

Friendship Force of Louisville  
Exchange to Bristol, England & Second Week Tour  
September 12-26, 2009

*These travel diary entries are the full texts prepared by each Ambassador on the exchange. Readers will welcome the many interesting details, the generous humor, and the unique viewpoints of each member of the exchange.*

*Ambassadors also received another printed version of this diary with photos – one page per day of travel. In many cases, this printed text was shortened from the original text to make space for the photos.*

*We are very grateful to all the Ambassadors for creating such a wonderful memory of our journey to England.*

*John and Jeannie Vezeau  
Exchange Directors*

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**Saturday, September 12, 2009**

**-- Jeannie and John Vezeau**

"Our bags are packed, we're ready to go; . . ."

Actually, by now our bags — and we — have been through security, we're all at the airport, and we'll soon be off on our two-week excursion to "The Heart of England."

To the two of us, it's almost unreal. We've been working and planning, researching and meeting, emailing and phoning for more than a year, getting ready for this exchange.

We've all studied our language cheat sheets (boot means trunk, gammon is ham, chips are french fries, and biscuits are cookies; OK, got it). And we've even experienced some tastes of England at our workshop.

Now we're all ready and excited, knowing that our discovery of new friends and new places is about to begin.

But first — we recruit a woman to take our group photo, a woman who turns out to be a mixture of Ellen DeGeneres and General Patton. We obey her orders, laugh a lot, and our photos come out great.

The small plane taking us to Detroit is on time. We settle into our seats for this, the first leg of our journey. Seat belts buckled, trays in their upright and locked positions, and we're off!

We arrive in Detroit right on schedule. There's a bit of a walk to get to our next flight — part of it through the Detroit airport's unusual and wildly colorful tunnel that takes us to the International gate area. We settle down for our four-hour wait. Some folks volunteer to watch bags while others get something to eat. A few returned, so Mary Rose and Terry grab their backpacks and go find a TV; there's a Michigan game on, you see.

Chris returns from his lunch, stands by the collection of bags, and a funny expression crosses his face. "Say! Where's my backpack." A frantic search — but it doesn't turn up.

We suggest that the only backpacks that left were with the Smiths. A-ha! Two minutes later, Chris returns — with his backpack, reporting that Terry says he picked it up by mistake. Poor Terry. Not many people believe it was a mistake — and the teasing doesn't stop for a while.

Meanwhile, we'd been missing Margaret, Jean, Karen H., and Karen F., but figured they'd stopped to eat. Well, they had . . . because just after most of us got to the "B" gate area, a security alarm sounded and everyone was stopped from entering the gate area. Our four had been cut off from the rest of us. So, they made the best of it — and had lunch.

But, no worries. Eventually everyone gathers at the gate in plenty of time to board our flight to Heathrow — all of us with our correct backpacks and carry-ons.

Seat belts on, trays upright and locked, and we were off! Yea!

**Sunday, September 13, 2009**

**-- Sandy Broderick**

Our first day in England began when our Northwest flight set down at Heathrow Airport outside London.

We were tired after the seven-hour flight from Detroit, but happy that not only we arrived safely but our luggage did too. After about a half-hour wait for our coach, we set out for Salisbury. In Europe long-distance transports are called coaches and local ones are called buses. Many people dozed, but those of us who were awake enjoyed the tranquil countryside. There were fields filled with sheep, cows, or horses. We also passed an exceptionally clean looking pig farm. Just before Salisbury, we saw the ruins of a Saxon fort called Old Sarum.

Upon arrival in Salisbury, several ladies decided to stop in the public toilets in the car park where the coach stopped. In there they made an awesome discovery, hand washing machines mounted on the wall that dispensed soap, water, and hot air all at the push of a button. The machines looked little like a drinking fountain. So excited were they to share their discovery they smuggled the men in to see it.

After this journey into British technology, we made our way along a lovely stream to look for a place to have lunch. Several of us visited our first pub, The Kings Head Inn, to sample pub food and drink.

On the way to the cathedral we took pictures of the beautiful flowers found everywhere along the way. Also saw the local police doing their duty. They were escorting some young people in handcuffs. Have no idea what the crime was.

At the cathedral more pictures were taken of the exterior. Of course there was the usual scaffolding one sees throughout Europe. It tests your skill with a camera. Inside pictures were allowed until we got to the room where a copy of the Magna Carta was on display. Photographing the document was not permitted. Also on display was a map of Virginia drawn by John Smith of Pocahontas fame.

We again boarded our coach and headed for Bristol. At 5:00 p.m., exactly on time, our coach pulled into the parking lot of Sainsbury, a large English supermarket. Our host families were waiting for us. We loaded our too big bags into their too small cars and headed for our homes away from home for the first week.

**Monday, September 14, 2009**

**-- Karen Foreman**

We all met at 10:30 at Queen Square for our first venture. Sitting in this grassy square was an unattended piano—brown with pink and yellow polka dots. Mary Lou and Pete played for us. Pete played “My Country Tis of Thee,” which I believe is also the tune to “God Save the Queen.”

We were fortunate to have June, a FF member from the Bristol Club, as our tour guide for the walking tour of the town of Bristol. She is a retired tour guide and did a great guide. She described herself as a “charming bully” when it came to keeping the group together.

St Augustine arrived to set up a monastery in Bristol. It was the second port of importance in England because of its geographical location. When William the Conqueror came in the 11th Century, he built the Bristol Castle. Oliver Cromwell knocked it down during the Civil War in 1645. It became a very important trading port, but was known mostly for its slave trade. They took beads, etc. to West Africa, brought slaves to America and brought back rum, sugar, molasses, cotton and cocoa to England. Those became the major industries of Bristol. Today there is a large chocolate factory here (Cadbury) and a tobacco center which is not doing well. (Cadbury is moving to Poland, but there’s talk that Kraft might buy it, and they hope they might keep it in Bristol.) Bristol has lost several of their industries and has since become a financial center.

We then proceeded to St Augustine’s Reef. The canal was expanded in 1232 by men digging the canal by hand. They had enough room to dock 1,000 boats. Some of the walls are built from tombstones. In 1597 John Cabot gave New Foundland to Henry VII. There is a beautiful statue of him here, but no one really knows what he looked like. Back then the artists did not try to make statues to their likeness.

A new course was built for the River Avon in 1709 so there is no tidal effect. The boats could float 24 hours a day. They had to cement one of these gates during WWII because, had it been bombed, it would have flooded the city. The warehouses along the harbor have become town houses and sell for about a half million dollars. Along the marina was a large general hospital that is now an oncology hospital. It was built by merchants on the condition that the first two floors would be warehouses. It’s a beautiful building.

The Ostrich was a pub known for its smuggling. Customs men were called “customers.” A lot of these customers were smugglers themselves. When the police came, The Ostrich had a tunnel where they could hide their goods. We strolled along the Phoenix Wharf, which was once called Alfred Wharf because King Alfred supposedly hid here. Bristol was once a glass manufacturing town. They scraped the rock walls for their sand to make the glass.

Banksy is a graffiti artist. He wears a mask, and nobody knows who he is. He is very quirky, but the people love him. He works very fast, often at night, and has done some work around the marina area and all over Bristol.

The Bristol Bridge was in another area of the harbor. It was made of wood and encased in stone. Before it was bombed in the war it had 30 stores and a chapel around it. At one time half of a house was built on the bridge, and the other half was built on a cantilever that extended

over the water. It was very drafty; and if there were winds, the sailboats' bows would come right into the house if it couldn't stop.

Six churches were built into the city wall. Originally the St Nicholas bell rang at 9:15 p.m., and at 9:30 the gates of the city went down. The church bell governed everything. St Mary Redcliff Church started in 1180 as a shrine for seamen to ask for a blessing going away on a journey and to give thanks after a trip. The queen came in 1582 and said it was the "fairest and most magnificent church in all of England." It was never destroyed in the war but some shrapnel from a missile flew over the church. Bristol suffered very badly in the war and lost all of their medieval buildings. Rebuilding has not been very good.

We then went to a pub called The Hole in the Wall. In 1771 when the king wanted a bigger navy, he had gangs that were called press gangs who would capture guys to take into the Navy. They would bang you on the head, take you through a tunnel and onto the boat. There was a window in the pub where someone looked for the press gang so the men could run.

Up until the 1950s, Bristol's dock was a working dock. You couldn't have walked around where we were at all because of all the ships docking, trading, etc. Bristol is six miles from the sea. There is a winding river (the Avon) where containerization shipping takes place. At times there might be as many as 1,000 cars on the dock that have been shipped in from Japan. They may get one or two cruise ships a year.

The clock with three hands is at the true center of Bristol. There was an eight-minute difference in its time and the time of London 120 miles away. This didn't matter in the days of the stagecoach but was a problem with train schedules, so it was changed to Greenwich time.

Everyone went with their hosts for lunch. We ate at Wetherby's Pub where they had a huge compass over the bar. This was put there for the shippers so they could meet here and watch the way the wind blew to help them know when the ships would be arriving.

After lunch we met at the Mansion House to meet the Lord Mayor, Counselor Christopher Davis. Bristol had its first mayor in 1215. Queen Victoria bestowed the position of Lord Mayor in 1899. They have three coaches and carriages and a police guard. The Lord Mayor said he had his first encounter with Friendship Force last year with another English group. He congratulated us on being part of a group "that transcends religious, racial and social barriers" and then summarized the history of Bristol. John and Jeannie presented him with a proclamation from Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson, a gift from Louisville Pottery and a lapel pin. LM David was most gracious with his time in letting all of us get individual pictures with him.

The Lord Mayor's Assistant then gave us a tour of the mansion's first floor. A wealthy British merchant named Proctor sold the house and all of its furniture to the city in 1874. Previously, there had been many houses, but this was the final one. The city paid 4500 pounds for the house and another 4500 for the furniture.

We were shown a silver platter called a salver. It was a round platter used under a bowl to catch water from washing hands. Mr J. M. Iver stole the silver platter dated 1537 and cut it into 167 pieces. A jeweler recognized the pieces and Iver was arrested and sent to Australia for 12 years. A jeweler riveted all of the pieces together and covered it with silver. It is now worth more than a quarter of a million pounds.

There were pictures in the Drawing Room by Charles Branwhite and Thomas Danby, Bristol's famous painter in 1886. The Drawing Room was originally the "withdrawing room" because the women were asked to withdraw while the men smoked their cigars. The dining room table was being set for 34 people who were coming to lunch the next day. The table can actually be extended to serve more if needed. The Dining Room housed a painting of Henry Kreuger by Gilbert Stewart. He also did the painting of George Washington, and the portraits look very similar. Henry Kreuger was an American, a Master of the Merchant Ventures Guild, the Mayor of Bristol, a Member of Parliament for Bristol and a senator of New York. His family is still in banking in NY and surrounding areas.

Our day host then took us to an exquisite little area called Blaize Hamlet. It was a large estate owned by the Hareford family who were Quakers. The owner was very interested in the welfare of his employees, so he built these houses for them when they retired. There are ten beautiful cottages plus the owner's home. This was in 1809. The area is now owned by the Bristol Council, and the cottages are rented out. The public can walk around the grounds but can't knock on the doors or disturb the people. These houses have the most beautiful chimneys. They are all different and quite a work of art.

Our day host joined us for dinner this evening. He was an aeronautical engineer and had worked on the Concorde. He was telling us about the A380, which is presently the newest and largest airplane. It is an endeavor combining efforts from Germany, France, England and Italy. The planes are double-deckers that hold 600 people. Our 747's carry 380-400 people. Bristol makes the wings and Rolls Royce makes the engines. They are then sent to Germany where the fuselage is made. Italy makes the tail, and they are assembled in France. These planes are flying into Britain now. They have a bar, sports room, etc. They have been flying in the Far East for about a year.

We had a wonderful day—so interesting, and such nice people showing us their city.

**Tuesday September 15, 2009**

**-- Alice and George Moore**

Leaving our host's home in Keynsham for a day with our host, we headed out in the countryside through county of Somerset to the farm of Harold and Shirley Lukins in Wedmore. Picture our travels through the country with privet hedges or shrubs, windmills, flocks of sheep, and Holstein Friesian Cows. After several stops to ask directions, we reached the Lukins Yew Tree Farm.

During our travel to the farm our host explained the "Morris Dancers." Morris Dancers is a form of English folk dance usually accompanied by music. It is based on rhythmic stepping and the execution of choreographed figures by a group of dancers. Implements such as sticks, swords, and handkerchiefs may also be wielded by the dancers. In the modern day, it is commonly thought of as a uniquely English activity, although there are around 150 Morris sides (teams) in the US.

When we arrived for the farm tour, Shirley very hospitably welcomed us with coffee and biscuits. She had an unusual and large collection of teapots. After conversation and a home tour of their 100 year old home, we drove to the farm area.

The Lukins farm has about 400 acres. Harold has 600 head of beef and dairy cows with a nice milking parlor—16 stalls on each side. They milk about 180 cows. After seeing the milking parlor, we toured the area where baby calves were raised. He left calves on Mamas for 4-5 days then put them on automatic bottles to finish raising them. Stalls were clean and dry with 4-5 calves in each 12'x12' stall. Calves were grouped by age; then started on small amounts of grain.

We continued to the area where cows were fed after milking which also provided a place to keep the cows at night. He mixed grass silage, potatoes, minerals and grain mixture in a big mixer wagon for feed to get the protein up to 18%. They cut the grass 1-2" in length giving cows more fiber to control displacement of the abomasum. The ration was fed to the cows twice a day. We then toured the area where silage was stored in a bunker silo under roof to help control mud and waste.

The Lukins Farm raises grass and cut its own silage. They hire someone to roll hay. After seeing the farm operation, we discussed costs and how they compare with farms in US. Farmers in both countries are in a bind these days to make a living on the farm.

CIDER! Somerset offers many opportunities to sample this fine West Country drink. There are plenty of small farms who will sell you Scrumpy Cider. Most pubs also serve proper Farmhouse Cider, especially out in the countryside. Some of it can be very strong so watch out. We sampled a very small amount of Scrumpy at our Pub lunch stop - "The Red Lion."

Next Stop - Cheddar Caves and Gorge, Britain's largest Gorge. The Gorge Cliffs are three miles long and Britain's highest inland limestone cliffs at 450 feet. The Gorge is a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of the calcareous grassland, Karst limestone butt the cliff face and Soay Sheep keep the scrub in check. We saw an example of 50 British primitives, the original breed of goat from Neolithic times on the cliffs. Rare bats, dormice, water voles, and Peregrine Falcons also live here today.

Cheddar, both the Village and the Gorge today provides both shopping and leisure opportunities for all ages. Cheddar is of course famous for cheese. We sampled several types of the cheese. Near Cheddar is skiing without snow. Also, Axbridge is famous for growing strawberries. You can find many strawberries around the area during the season.

We visited Bristol Blue Glass Factory, a stone's throw from banks of River Avon. It is world famous. The glass was first made during the seventeenth century and is famous for its stunning color and for the quality and beauty of the glass. They also make Bristol Ruby Glass. To be genuine, it must be freeblown in Bristol.

We ended the day attending the Welcome Barbecue at Sylvia and Peter Dando's. The barbecue was held in their lovely backyard with a wonderful assortment of barbecue chicken, sausages and other foods. Welcome was given by Bob Ross of the Bristol FF Club and John Vezeau, Co-ED of our Bristol Exchange.

**Wednesday, September 16, 2009**

**-- Margaret Clark**

We met at the fountain in the market square in Wells for a welcome by Wells Town Crier. Rosemary's group got caught up in traffic, and the Town Crier repeated his "cry" of welcome to the Friendship Force of Louisville, Kentucky. Many of us got our photo taken with him.

Anyone who visits Wells cannot but be impressed by the sheer size and beauty of the Cathedral! Nearby was the Vicars' Close, claimed to be the oldest purely residential street with its original buildings all surviving intact in Europe. It is called "that rarest of survivals, a planned street of the mid-14th century". We enjoyed shopping in the weekly market. I took some beautiful strawberries home to Audry.

We were day-hosted by Margo Cevik, who later took us to Glastonbury Tor to see the Abbey which contains 2000 years of Christian history. On returning to Thornbury, our hosts the Greens served a great salmon dinner with Margo and Rose Duke attending.

**Thursday, September 17, 2009**

**-- Jean Schnell**

Margaret Clark and Jean Schnell were staying in Thornberry, a suburban town about 15 miles out from Bristol in South Gloucestershire. Our hosts, Audrey and John Green chose this area for their retirement. John had grown up in the Bristol area, and Audrey was from London. It is an old cattle market town that is known for good primary and secondary schools, lots of churches, pubs, and many restaurants. These amenities plus free downtown parking have attracted many couples with young children. Audrey, Jean and Margaret walked the few short blocks to the downtown shopping district. As we walked around with Audrey, it was good to see how friendly and welcoming everyone was.

Audrey and John are “pensioners” and as such have many benefits. One such benefit was a Community Room in the downtown Council Chamber. Here they meet with other seniors to chat or have a cup of tea. They take turns manning the room about once a month. Audrey enjoyed introducing us, her American guests, to her friends and neighbors. Later as we walked around the open market we were able to see these villagers as they live everyday. We visited the greengrocer whom Audrey frequents. In fact, they call in an order twice a week, then the greengrocer delivers that night and puts the groceries away. Next we went down “Medieval Lane” filled with antiques and crafts, where we saw a man repairing a clock. We walked to Thornberry Castle, which is now a 5-star hotel. We didn’t go in, but as we visited the town everyone asked us if we were staying at The Castle. Apparently most American tourists stay at “The Castle.” We were glad to be considered worthy of staying at this very expensive hotel! Next to the Castle was St. Mary’s Church. It is a lovely old parish church, which was decorated with many fragrant bouquets for a wedding.

In the afternoon we went to Clevedon Court. There we toured Clevedon Court Manor House. It was built around 1300 and became Clevedon Court in 1709. It has been owned by the Elton Family for 11 generations. Now it is in the National Trust, and also used by the Elton family. Each succeeding generation made improvements to the house. The west front was constantly rebuilt reflecting changing architectural tastes; from Tudor to Gothic, to Victorian Tudor. After a fire in 1930s, it was restored to its medieval floor plan.

That evening was Margaret and Jean’s turn to take the Greens to dinner. They chose their favorite pub, The Anchor, in the neighboring village Oldbury-on-Severn, because it is more quiet than the more trendy places in their town. We had delicious dinners in this non-touristy pub and returned home with the Greens for our usual cup of tea and a recap of our interesting and fun-filled day.

**Friday, September 18, 2009**  
**-- Mary Lou and Pete Peters**

Our hostess, Ann Ritchie (Deputy Exchange Director) was in charge of the list for the day's excursion to Dunster and the West Somerset Railway – total of approximately 50 people in our group. All gathered at Sainsbury Super Store car park for the coach to the train ... from Minehead to Bishops Lydeard.

A Bristol lady related: “The town remembers Judge George Jeffries (the ‘hanging judge’) in the late 1600s. He was famous for many harsh and cruel judgments made on those who rebelled against the king, James II. Also in Bishops Lydeard, there was a ghostly rider (headless). This town was also famous for making men's skirts named “Tootal.”

Just outside Bishops Lydeard in village Combe Florey, Evelyn Waugh, a famous writer, had a lovely estate – house and grounds with a water garden. In the house, library books covered the walls. A satirical writer, he was published in the Times, Guardian, Observer, and other broad sheets. He wrote many respected novels and essays. [This story was related by Carole Duckett.]

At 10:15, James (Jim), the bus driver, introduced seat belts and requested us to use them. While driving past Silver Birch trees, the leaves looked like white blossoms. On the road to Dunster, we saw the Willowman, a 15-foot to 20-foot tall figure made out of willow branches – and fences also made of willow. Also a couple of white camels made for a parade, plus numerous live cattle, horses, and sheep. We passed through a town, Somerset Bridge (below sea level), and noticed a sign post reading Sedgemoor Splash. This area is known for cider and wool.

Arriving in Dunster, we stopped at Cobblestones Restaurant and enjoyed red pepper and lentil soup with our host and hostess. Then we shopped a little. We walked uphill toward Dunster Castle. Some of our FFLK people went inside, but we opted to shop in the National Trust Shop. We briefly looked in an artist's gallery where we noticed some paintings that had tiny LED lights shining through.

Our coach then took us to West Somerset Railway, a heritage railway started in 1862. In Minehead, a turntable was used to turn engines around. The scenery along the 20-mile ride was beautiful!

Many of the stops had unusual names: Blue Anchor, Washford, Watchat, Doniford Halt, Williton, Stogumber, Crowcombe Heathfield, and lastly Bishops Lydeard.

In the evening, we enjoyed a lovely candlelight dinner at Colin and Jenny Armstrong's home. They are members of the same church as our hosts; they were also Terry and Mary Rose Smith's second hosts.

**Saturday, September 19, 2009**

**-- Sherry Farson**

What a great day today with my host, Valerie Henry. We drove to Wraxall, North Somerset, to visit "Tyntesfield." Four generations of the Gibbs family lived here, increasingly quiet, making it one of the least-known of English country house estates. It has not been worked on for more than 50 years, and the National Trust is working on it now.

What amazed me was that it was open during all this time to the public and charged about £10.00 to walk around inside and outside. We were told that they have 800 to 1500 people a day!! On the outside of the home was 28,000 miles of scaffolding...read that number correctly...the metal did not touch the outside walls.

Talk about retail shopping – the staff is working on taking an inventory of everything in the home and so far they are up to 40,000 items. Cloths were thrown over the furniture with lots of dust covering everything. I am sure it will look beautiful when it is clean. It was a beautiful day as usual, and we sat outside with others to share a sandwich and drink for lunch.

What can I say about the "Farewell Party"? It was really fun. About 50 people attended. We met at a private club, which had two skittles courts (9-pin bowling). Everyone had a chance to mingle and bowl. The food and drink made everyone happy. Sylvia and Peter Dando prepared a delicious buffet dinner. With Cheryl leading a chant of "USA\_USA," Chris Kinberger and Sherry Farson had beginners' luck and actually won the Skittles contest. Afterwards, we exchanged gifts and words of thanks for the Bristol club's hospitality.

**Sunday, September 20, 2009**

**-- Karen Henson**

We all met at the Sainsbury's car park, Emerson's Green, to board the bus for our 170 mile drive to Chester, England. We met our guide, Yvonne, and driver, Ian, and bid our hosts goodbye.

We drove north through the western Cotswold area, including an area where Beatrice Potter was born. The road route of the major part of our trip was created by the Romans. It was explained if you have a long, straight road, it would be the Roman road. There were several bridges over the motorway, and some are used by the animals as well as people. The reason the Brits drive on the left side of the road is because the swords of the Romans were on the right side, and they must be able to draw their swords. This was started from crossing the London Bridge in the early days.

We drove through the large city of Birmingham, which is an industrial town. After a long delay near here on the motorway, we proceeded to Stoke-on-Trent to visit the Wedgwood factory. We passed some cricket matches near here. All the players were wearing white, and it was explained anytime you see people dressed all in white they were probably cricket players.

We had lunch at the restaurant at the Wedgwood factory and then toured the gift shop before seeing an informative film about the history of Wedgwood. Then we took a self-guided tour where you could see the various phases of creating Wedgwood items, and you could talk with the workers. We could also take a tour of the extensive museum that also told the history of Wedgwood and showed many of the pieces created throughout history from 1730 to today. It showed paintings, documents and some of the pieces along with explanations of when and how they were used.

From here the bus proceeded to Chester. Along the way we passed a large haystack version of the "Big Ben" clock in the middle of a field. We checked into the Best Western Mollington Banestre Hotel & Spa. We had dinner next door at the Chester Crabwell Manor, which consisted of pate on lettuce, chicken with potatoes and mushrooms in gravy, zucchini squash and carrots and parsnips; followed by apple pie with custard sauce. After instructions for times and activities of the following day, we returned to our hotel for the night.

**Monday, September 21, 2009**

**-- Mary Rose and Terry Smith**

Chester, a walled city on the Dee River, was inhabited by the Romans in the year 79. We visited this historical city on a warm September day. The decorations around the city included flowers and flags, but we felt the old bicycles in the downtown area which were surrounded with flowers must have been put there just to welcome us.

The original city flourished because it was an important port city for trade and commerce. Following this period of wealth and growth, first the Romans left, and then the river Dee changed its course. A new port city was formed and all commerce moved out of the city. What remained was this walled city with beautiful Romanesque houses and buildings of stone left intact. No one with money remained in the city to fund any alterations or new buildings; therefore, the city remained as it was in the fourth century.

Chester Cathedral with its Norman arches, gothic columns, and amazing medieval wood carvings was a sight to behold. We took a self guided tour of this Cathedral; and although we saw many cathedrals and churches, Chester was indeed a wonder.

A highlight for our day in Chester was a visit to the Grosvenor's Museum. While on this self-guided tour, we saw Chester from the Roman rule to the Victorian elegance, from old masters to contemporary art. When we were looking at the old Roman grave markers we discovered that many soldiers once they had completed their military obligation stayed in the area of their duty assignment. They did this either because they had started a family in the area or that their home was so far away, sometimes as far as Turkey.

After a "lovely" [that word must be used in a report about a trip to the U.K.] lunch we went for a walk on the wall overlooking the city and the river. While on the wall, we encountered Chris on his walkie-talkie looking for Cheryl, having just located his position on his GPS and looking for a connection on his computer, while taking a picture of the river.

Chester was another "lovely" city of the many we visited in west-central England. We must share with everyone what a wonderful job John and Jeannie did in coordinating this exchange. It was a masterful job and they deserve the thanks from all of us.

**Tuesday, September 22, 2009**

**-- Rose Lowry Duke**

We left Chester by coach at 8:30 A.M. to visit the countryside of Northern Wales and take a narrow-gauge railroad through the Snowdonia National Park. As we rode the coach, our eyes are feasting on the beauty of the green rolling fields and valleys dotted with many sheep. We are told there are more sheep than people in Wales. There are some cows, some now-and-then horses, and farmhouses made of stone with slate roofs.

Northern Wales had a large slate business, supplying people and businesses all over the world. We could see stacks of slate as we went merrily along our way. We passed a village where we could see the Conwy Castle covered in red ivy. "Brilliant."

Shortly, we made a stop at the charming village of Betws-y-Coed, meaning "prayer house in the wood." We had time to visit restrooms, browse the shops, and have a snack. Then we were off to Blaenau to catch the Rheilffordd Ffestiniog Railway to take us through Aberglaslyn Pass. At the start, it was lightly raining, but it didn't dampen our spirits. Eventually, the sun came out.

We boarded a car that had been reserved for us. We were having a fun time amongst ourselves when in comes a rather large man -- with the physique of Santa Claus and a jolly booming baritone voice. He was selling an information guide booklet of the Rheilffordd Ffestiniog Railway. With our encouragement, he sang a Welch song and told some interesting stories of the area. His enthusiasm helped him sell some copies. (I bought one.)

With his leave, we were back looking at the beautiful scenery as we made our journey through the heart of Snowdonia. The railway dropped over 700 feet, through tranquil pastures and magnificent forests, past lakes and waterfalls, round horseshoe bends, even a complete spiral -- sometimes clinging to the mountainside, then tunneling through it. We reached our destination -- Porthmadog. We had some free time in Porthmadog to eat lunch, visit some shops, and get a little flavor of the port. There were sailing boats to be seen, and we were told that Porthmadog has a deep enough channel to berth small oceangoing sailing ships. Interesting -- we could have spent more time there.

But back to the coach to go to Caernarfon to see the Castle, a large stone structure built by King Edward I in 1283 AD, one of the largest among the many he built to fortify Wales. The heir to the throne of England is called the "Prince of Wales" -- and in 1969, Prince Charles received his investiture here. Beautiful green grounds helped enhance the castle. We had some free time to walk around the city, browse the shops, and purchase some gifts. Then back on the bus to take us back to Chester and our hotel. What a wonderful, full, and fascinating day! I enjoyed all of it! Thanks, John and Jeannie!

**Wednesday, September 23**

**-- Phyllis Fitzgerald**

Several months ago when I decided to go on this trip, I knew I must contact my long lost friend, Veronica Lovell, who lives in Leeds, Louisville's Sister City. I hadn't seen her since she lived in Louisville some 38+ years ago when her husband Patrick taught at the U of L. Law School with my husband. They returned to England, had a son, and Patrick died, after which time, life intervened, and I lost track with Veronica after she moved. I contacted her, told her I was coming, and asked how we could get together. Her reply was a suggestion that she join our group for a few days of our trip, and she did. She arrived on Tuesday night, and I found her sitting in the lobby drinking wine. We took up where we left off 38 years ago, and talked half the night. And continued talking for the next two days. It was such fun having her join us!

Today (Wednesday) we checked out of our hotel in Chester, and our bus took us on a long ride down a toll road toward "the Midlands." We were admonished by the bus driver and guide to wear our seat belts, though they didn't wear theirs—perhaps because we were traveling around Birmingham, and out of the hilly country into flat land. (Do what we say, not what we do!) We passed "allotments," which were like our community gardens, where many people raised small plots of vegetables. We saw many houses with picturesque thatched roofs containing the logo of the thatcher. We learned that good quality thatching straw can last for more than 45–50 years. Traditionally, a new layer of straw was simply applied over the weathered surface. This has generated accumulations of thatch six-feet thick and, in ancient buildings, preserved lower layers of medieval thatch over 600 years old. After passing through cattle country, we again arrived in an area where sheep were the main livestock.

Then came what was perhaps the most spectacular feature of our trip: Blenheim Palace in Woodstock. Blenheim—an English baroque palace made from Cotswold stone, was the birthplace of Winston Churchill on November 3, 1874, although that was not his permanent home. There were quite a few Churchill memorabilia at the palace, including his baby vest, and some curls; however, and he did spend time there. Several of his paintings were on display, and some were used as Christmas cards.

The Blenheim estate was given to the first Duke of Marlborough by Queen Ann in 1704, and the palace was built in the ensuing years. A plaque on the building reads, "Under the auspices of a munificent sovereign this house was built for John Duke of Marlborough and his Duchess Sarah, by Sir J Vanbrugh between the years 1705 and 1722. And the Royal Manor of Woodstock, together with a grant of £240,000 towards the building of Blenheim, was given by Her Majesty Queen Anne and confirmed by act of Parliament." The building caused much political intrigue at the time, but has been the home of the Dukes and Duchesses of Marlborough since it was built. It was not damaged by air strikes during World War II, and rumor has it that Hitler did not bomb it because he wanted to live there. The present Duke is divorced and lives in one wing of the palace. Woodstock neighbors see him riding about the grounds on a four-wheeler, or occasionally attending St. Mary Magdalene church in Woodstock.

The palace became a National Heritage site in 1987, and is open to the public. We were able to visit several sitting rooms, a dining room, library, and grand entrance hall. We saw many rich tapestries, elaborate china, paintings by Churchill, Sargent, and Joshua Reynolds. In addition,

we viewed many antique pieces of furniture, including Chippendale chairs, Chaperone sofas, a dining room table that seats 40 persons, and an intricate silver centerpiece that takes days to clean.

Much of the décor seemed to be influenced by Versailles, with fleur de lis carpets and other French baroque influences. The series of doorways were especially influenced by the Palace at Versailles, as were those at the Louisville Speed Art Museum. The library is 183 feet long, and contains a large statue of Queen Ann. (It was said that at her death, she was as wide as she was tall, so the statue depicted her at an earlier stage.) The second story of the library is accessible only by a spiral staircase, and the room was certainly “floor to ceiling” books.

After thanking our excellent guide, we departed through the chapel, which contained a sculpture of the first Duke and Duchess of Marlborough and their two sons, done in Roman style. Other public parts of the palace include a restaurant and magnificent gardens, designed by Capability Brown in 1764, which included a man-made lake, bridge, and large statue of the Duke. Local people buy passes to walk and cycle through the grounds throughout the year, and we encountered many families strolling through the grounds for the three days we were in Woodstock. The entrance gate was just down the street from the Bear hotel, so Veronica and I came back to see the beautiful Blenheim grounds again that night, and again the next night. In fact, the next night we got locked in and had to learn how to get out by asking some locals who were still strolling the grounds at closing time, 6:30 p.m. We followed a path, as directed and were able to get out a short distance from the main gate with no problem.

Wednesday night, our first in Woodstock, we had dinner as a group at a restaurant aptly called “The Duke of Marlborough.” Afterward, Veronica and I continued to talk until the wee hours. It was a beautiful day, beautiful country, and beautiful town!

**Thursday, September 24, 2009**

**-- Cheryl Kinberger**

At 6:00 a.m., I am awakened by the bells of St. Mary Magdelene Church, located next to our accommodations, the McDonald Bear Hotel in Woodstock. Once they finish, I lay there and hear little traffic noise this early in the morning. We are on the third floor, in what we call the "attic room." It is somewhat small with a double bed, two nightstands, desk, two chairs, and a short chest with a 13" TV sitting on top. We must be careful when we walk into the room. A quick step to the right or left will bang our heads on the beams hanging from the A-frame ceiling. There is a double door closet with hangers, cubbyholes for clothing, and a small refrigerator. One dormer window that opens up about two inches overlooks the street. If I stand on my tiptoes, I can see the shops on the far side. The bathroom is a nice size with lots of counter space. There is a partial glass shower partition that keeps the water inside the tub.

Chris and I get up and ready ourselves for another day's adventure in Great Britain. We head down to the hotel restaurant about 7:10 for our breakfast. A few minutes later other members begin to trickle in. Besides the cereal and dried fruits, bakery items, jams and spreads, yoghurt and compotes, and continental meats and cheeses, we enjoy scrambled eggs, bacon, toast and juices. Rose Lowry Duke has a special breakfast companion waiting at her table – a brown teddy bear she names "Duke," dressed in a button down vest and bow tie.

Reminiscent of a country inn, the dining room exudes traditional charm -- exposed ceiling rafters, a stone fireplace nestled in one wall and circle wheel light fixtures. Recognized for its quality food and impeccable service, we eat on tables covered with two white tablecloths, using silverware and cloth napkins, and drink from fine glassware.

Today we are traveling through the Cotswolds. This area is characterized by attractive small towns and villages built of Cotswold stone, a yellow oolitic limestone that, when weathered, is described as "honey" or "golden."

After settling ourselves on our coach, ED John Vezeau tells us that "today will be one of our most picturesque days, like a string of pearls through various villages." As we travel along, our guide, Yvonne, mentions that this used to be a very, very prosperous part of the country because of the woolen trade. Also, the villages were placed about the same distance apart with a pub located halfway between each village. This was so the coaches could stop and rest their horses between point A and point B, and the passengers could rest as well.

The countryside is lovely. This morning there is fog in the lower valleys. Leaves are turning colors as autumn is near. Trees form a canopy across the road.

Our first stop is Burford, situated about 20 miles west of Oxford and generally regarded as the Gateway to the Cotswolds. From the 14th to the 17th century, Burford was a great wool town, and near the middle of the High Street is the 'Tolsey' where once wealthy wool merchants held their meetings and collected tolls; it now houses a museum. We spend a half hour walking along the street, admiring the buildings, some dating from the 15th century.

We return to the coach for a drive through the village of Bibury, called one of the most favorite spots for taking photographs in England. Bibury once provided housing for weavers who supplied cloth for fulling (a process in which a felt fabric is pounded with hammers in order to develop) at nearby Arlington Mill. The River Coln flows through the village, alongside the

main street. Its water supplies the Bibury Trout Farm, where some 10 million rainbow trout are spawned yearly. We make a short stop here to watch the ducks swimming, walk to the trout farm, and see the Church of St. Mary.

What a beautiful day we have for travelling -- a blue sky above us with puffy white clouds and sunshine. We pass plowed fields and drive underneath boxed cut canopied trees, cut so as to allow double decker buses to drive through the overhanging branches.

We continue on to Bourton-on-the-Water. It is known as the “Venice of the Cotswolds” because of the many foot bridges spanning the River Windrush that runs through the village. Here many of the ladies enjoy their favorite pastime – shopping! Others visit various sites of interest including St. Lawrence Church. According to Sherry Farson, St. Lawrence was a deacon to Pope Sixtus the Second and was martyred by being roasted alive over a gridiron.

Off we go to Stow-on-the-Wold. At the height of the Cotswold wool industry, this village was famous for its huge annual fairs where as many as 20,000 sheep were sold at one time. We have our lunch break here with additional time to explore the beautiful streets, buildings and interesting shops. Chris and I find a little restaurant, Toad-in-the-Wold, tucked off the main road. We enter – and there’s Phyllis Fitzgerald and her friend, Veronica, seated at a table. We join them and order lunches of steak and kidney pie, a tuna and cheese panini, and minced beef. After our fill, we bid our farewells to the two ladies and head out to the streets for some shopping and sightseeing.

Once again it’s back on the coach to visit Chipping Norton, another lively and bustling village with many shops, hotels and restaurants dating back to the 17th century. At one time this busy market town was known for the Victorian tweed mill that sat to its west. This is our last opportunity to experience the aura of the Cotswolds region in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

After loading the coach, we head back to our hotel. Sherry Farson and Karen Henson have stories to tell me about conversations they had with people in the villages. To pass the time our guide, Yvonne, in her own special way, explains the rules of cricket, a bat-and-ball national team sport of England.

We arrive in Woodstock about 4:45 pm. Chris and I decide to walk around the village and check out our dinner choices. We run into George and Alice Moore and Karen Foreman doing the same. We all decide on a fish and chips restaurant. George orders the salmon while the rest of us go with the cod. Chris’s large piece of cod covers half his plate and even hangs over the edges! We ladies order the small cod which stretches from one plate edge to the other. The rest of our plates contain the chips. We all have plenty to eat!

After dinner, Chris and I go walking on our own. About 7:45 we hear the church bells next to our hotel begin ringing. They still do so as we return to our room about 8:00. And they continue ... on...and on...and on. Just when we think they’ll stop, the bells start up again. At 8:20 Chris calls the receptionist desk and asks that they send someone over to the church to check on the constant ringing. At 8:50 he calls again. Finally, at 9:02, the bells are silent. Now I can snuggle down under my bed covers and rest up for our trip to Oxford tomorrow.

**Friday, September 25, 2009**

**-- Rosemary Melloy**

What a great way to start the day. I had come down to the restaurant early, and was looking forward to a nice, leisurely breakfast, when I discovered the Bear was waiting for me at the table. I was told he'd been there yesterday sitting with Rose, but I'd missed that. As others appeared, the buzz around the room was about the sound of the church bells ringing randomly last night for an hour and a half. What was that all about?

We climbed aboard our coach and headed for Oxford. This is our last day of touring! Our city guide is Angie. She does a great job. We can hear AND understand her.

The walking tour begins at the Martyrs Memorial where three Protestant Bishops were burned at the stake by Queen "Bloody" Mary who wanted the nation to return to Catholicism.

Angie told us much about Oxford University: 18,000 students in 38 colleges.....colleges contain residences for 1st year students as well as tutors and professors attached to that college....bedrooms include an area for study....Scouts are men who "tidy up" so students can concentrate on their studies.....they also keep them on track....like house mothers?...all colleges have three things in common--a library, a dining hall and a chapel.....the first colleges were established by religious orders....Divinity was first subject taught.

We are fortunate to be visiting on one of the days of graduation. First we see families of the graduating seniors gathering at the Sheldonian Theatre, and then later spied the line of students walking to the ceremony. Afterwards, we passed several walking proudly with their families sporting their new academic garb. The Sheldonian, designed by Christopher Wren, is the site for the graduation ceremonies....which are held in Latin. At the end, the Chancellor hits each graduate over the head with a Bible ????? I missed the explanation for that one.

The Bodleian Library has more than 8 million books, including 1 copy of every book published in the UK....they are contained on 120 miles of bookshelves...all books, even many middle eastern and early English manuscripts are accessible to any member of the University.....but cannot be checked out. They can only be used in the library...pencils and laptops may be taken in...a thorough search of each person is made on entry and exit.....Radcliffe Camera is a reading room where students can request books and then wait until they are brought to them.

The major mode of transportation is the bicycle. There are thousands whizzing by in all directions.

We visit the Market which has been there since the 18th century. One deli had such delicious looking baguettes that Sherry and I bought one to split for lunch.....along with a sweet. Yum!!

Some of the colleges we walked past included Exeter, Trinity, Old Souls, Queens, University (where Bill Clinton and later daughter Chelsey attended), Merton (the first to offer secular studies), Corpus Christi, Christ Church meadows and playing field. We went into the 13th century University Church of St. Mary The Virgin...used often for student music recitals. St. Mary was the site for graduations until 1669, when the Sheldonian was opened. It was also where the trial of the three martyrs took place. John and Charles Wesley preached sermons there in the 1730s.

After the walking tour ended, a few of us wandered through St. Michael at the North Gate (a Saxon church) which is Oxford's oldest building. Sherry, using her special interviewing technique discovered many fascinating details of a man sitting in the pews--who turned out to be the church's retired minister. We then visited The Eagle and the Child, a pub where C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and others gathered every Thursday morning to discuss their writings.

We said goodbye to Veronica, Phyllis's English friend who had been with us several days..... and then after driving back to the hotel in Woodstock, to Ian - our bus driver who did a fantastic job of driving us everywhere. His turnarounds and backing into parking spaces were extraordinary!!!

After a short rest, we gathered for our farewell dinner in the restaurant of our hotel, The Bear. After toasting to our group, those left behind, and our great E.D.s, John and Jeannie, we had a tasty meal of soup, chicken, broccoli, potato, bread pudding and drink of our choice.....the wine flowed freely. John presented a gift of appreciation to Tour Escort Yvonne.....and then asked us to share impressions and highlights of the two weeks. We then went back to our rooms to pack and prepare for our early, EARLY departure tomorrow morning.

**Saturday, September 26. 2009**

**-- Janet Campbell**

Church bell ringing at 4:15 a.m. Hotel wakeup call at 4:30 a.m. All souls awake and ready to put luggage outside doors by 5:00 a.m. We then found our way to coffee. After coffee with keys collected, luggage underneath coach and passports and tickets in a safe place, twenty bodies ambled to the coach at 5:30 a.m. for departure. The only sound to arouse us was a firecracker thrown from an overpass in front our coach (bus).

Arriving at the airport about 6:45 am, we congregated around the Delta area for our boarding passes before checking our bags and continuing "our search process." On to the next check point. Take off shoes, coats, put everything in plastic container, place on conveyor belts, and walk through scanner. Oh, no one red light. Small amount of water left in bottle! Through security and into stores where everyone spent the last few English pounds on candy or other small items. Onward to gate, check, check, check—passport, boarding pass, carry on—

Finally on flight from gate 8 leaving for departure to Detroit at about 9:30 a.m. London time and 4:20 a.m. Louisville time. Altitude reached at approximately 30,000 feet for trip, temperature outside to start -36 degrees C. Crossing Irish Sea onward to Atlantic Ocean. Time to settle in on plane; watch TV, movies, listen to music, play games or watch progress of plane on screen. Remember not to push too hard on screen because of person in front of you -- three in middle seats, two on right, two on left (total of 7 seats) others knitted, read books, magazines or tried to sleep.

Prepare for meal (lunch). Then by 10:14 a.m. Detroit time were at Prince Edward Islands. Arrival in Detroit. About 12:40 p.m. went through customs, gathered bags, left bags and then through screening again. We had begun our journey to gate 51 for our departure to Louisville at 6:05 p.m.

During the waiting time many could be observed, sleeping, reading paper, books, shopping and some even rode the tram on the upper lever of McNamara Terminal. Some took turns watching carry ons while other ate or "washed their hands."

When the time for departure finally, finally arrived, all were eager to find seats and prepare for the 55-minute jaunt to Louisville. This plane (Delta) had two seats on right and two seats on left. We were only about 15<sup>th</sup> in line to take off so there was time to reflect on the day and also to anticipate our greetings in Louisville on arrival. At last in the air and time for only a beverage and peanuts (or pretzels or cookies) before we landed.

Arrival in Louisville about 7:30 p.m. found us ready to meet our friends and relatives to be whisked to our own beds to sleep, sleep, sleep.

Everyone tired but very pleased with our trip to Bristol, England, and other areas but happy to be back in Louisville. The end of the trip but only the beginning to the stories that are to be told of the adventures had by one and all.