

B30 RETURN TO THE MOTHER COUNTRY

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

SUBJECT: B30 RETURN TO THE MOTHER COUNTRY SCRIPT

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The English Channel crossing from Le Havre to Portsmouth went as smooth as glass. We drove our car onto a triple decked catamaran...two decks for cars, one for passengers. Because of the catamaran design, it fairly knives its way through the water cutting almost 1 1/2 hours off the travel time of regular hulled ferries. After going through light customs the officer directed us to a gas station just outside the gates. "Left at the roundabout, right at the first street, right at the light and you can't miss it," was his promise.

Unfortunately, on entering the roundabout, I turned right instead of left and found myself facing four lanes of traffic all headed toward our MG. Fortunately, Portsmouthians are familiar with cars from the Continent doing the same but there was a certain amount of horn honking and digit pointing toward the sky. My initial reaction, on seeing all those hood ornaments pointed toward ours, was to say to Louise, "Look at all those women drivers" forgetting, of course, that everything and everyone was reversed.



We made our way to the Penny Farthing B&B in Lyndhurst in Hampshire county. It is a sleepy little village frequented mainly by people in cars on their way to somewhere else. It was Sunday evening traffic returning home and we literally had to sit for five or more minutes to even nose into the street and another five to get through the traffic lights.



It did give us time to wonder why such a tiny burg had few filling stations but did have a Ferrari and Maserati dealership. It was getting late so we had to locate our hotel.



Since we were the last to check in there was only one room left at the Penny Farthing, a family run B&B named for the early bicycle with one large wheel and a smaller one on the rear. The front wheel represented the size of the British penny with the rear the size of a farthing. There were images of the bike all over the place. This one was just outside our room. There was also a surprise for us.



The only available room was an apartment that normally rents out to families, etc. It consisted of three bedrooms, a living room, bathroom and a full-blown kitchen complete with clothes washer. The kitchen table became my communications center for catching up on the blog and the built in appliances triggered Louise's nesting instinct causing her to immediately do a wash.



We had our first experience with a traditional English breakfast at the Penny Farthing. The waitress suggested I might like to sample the fare and turned out a breakfast feast. After the juice and fruit she brought two eggs over easy, thick bacon, bangers (sausage), toast, beans, fried bread and black pudding.



I was not at all familiar with black pudding and questioned the contents. "Oh, that's pig's blood cooked into a cake," was her reply. "Most people just love it, don't you?" Of course I lied but didn't ask for seconds.



It was our first Sunday without a travel commitment so we walked to the local Episcopal church for morning services. Just listening to the bells was worth the price of admission. By the time they finished everyone in the village knew that a service was about to begin.

Of course, being visitors with funny clothes and accents, we were the center of attention. The organist threw in extra trills during the prelude and the minister added a few more adjectives to his sermon. There was one thing grossly out of place. All during the service a two-year old boy wandered noisily through the church, up onto the altar

and past the minister as he delivered his sermon.

Unbelievably, his parent followed him around smiling as only a clueless father can do. Afterward I asked the minister if the distraction bothered him. He replied, "Oh, I just talk louder to cover up the little buggers."





Of course, the unruly child was the topic of conversation of the church ladies group when, after the service, they served coffee, tea and biscuits. They insisted we pile more food on top of the English breakfast.



The church is replacing some rear pews with stack chairs and Louise was invited to sit, sample and vote on the candidates. We'll never know what they chose but we walked away feeling grand about being welcomed by people we'll never again see.

We grabbed a late lunch at the Fox and Hounds pub before touring. Lyndhurst sits in the middle of England's newest national park called the New Forest, an area set aside for hunting, fishing and animal preservation by William the Conqueror some 900 years ago.



There are no fences or cattle guards so the animals roam without restraint, sometimes using the roadway for basking and relaxation.



A guest told us about a garage in a neighboring town that sold interesting old cars so we asked for directions. "It's in Beuleey, just down the road," he said. I checked our map but couldn't find it. "The only nearby town I see is Beaulieu," I said pronouncing it in French. "That's it. You've got it right mate. Beuleey."

Beaulieu Motors is a small fantasy-land for fans of old cars. Not antiques mind you, but cars we can still remember from our youth. Phillip Scott owns all these cars and is in the business of selling them so it is difficult to get him off the phone or Internet and onto the sales floor.



He did come out though after seeing our MG loaded down with luggage and off doing the job of a proper British car. He allowed us to poke around his showroom and garage...one of the cleanest I have seen, mainly because he does no shop work here.



Phillip printed off a Google route map to our next destination and pointed to the way out of town. "Mind the cows," he said. "They have the right of way, you know. Even over old MGs."

Next stop, Stow on the Wold in the Cotswolds.

Louise and Ray