



THE ICORNIC ROUTE: U.K.: 2

ENGLISH **Plantagenet** **Tudors** **Stuarts** **HANOVERIANS**

This chamber, together with the adjoining hall and chapel, formed the main apartment of the Norman castle. As the smaller chamber, with its own garden-like (closet) and access to the chapel, it would have been more private. Use of these rooms is uncertain – possibly domestic, or for ceremonies.

In 1565 – 66 this room probably became part of an armoury.

Later it became part of the Ordnance gunpowder magazine. In 1836 the doorway in the north wall was made to allow barrels of gunpowder to be lifted directly into the room from outside.

It later became a weapons store and in 1883 was transferred to the Tower Armouries to house part of its museum displays.

Historic Royal Palaces
TOWER OF LONDON
TOWER ARMOURIES



Mib and Neville make friends wherever they go.



Two-thirds of the way through our trip to France and the United Kingdom, Rosy and I were tiring.

We had already seen some of the supreme sights of Paris – the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Versailles, and taken a trip to the Normandy coast to visit Omaha Beach. In London, we had hit the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Tower of London, Whitechapel and Hampton Court. It had been brain-booming wonderful – and body-boggling exhausting.

But we still had much to see.

London is a city that is in constant self-creation. You can never know it completely. For that reason I daydreamed, while I was there, of being ¼ my age, about four times as healthy, about 40,000 times as rich – because if, if, if, I'd love to *live* there.

E.g.: One night as we were returning to our hotel we had to change trains at Piccadilly Circus. The train had been all but empty, but as we tried to leave we found ourselves all but crunched by an avalanche of people. As we staggered onto the platform I turned to a beautiful young lady disembarking with a mate. “What’s all *this*?”

The girl was gorgeous, splendidly made up, her excellent cleavage tanned and glowing. And she was delightfully at full sail. “Oh, London is fabulous!” she said. The two girls hustled off towards the exit, *Ab Fab* on the hoof. Sigh. I wasn’t that young when I *was* that young.

I fear we erred in leaving London for Edinburgh, and in due course I’ll say why. We should have saved Scotland for another year, when we’d’ve had time for the highlands, Loch Ness, and the rest of the country. We could have used the days in April to see the White Cliffs and Bletchley Park and another castle or two. Well, we did have some time left in London before we had to leave, and ...

Here they are.

THE ICONSIC ROUTE: U.K.: 2

concluding an account faithful
and true of the journey in April,
2022 of

GUY & ROSY LILLIAN to
LONDON, ENGLAND, &
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Uphill all the way!

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Marie Lillian and the rare
purloined picture

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ALBA GU BRATH





LONDON. “Bucks.” April 18, 2022.

Buckingham Palace annoyed my beloved lady. It shouldn't have; the day was gorgeous, my feet and belly weren't a particular nuisance – but Rosy wanted to take photos of the great monument to Queen Victoria in front of the palace they call “Bucks.” It was masked in scaffolding! And the plaza was crowded.

I reminded *la belle* that crowds are always there and were light compared to Versailles. (*Mardi Gras* is light compared to Versailles.) Also, there was good reason for the scaffolding. Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee

was upcoming. The Brits were simply giving the grounds a good wash.

We made the best of it. We watched Grenadiers snap to and struggled to find good photo sites. Here: the Victoria monument, built in 1911, and a close-up of Dean Spooner's “queer old dean.”



Mib and Neville charmed a friendly female cop. She didn't speak English well. The boys then tried to climb the locked gates, before which Rosy stands below.

I loved "Bucks", but I was glad to leave, hike a few blocks through a residential area – imagine the rents! – and scarf a delicious burger. We salvaged the day with a film, *Operation Mincemeat*, a true World War II tale Rosy enjoyed—she'd just seen where it took place.



And of course, when the Queen's Jubilee was broadcast in June, we *lived* in front of the TV. "We've been there!" Rosy kept saying. The Queen, though said to be ailing, looked sharp and happy. I'm all for the monarchy. Elizabeth II is after all a living symbol of England, and these events are a celebration of thousands of years of heritage more than "just Liz." Anyway, the monarchy's future seems promising. See above? Three kings and three queens. Whatever the game, that's a pretty good hand. (Full disclosure, we *didn't* take the above picture.)



LONDON. Linda! And the Thames. April 19, 2022.

Cast your mind back, back, back to 1975, to New Orleans, and the small convention I chaired with my great friend John Guidry, **Halfacon**. If I do say so, our little event featured some innovative program items – a roast of the great Southern fan, Hank Reinhardt, a slide show by the eminent photographer and book collector, Clarence Laughlin, a showing of rare SF/horror films (*Just Imagine; Night of the Demon*), and a tour of the Mardi Gras float dens across the Mississippi River.

All resound in my memory, but the expedition to Blaine Kern's float warehouse does so especially, since along on that trek came a newcomer to SF conventions – a short, longhaired blonde wearing a loose white tee shirt, droopy-lensed glasses and a cool worthy of Emma Peel. I kept trying to

sneak her picture. That was Linda Krawecka, then going by Linda Karrh.

SF plucked a chord for Linda, and in the fullness of time she became an important fan in New Orleans. In 1976 – barely a year after joining our number – Linda teamed with Annie Hebert to *own* the Worldcon. She became fast friends with Karl Edward Wagner and Barbara Mott Wagner and the undisputed leader of her fannish krewe. She became EO of Shadow-SFPA, the waitlisters' apa of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. And she moved to England, a change which did little to separate her from her Southern roots: she often visited her peeps in New Orleans, attended Jazz Fest and Carnival, and kept up a righteous membership in SFPA. I was OE then and founded the M.I.L.K. fun to convey her mailings across the Pond by the fastest post possible.

In England, she founded **Tiger Tea**. The organization attends major events such as rock concerts – the Stones would be appearing in London soon – and attend to those in need, drug O.D.s, folks freaked by the crowds, the lost and sick and frightened. Good work – noble. She let me know that when we came to England she was ready willing able to hostess us around. And so in the early afternoon on April 19 Rosy and I waited in the Thistle bar for this bundle of energy and joy to burst in upon us ...

And I'd thought London was terrific *before*.

Originally Linda planned to take us up to Oxford, but hearing about my ailments, she suggested an alternative: a river ride along the Thames to Greenwich. Lots less walking,

she promised. She led the way up to the upper level of one of London's ubiquitous red double-decker buses – which is a heckuva cool way to see the city.

The river taxi was like a bus itself. As it churned off into the choppy Thames, the captain/pilot began a saucy commentary on the landmarks we passed. Often he would remark glumly on the pubs that had closed, but also pointed out glories of the city skyline. We left from Westminster, about Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Parliament; soon we passed beneath the epic Tower Bridge by the white flame of the Tower of London. We saw the motionless London Eye, the great Ferris wheel my gut would have forbidden me anyway. The sardonic guide pointed out Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, the pub where Captain Kidd was arrested, Daniel Radcliffe's acting school, Ian McKellen's house, and "one of Gordon Ramsey's overpriced restaurants – 30 pounds for a burger and two chips!" Hyper-modern architecture sat side-by-side with traditional, classic structure; the Golfball, the Cellphone.

We passed beneath London Bridge, which did *not* fall down while we were there, and multitudes of closed port facilities, now converted into pricey

apartments *no one wants to rent*. The upper crust who could afford such digs have all chosen to move to the 'burbs. We were seeing a downside to London: costly and *empty*. Our guide gave the impression that we sailed through a ghost town, a mega-metropolis built and abandoned long ago.

Soon we pulled into the dock at the town

of **Greenwich**. I had some vertiginous moments recovering my land-legs, but did so without falling back into the Thames. And you know Linda's promise that we wouldn't have much walking to do? Not much perhaps for Yohann Diniz, world record holder in the 50 kilometer walk, but ... well, at least we saw cool stuff on the way.



For instance ...



Right in our path was the *Cutty Sark*, not only a fine whiskey but a famous clipper ship, built in 1869 and named, apparently and mysteriously, for old Scots slang meaning “scanty undergarments.” They let you climb the rigging nowadays – I *hope* they provide safety harnesses – but it being mid-afternoon, we passed.

Linda led us through the campus of the Royal Naval Academy, deserted this Easter week. It’s a new school relative to much of British academia, founded practically yesterday – 1733.



Once we hoofed it through, Linda placed us in front of what I *think* was an office building for the Greenwich Observatory.



She said we were either astride or suspiciously near the 0° longitude line, so if I seem confused about the date ...

Linda knew a good café just past the Academy, so we trooped to Bill’s, and it was an experience special enough for me to record it in my journal. I didn’t write about the food there, though I was right pleased with it – another burger; I crossed the Atlantic to eat hamburgers – but the purple-haired, much-pierced QT of a waitress.

At Bill’s we had the chance to catch up with Linda, to learn more about Tiger Tea, to pass along New Orleans news, including the sadness about an old and beloved friend who has begun to show the ravages of age. She resolved to visit her old homestead soon – it’s been too many years.

We took the train back into town – I think we’d missed the last boat. Saying goodbye to La Krawecke at the London Bridge terminal was sad, but seeing her in London was a reminder of the value of this life we lead and the fandom we inhabit, and how splendid it is to reconnect with one of the truly terrific people in both.

LONDON. The Tower II. April 20, 2022.

I was reluctant to revisit the Tower of London, recalling with horror the agonizing trek to find its entrance the first time. But *la belle's* heart was set on it. When we first visited, we were kept from the White Tower, the original building, by the crush of crowds, and besides, she had seen this *one particular keychain* at the Hampton Court souvenir shop, hadn't bought it, and now *wanted* it. Possibly it'd be at the Tower. So, we went. Took a cab this time, and knew where to bail.

Beautiful day – except for the light sprinkle at Stonehenge, we'd seen no rain on the entire trip. As usual, we were greeted by the Beefeaters, loudly and cheerfully giving tours. We didn't need one: we knew where we were to go.

This is it. See the raven ...



at the base of the building, just above the lady's head? Legend says that when the last raven leaves the Tower, the fortress will fall. Not today.

Note the wooden staircase, the first of some 200+ stairs we would need to climb to fully explore the White Tower. I whined that my feet would never make it – but they got me there!



Inside the building ... history. Gaze here ← upon Henry VIII's armor, complete with boastful codpiece. Though this suit was made late in Henry's life, it doesn't betray his truly unhealthy bulk – over 300 pounds – unless you view it from the side. Then the armor seems made for Moby Dick.

Speaking of bulk, the book to left is a ledger where items of armory were listed when the White Tower was doing service as an arsenal. One wonders if the previous 11 volumes were that thick. (Only 700 pages; I have paperbacks that large.)

I advised Rosy not to lower her head before the block, this one taller than usual to accommodate the audience in the back row.

Thousands of things ...

Not everything in the White Tower reflected antiquity. **The Commonwealth Globe** was

created and unveiled just before we arrived in Europe. It features stones from the summits of the highest mountains in each country of the British Commonwealth – plus lots of precious metal, of course. Gorgeous thing; it seemed to glow.





A faithful **Beefeater** let me cut in and out of the Tower for *ahem* biological reasons, saving my day, and I found to my surprise that my feet handled the 200-odd stairs without complaint. *Above & below*, as one of the Tower's identities in its span was that of private zoo, some of the critters housed there are memorialized in sculpture. *Next page*, Rosy descends within the Tower.



Great day.

It was a fine farewell to London, my new favorite city on Planet Earth.



We went back though to see the Crown Jewels again – and to seek out Rosy's keychain souvenir (no luck). While in line, Rosy looked up at the hat on the guy before her in line. The cap advertised a Harley-Davidson business in PALM BAY, FLORIDA.

Palm Bay is just south of Merritt Island on I-95. Small world.

But we couldn't find a keychain. We could, however, buy more Christmas ornaments ... and a fine Tower of London cap for me.



Sweeney Todd was both right and wrong about London. When he sang “There’s no place like London!” he was dead on. When he went on to lambaste it as “A hole in the world like a great black pit/and it’s filled with people who are filled with shit!” ... Well, no



“beagle” had his eye on Rosy, but everyone we met there, cabbies and concierges, druggists and party girls, was simply terrific. And there were always attractions. ←, Rosy with the dump she had us find on Denmark Street, because J.K. Rowling set one of her mysteries at that address. *Below*, she digs on Rose Street. No Harry Potter connection, but a nice name.

I haven’t spoken of **Forbidden Planet**, the enormous multi-storied SF comics/manga/clothing/toys/bookstore on Piccadilly Circus, rife with goodies and teenagers,

including one spectacularly good James T. Kirk cosplayer. I felt older than Tower dirt, surrounded by



all that joy in stuff I don’t collect anymore, but also pride in the genre. (Wish we could have seen some more fans in London, but Eastercon was

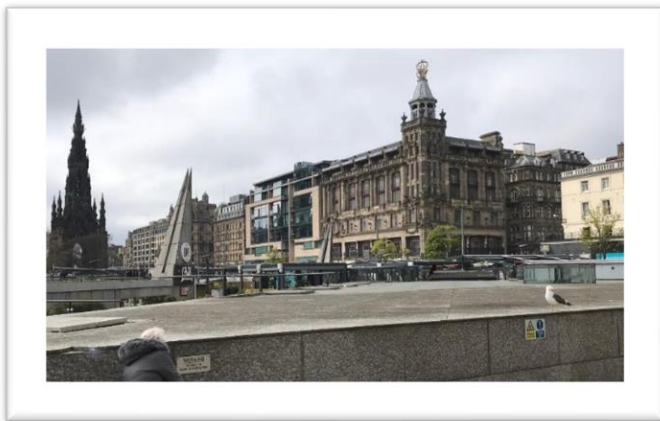
apparently the *next* weekend.)

We didn't get to the Old Bailey, to St. Paul's for Wellington's tomb, nor wandered about Trafalgar Square, or seen a play or three at theatres in the West End. I've already lamented Bletchley Park. Oxford and the White Cliffs of Dover. There's so much more to see – not to mention the *other* cities and sites in England.

I guess we'll have to go back, assuming my feet and digestion don't kill me first.

EDINBURGH. April 21, 2022.

I feel guilty about the few days we had left on our vacation, because I feel we wasted the time and the destination. We went to **Edinburgh**, one of the world's fascinating cities in one of the world's fascinating countries – but with a few exceptions, sampled little that was cool about the town. For one thing, it was *frigid*. For another, I was beat and sick. We hit that challenging town at the end of our trip, and I was in no shape to enjoy it ... enough.



You see, the Old Town in Edinburgh, where we stayed, sits on the side of a mountain. It's streets are cobblestone and brick – devilish on sore feet – and with the antique monuments and buildings athwart each avenue, Old Town has a heavy gothic vibe. Checking into our pleasant hotel – after pulling our suitcases, newly weighed with books on London attractions, up a steep, broken gradient from the train station – we saw this out of our window ... It's the

old city jail.

Cue heavy chords on the ol' pipe organ. Rosy tried to cheer me, pointing out that we were adding another ocean to our experience and another country to our resume. And the next day, we would see another castle. Well, okay then! All men are 12 years old, and all castles are *cool*.

EDINBURGH. The Castle. April 22, 2022.

And there's no denying it, Edinburgh Castle is cool, and I don't refer to the Arctic winds that rip down upon the mountaintop on which it sits. It's a fortress, a monument, a bastion, a symbol, reminiscent of Xanadu.

We took two taxis to get there – never mind the silly story. Suffice it that everything was uphill on uneven streets, and our able guide moved us all along like a sheepdog. I liked his spiel, explaining



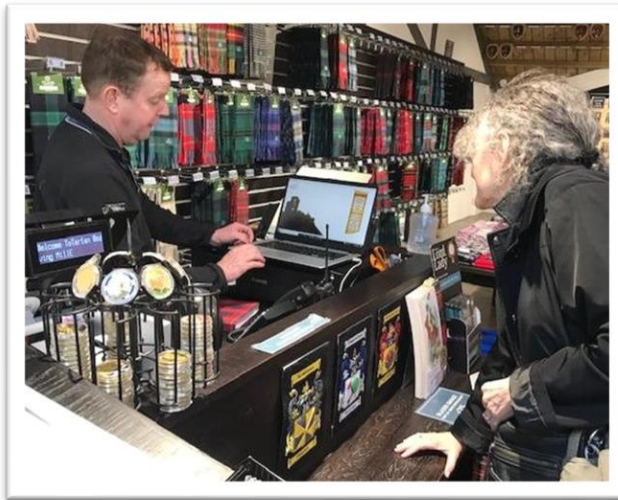
that the Castle was begun in the 12th Century – that was a busy time around that part of Europe – hugely expanded by James I three/four centuries later. But we never got to go inside. The whole tour was conducted in the clear but freezing weather.



Still, the Castle was impressive. I mean, *look* at that place. The fortress is built on Castle Rock, which has been occupied by human beings since the Iron Age. The most modern item in the place was an equestrian statue of a British general, Earl Douglas Haig, a World War I commander with a connection to the Castle. And the view from the Castle parapet was, in a word, phenomenal. Thinking back on the day, I wish we could have spent more time there. Hell, I wish we could spend

more time in Edinburgh. In Scotland. In *Europe*.

Rosy stopped at several souvenir shops on the way back to the hotel, seeking her souvenir keychain and, as seen below, researching the family tartan.

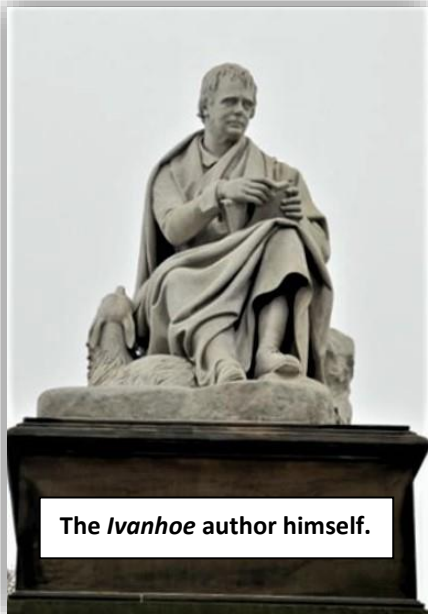


That evening we made our way to a multiplex to see the new *Fantastic Beasts*. Rosy thought it appropriate to catch a Harry Potter flick in the same city as J.K. Rowling began her career. I didn't care for the movie; the plot was confused and though Mads Mikkelsen is a brilliant actor, he hasn't a touch of Johnny Depp's whimsey, and whimsey is what the Dumbledore franchise is all about. Stupidly, I kept raiding Rosy's popcorn, which she pronounced the tastiest she'd ever had – and indeed, the

concessions in the U.K. featured pre-seasoned 'corn suitable for gourmands. I scarfed and scarfed and lo and behold, just as Dumbledore and Grindelwald were priming themselves for their inevitable epic battle, it became obvious that my attention was needed elsewhere.

I hurried past the other viewers in our row, made it through the door, and had just made the family bathroom when ... well, let's just say that had I *not* left when I did, I would have emptied that theater like a bomb scare. After 15-20 fervid minutes of amateur janitorial work, I returned to catch the last scene in the movie – from the door. Rosy met me there and we caught a quick cab back to the hotel. I don't think anyone else noticed.

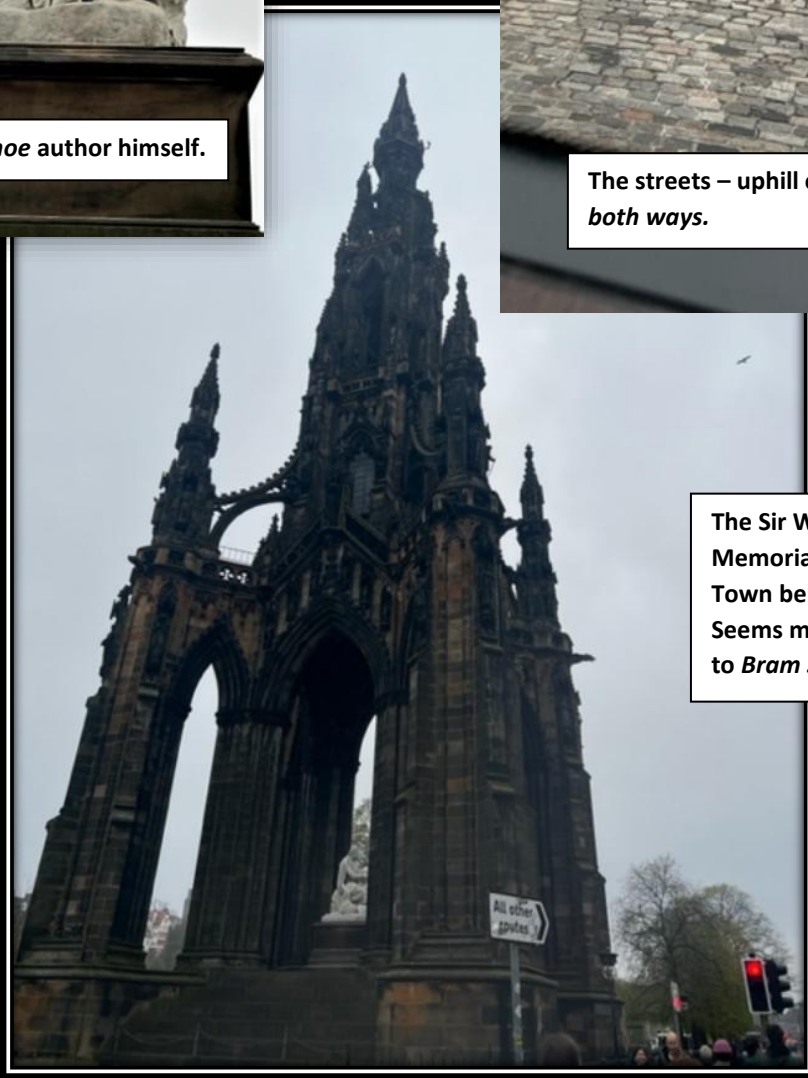
Edinburgh and I .were not being kind to one another, despite some astonishing sights.



The *Ivanhoe* author himself.



The streets – uphill on uneven brick – both ways.



The Sir Walter Scott Memorial dominates Old Town below the Castle. Seems more appropriate to *Bram Stoker* to me.

Britannia. April 23, 2022.

La belle refused to let me hide beneath the hotel bed the next day. Disaster or not, there were things *she* wanted to see. And number one on her list was a ship.

Moored on Blackness Bay off the Firth of Forth – “the Firth of Forth”; what a neat name; it means the *fjord*, or inlet, of the river Forth, an Anglicization of a Gaelic name – *HMY Britannia* was once the Queen’s royal yacht. It took Liz and Philip and other royals here and there about the world for many years, served as the honeymoon vessel for Charles and Diana, and was to be the royals’ refuge off the Scottish isles in case of nuclear war. A conservative Prime Minister of an anti-monarchical



bent forced sale of the ship to a private corporation, which tied it up in Scotland and opened it to tourism. It’s run a fine profit. Rosy had tickets for this Saturday, and away we went.

You can see the model on display of the *Britannia* on my cover; we couldn’t fit the whole vessel into one shot from our vantage; she is, after all, 412 feet in length. So we had to take picture after picture of the interior of the beautiful ship as we followed the arrows for the tour. The Queen’s stateroom impressed me. As you see, it’s not particularly elegant nor at all ornate; rather, it resembles a well-kept motel. The crew’s quarters were regulation, but the engines were spotless – as were the Land Rover, Rolls and touring boat kept on board ... you know, just in case Her Majesty got the mad munchies near a port of call.



Everywhere Queen Elizabeth went, her corgis were sure to follow. This ersatz pooch, masked against COVID, guards the medical bay on *HMY Britannia*.

Speaking of munchies, the Crown had a Tea Room built on an upper deck for commoner tourists such as we, and thereto Rosy and I pointed our noses.

And so Rosy and I lunched on the ship of royalty. *La belle* enjoyed her cake while I scarfed delicious skink soup and wtched ducks cavort in the cold blue waters of Blackness Bay.



A kind crewlady helped me on with my coat after lunch. I hate being infirm but she was being sweet more than just professional. Such kindness was *the* British attitude. I decided then and there that this excursion, or perhaps just this moemnt, made the whole stop in Edinburgh worthwhile.

Back to the hotel we went. The streets of Old Town thrived with the young, heading out on the town for Saturday night. It was wretchedly cold, but the Scots are a hardy race – many the mini-skirts on the lithesome young ladies!

EDINBURGH. Covid. April 24, 2022.

Our last day in Edinburgh was consumed with one thing: COVID. Recall that at the time the US government still required travelers coming into the United States – citizens or not – produce proof of a negative COVID test within the previous day or two. We hit the perpendicular streets of Old Town in search of the same, and after stumbling into two or three drugstores, were directed into the local testing clinic: Randex.

The girl in charge, Alex-for-Alexandria, became our instant heroine of the day. Funny, cheery, professional, kind, she moved us through quickly. To my surprise, the Q-tip inserted depo into my snoot didn't bother me. COVID has changed age-old GHIII attitudes towards certain medical procedures – like getting routine shots. They no longer fill me with panic. Likewise the COVID test; my only worry now was the result.

Because what if I tested positive? Or Rosy did? No one on the posh subways of Paris or the rumbling trains of the London tube had bothered to mask. We did so only sporadically. Crowds of wheezing tourists had surrounded us at the Eiffel Tower, Versailles, the theatres. I dreaded but half-expected bad news – and ten more days stuck in our hotel in Edinburgh. Wouldn't *that* be popular back home!

We adjourned to a nifty Italian restaurant with a cute blonde waitress with a delightful split chin, While we ate, the e-mail came through: NEGATIVE, both of us. Let's hear it for Moderna booster shots!

While we were out we visited another souvenir shop and I bought two hutch-ka sheep, a ewe and a lamb, to join Mib and Neville and Roo and Tony, king of icons, on my chest of drawers back in Florida. Back at the hotel, we retrieved laundry and packed. We ate dinner there, our waitress – Danae – a young and beautiful Cypriot, a student getting her Masters degree in entertainment law, if I remember correctly. She was adamant about going back to Cyprus and fighting the corruption there. That's the spirit!

It was all but over. I felt a familiar melancholy, similar to the emotions felt on our last days in Australia, that final taxi trip in Paris, in leaving London. Edinburgh had been a rough cob, as they say – but God only knew if we would ever return. My condition might make traveling impossible in the future. And I would miss seeing new sights and encountering new people, standing in history and being part of something far greater than myself. Guess I just hate saying goodbye.

The Atlantic. April 25, 2022.

Only one thing wrong with the cabbie who showed up to drive us to the airport. He was a fascist. Finding out that we were heading to Florida, he launched into praise for the state's troglodyte governor and condemnation of Joe Biden. He showed us a photo he claimed was Biden molesting a woman. But then he switched gears, in the taxi and in conversation, and was perfectly nice as he conveyed us through the 'burbs of Edinburgh.

He dropped us a long walk – my luck – from the Edinburgh terminal. There we endured more TSA-style nonsense. I don't remember the flight to Heathrow, where they inflicted even more of the same. No one looked at our COVID certificates. We were both patted down, and had to hurry to make our flight. But make it we did, and again, we had our three-seat row to ourselves, although the 777 was otherwise as full as a fresh pack of Marlboros.

The Atlantic was deep blue, daubed here and there by the bright white of sunlit clouds. I eyed the great ocean with wonder, nerves calmed by a pre-flight trunk and the beauty of what lay below us. I photographed the white clouds and blue water; Rosy photographed the sandwiches British Airways provided. Behind and about us, people eyed their TVs. Few conversed. Me, I was no better. When I grew tired of eying the Atlantic, I watched *Key Largo*. Though the Florida of the great Huston/Robinson/Bogart/Bacall film was beset by a hurricane, I knew that our real-life Florida had no weather problems waiting. The plane was, in John D. MacDonald's phrase, as steady as a cathedral. We'd seen a few of those in the last three weeks.

Finally the engines dropped a familiar octave; we were slowing. Indeed, that was land ahead ... familiar land. The pilot pointed out Cape Canaveral and Kennedy Space Center

to our left. We descended and landed in Orlando. I clapped in celebration. “We have crossed the Atlantic Ocean!” I bragged to Rosy.

Our 777 pulled up to the terminal. And stopped. Another plane had usurped our gate. We had to wait. The friends who had dropped us off were inside. They too waited. *45 minutes*.

Part of me, no doubt drug-crazed, fretted that the pilot would take off and *return us to England*. We’d loved it, and wanted to return, to do more than tour famous sites and sights, to learn more of what it’s like to *be* a Londoner, to *live* in that excitement, that joy, that frenzy, that history. And who knows? Drop back to Paris; see *Mona Lisa* again. Or go north, and this time tour the Highlands. And though we couldn’t correct the major mistake we’d made with this trip, and gone when we were younger and healthier, we could fix the lesser, and go when it was *warm*. Yea, verily, we will return.

But not yet! Pilot! Don’t take us back!
He didn’t.

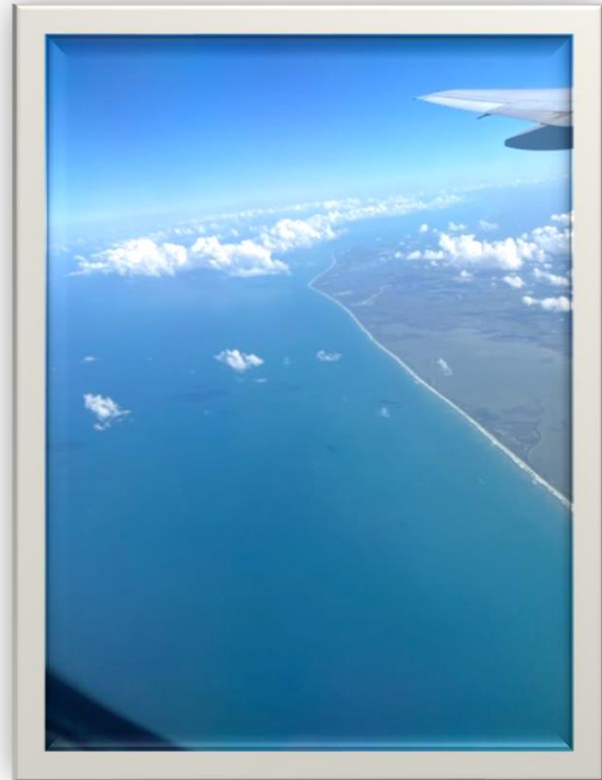


A few last thoughts, and apologies. *Sorry* about the focus on some of the photos; those were mine; my cellphone is not the Hasselblad equivalent that Rosy’s is. Sorry also for the travelogue nature of these three zines – except for Linda K., we didn’t see any SFers on our journey. My fault: I let people know I was coming. (Seriously, I didn’t think to look up the dates for Eastercon. Our loss.)

And now the trip Rosy and I have always dreamed of is not only done, it’s *doubly* done – experienced and related. My personal bucket list, as I said, is fluttering away in the breeze, reduced to scraps. Any other place we go will be, for me, *lagniappe*.

And who knows? Maybe we’ll see you there.

Happy trails -



GHLIII