

VACATIONS – CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

2007 – ENGLAND – Isabel, Bill, Jimmy and Ellie

May 15 – 20, 2007

Philadelphia to Gatwick Airport, London

Places visited on this trip

- London
- Dover
- Canterbury

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

Our grandson Jim Mellon, his wife Ellie, Isabel and I left Richland in our car and met with Bev in Wallingford. She then drove us to the Philadelphia Airport for our USA 8:55 pm flight # 730 to Gatwick airport in London. Bev, as usual, had prepared delicious sandwiches and hoagies for us.

Flying over Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York after the sun had gone down was very beautiful. We were served a very good supper as we crossed the Atlantic, and the ride was very smooth.

This is the fourth European trip that Jim has taken with us ('97, '98, '05, '07; and the second for Ellie '05, '07.)

Wednesday, May 16, 2007

Arriving at Gatwick, London at 9:10 am, we went through customs, got the train which became a subway (U –underground) to Russell Square Station, a block from our hotel, The Imperial. This is the same hotel where Isabel and I stayed a few years before when we were here in London and also Scotland. The room, however, is very small, bit adequate. We are on the top floor (9th), and can see the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.

After a noon-day snack, we took a bus to Trafalgar Square, walked around the Parliament Buildings, viewed the huge Ferris Wheel across the Thames River and walked outside Westminster Cathedral. Unlike previous years when Isabel and I were there by ourselves, they now charge for entrance into the Cathedral, which we thought was too much. Looking back from the present, we wish we had gone in for the sake of Jim and Ellie.

By 9:30 pm, Isabel and I called it a day, having been up for thirty or more hours since leaving Richland.

Thursday, May 17, 2007

After a very good breakfast in the dining room of the adjoining hotel (connected), we took a bus toward Buckingham Palace but ended up walking and walking to get there. We saw the "Changing of the Guard" which was very impressive, and then Isabel and I went to Harrod's Department Store. Jim and Ellie headed out to Hyde Park.

Having supper together the four of us then went to St. Paul's Cathedral which, unfortunately, was closed to the public at the time.

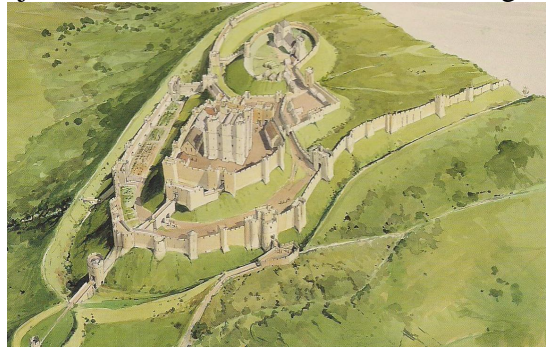


Walking the Millennium Steel Bridge over the Thames we passed by the Globe Theater and Christopher Wren's house. Isabel and I then headed back to the hotel while Jim and Ellie walked on to Tower Bridge. Weather is cool, sweater or jacket all day.



Friday, May 18, 2007

We had breakfast here at the Imperial Hotel and then took the train to Dover, arriving there just before noon. Before getting a taxi to Dover Castle, we had a brief snack at the train station just in case we couldn't find something later.



The taxi let us off at the Visitor's Centre at Dover Castle which is a sprawling complex high on the White Cliffs of Dover overlooking the English Channel. Though it was still May, it was very cold, almost freezing, with the winds 40 to 50 mph. The wind was blowing so hard that we could hardly stand up straight. (Because of Isabel's recent surgery and chemo therapy, she was wearing a wig which we were afraid she might lose.)

We all stood at the top Admiralty Lookout platform observing the ships in the harbor, the large transport area, and the beautiful white (chalky) cliffs. I was reminded of the song that was so popular during WWII - "There'll be bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover, tomorrow, just you wait and see." Though I was just a teenager then and soon

to become a soldier, we all sang the song hoping the war would soon end and peace would return.

As we headed to an indoor snack shop, Jimmy kept wandering around the site taking photographs of this historic area which was so crucial to England's defense. Deep below us were the secret underground Wartime tunnels and rooms for the military who were not only defending the area with anti-aircraft guns and others to protect the harbor, but were also able to observe attacking planes from their unseen sites. Because of the weather and our limited schedule, we didn't spend as much time here as we should have liked. But always, it seems, we keep rushing on in life to see what's next.

Getting a taxi back to the train station, we then went to Canterbury, about a half-hour away. Getting another taxi, we arrived at the Cathedral entrance which is right in the center of the town. Paying our entrance fee, we began our self-guided tour of a magnificent church with a history spanning more than 1500 years. Archbishop Thomas A. Beckett was murdered here by "The King's Men" (Henry II) because of the King's jealousy over Becket's power and refusal to submit to the authority of the King. The Archbishop was actually murdered while he was conducting a worship in the cathedral.

Fortunately for us, there was a service of Evensong on this Friday evening in "The Choir", (the chancel) the front part of the church. As we sat in pews and chairs normally used by members of the choir, we listened and watched the "Boys' Choir" in a beautiful service of music, Scripture and Prayer. The boys, in their choir robes, were particularly dignified, and very attentive to their director. After the service we met the director as we wandered through the nave of the cathedral.

Before leaving Canterbury we found a very nice restaurant in the quaint old city. Returning to London we took the U subway to Russell Square and our hotel. A very nice and informative day.



Canterbury Cathedral

Saturday, May 19, 2007

Breakfast again here at the Imperial Hotel; Isabel and I decided to rest for the morning while Jimmy and Ellie went to a market. When they returned, the four of us walked about four blocks to the British Museum, sat first on the outside eating a hot dog, then entered this fabulous museum with so much to see. Once again we saw the Rosetta Stone, which was found in 1799 and contains writing in both Egyptian hieroglyphics and Greek. As such, it enabled linguistic scholars to decipher the previously unknown hieroglyphics. The stone is quite large, standing about 44" high, 30" wide and 11" deep. Having learned all about this amazing find in my own language studies, it was most interesting to actually see it.

The Museum also has preserved large portions of the Parthenon ruins. a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena.

Jim and I took a bus into the center of London in order to find the Novello Theater where "The Drowsy Chaperone" is playing. This is the same show which the four of us saw in New York City where Dave Stahl is the lead trumpeter at the Marquis Theater at the Marriott Hotel on Times Square. We picked up a souvenir program to show him the next time we meet.

The four of us had supper at Cagney's at outdoor tables, just around the corner from our hotel.

Sunday, May 20, 2007

Getting up early on this our departure day, we had breakfast at the Hotel Imperial and then got the U to Victoria Station and the Gatwick Express train to the airport.

This has been a very nice trip with Jim and Ellie who made the itinerary and daily schedule, and then helped us with our baggage and boarding. At eighty and seventy-six, plus Isabel's recent surgery just eight months ago, means that we don't move as fast as we use to. All in all, it was great for us. We hope it was as wonderful to them as it was for us.

On the plane at 12:30 pm - USA #741 - Airbus A-330. Arrived in Philly after 4:00 and got home to Richland about 7:00 pm, (midnight London) a long day.

END OF CHAPTER SEVENTEEN