

Great Britain & Wales September 4 - 18, 1992

Friday, September 4 - Los Angeles

We're on the plane, and I'm so glad to have a chance to relax! Footsie got into a catfight on Tuesday and wound up with a huge abscess. We only got him to the vet this morning as he decided to hide for two days. He gets to stay at the vet for two weeks instead of the kennel, at least he is in good hands. Debbie said she'd visit him, too. :-) So we got to work at 10:00 in a RAND car (had to leave ours at home due to parking lot resurfacing!), pretended to work for about three hours, then came to the airport. By some stroke of luck we were upgraded to Business Class for free - what a deal! We're in cushy seats in front of the 747 - I keep waiting for them to look for us and say it's all a mistake. Free drinks, appetizers (salmon and caviar!), a menu for dinner that includes lamb - unbelievable. We're backing away from the terminal now. I'm so tired; got up at 2:00 am as part of my time-shifting experiment. Saw Luci and Mo at the airport, that was fun.

I could hardly believe dinner on the plane. We had more wine, amaretto, port, raspberry mousse - yum.

Saturday, September 5 - Heathrow/St. Albans

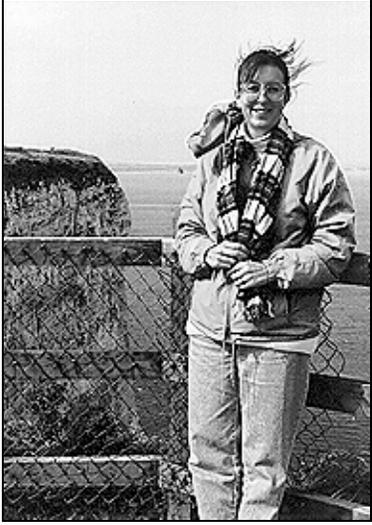
Landed at Heathrow around 10:45 am; it's about 16 degrees Celsius (62 degrees Fahrenheit). Alamo didn't have our rental car, so they sent us to a more expensive place (Kenning) and claim they'll pay the difference. It's quite expensive at Kenning, £900+ for two weeks; ungläublich! At any rate, we'll get reimbursed. So off we drove in our Rover, great car. Gas seems to be 45-47 shillings/liter. We got to St. Albans, Robert handled right-side drive just fine, although I was pretty terrified for the first hour. I might try it myself tomorrow. Exchanged some money; the going rate is \$2.10/£.

The St. Albans cathedral is a weird jumble of Norman, Early English, and Decorated architectural styles. It is huge and very interesting. Saw some birds near a lake, but didn't have the binocs (sigh). We did seem to see Black Headed Gull, Gray Heron, Moorhen, Magpie, Blue Tit, Mute Swan, Swift, and Pigeon.

Sunday, September 6 - Cambridge/Cley-next-the-Sea

After our first "full breakfast" (egg, bacon, sausage, toast, tea, and juice, but no spam) at the Ardmore House (on Lemsford Road) in St. Albans, we hit the road for Cley-next-the-Sea. Our first stop was in Cambridge, where we visited King's College chapel with its amazing vaulted roof and stained glass. The college was built by Henry VI, VII, and VIII, and the chapel is the showpiece of the Perpendicular style. The guidebook mentioned that Christopher Wren said he'd reproduce the chapel, if only someone would tell him where to lay the first stone. We later walked through Trinity, Clare, and St. John's colleges. The whole Cambridge complex is beautiful with its wonderful architecture, lawns (upon which only college members are permitted to walk) and narrow cobbled streets.

From Cambridge I took my first stab at driving. It wasn't bad, except for a poorly executed right turn at King's Lynn (Robert grabbed the wheel :-() and the narrowness of the A149 the last 20 or



Liza at Bempton Cliffs.

so miles. I finally had Robert take over, it was too narrow for me to handle. The road was so narrow that there was literally not enough room for 2-way traffic, and there's not really any room to pull out as the hedgerows are right up against the pavement. We got to our B&B in Cley-next-the-Sea, the Harnser, in the mid-afternoon, then went out to Cley Beach around 5:00 pm. Full dinner at the Harnser restaurant (three course, £9.50/person). Now in our room we're watching American television – a football game between the Saints and the Eagles! I'm tired.

Monday, September 7 – Cley-next-the-Sea

On the advice of a couple we met at breakfast, we drove to Titchwell RSPB reserve. The reserve is basically a long windy walk to the sea past several "hides" that overlook the marshes. We got some good birds including Redshank, Greenfinch, and Avocet. Long day! Robert went back out before dinner and got a Skua and Meadow Pipit – foo. I got a Corncrake, at least.

Tuesday, September 8 – Cley-next-the-Sea/York

Checked out the birds this morning then headed to York. Stopped at a pub en route to try Bateman's Ale and got gypped out of £10 (sigh). Arrived in York around 5:00 pm. Our B&B is the Four Seasons Hotel – a Victorian house that is absolutely gorgeous. Our room is huge with big bay windows, and from here we can hear the bells of the York Minster. We walked to the Minster and to the Shambles before dinner. The walled part of the city is basically a pedestrian zone, quite nice with lots of shops. Had Yorkshire pudding for dinner – yum! – at the Old York Pie Shoppe. Off to Humber Estuary tomorrow for the day, and hopefully to Castle Howard.

Wednesday, September 9 – York

What a great day. After a restful night in our gorgeous Victorian room (can't believe the crown mouldings, lace, pink decor, not to mention another full breakfast), we went to the coast at Harnsea. Found a Whooper Swan at the Harnsea Mere, as well as a Kittiwake. We then drove up to Bempton Cliffs, an RSPB reserve with gorgeous white cliffs rivaling Dover (or at least, my impression of what Dover would be like). We saw Fulmars and Gannets, and maybe(?) an Arctic Skua. We then drove back to York and arrived around 3:15 pm, walked to the city centre and shopped a little. Stopped in at a pub where I had Stone's Best Bitter, and Robert had a Bass Ale and a Guinness. Yum! After an Italian dinner we walked along the top of the city wall – mindboggling how old it is – and watched the moon rise over the Minster. Lovely and romantic.

Thursday, September 10 – York/Caernarfon

We got up early this morning to take another walk along the city walls, but they were locked! So we walked over to the castle area instead to see Clifford's Tower. We returned via the museum gardens, had another full breakfast, then headed off to Caernarfon.

Caernarfon on the North Wales coast is *very* imposing and severe. Coupled with signs in Welsh (looking like bad scrabble racks) and the wind and cold, it felt very wild and remote. I can't even imagine what living there must have been like for Edward I. In the castle was a museum for the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, detailing their military history, honors, and trivia (i.e.,

their mascot is a white (Persian) goat). Of particular interest to me was a diary excerpt from a colonel who served at Lexington/Concord! Also many details of other campaigns, including Gallipoli, Gaza, Egypt, South Africa, Ypres (John Cleese comes to mind), etc.

Friday, September 11 - Caernarfon/Bath

From Caernarfon we drove south to Harlech, another seaside castle of Edward I built between 1283-1289. More in ruins than Caernarfon, but imposing nevertheless. It was very windy (gale force) and rainy, perfect atmosphere for medieval castle exploration! Later we stopped in town (Perthadog) and shopped in a bookstore. I bought a Welsh dictionary and a beginner's book with an audio tape.

Drove through Snowdonia National Park. Such expanses of green, meadows bordered by stone walls and hedges - is this what Ireland is like?

We left Wales and its scrabble signs, back into England to Bath. We met up with Dennis Davis, of the University of Bath, for drinks and dinner. Dennis is my rec.bicycles correspondent who was kind enough to tape some cycling races (including Kellogg's Tour of Britain). Charming fellow, the evening simply flew by. Now, after one quart of beer, dinner, and five hours of conversation, I'm beat!

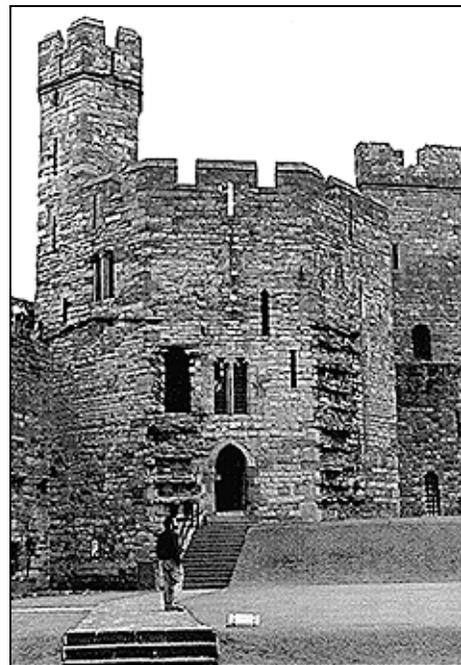
Saturday, September 12 - Bath/Morchar Bishop (Devon)

After a comfortable night at the Tasburgh Bath hotel, sleeping off my two pints of Courage Bitter, we had breakfast, then went into Bath to walk around a bit. We visited the Royal Crescent, Circus, and Roman Baths. The architecture of the crescents is interesting; basically huge three-story townhouses with columns, friezes, etc.

We went to Longlief afterwards, a country estate with lots of attractions. We confined ourselves to the maze - world's largest! - and it took us two hours to get in and back out. Some people apparently do it in under an hour.

Finally we made our way to Morchar Bishop and on to the farm/inn "Wigham", run by Leslie and Steve Chilcott. This is a gorgeous 16th century Devon "longhouse", a long building with a thatched roof that in its day housed a family at one end and the livestock at the other. It's been extensively remodeled on the inside, lots of dark wood, heavy beam ceilings, fur rugs by fireplaces over stone floors. Our room is the "rose room", beautifully decorated in shades of rose and pink. There are three resident cats here, too, a British Blue named Boswell, a black/white cat named William, and a third whose name I don't know. William is snuggled up with me next to the fire at the moment.

Wigham has only five rooms, and we're the only guests here this evening. We're being treated like royalty! Leslie brought us tea and fresh cookies when we arrived. Dinner was served to us at 8:00 in the dining room near a roaring fire, and we ate on a massive oak table. Dinner was phenomenal - fresh tomato bisque,



Robert at Caernarfon.

homemade wheat bread, a main course of lamb with apricots, and veggies – cabbage with dates, carrots, and beans. After all that, dessert! Robert had a flan while I had fresh blackberry crumble; Leslie said she'd "picked the blackberries with my own hands" – yummy with brown sugar and oatmeal crust and fresh Devonshire clotted cream, practically butter and very mild-tasting. Then Leslie brought out a huge cheese tray with white cheddar, brie, stilton, and a few others. Now (barely able to move), we're enjoying the fire and Robert is drinking coffee. William, incidentally, has left me by the fire and is now in Robert's lap. What a great way to live, it's so peaceful here; we're miles from anyone, it seems. Morchard Bishop is a small dot of a town eight miles from Crediton, 16 miles from Exeter, yet it shows up as "Bishopmorchard" on a Devonshire map dated 1611.

I'm so relaxed and we have another week to go. I wish we could stay at this farm for a week, but I'd probably gain 20 pounds. They take guests here for Christmas – it would be so lovely here during the holidays!

Sunday, September 13 – Devon

Slow day; after several games of snooker (Bob won) we went to Dartmoor National Park. It rained; not many birds out. We also stopped in at Castle Drago, really a large house built around 1910. Very nice gardens. There's a couple here at Wigham this evening from San Francisco (Palo Alto).

Thursday, September 17 – Rye

Many days to cover! We arrived in Bournemouth on 9/14 and had a very nice visit with Ulrich Weissler at Cumloden, the retirement home he owns on Wimborne Road. He took us to dinner at a railroad pub – fun place. Ulrich is very interesting, having been in Kenya from 1954 to the late 60's, then in Malawi until 71 or 72, teaching English while his wife Judy worked as a nurse. He had many interesting stories to tell.

The next day, 9/15, he picked us up and we went to Corfe Castle, a ruined castle near Bournemouth. After a lazy afternoon in the hotel, we rejoined Ulrich at Cumloden for dinner. Talked until 11:00 pm! Definitely a Weissler. :-)

Wednesday we went to Salisbury (scaffolding on the cathedral spire, sigh) and then Leeds Castle, where Henry VIII lived with his first and sixth wives, Catherine of Aragon and Catherine Parr. Today (9/17) was a birdwatching day, first overlooking the sea next to the nuclear power plant, then at Dungeness, an RSPB reserve. Black terns, Yellowhammer! Later we went to Canterbury, then back to Dover, where we saw the white cliffs (although it's so industrial, it's not very scenic, at least not from the docks). We then went to Folkestone to the Eurotunnel exhibit (fantastic! great model train, too), back to Dungeness, then back to Rye for dinner. Staying at Jeake's House, ery nice, cozy place, although the tv is a staticky mess. Robert's making something to drink, and I'm going to sew now.

The news is on – the financial debacle is big news. The pound is falling against the Deutschmark, is below its floor, and devaluation is being discussed, as well as realignment of currencies within the common market. Germany is annoyed at the drop in interest rates that the UK is demanding; the Germans say they're not responsible for the other economies. Also the vision of a United Europe is presumably hosed. The French vote on Maastricht on Sunday. Will the US report on it? Who knows.

Friday, September 18 – Guildford

What a day! It took us forever to find a gas station; you'd think they'd be in obvious spots near the motorway, but NOOOOOOO!!! Not any signs visible from the motorway either; I guess that's a good thing, but it makes it difficult to find things. Finally we gassed up at Redhill and then had the privilege of getting lost in Guildford looking for our hotel...found it after almost an hour, only to find a room with two twin beds. Oh well. So then we drove up the A3 toward Wimbledon to park, then take the Underground into London. We did so and got into London around 4:15 pm. Despite the late hour, we managed to see the Tower of London, the Tower Bridge, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral (heard part of evensong mass), Trafalgar Square. We had a pint at the pub in Covent Garden, then dinner at a fantastic Indian restaurant in the theatre district.

Then the real fun began. We got back to the car park in East Putney to find it locked! We were walking down the street and wondering why it seemed so dark, and found the lights out and a gate across the driveway. It was 10:15 pm, and it turns out it closed at 8:30 pm! Luckily a guard took our £15 (the fine for parking over five hours) and let us out. He claimed there were posted signs everywhere listing the rules, but when pressed he could only find one in a dark corner. Oh well. We got onto the motorway headed back to Guildford, pretty pissed off in general, but relieved to have gotten the car out of the garage. Then on the way back to Guildford, we're driving along in the centre lane when someone two cars back starts flashing his brights at us and the car behind us. The car behind us eventually pulled over, but Robert was ticked off enough that he said tough tacos, there was a lane to the right if someone wanted to pass. Well, it turned out that the car flashing the lights was a policeman who eventually pulled us over. The policeman walks up to the passenger side, and when I rolled down the window, he looked over at Robert and said "Excuse me, sir, how much road tax do you pay?" "We don't!", we answered, "we're American!" I guess we looked pretty stupid at that point, because the officer went on to say that we had to drive to the "inside" unless overtaking someone, that you couldn't sit in the middle lane. Sigh. He let us go without a ticket, at least. I asked Dennis in Bath about this later and he assured us that the officer was being very sarcastic asking us about road tax, the implication being that we thought we owned the road.

Saturday, September 19 - Heathrow to Los Angeles

Well, we're homeward bound today. Managed to get the rental car returned, get to the airport, etc. The security at Heathrow is pretty intense, at least, it's more thorough than anywhere I've been so far. They xray'd the bags that we checked, made us go through a big security check, asked us if we had let the bags out of our sight, etc. I tried upgrading our return ticket to Connossieur Class (same as we had coming over), but they had the nerve to tell me it would cost almost \$1000 apiece! What a rip-off. So we sat in coach, cramped, eating lousy food...sure made me appreciate the deal we got on the flight over. Mom, Luci, and Maureen met us at the airport, it was really nice to see some familiar faces on arrival. Another trip gone by too fast.