

Subj: **Hello from Great Britain (Travelogue #1)**

Date: 4/29/2009

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Hi Dear Friends & Family,

First off, let me apologize for doing this as a group email, but I wanted to share some of our trip and pictures and have just not had time to sit down and write individual letters!!

George & I left the US on Wednesday, April 8th and flew to Munich, Germany from DFW. My brother Gary took us to the airport and we got to meet our newest (and only!!!) grand nephew, Jackson, enroute!



We arrived in Munich and Susie & Gert-Jan Rotscheid (the folks putting on dance week) were waiting for us outside the passport control area! Just a short 1 1/2 hour jaunt north to Cham, the dance venue. We had arrived on Thursday and had quite some time before the official dancing started on Easter Sunday night, April 12th! We went shopping at the Swarovski Crystal Factory & enjoyed the sunshine.



We also got our second experience with the Cham Easter tradition of "egg ticking." You meet at the town square, listen to the major and several local important personages give a little speech, then receive your hard boiled colored Easter Egg and take turns tapping it against a neighbor's to try & break their egg and save yours.



I promptly cracked mine against the caller's, Dave Wilson (American, but has lived in Sweden the past 20 years). Heard later that Dave & I were on the local TV participating in the event. By the way, Dave is planning to come to Mesa this year to call for the season. We can't wait to attend his A2 session!!

The week was a smashing success. We had a ball, renewed friendships, made new friends, danced, taught, & socialized late every evening. Randy & Marie Preskitt were also on Staff and we enjoyed visiting with them several night. The Dance week includes skits for the after Dance parties every evening and we all participated one way or the other. I played a "homeless bag lady" in a skit with Marie one night.



Anyway, the week flew by without any problems and on Sunday, April 19th, we flew to London to meet Tom & Marge Brown and Tom & Marilyn Anderson. We stayed in London for 3 nights and had an unbelievable time!!! It was actually so sunny that I sunburned my neck!! Went to buy sun tan lotion and was told that they didn't normally carry it until May!!! Too funny! George had forgotten to bring a had, so we had to go shopping for him to find one.



Saw the changing of the guard (short movie attached if anyone is interested). And the flowers were stunning in front of Buckingham Palace. That's Big Ben in the background!!



We walked everywhere, rode the Hop On Hop Off busses, rode the Tube, rode a double decker bus, stopped to listen to Big Ben, took a river cruise down the Thames to Greenwich & had a birthday dinner for Marge on top of the OXO building high over the city, saw Blood Brothers at the Phoenix Theater, & ate a wonderful Chinese dinner in Soho.



I'll continue this later!!

Subj: **Hello from Great Britain (Travelogue #2)**

Date: 4/29/2009

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Hello again! Got behind, so hopefully we can get you all caught up with our adventures in the next couple of days!

We left London with George driving our 9 pax black VW van. We were all holding our breath, while singing "To the Left to the Left, to the left, left, left!!!!" Jack, our GPS voice was calm & rational and directed us out of town with ease. You'd think he's been there before or something!!! We drove on to Bath with nary a problem and our vacation continued with continuous sunshine and 70's temperatures! We must be charmed!!

Bath was simply gorgeous! Rented a 2 bedroom Townhouse just off the famous Circus area. Tom & Marilyn drew the short straw and got the Sofa bed in the huge living room/kitchen. We all got to party all evening and Marilyn fixed breakfast each morning! We spent 3 nights. First night we took the hilarious Bizarre Bath Walking Tour. It is basically a theatrical street comedy and we laughed until our stomachs ached. Didn't give us any history, but we enjoyed seeing the stuffed rabbit roped & chained and surviving his toss into the river! Ask more about it later!!



Seriously, Bath is gorgeous. Monday we walked all over with a serious tour and again enjoyed warm sunny weather!



On Tuesday, we did whirlwind tour of Avebury Stone Circles (watch our for the sheep poop!! Oops, Marilyn got it!!),



Stonehenge (ooh laa laa, finally and oh soooo mystical!!),



Gastonbury Abbey,



Scrumpy Jack Cider Farm (ask Tom Brown for more info on that!)



and ate in the gorgeous city of Wells by the Cathedral.



Geez, I'd better finish this up now!!! We're way past Bath (actually arrived in York tonight!!), but must get you caught up!!

Lots of love,

***George & Pamela***



Subj: **Hello from Great Britain (Travelogue #3)**

Date: 5/1/2009

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Hi Unfortunate folks back home! We are still on the road and having a ball!! Had our first rain yesterday - but didn't cause any grief - however, I'll get to it later, I'm still trying to get caught up.

So we left the gorgeous city of Bath and took a side trip into South Wales (to just past the capital - Cardiff). We made 2 stops. The first was to an open air Welsh museum, St Fagan's Natural History Museum. It was free and huge. 100 acres! There are working farm houses on it and full size Welsh homes and churches which have been moved there stone by stone to give you an idea of Welsh life from medieval times to fairly current (1950's). It was free also! Amazing, huh? One of the working farms had lots of chickens, horses, & pigs.



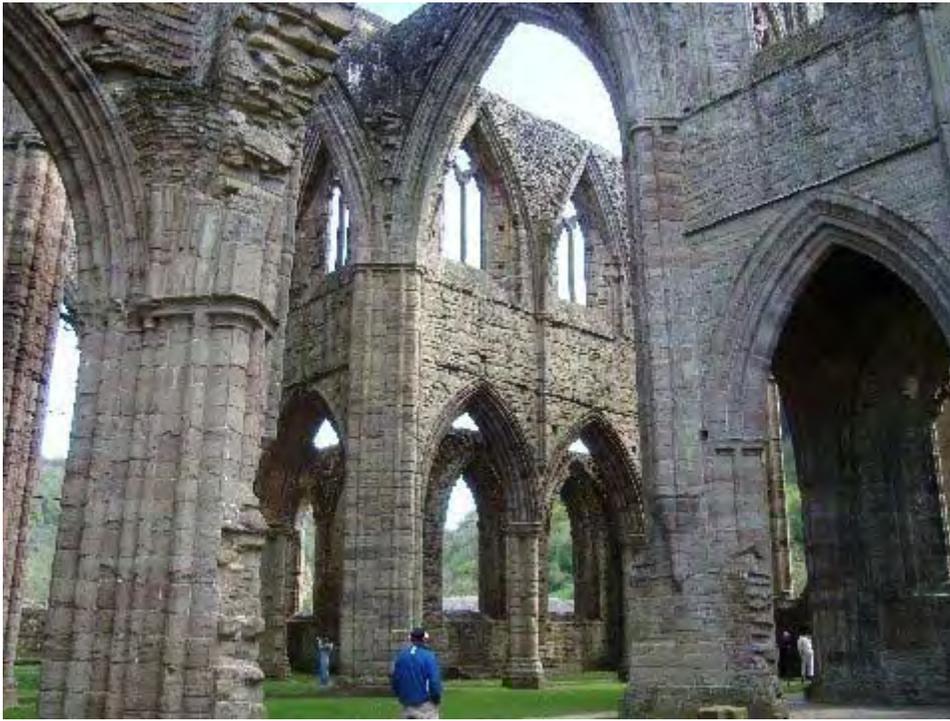
The entire site was built around a castle. Not a medieval stone castle, but more of a wood frame home. The gardens were gorgeous (Mom - note the blooming wisteria vine framing the left side of my picture! They have just started blooming!)



We took off for our second stop in South Wales - Tintern Abbey. It was gorgeous! Couldn't resist a picture of the Cherry blossoms. We've been seeing them everywhere, but this one was particularly beautiful.



Anyway, the Abbey was begun by monks in 1131. That's hard to imagine, huh? It was active until King George VIII did his sweep and closed all the religious places in the mid 1500's. Wordsworth wrote about this abbey in one of his poems.



On we drove to our next overnight stop, Chipping Camden in the Cotswolds. This entire area is just amazing. A collection of adorable little villages all within a few miles of each other. We enjoyed a Sunday drive to visit several of them, Broadway, Snowhill, Upper & Lower Slaughter, Upper & Lower Swell, and Stow-on-the-Wold. I will never again complain about narrow roads in the US!!!! We are all learning to suck in our breath to help George squeeze our enormous 9 pax van through these roads built for single horse carts!!!



Some of the homes were slightly larger than cottages!



While in Stow-on-the-Wold (don't you just love that name!!!), we visited the small Cathedral and took a picture of the back door that Tolkien fans consider his inspiration for the Gates of Moria!



The final stop of the day was Blenheim (pronounced BLEN em) Palace. I had considered not stopping here because it was fairly expensive - 14 pounds per person. Boy am I glad we did stop!! It was magnificent!! The Duke of Marlborough (don't get your Duke's mixed up - Marge got chastised about saying the wrong Duke!!!) still lives here. The Palace and grounds were given to the 1st Duke of Marlborough (John Churchill - last name sound familiar??) in 1704 for a successful battle. This is where Winston Churchill was born! Had a huge museum about Churchill. The Palace rivals Versailles.



The grounds were unbelievable! The gardens & grounds closed at 6pm. We got to walking, realized we couldn't get out and had a long long walk back to the entrance. We had to knock on a door of the restaurant to get back through the palace!! I'm sure we got the "silly Americans" sign behind our backs!!! We could have spent the entire day at this Palace and just scratched the surface. It's definitely a don't miss visit.



Enough for this missive. More later!!

Lots of love,

Subj: **Hello from Great Britain (Travelogue #4)**

Date: 5/6/2009

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Hi Everyone!!

And our journey continues!! We left the beautiful Cotswold and it was drizzling a bit. We traveled Northwest and stopped to see Ironbridge Gorge. This bridge was the first bridge to be built in iron. It was quite amazing. The history of this area is very interesting, if you want to know about it first hand, please ask Tom Anderson! He bought a book and was very intrigued with details. I just took pictures!



We didn't stay very long, but interestingly enough, it quit raining just as we got there and we saw no more rain that day!! We decided to take the scenic route towards North Wales - Conwy was our destination for the next 2 days. The drive was wonderful and it was indeed a scenic route!



By the time we drove into the wonderful town of Conwy which is dominated by a medieval Castle and surrounded by huge stone walls (our B&B was inside the walls), the sun was full out and the sky was a fabulous blue!! I for one fell in love with Conwy. I now have it on my list of places to return to and stay for several weeks. We walked on the walls around most of the town before having dinner in an Italian restaurant that had food to die for!! So good in fact, we ate there again the next night! This was also the nicest B&B we had stayed in! The rooms were beautifully done and had views of the castle from the big glass windows. They let us meet in the Breakfast room to do our computer work in the evenings!



I didn't want to leave the town, but there was a scenic circuit suggested by Rick Steves, so off we went the next morning. Very glad we did too, because again, it was a beautiful sunny day and the scenery was awesome! Our first stop was another medieval castle, Caernarfon. Had a wonderful guided tour with a volunteer who drew a mental picture of the castle as it would have been when the soldiers lived there. Had us imagining the tapestries on the walls, the fires burning, the cosy little family rooms, etc. Made it look much different!!



Then on to the base of the gorgeous Mt Snowdon - Snowdonia National Park area. Didn't have time to really take a proper hike here, but stopped for pictures and wandered up a trail to just take a look. Just a truly lovely area.



Continued back towards Conwy with a short stop to see a lovely water fall, Swallows Falls. Took a little hike around it.



Then stopped for a tour of a woolen mill.

We could have spent the rest of our vacation in this area, but.....time to move on!!

More later!!



***George & Pamela***

Subj: **Hello from Great Britain (Travelogue #5)**

Date: 5/6/2009

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Hello Friends & Family!!

We left beautiful North Wales and zigzagged back east to visit York. It is dominated by a huge beautiful cathedral that everyone calls the York Minster.



***George & Pamela***

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Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](#)

Look at my pictures on Webshots <http://community.webshots.com/user/pshurd>

Subj: **Greetings from Great Britain (Travelogue #6)**

Date: 5/13/2009

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Hi Guys,

Got way behind on my travelogues and sent one out accidentally. Soooooooo, thought I'd try to get caught up quickly!

I accidentally sent the picture of the York Minster Cathedral with out much info, but you got the picture anyway. We had gone there from Wales. We went to a professional Shakespeare production of Twelfth Night and just loved it!! We might become Shakespeare fans! We went back west from there to the beautiful English Lake District with is also in the National Trust (similar to our National Park system). We watched a local production of My Fair Lady there. It was really cute. Fun to hear the real British accents for that lovely musical!!! We had quite lovely weather and got to enjoy a lovely boat ride, a joy ride through the mountains and a fun walk around the lake!



We headed back towards the East coast with a stop at Hadrian's Wall - historic site of a Roman built wall that crosses the entire island of Great Britain. Assumedly to keep those pesky Scots away from Roman controlled territory! We spent one night in Durham, taking a quick look at the local cathedral & castle.



Splurged with huge king rooms at the Marriott (mostly because I reserved the Bed & Breakfast for the wrong date and it was a Bank Holiday with no other rooms at the Inn!!!). But we did get an extremely good rate that was actually the same as the B&B! Shuuuu! Barely escaped that screwup!

Anyway, just spent one night and then we headed up the west coast and into SCOTLAND!!! Yippee!! Finally made it to the beautiful land of the Scots!! The west coast drive was awesome! We stopped to see an exhibition about John Muir, his birth in Scotland, his travel to the US and around the world to help conserve the beauty of nature for the ages. Also found a lovely Seabird center with live cams (you control where you are looking!) of Puffins, kittiwakes, & gannets sitting on nests on a nearby



rock!



And so we arrived in Scotland. With 3 nights in Edinburgh, we got to do a Scottish Folk night, an late night evening in town, and a more relaxing night. The Scottish Folk night was great fun. It was within walking distance of our Bed & Breakfast and we were the first to arrive at the theater, so we got a private serenade of the bag pipes and they seated us in the front center table!



Both Marilynn & I got to learn & dance a Scottish dance. I tried to get pictures of Marilynn with her Scotsman in a proper kilt, but they were moving so fast, they were a bit blurry!!! I also got to sing a solo of My Bonnie during the crowd sing-a-long! I'm sure we were quite the hit!! At least in our eyes!!



We toured the castle, the Queen's Palace, walked the Royal Mile, rode the Hop on, Hop off buses all over the town, and enjoyed a museum of the history of Children. It had really interesting toys dating from the 1700's. The highlight was a tour of the Royal Family's retired Yacht, the Britannia. Although we finally experienced a little rain, it did not keep us from doing any of the touring & we loved Edinburgh.



Since this has already gotten longer than I intended, I suppose I'll do one more travelogue to finish up our British Isle vacation report!!!

Hope you are all fine and if you would like to experience more of our vacation, I have been loading most of my pictures on my Webshots site!!

Subj: **Greetings from Great Britain (Final Travelogue #7)**

Date: 5/22/2009

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Hello Everyone!! Hopefully I will not be too long winded and can get this finished up!! We're back in Texas now so need to get this caught up before we find ourselves back in Texas and forget about all our wonderful adventures!!

Okay, so we got our sunshine back shortly after we left Edinburgh!! We stopped at a very interesting Deep Water Aquarium right on the outskirts of Edinburgh. It was smaller than many we'd been to, but had a lovely tunnel to walk through with fish (huge sharks!!) all around. There were some really interesting anenomes and coral species we none of us had seen before.



We made it to Pitlochry easily. Went to visit the dam and fish ladders, took a distillery tour and a forest walk to a waterfall. Actually had snow projected, but after one drizzle, it was quite nice the rest of the day & evening. The B&B hostess built us a fire in the cozy little sitting room and we all curled up after dinner and enjoyed the lovely view & relaxed with our sweet cream whiskey liquour from the Edradour Distillery!!



The next morning, we drove to Inverness. We were officially in the Scottish Highlands!  
Stopped at Blair Atholl Castle. It was wonderful. (Notice we have our blue skies back!!)



Got to watch a swan nesting in the huge outdoor gardens.



Geez, I'm already getting long winded! Anyway, we stopped at the Culloden Battlefield.



Had a wonderful experience theater that put you in the middle of the charge between the Scottish and the British in the Bloodiest and last battle on British soil with the Jacobites in 1746. Scary! It's a national battlefield exhibit much like our Civil war areas. Very important to the Scots & you can certainly feel the spirits of all the dead.

Our 2 nights in Inverness were great. Wandered all around the city



and even taking a city bus over to Black Isle to walk along the beach and watch the dolphins playing just off shore. Can't resist telling this funny story. It was about a 45 minute ride to the beach. We then walked along the beach for about another 45 minutes. Just as we got to the lighthouse where we'd been told to expect the dolphins, we ran into a group of 20 or 30 folks standing and peering out at the water. Most had huge cameras with extremely large telephoto lenses. Just as we walked up, a pod of dolphins started jumping out of the water directly in front of us. We watched them chase the salmon for about 15 minutes and they disappeared. Everyone started heading back into town. One couple told us that they had all been standing and watching for the dolphins for over an hour and a half. We walked up and there they were!!!! Too funny! Unfortunately since they just showed up as we got there, we weren't ready for pictures, so I only got a couple with little fins showing up in the water!! See

one just in between Marge & George!!



Okay, must move on, this is taking forever!! We looked for Nessie enroute to the Isle of Skye. Didn't find her, but the scenery of



Loch Ness was fantastic!!



The Eileen Doonan Castle was awesome.

The 2 nights on the Isle of Skye were totally unbelievable. Called The Misty Isle by the Scottish, I had my fingers crossed to have a few breaks of sunshine to see the amazing views. Instead, we got 3 glorious days of total sun, with rarely a cloud in the sky. I could fill up my photo album with just pictures of this amazing island.



Had to include this picture. It was in a little hidden glade, called the Fairy Glen by the locals that we were given directions to by our B&B hostess. We had to really search for it and then scrambled up the grass & heather covered hills (watching carefully for sheep poo!!) to reach this beautiful little area.



One final picture of the view from our B&B bedroom in Portree on the Isle of Skye. Truly a magical area.



We drove south on the island to catch a ferry back to the mainland, through Fort William (views of the highest mountain - Ben Nevis)



and making a stop at the Glen Coe National Trust Area.



Finally got to Oban and we were dropped off at David & Valerie's, our host/hostess for the Scottish Dance Weekend. Tom Brown got to take over the driving! And it was on one of the notorious 2 way, but only 1 lane Scottish roads!! Cool, huh?

Wouldn't be a complete travelogue without at least one picture of a Highland Cow! Had to add one to our herd!!



Have to finish this up. I'll put more info on my website soon. Bottom line was that the weekend was fabulous! We got to do a little hiking in the local area with David & Valerie.



They were totally the best host/hostess we've experienced and then the dancing was wonderful. Tom & Marge and Tom & Marilyn did decide to dance with us and we all enjoyed socializing (was that the main reason everyone showed up - YEP I think so!!!) with the international group!! (3 American couples, 1 Scottish couple, 1 Belgium couple, 1 German couple, and 5 Swedish couples). Sure hated to see our much anticipated Scottish Fling end, but I must say, our bed felt awfully good!

Already working on Australia (now decided to add in a week in Tahiti) in September and NOW A NEW TRIP - Sweden in July 2010!!!! Stay tuned for more!!

Lots of love & hope everyone is safe & happy!!!



*George & Pamela*

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Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](#)

Look at my pictures on Webshots <http://community.webshots.com/user/pshurd>