



THE ICONIC ROUTE: U.K.: 1



LONDON
STONEHENGE





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continuing the account faithful
and true of the journey in
April, 2022 of
GUY & ROSY LILLIAN to
LONDON, ENGLAND,
STONEHENGE

Following the paths of druids,
kings and killers and assisted
by cool cabbies and
compassionate party girls

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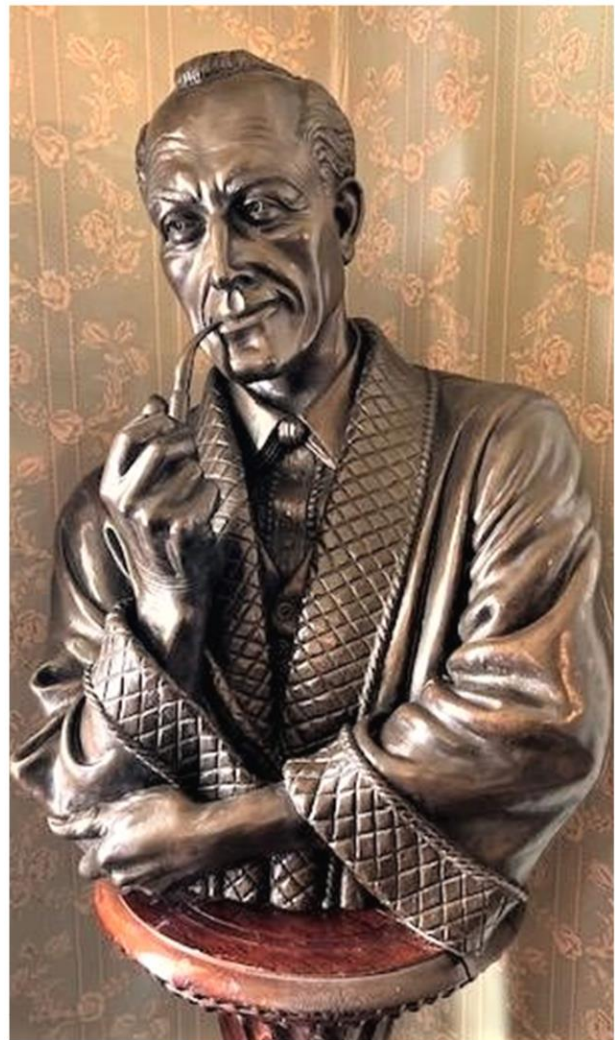


Rule, Britannia!

When we last saw our intrepid vacationers, they had just entered the “Chunnel,” the railway tunnel beneath the English Channel, traveling from France to the U.K., and the world outside the train’s window had gone black.

LONDON. The Chunnel. April 10. 2022.

Minutes passed as our coach zipped on in the external darkness – and then the world flashed back into being. We were through the Chunnel. We were in England.



We were welcomed to England and its greatest city by a delightful Cockney cabbie, who complimented America and Americans far beyond what we deserve. (Probably hoping for a tip, and he got one – we tried to give him a two pence piece instead of a two pound coin, same goof I made in Australia.)



Our travel agent had chosen our hotel for its centrality – we were within shouting distance of the British Museum and almost as close to the Underground. Thistle Holborn, t’was named, and it was *impeccable*. Downstairs, a free breakfast buffet with (among much else) watermelon, fried and scrambled eggs, splendid bangers – *sausage* to you bleedin’ yanks – croissants, orange and apple juice; upstairs, a small but luxurious room. Heated towel racks! In fact, the only flaws I could find with our room were our lousy view – the wall of the

building next door – and the difficult toilet flusher. You practically had to break your thumb to rid your privy of nastiness.

One other problem. Recall that I had stupidly left my levothyroxine – thyroid meds – in Florida, and had asked Rosy’s sister-in-law to mail them to our London hotel. I expected the package when we arrived – but t’wasn’t there.

We ate dinner at a nifty Italian restaurant around the corner, Il Castelletto, recommended by the hotel bartender. I had a thin crust seafood pizza washed down by another of those excellent European Cokes (real sugar!). We struck up conversation with a nice winger couple from Virginia at the next table. I told them my favorite Ronald

Reagan story, wherein that malignant old ham smiled and shook my hand and the next week had his goombahs teargas me on my way to class. Hope I didn’t offend them.



An initial impression of London: I noted similarities with Paris – the people on the busy streets were young and energetic – and some differences – unlike Parisians, Londoners didn’t hold hands or link arms as they walked. The streets were flanked by much more modern architecture. I recalled no double-decker buses on the streets of Paris, either.



We slept. A good idea. The next two weeks would be non-stop.

LONDON. Baker Street. April 11, 2022.

An easy address to remember the next morning, which was beautiful, by the way. “221B Baker Street!” I told the cabbie. Our London adventure began.

I very seriously doubt that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson could have survived comfortably in the 221B into which we were escorted. Though beautifully realized, it was *tiny*. One could not imagine the immortal duo facing down Charles Augustus Milverton or Dr.

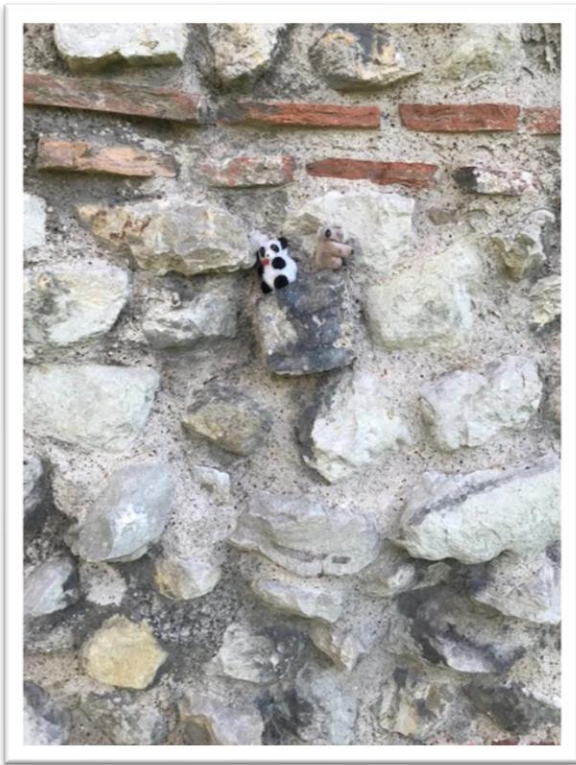
Grimesby-Roylott in such cramped quarters. However, the entrepreneurs who established the Sherlock Holmes Museum had done a fine job in decorating the parlor and the bedrooms to Victorian and Doyle-ish accuracy. On one shelf, you could find Holmes’ fabled Persian slipper, in whose toe he kept his favorite tobacco. On the wall behind us when I took the photo of our guide – who said she had studied Holmes in college – bullet holes showed where Sherlock had “carved” his initials. In an upstairs room detailed mannequins formed tableaux from famous Watson accounts. Spooky display – but effective. Above we see Jabez Wilson, the idiot anti-hero of “The Red-Headed League”, copying the dictionary, and here, the good Professor, all dried off from the Reichenbach Falls.

A somewhat prolonged visit to the juice bar next door, necessary for my belly and state of mind, and we were ready for the day’s main excursion. For that, we braved the Underground, the most complicated set of subways I have ever encountered. We emerged ... well ...

LONDON. The Tower I. April 11, 2022.

We emerged from the Underground, walked through a tunnel, paused by a ruined section of Roman wall – possibly the oldest structure in London. Climbers Mib and Neville, our personal icons, found the Wall irresistible, as you see below, and had it all but conquered before I plucked them from the stone.





The “boys” back in tow, we proceeded, and found ourselves on a pretty flowered path, startled by the majestic Tower Bridge over the Thames ... and facing the outer wall of our goal. A hideous trudge around said wall – twelve miles, at least (or ten; I am prone to exaggeration) – to find the entrance crippled my feet, and I admired with envy the fish & chips scarfed by younger, fitter-stomached visitors. (I didn’t dare eat.) But then we found the entrance, strode in past the colorful Beefeaters, and the history of the city and the country and the civilization swept us up like a tornado.

The Tower of London was built on the orders of William the Conqueror, no less, in the later years of the 12th – 12th – Century. (That’s roughly the age of Notre Dame.) His aim was to awe hostile Londoners, and so erected the White Tower – a massive edifice

for its time. Other monarchs added to the fortress, which became in time an arsenal, a prison, a royal residence, an execution ground, a repository for the nation’s greatest treasures, and a terrific tourist attraction in a town bulging with them.

The Tower was crowded (though not to Versailles fervor) and we were stressed and (of course) sore. So, to Rosy’s



regret. we had to skip the White Tower, which is a cool third of the point of the whole palace. But there were no stairs to climb for the exhibit comprising another third of the attraction, so we joined the queue for the **Crown Jewels**.

The line into the gallery/vault where the crowns and scepters and pots and pans are displayed/stored moved quickly, and we could see why: *no photography*. Rosy pointed out that if cameras were allowed, the line would groan to a halt behind endless selfies. We didn't feel hurried, but they did get us through – part of the way on a moving walkway that took us past the orb and scepter held by the Majesty at coronation. The scepter sports the Cullinan diamond, largest such known (>105 carats). A lot of space was devoted to serving dishes for royal banquets, including a cupid-adorned *gold* punchbowl in which one could bathe a fair-sized midget. The gold looked dark in the artificial light. After a display of ceremonial swords, used by monarchs for knighting and summary executions, we reached the crest: Queen Elizabeth II's crown, in which sits so much weighty gaudiness that Liz is said to hate wearing the damned thing.

The Crown.

The head of the Scepter.

Both hold Cullinan diamonds.

The Queen has her crown; we had our laundry. Best for my screaming feet, for we did the usual Lillian thing and got lost from the subway, wandering for miles before we found our hotel, they delivered the clean stuff to our concierge. That was all he had for us, though. My levothyroxine still hadn't arrived.



LONDON. The British Museum.
April 12, 2022.

Literally around the corner from Thistle Holborn was the expanse of **the British Museum**, and thither we trekked that Wednesday morning. There was a long line along the fence, but when the hour came, it slid easily into the great edifice. From the look of the Great Hall into which we trod, half of London could have fit inside. I had the idea that the British Museum would be an ancient, stuffy old place, exhibits cobweb-ridden on inaccessible shelves, but as you see → it was an open, airy, sunlit, modern facility. The exhibits were beautifully displayed. My only regret is that the hours we spent there had no sequel; we didn't go back for a second look.

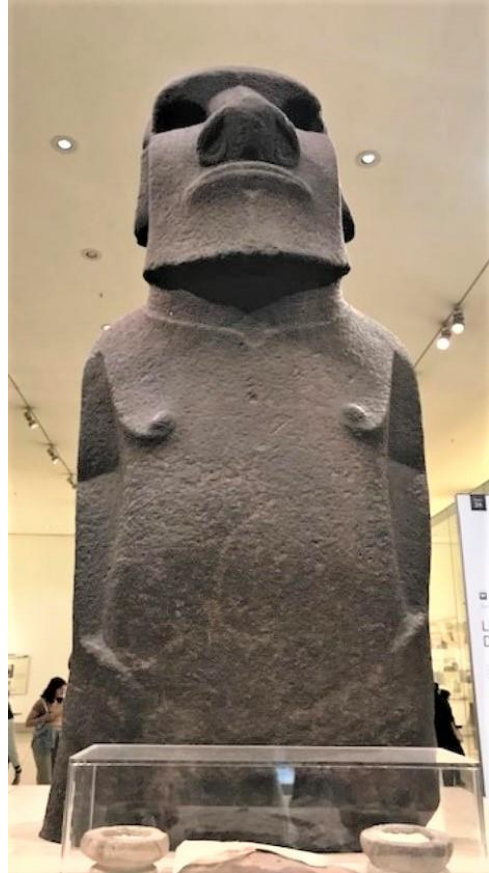
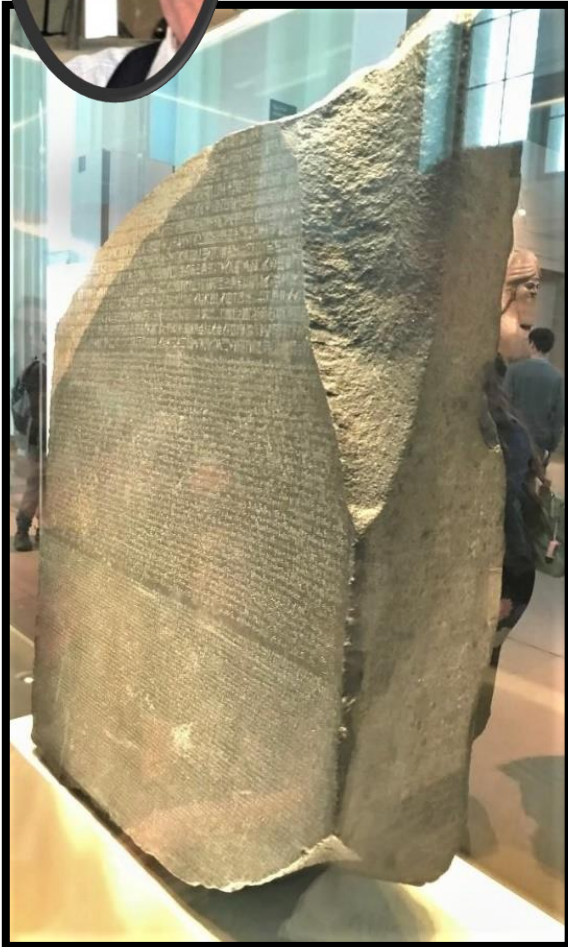


What we did see was awesome enough.

Yet there was more.



Ever see *The Dig*? Ever hear of the Sutton Hoo helmet? How about this → broad-bellied Moai emigrant from Easter Island and the funky Pharaoh below, on loan – *ha!* – from



Egypt, along with the cat so admired by Rosy ...

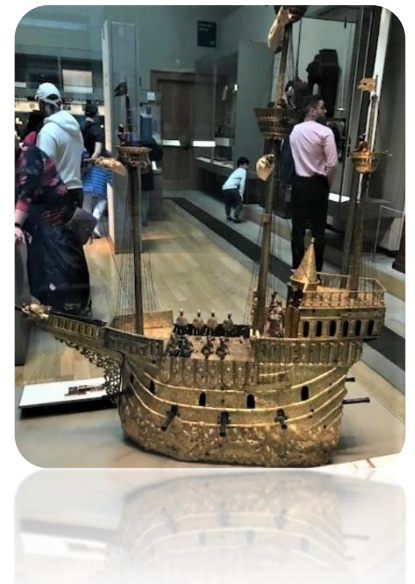
plus *this* ← hunk of rock sharing close to the same name as *la belle*. What's written on the **Rosetta Stone**, anyway?



The Museum had a special exhibit on Stonehenge, but since we'd see the great mystery the next day, we blew it off. Instead we toured an Egyptian display featuring this giant stone scarab and mummies and sarcophagi ... no Karloff, however.



One room that particularly snared my gaze displayed antique *clocks*, masterpieces created by senior artisans in the days before digital. Touring the magnificent creations, I recalled the Orson Welles film *The Stranger*, wherein Edward G. Robinson's FBI agent tracks down Welles' Nazi fugitive through his love of ... clocks.



STONEHENGE. April 13, 2022

Back at Thistle Holborn, we found that my levo had still not arrived. This worried me; miss too many doses of thyroid meds and you whack out. Rosy hit her text buttons and got into contact with her sister-in-law. Mystery solved; the dear girl had misread the shipping label and *sent the dope to herself*.

Fans of my *Routes* will remember that we ran into a similar problem in 2010, on our last trip to Australia. What to do? Go to a local pharmacy, drugstore, chemist, whatever they call them and wait for help.

There was such a business right on the other side of the Museum of Comedy – apparently a converted church, with pillars – which abutted our hotel. Tiny place but very helpful. I gave the (somewhat acerbic) chemist/pharmacist the phone number of my Florida Walgreen's, which would verify the levo script; he would pass on to a local sawbones who would write me a local prescription, which in turn would be filled by the druggist who would sell it to me. Success. I would soon have levothyroxine push-pop packets of the same strength as I'd been prescribed in America. I also bought some generic gut med and for my screeching feet, a tube of stuff I called Ben-Gay Lite. I'd need a quiet gut and serene feet; we'd be walking tomorrow, and if my plans went well, *dancing*.

We met our bus – and our charming guide – in front of a fancy hotel, and soon learned the only real flaw with our tour: they stuck to their schedule like Velcro. So much so that they promised to *abandon* anyone who wasn't aboard the vehicle when it came time to leave. Into the British countryside we drove. I felt secure; the bus had a bathroom of sorts.

When I'd spread the word that Rosy and I were England-bound, suggestions had flooded in of where to go while there. Many named Bath, a small city on the Salisbury Plain. Bath was our first stop, for lunch and a tour of the museum there. We were hustled through the streets of golden Bath Stone buildings, past a plaza where a trumpeter bravely filled the air with standards, to the museum entrance. The Bath Abbey, a beautiful cathedral, was apparently not open.



True to its name, the Bath Museum was built around Roman pools wherein citizens could shed their togas and wallow in the pleasant waters. Nowadays the waters looked more polluted than pleasant, but the statues surrounding the pool were impressive and intact, and the museum was intriguing. But we chafed under the hurry the schedule imposed, and by the time we had to go, we felt like we'd hardly seen the place. The famous mask of Minerva shown on my cover is about the only memory I have.

Not only that, we couldn't find our bus! Surely we were at the same round-about where we'd been dropped – what if it left without us? A panicky call to the tour offices promised succor; they said they'd inform our guide of where we'd be. I worried that we were being

pests, but when the bus returned she was kind and told us she'd appreciated the heads-up. We ate takeaway sandwiches as the bus returned to the narrow road.

Someday I'd like to visit Bath again ... really appreciate its Georgian architecture and history as a posh spa. But this day, a somewhat older attraction awaited.



(D'you see how the Heelstone seems to wrap a halo around *la belle's* head?)

Our bus stopped at a visitors' center where we raided the souvenir store before it closed, hit the head and finally boarded a smaller bus for the trip over the hill. Up we went. When we saw **Stonehenge**, a cheer flew high.

If you've lived under a stone yourself and don't know about the famous neolithic construct on the Salisbury Plain, my advice is that you interrupt your immersion in this account and look it up online. A prehistoric computer designed and built by Cro-Magnon geniuses over *five thousand years* ago, a site for religious ritual, for agricultural guidance, for awareness of the mechanisms of the sun and the seasons ... for reasons unknown ...

It's smaller than you'd think, from the hype. But those who expect Wembley Stadium at Stonehenge have visited the wrong era. A new guide joined us, and after a suitable spiel, led us within the fabled stone circle. I'm not ashamed to say that *I* whooped. The scraps of my erstwhile Bucket List fluttered away in the breeze.



I mentioned, when describing our visit to the Louvre, that the tours I'd seen on video were chaotic mob scenes, and to avoid same I signed us up for a special, late afternoon guidance that gave us extra time and proximity to *La Gioconda*. A similar effort took place here. Tours of Stonehenge usually don't allow access to the innards of the monument, but I found the one that did. I felt sorry for the folks restricted to the walkway on the outskirts, because *we* went inside and went *ape*.

While the guided chattered away and shoed my fellow tourists off the rocks (which seemed covered in lichen) we frolicked in history and myth – sneaking a touch here and there of the stones, hoping to somehow connect with the remarkable people who designed and erected this ancient cathedral.



As you can see from the photos above, clouds gathered and sprinkles began. No one paid the rain the slightest attention – indeed, the whole tour caroused in ecstasy. Like the smile of the *Mona Lisa*, Stonehenge is something as close to eternal as our poor little species can get. And *we've been there!*

Our sweet tour guide had collected meal orders for us on the way to Salisbury, and our bus took us to a ... what's the word? Oh ... *quaint* little village and its inn. For the second and last time in England, we each scarfed fish & chips, chatting with a young American couple at our table. Cleaned the plate, hoped that the fine foodies would take their time in my digestive tract. I popped a generic pill to aid in that aim.

As we headed back to London, our guide warned us that we'd have no rest stops on the way, and I *think* she said something about the john aboard our bus. Trusting in pharmaceuticals, I relaxed and fell asleep. And woke up when the pill wore off, well shy of London.

No problem, I'd just head for the head. It was located by the back door to the bus, a little compartment off to one side of the steps. But there was a paper attached to the door. Something to the effect of NOT IN USE. The *hell* you say.

I tore the paper aside and clambered in. Everything seemed to work, W.C., myself, sink. I heard giggling from some other passengers when I emerged, emptied, but hey, turkeys: you *wouldn't* be giggling if I *hadn't* gone in there.

LONDON. Whitechapel. April 14, 2022.

Many years ago I read Donald Rumbelow's *The Complete Jack the Ripper*. I'd known about the character, of course, and thought of him as just that, a character, a mystery, the most significant uncaught killer in history. Rumbelow, a skilled Scotland Yard detective, ran us through the five victims and several of the suspects – including the most popular (im)possibilities, Queen Victoria's grandson Eddy, his misogynistic tutor, barrister Montague Druitt, Dr. Neil Cream, H.H. Munro, etc, etc. The detective emphasized the mystery: everyone knows what Jack the Ripper did; no one knows who Jack the Ripper *was*.

Effective book! I read it on a bus between Birmingham and New Orleans. When I arrived

Jack the Ripper



home that night, I was reluctant to walk through the shadows into my French Quarter apartment.

I became and remained a Ripper aficionado. I watched movies about Saucy Jack, from Hitchcock's silent version of *The Lodger* to *Murder by Decree*, starring the impeccable Christopher Plummer and James Mason as Holmes and Watson. My friend Doug Wirth posed as Jack for a Jeff Potter book cover, portraying him as most imagine: an elegant top-hatted toff, cane in one hand, butcher's blade in the other. Mike Resnick wrote a story about him, making "him" a "her." I read Alan Moore's *From Hell*, accusing Queen Victoria herself of ordering the murders. Learning about Joseph Merrick, the desperately deformed "Elephant Man," I found it fascinating that they lived at the same time and close to the same place. Surely there was a lesson there ... maybe even a story. All right, then. When in London, a "Ripper tour" was *de rigueur*. No student of the mystery could possibly avoid it.



And so, on the night (of course) of April 14, we followed the texted instructions and made for a corner on the east side of London. The gathered people were enthused. One lady proclaimed herself president of her local Jack the Ripper Fan Club. Our guide, a spunky blonde lady in her 40s, assembled the 20 of us and took us along Jack's path.

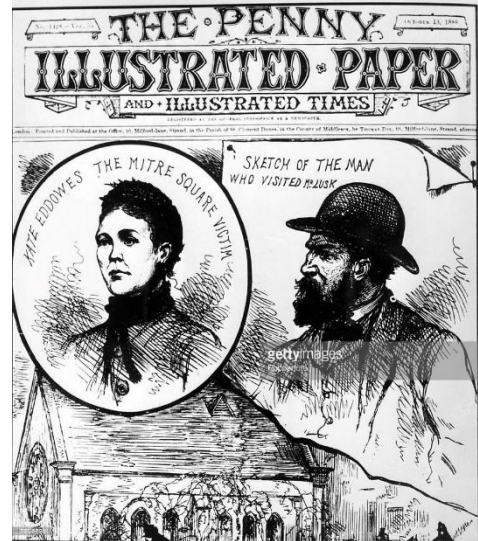
Here was Whitechapel. In the Ripper's time it was a literal cesspool of poverty and disease and crime. It could compete with the Black Hole of Calcutta. Now it seemed simply sleazy. Squalid takeaway joints. Dilapidated buildings. Trash cans overflowing by the curbs. Here was my problem with any tour devoted to the monster of 134 years ago. However seedy the Whitechapel of 2022 seemed, the Whitechapel of 1888 was infinitely worse, and from the streets tonight you can glean hardly a hint of Jack the Ripper or his victims. The sites of the murders are gone, replaced over the decades by apartment houses, office buildings, fast-food emporia and convenience stores. It was like standing in a parking lot and being told that a meteor had struck there 10,000 years before. You could feel little to no connection with the history, the terror, the mystery.

Also, our guide not only told the stories of the Ripper killings, she showed the people *pictures*. As you can imagine (or look up online) they're ghastly. Coroners' shots of the first four victims, slashed brutally up the front. The horrifying police photo of what Jack left behind of Mary Kelly, his two-hour masterpiece. Goodbye, any last vestige of *fun* connected with Jack the Ripper. That silly lady on the tour may have started out a fan of the mystery, but she wouldn't feel that way now.

Though Scotland Yard is sure of the Ripper's identity, and our guide mentioned his name (Aaron Kosminski, locked for life in a wacko ward shortly after the killings), the appeal of the case is *not* knowing, in hearing the ridiculous theories, in forgetting that Polly Nichols, Annie Chapman, "Long" Liz Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Kelly

were real human beings, with real rip-able flesh and spill-able blood. The epic ceases to be amusing when you realize that Jack, whoever he was, tore into real people like a wild animal. He was no prince of the realm or twisted *artiste* or mad doctor ... nor was he particularly interesting. Jack the Ripper was simply, fundamentally and forever a psychopathic sack of shit.

The tour broke up in the lee of a giant glass skyscraper. Thirty feet away, where now stands a children's schoolyard, was the site of Jack's penultimate murder, that of poor Catherine Eddowes. I went to the spot and said something like a prayer for the pitiful sinner who had died there 134 years ago. On behalf of all men who love women and feel born to protect them, I begged her soul for understanding and forgiveness. Forgiveness for you and me, that is. Not for Jack. To Hell with him.

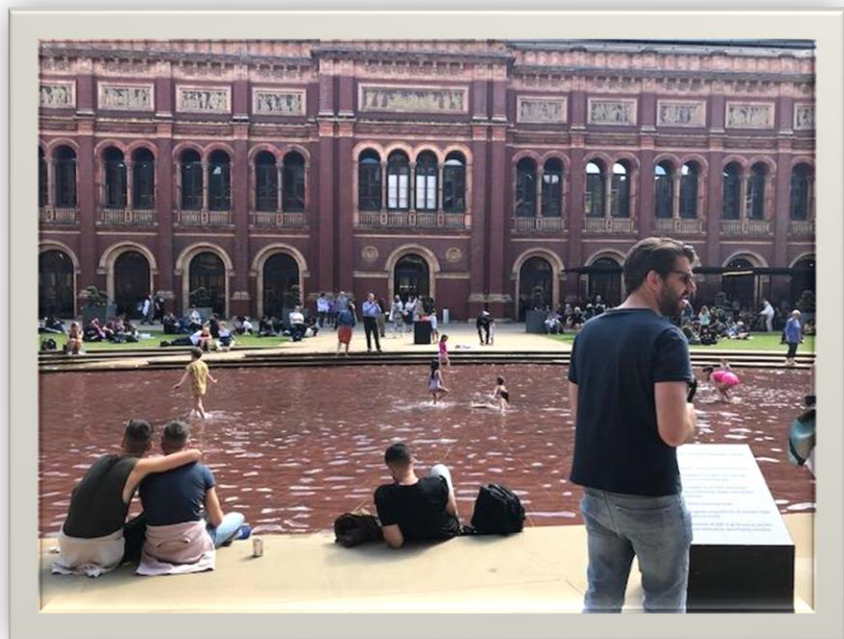


LONDON. The Victoria and Albert Museum. April 15, 2022.

From the depths to the heights, from Whitechapel to South Kensington, from the sleazy slums to the poshest pads in town, the next morning – after I took my levo, with relief – we were off for **the Victoria and Albert Museum**. When word of our European journey had come down, only Bath was touted more. And there was a special exhibit there Rosy had secured tickets to see.

During our long stroll from the Underground, I admit to being nervous about my tummy, Imodium'ed up though I was. I kept eying the basement entrances to some of the apartments along Exhibition Row. I wondered, could I jump down there should the ugly need arise, or rather descend? The museum itself was quite a walk from the tube station, for in between stood the massive Science Museum, its towers capped with crowns. About it on this pretty and *warm* mid-April morning Londoners thronged. Unlike the mob scene at Versailles, the vibe was joyous.

We got a perfect explanation why when we finally passed the Science Museum and reached the





Victoria/Albert, and the wading pool in the courtyard. *Families*. Children splashed merrily under the caring eyes of parents basking on the lawn. It was Good Friday, the beginning of the four-day bank holiday, and here in the midst of some of England's great treasures, family celebration was welcome.

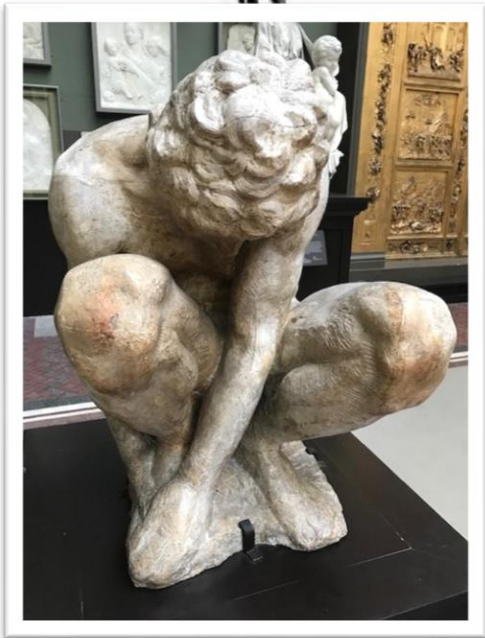
We had lunch under a palatial sky-high ceiling and went a'wandering. The dominant theme to the Vic/Albert seemed to be *sculpture*, both original and cast-copied. The latter category commanded most of a major gallery, and included many works of Michelangelo, including the magnificent horned Moses from the tomb of Pope Julius II, unfinished – and brilliant – slaves, and, of course, this guy ←. As I'll probably never make it to Florence, the V/A was as close as we'll ever get to *David*. I was proud and somewhat gratified that Rosy kept her eyes averted.

Other cool castings were the recumbent royal effigies from the French abbey of Fontevault, a couple of which are depicted on the next page. Prepped for the poobahs' coffins, they depict the royals in "eternal repose." Richard the Lion-Hearted! Eleanor of Aquitaine!

Original stuff at the

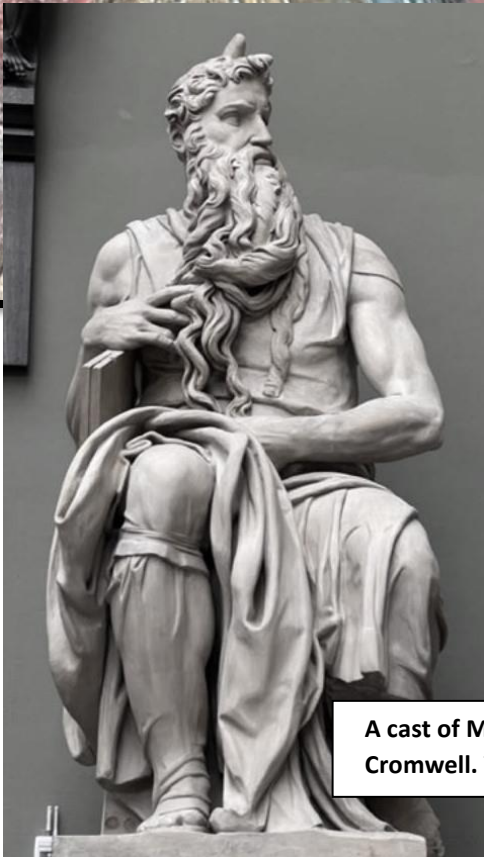


On this page: *David*, one of Michelangelo's unfinished "Slaves", a Beatrix Potter bunny.



Museum included busts of various important dudes of the times – including Oliver Cromwell – the famous *Three Graces*, plus ornate towers purloined from Egypt and some very cool Rodins. (No *Thinker*, though I've seen it in San Francisco and Philly.) Rosy had tickets for a Beatrix Potter exhibit, and when it opened, we trotted through. Bit of a downer, though – the Museum kept it too dark for us to make out details in the art.

Royal effigies – Eleanor of Aquitaine and Richard the Lionheart. What are you ladies reading, Rosy?



A cast of Michelangelo's *Moses* faces Oliver Cromwell. You lose, Ollie.





Just keep your eyes on the info, Rosy!
Above, the Three ... no, *Four* Graces.

We made the mistake of telling our taxi driver for the return to the hotel that we wanted no more than a sandwich for dinner. Helpful soul that he was, he drove us right into the thick of Piccadilly Circus, thinking a McDonald's would do. Rosy was disgusted, believing he'd taken us into that trafficky mess to boost his fare; the only way I could cheer her up was to find a store that sold premade sandwiches, which I did, around the corner from our hotel. Also picked up the Key-Lime-Pie-flavored KitKat I mentioned earlier. Why don't we have that in the United States?

LONDON. Westminster and Parliament. April 16, 2022.



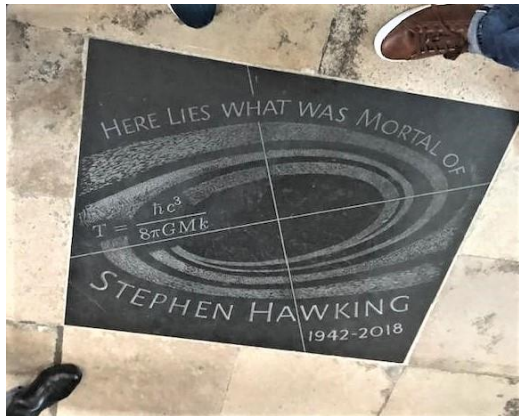
We rode the Undergrounds again. More like New York screechy subways than Paris' elegant trains. Walked to the Westminster Station entrance and outside. WHAM. **Big Ben.**

The Elizabeth II Tower and its famous clock loomed overhead like a doting parent, right across the street, stunning us hicks from the colonies. Adjacent, a park full of statues; we met our next tour and guide, Liz, by a bellowing bronze Winston Churchill. Liz

turned our attention to the grand cathedral beside Parliament, and into **Westminster Abbey** we went.

And I thought the Tower was rich in history. Read about the Abbey online. It is history.

My immediate impression: *stained glass*. The high-set windows on the Abbey are phenomenal. And *names underfoot*. It is considered the honor among honors for Brits to be buried in (or memorialized by) a space on the Abbey floor. My memory is probably fried by the Abbey's overdose of Cool, but the first such name I noticed, commemorated by a plaque underfoot, was Roger Bannister. Childhood memory: watching a film of his four-minute mile – the first ever accomplished by a human runner. (He became a renowned neurologist, I noted, and just now I learn that he died from Parkinson's. Oh well; good company.)

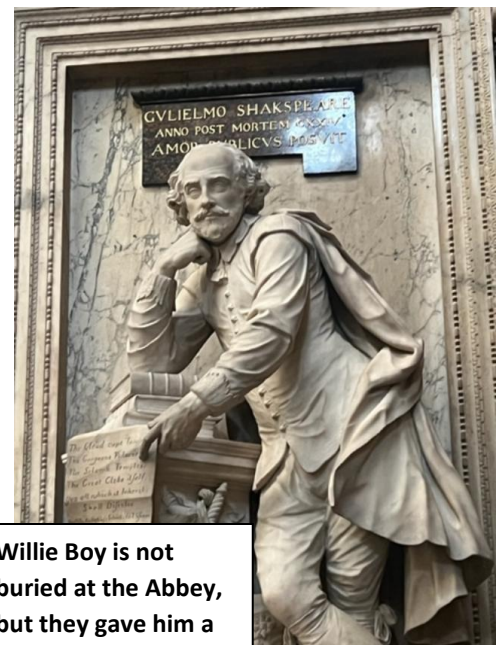


Stephen Hawking, beneath a modern-esque stone. Charles Dickens. Lewis Carroll. Handel. Kipling. W.H. Auden. Dylan Thomas. Samuel Johnson. Edmund Spenser. *Chaucer*.

Elizabeth I lies there, in a beautiful sarcophagus adorned with her effigy; nearby, Mary Queen of Scots. The psychic conversations between the two must be awkward. Here

also are the murdered princes (see *Richard III*). But Westminster Abbey is much more than a fancy boneyard. Royalty is married, christened, coronated there. Here Princess Diana was married, then mourned by her brother with the finest speech I've ever heard.

Our guide told us the tale of the Stone of Scone – now in Edinburgh – and there was the damned Throne of the Stone of Scone, shown all alone, with a groan, a drone on the phone, for the unknown bone, pone hone like a cone ... “You tramp! Stay away from my clone!” Wow, I'm in the *Zone!* And my mind is *blown*. (Forgive my tone.)



Willie Boy is not buried at the Abbey, but they gave him a statue anyway.



Isaac Newton and Queens Mary (of Scots) and Elizabeth I (below) rest easy, one hopes, in Westminster Abbey.

Rosy later admitted that, to an extent, the Abbey creeped her out. It seemed to her like a mausoleum. But she liked the tomb of *Sir Isaac Newton* ←. Rosy is a superfan of *The Da Vinci Code*. And the Laws of Motion.

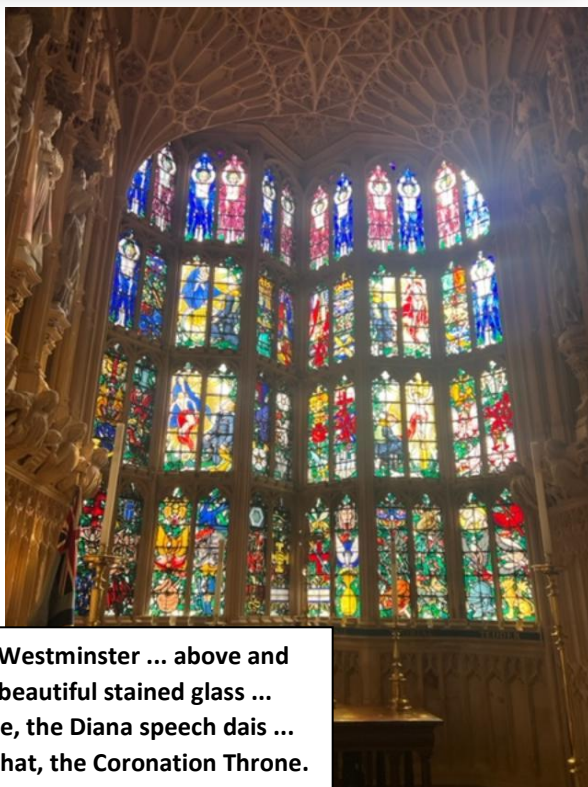
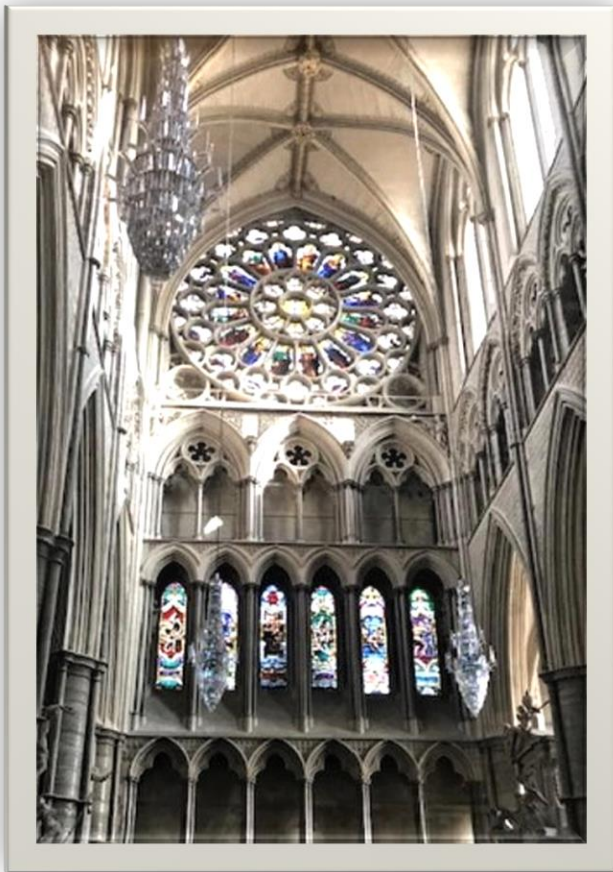
Me, I was overwhelmed. Exalted, but overwhelmed.



The architecture, too, numbs my attempts to describe it. A cathedral's high ceiling is

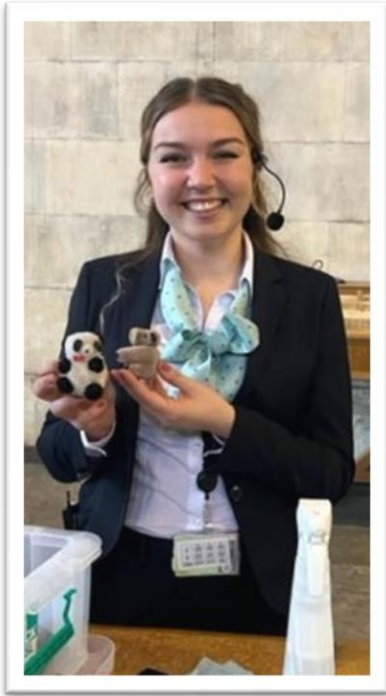
traditionally meant to evoke the magnitude of God. This building's astonishing ceilings could barely contain the majesty of English history. On the next page or so I'll allow my photos, poor though they are, to do my describing for me. My words are simply not up to the task.





Within Westminster ... above and below, beautiful stained glass ... opposite, the Diana speech dais ... below that, the Coronation Throne.





We didn't – couldn't! – see everything. But we'd seen enough to dizzy our minds by the time Liz passed us off to a successor guide. A heartbreakingly cute damsel by the name of *Gemma*, she would be escorting us – and Mib and Neville – through the second half of our tour – the **Houses of Parliament**.

Neither Rosy nor I have photos of the interior of the rooms – could be Gemma forbade it. But memory does tell me we saw British society and history in metaphor. The House of Lords is ornate, gold-leafed, grand ... obsolete, a relic, symbolic. The House of Commons is plain, utilitarian – the green cushions in the wooden pews were here-&-there torn along the seams. (Could we sit down? *No!*) But here was the real seat of government; here, *in that spot* at the end of the first bench, the Prime Minister sits. I could imagine Churchill rising from *that spot* to promise blood, toil, tears, and sweat, or Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher shooting zingers back at Her Majesty's loyal opposition ... I've seen

America's congressional chambers, Australia's parliament, and now the Mother of Parliaments. Next time I'm in Ottawa I'll complete my jaunt through the halls of government of the English-speaking peoples ...

Gemma finished our tour in a great hall directly underneath Big Ben. As you can see, there is nothing in it. But no matter. Check out the upper left photo. Mib and Neville joined the rest of us thanking the lovely girl for a terrific day.



HAMPTON COURT. April 17, 2022.

If the masters of Versailles want to improve their palace – give it context, evoke its place in history, bring its inhabitants to life, make it a *tolerable*, even thrilling experience, to **Hampton Court** they should go.

Though the palace is considered to be within London, we had to take a train to get there. The stops bore some familiar names, most particularly **Wimbledon**. Of course my thoughts turned to tennis, and I laughed at myself for wondering if Connors or Borg ever rode this train. *Only if England banned limousines*, I thought.

It was Easter Sunday, and what better way to mark the day for a Brit than a trip to a castle? You can google the story of Hampton Court, so I'll spare you much detail here. Suffice it to say that kings slept here (principally Henry VIII and William of William & Mary), queens died and were arrested here (both married to Henry), Shakespeare was performed here (*Hamlet* debuted in its halls), and millions have wandered its halls. But unlike Versailles, the multitudes didn't stomp all over each other's feet, and you left with an appreciation of the people and the times.

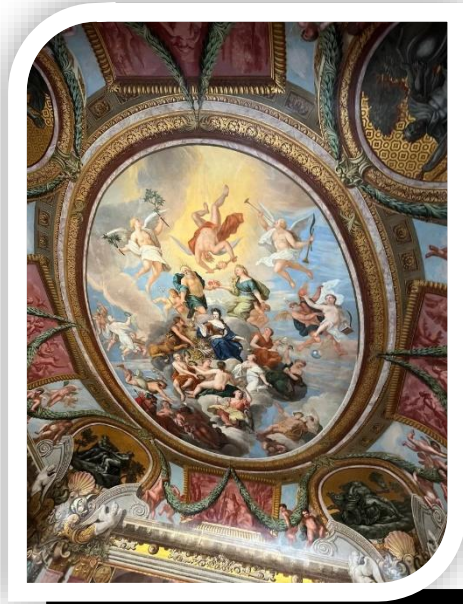


It was Easter Sunday, and families were out in force, visiting the castle – but unlike Versailles, not glutting it. Unlike the French palace, Hampton Court provides separate audio tours of its various wings, which are furnished appropriately. For instance, since Henry VIII held lavish banquets at Hampton, much attention has been given to his kitchens – as shown by the ox-sized fireplace below.





“Henry the VIII I am I am” ... in a portrait outside of his private apartments. Below him, a royal fireplace. Here, a glorious ceiling, and below that, a ghostly waistcoat from William and Mary’s time.



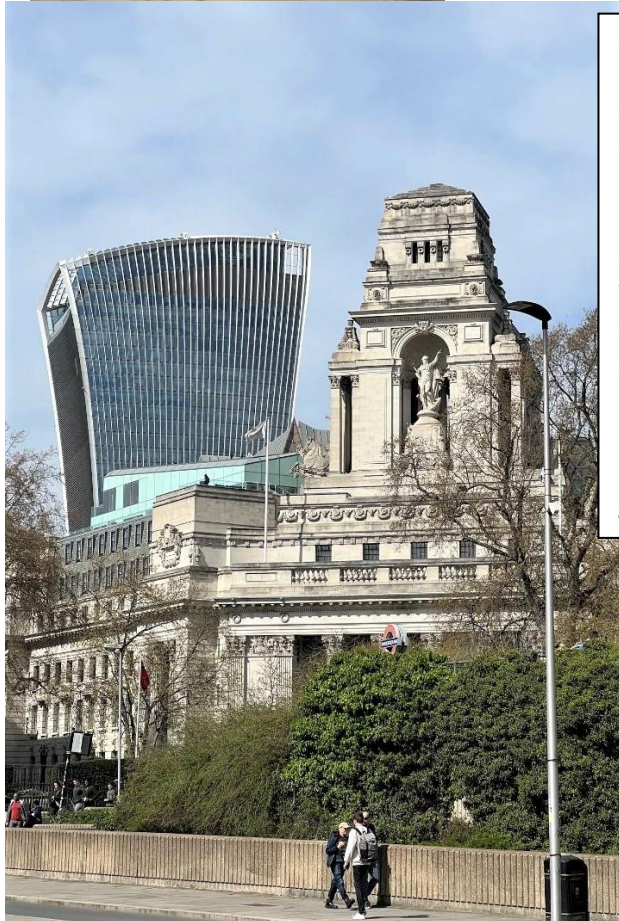
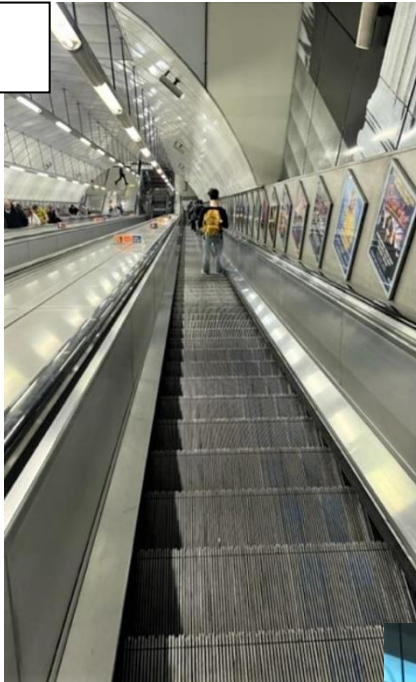
Hampton Court is a lively, living site in honor of British history. Concerts are held there and its gardens are legendary; the Brits know how to put on a show. Our visit was a pinnacle among pinnacles on our journey.

We had fish&chips at a local pub for dinner. Huge fish.

Two weeks down. One more to go.



AROUND LONDON



Clockwise from upper left: Churchill berates GHLIII by Parliament; the Holborn escalator; a white chapel in Whitechapel; contrasting architectures; Rosy eyes a puddytat at the British Museum gift shop.



“Eng-a-land swing like a pendulum doooo / Bobbies on bicycles two by two ...”

