, 1969, photographer Iain Macmillan took the photo. Paul McCartney sketched the idea for the cover. A police officer stopped traffic while the Beatles walked across the crossing. Macmillan used a stepladder to get the right angle. Macmillan took six photos, and the fifth one was chosen for the cover. According to designer John Kosh, "The reason Paul he kicked his shoes off was because they were too tight". On the 8th of August 1969 it was a particularly sunny day and Macca lived around the corner in St John's Wood, so he strolled around to the studios wearing sandals. For a classic McCartney prank, he crossed the road a couple of times without the footwear - it had nothing to do with being a "clue" that Paul McCartney had died. The white Volkswagen Beetles that bears a number plate saying "**28IF**" - Paul would have been 28 *IF* he'd had survived (he'd actually just turned 27); the police van on the cover is

usually seen at traffic fatalities; and the four Beatles represent a funeral procession: George is the gravedigger, Paul is the corpse, Ringo is the congregation and John is the priest.

We had a good time Abbey Road Studios', went inside the Abbey Road Shop and took some time to write messages on the graffiti walls outside Abbey Road Studios. To maintain the appearance of the building, the wall is painted over on a consistent schedule, usually every few months. Returned to our hotel in time for the tours farewell dinner.

1st September: Post-tour Extension London on your own. Accommodations: *The Clermont, Charing Cross*. In front of the hotel was 'The Queen Eleanor Memorial Cross' a memorial to Eleanor of Castile erected in the forecourt of Charing Cross railway station, London, in 1864–1865. It is a fanciful reconstruction of the medieval Eleanor cross at Charing, one of twelve memorial crosses erected by Edward I of England in memory of his first wife. The Spire's slender form is intended to symbolise Dublin's aspirations for the future and its commitment to innovation and unity.

We all got in a taxi to queue in line to enter 'The Tower of London', built in the 1070s. The Tower of London's history spans almost a thousand years, but London's castle can still fascinate and horrify. When William the Conqueror built this mighty stone tower at the centre of his London fortress, defeated medieval Londoners must have looked on in awe. As protector of the Crown Jewels, home of the Yeomen Warders and its legendary guardians, the pampered ravens, the Tower now attracts over three million visitors a year. Here, the Ceremony of the Keys and other traditions live on, as do the ghost stories and terrible tales of torture and execution. Throughout history, the Tower has also been a visible symbol of awe and fear. Kings and queens imprisoned their rivals and enemies within its walls. The stories of prisoners, rich and poor, still haunt the Tower. But the Tower also has a richer and more complex history, having been home to a wide array of institutions including the Royal Mint, the Royal Armouries and even a zoo. As the most secure castle in the land, the Tower guarded royal possessions and even the royal family in times of war and rebellion. But for 500 years monarchs also used the Tower as a surprisingly luxurious palace.

We explored the grounds and went inside the buildings and towers. Mike and I have been here before but liked seeing it again especially the crown jewels, Ravens, Yeomen Warders, Royal Armouries, Royal Guards and the Chapel Royal of St. Peter AD Vincula, White Tower and St. Johns Chapel. Throughout history, the Tower has been adapted and developed to defend and control the nation. Henry III (1216-72) and Edward I (1272-1307) expanded William's fortress, adding huge 'curtain' (defensive) walls with a series of smaller towers, and enlarging the moat. In 1240, Henry III had the Tower's great keep painted white, making it the White Tower. They also transformed the Tower into England's largest and strongest 'concentric' castle (with one ring of defenses inside another). Inside, the kings built a magnificent medieval palace.

We then had tickets to visit the 'Tower Bridge' a Grade I listed combined bascule, suspension, and, until 1960, cantilever bridge in London, built between 1886 and 1894,

designed by Horace Jones and engineered by John Wolfe Barry with the help of Henry Marc Brunel. It took eight years, five major contractors and the relentless labor of 432 construction workers each day to build Tower Bridge under the watchful eye of Sir John Wolfe Barry. Two massive piers were built on foundations sunk into the riverbed to support the construction, and over 11,000 tons of steel provided the framework for the Towers and Walkways. This framework was clad in Cornish Granite and Portland Stone to protect the underlying steelwork and to give the Bridge a more pleasing appearance. When it was built, Tower Bridge was the largest and most sophisticated bascule bridge ever completed ('bascule' comes from the French word for 'seesaw'). These bascules were operated by hydraulics, using steam to power the enormous pumping engines. Today, the bascules are still operated by hydraulic power, but since 1976 they have been driven by oil and electricity rather than steam. The original pumping engines, accumulators and boilers are now on display within the Bridge's Engine Rooms. In 2012 Playing a focal point in the London Olympics, this year saw the Olympic rings suspended from the Walkways, and James Bond and 'the Queen' fly through in a helicopter during the Opening Ceremony.

We loved the glass floors in the high-level walkways. The Glass Floors at Tower Bridge were installed in November and December 2014, 10 years ago. Since they were fitted, more than 7,258,000 visitors have walked across them. And, as one of London's only pet-friendly major attractions, more than 4,500 dogs, cats and other animals have also tip-tapped across the glass. The panels are comprised of five layers, 70mm thick in total. The top layer (also called 'the sacrificial layer') is replaced regularly to ensure visitors get the best views. Each panel can bear the weight of one elephant or two London Black Cabs.

We left and walked across the 'Tower Bridge' street level to hail a taxi to 'Covent Gardens'. A shopping and entertainment hub in London's West End, Covent Garden centres on the elegant, car-free Piazza, home to fashion stores, craft stalls at the Apple Market, and the Royal Opera House. Street entertainers perform by 17th-century St. Paul's Church, and the London Transport Museum houses vintage vehicles. Upscale restaurants serve European cuisines, and nearby theatres draw crowds for plays and musicals. The area was originally fields owned by Westminster Abbey. The first historical record of Covent Garden dates back to 1200, when it consisted of fields. Owned by Westminster Abbey, the land where the Market Building and the Piazza now stand was referred to as 'the garden of the Abbey and Convent', hence its name.

Returned to our hotel and had dinner that night at L'Ulivo Charing Cross – Italian Restaurant on 23 Villers St., near our hotel.

2nd September: Our last full day in London on our own we head to Westminster Abbey. The Collegiate Church of Saint Peter at Westminster, informally known as Westminster Abbey, is an Anglican church in the City of Westminster.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries: Once you are inside Westminster Abbey you can head up the Weston Tower to view the items on display. The exhibits include a set of life-size effigies of English and British monarchs and their consorts, originally made to lie on

the coffin in the funeral procession or to be displayed over the tomb. The effigies date from the 14th to the 18th centuries, and some include original clothes.

We had tickets for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries. We wanted to get to the top of the tower with less people in the gallery so we got in line early and took the lift up to the gallery.

Mike wanted to find some famous people buried in Westminster Cathedral. We located Charles Darwin, Stephen Hawking, Sir Isaac Newton, and others. At Poet's Corner more than 100 poets and writers are buried or have memorials here. The most notable example is Geoffrey Chaucer, author of *The Canterbury Tales*, who was buried there in 1400. William Shakespeare was commemorated with a monument in 1740, over a century after his death. Memorials for Jane Austen (1775-1817), Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), Charles Dickens (1823-1870), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) and Robert Southey (1774-1843).

My search was for the baptismal font. We found it in the Henry VII chapel, and it has a nice carved wooden cover.

Headed towards 'Big Ben'. Big Ben is the nickname for the Great Bell of the Great Clock of Westminster, and, by extension, for the clock tower itself, which stands at the north end of the Palace of Westminster in London. Wanted to climb inside Big Ben was tickets were sold out long before our trip to London. The first is that it was named after Sir Benjamin Hall, the first commissioner of works, a large man who was known affectionately in the house as "Big Ben". The second theory is that it was named after a heavyweight boxing champion at that time, Benjamin Caunt. Big Ben is probably the world's most famous clock. That iconic silhouette is instantly recognisable and is one of the most Instagrammed landmarks on the planet. Six monarchs and 41 prime ministers have come and gone since the bells first struck their now familiar music across Westminster.

Had lunch across the street from 'Big Ben' called St. Stephen's Tavern, part of The Hall & Woodhouse Family.

Took a taxi to Harrods a British luxury department store located on Brompton Road in Knightsbridge, London, England. It is owned by Harrods Ltd, a company currently owned by the state of Qatar via its sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority. Harrods is a luxury department store in London, England. It was founded in 1849 by Charles Henry Harrod as a grocery store. The store has expanded over the years, adding new departments, services, and locations. Opened by Charles Henry Harrod, an East End grocer and tea merchant, in 1834, relocating to Knightsbridge in 1849, our store is recognized globally as a symbol of excellence. Some interesting facts: Approximately 100,000 people shop at Harrods every day. During Christmas this number can be in excess of 300,000. At night Harrods is lit by 12,000 light bulbs on the store's façade.

Jeanette and I left the guys at Harrod's Food Hall at The Coffee Bar & Bakery so we could go shopping. We ran around looking at all kinds of wares. Returning to The Coffee Bar we traveled through Chocolate Hall, Roastery & Bake Hall, Market Hall even a fancy hall with fresh butlery meats, cheeses, deli and salads for sale. Picked up the guys and stormed the Patisserie cases. Calling on the very finest ingredients – Madagascan vanilla, grand cru chocolate, exotic fruits, Chantilly cream and more – our chefs create delicious creations, including the ever-tempting Paris-Brest, Chocolate Bar and Mille-feuille.

Back to the hotel and our last dinner at Champagne Charlie's at 17 Villers St., London. Cellar-style bar, part of the Davy's group, offering wine by the glass, carafe or bottle. What is champagne Charlie? Charles Heidsieck (1820–1871), French Champagne wine merchant who was originally called "Champagne Charlie" George Leybourne (1842–1884), introduced the song "Champagne Charlie" to the London music hall, and was himself thereafter often referred to as "Champagne Charlie". Tucked away beneath the arches of Charing Cross, Champagne Charlies has become a popular local institution for wining, dining and entertaining. The brick-lined vaults of Champagne Charlies offers a welcome refuge from the hustle and bustle of the West End. The wood paneling, exposed brick, intimate alcoves and candlelit tables make for a cosy atmosphere. We had a private room for our group. I had been contacting a mutual friend of ours Nancy and her brother to dine with us that evening. They were vacationing in London same time as us. I wanted to surprise Jeanette for her birthday time on this epic vacation. Had a good dinner and conversations about our trip and theirs.

All things must come to an end..... memories to reflect on when we get home. **HOMEWARD BOUND.** Embrace the end of a journey for it means another awaits.