

England

December 27, 2014-January 5, 2015

Saturday, December 27-Sunday, December 28 - After driving to the Portland Transportation Center, we shortly boarded our bus to Boston Logan. When we arrived we checked in for our flight (Virgin Atlantic flight 12) to London Heathrow. We had seats in Premier Economy, which were almost as good as Business Class...wide seats, lots of leg room, nice meal, free drinks, etc.



Immigration at Terminal 3 was slow, as we expected, since it usually is because so many flights arrive at about the same time. We finally got through and made our way to Terminal 5 to meet Tom. We also found our driver (we had arranged for a car to take us into London) and when Tom arrived, we started in. I thought I had booked our rooms at the Blackfriars Novotel but they were actually at the Ibis Blackfriars next door. We checked in and arranged to store our luggage until we could actually take possession of our rooms (we were there about five hours before check-in time).

We walked to the Southwark Underground station, which was on the Jubilee line. I thought it would take us to the Baker Street station

but it ended at the Waterloo station for reasons unknown to us. So we switched to the Bakerloo line, which got us to the Baker Street station. We departed and walked to [La Fromagerie](#), a great little place we found on TripAdvisor, where we had a great lunch of escargots, charcuterie, and, of course, cheese. We also bought some things to take to our apartment in [Cowes](#). Afterwards, we walked around the [Marylebone](#) area of [London](#), which was still decorated for Christmas and beautiful,

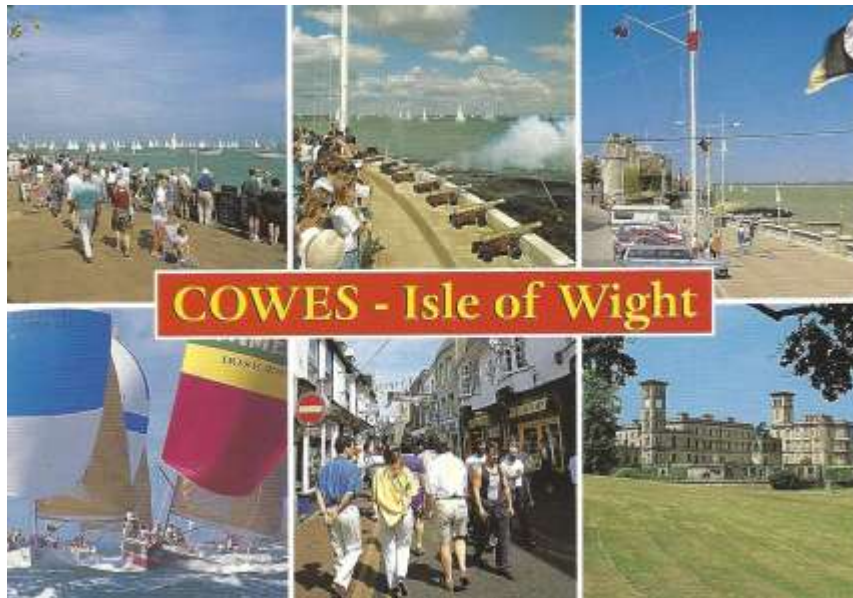
but crowded. It was cold and windy so we decided to stop into a pub for a pint. We took the Bakerloo line back to Waterloo station and walked from there back to the hotel and got settled into our rooms.

Since it was Sunday, there weren't many open restaurants nearby so we decided to try one called [Tas](#), which we had seen when we walked back to the hotel from Waterloo station. It turned out to be a god choice and we were able to stay awake until 21:00.

Monday, December 29 - I woke up early, as usual, and walked to a Tesco market around the corner from the hotel to get something for breakfast. I found my favorite prawn and mayo sandwich and some yogurt and a banana for Cindy. Tom had to go pick up Alexander, Genevieve, and Olivia from Julian and Abigail's house in London. So we decided to take all of our luggage to Waterloo station where Cindy and I would wait for him. We found a great place on the second floor mezzanine in the station called [Cartuccio's](#) where we sat at an outside table and had espressos. I also had a grappa and Cindy had an Amaretto. It was great watching all the activity in the station while we sipped our drinks.



Finally, Tom arrived with the kids and we bought train tickets to Southampton and some sandwiches for lunch on the train. We arrived in Southampton and went outside the station to catch the shuttle bus to



the ferry terminal. When we arrived at the terminal, we barely made the Red Jet ferry to [East Cowes](#). The ferry took about thirty minutes to get there and, when we arrived, Tom called Graham, the apartment manager to let him know we were on our way to the apartment. Then we started walking, which

was strenuous for all of us, but particularly Tom since he was carrying a heavy

duffel that Genevieve had brought. Fortunately, though, Graham drove up to us and offered to pack all our luggage into his car. What a relief!

When we arrived at 9 Fife Court (right), Graham gave us a tour and orientation. The apartment was great. It had five bedrooms so everyone had their own. It also had four bathrooms so only two kids had to share (Cindy and I had an ensuite bathroom).

We walked to a Sainsbury to get supplies for our stay; i. e., breakfast, dinner, drinks, etc. Since we had to walk everywhere, by the time we got back to the apartment and get settled in, it was time to think about making dinner. We decided to make pasta with mushrooms (we had brought some handmade pasta and dried porcini at La Fromagerie). We had a great time eating and talking.



Tuesday, December 30 - We walked into town for lunch but we were a bit late and couldn't find a table for five at any of the places we liked. However, we finally got one at [The Fountain Inn](#) and had a great pub meal. I had the best fish and chips ever.

After lunch, we walked to Top Gear car rental to arrange for a car. We were fortunate to get a van but it was only available for two days and we could pick it up tomorrow.

On the way back to the apartment, we stopped at a restaurant that we had seen earlier, called the [Coast Bar](#), to make a reservation for dinner. We had wanted to go there for lunch but couldn't get a table so we were glad to be able to go there for dinner. It was very good and had pizza, which made the kids happy.

Wednesday, December 31 - I went into Cowes to pick up our rental car. I also arranged to rent another car when I returned this one the next day. We were able to get a regular five passenger car next since Alexander would be gone (he would be going back to Heathrow to fly to Vancouver). The van was ready and waiting; however, the battery had died so I had to wait for someone to come and jump start it, then wait about twenty minutes for the battery to get charged. Fortunately, it never had a problem after that but, since I was a bit disoriented driving rather than walking back to the apartment, I got lost. Finally, after about thirty minutes, I found it.

When I got back, Tom informed me that he had a cold and couldn't go with us on our road trip. So the kids, Cindy and I piled into the van and started driving to [Yarmouth](#). We parked the car and walked into town to look around, then went searching for Salty's, a seafood restaurant we found on TripAdvisor, but it was closed for the season. What a disappointment! I was looking forward to it because they got great reviews and also had oysters. Anyway, we went to a pub across the street called [The King's Head](#) and ended up having a nice lunch. After lunch, we walked around town some more then got into the van and drove to a rock formation

off the west coast named [The Needles](#) because it is composed of several towering rocks resembling needles. The kids got a kick out of it but it was cold and very windy so we didn't stay very long.

We decided to drive down the south coast. We drove quite far but it was getting late so we made our way back



to Cowes through Newport. After we dropped off the kids, Cindy and I went into Cowes to the butcher shop there and bought some beautiful loin lamb chops. I cooked them for our New Year's Eve dinner. While waiting for midnight, we started watching a Queen concert on TV. It was really good and we celebrated the arrival of 2015 on the deck of our apartment listening to all the revelry going on around us. I was surprised not to hear any boat whistles from Cowes.

Thursday, January 1 - Tom made a fabulous brunch after which we took a drive to [Ryde](#), which is apparently a tourist destination. We walked along the seashore but most places were closed for the season. When we returned, I took the van back to Top Gear rentals and exchanged it for our car. Tom went for a long walk around Cowes and we drove to the [Spinnaker](#) restaurant, where we met him for dinner. By the time we left, it was raining so we had to pack ourselves into our smaller car (Olivia had to sit on Genevieve's lap).

Friday, January 2 - We said our goodbyes to Alexander and he and Tom took the ferry over to [Southampton](#) where Tom put him on a train to Heathrow. While he was gone, Cindy, Genevieve, Olivia, and I went to The Fountain again for lunch and I had that fabulous fish and chips. I was starting to catch Tom's cold and I couldn't finish it because my appetite had faded. Cindy and Genevieve had the Chicken Sharer, which they had wanted the first time we ate there but they had run out. After lunch, we took the girls shopping then went back to the apartment to wait for Tom and relax. I had begun reading *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand, which is a great read so I was glad to get back to it. When Tom returned, we decided to go to [China China](#) in Cowes for dinner.

Saturday, January 3 - Tom made us some beef sandwiches for lunch and we drove to the chain ferry to go from West Cowes to East Cowes and then to [Osborne House](#) (left). We took a guided tour of the house (which was all they offered during the off-season) but it was very interesting. We learned a lot about [Queen Victoria and Prince Albert](#) and their family.



When we got back to the apartment, we decided to use all the leftovers we had for a frittata, which I made, and it was great. It made more sense to use those leftovers than to go out to dinner again. Besides, many of the restaurants were closed for the season, so there weren't that many to choose from.

Sunday, January 4 - Tom informed us that Alexander had been sent back from Canada to Heathrow. He had been refused entry because he didn't have a student visa although he had attended college there. They assumed that he could get by with a tourist visa but Immigration didn't agree. More on that situation later. Anyway, we cleaned up the apartment and went to the ferry terminal where we took the ferry back to Southampton. When we arrived, I walked to National car rental to get our rental car. It was a nice car but wasn't going to be big enough to

carry us all after we picked up Alexander. So we drove to [Windsor](#) and dropped off Cindy and the girls at the castle and Tom and I went to Heathrow to pick up Alexander. I was really disappointed that I couldn't see the castle as well but that was our only choice since I was the only one who could drive the car. Anyway, we finally picked up Alexander after a long wait for his luggage. Then we had to drop him off at the Holiday Inn, where we were staying, since we couldn't all fit into the car, and then we went to pick up Cindy and the girls.

Tom and I walked into town to look for [Al Fassia](#), which Tom had found when he lived in England. It was still there and would open for dinner so we made a reservation.

Monday, January 5 - I got up and took advantage of the free breakfast and got what I paid for. Then I drove Tom and the kids to Heathrow to catch their flight to Malta. I got lost again coming back to Windsor but finally figured it out. So Cindy and I got packed and drove to Heathrow where we dropped off our rental car and checked into the No. 1 Traveller lounge at Terminal 3. It was pretty nice, especially since it only cost us 35 quid, so we were very comfortable until we could check into our flight.

We flew back to Boston on Virgin Atlantic flight 11 in our Premier Economy seats. We arrived in Boston around 20:45 and were hoping to catch the 21:35 bus back to Portland but we couldn't leave the plane because the jetway bridge was frozen and the crew was unable to get it to the plane. They finally managed it though and we were able to use Global Entry to get through Customs and Immigration. We had missed the 21:35 bus and knew we had to get the 23:25 bus. It was the last bus of the day but now our luggage was taking a long time to come out and we were afraid we might not make that one either. Finally, we got our luggage and were able to make the bus with a few minutes to spare.

When we got to the Portland Transportation Center, I found the car was covered with frozen snow. I had to clear it without the benefit of gloves in a freezing wind. Just what I needed with a cold coming on. Boy, was I glad to get home!