

Devizes, Bath and Salisbury

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Devizes, England, United Kingdom

Saturday, May 7, 2016

Not all those who wander are lost - J.R.R. Tolkien

Thursday 5th of May 2016

Our time in London has come to an end. Time to move on and have a look at the rest of England. We picked up our Hyundai I30 diesel (not exciting but pleasant enough to drive) and took the motorway to Oxford. We had been advised to do a "park and ride" here, but couldn't find the "park" bit so kept on driving - and ended up in the centre of Oxford after having lunch in a wonderful park a couple of miles out of town. This blog is going to be overloaded with superlatives - for good reason too. Oxford is exquisite. Thoughts passed through one's mind: if I had known this place existed, maybe I might have tried a bit harder at school so could become an Oxford scholar. It seems there was some tension between students and the townsfolk in the early days. Back in 1355, tensions that had been brewing over the last 50 years culminated in an all out brawl now known as the St. Scholastica's Day Massacre where 93 students and townspeople were killed. Things seem a little more settled now.

From Oxford we headed towards Devizes, and by pure luck passed the Avebury stone circle. The "Red Lion" pub is just opposite so we stopped for a drink in the front garden looking over the prehistoric stones in a field just over the road. This site is much larger than Stonehenge, quieter and has the advantage in being able to walk through and touch the stones. Truly awe inspiring.

On arrival at Devizes, we had a little difficulty locating our lodgings at "Hope Cottage", but found it at last and very happy with what we found. Small but very comfortable and with a friendly host who lives next door (Martin). He suggested we drive to Pottern to eat at the George and Dragon Hotel, which we did. A very old pub with low ceilings and it was very interesting watching the locals socialising here. The comparison with Australian hotels was stark - well dressed, well mannered people enjoying themselves in a homely way. Another big day with beautiful weather. 120 miles today.

Friday 6th of May 2016

Another fine and sunny morning greets us as we head into Devizes to do the walking tour of the town. The dominant feature is the Kennet and Avon Canal that passes through town. We inspected the Caen Hill locks, where 29 locks raise the canal 72 metres in 2.5 miles. A number of grey nomads and middle aged hippies passed by negotiating the lock ladder for our entertainment.

After lunch we headed off to Lacock Abbey (founded 1232). The whole of Lacock village has been in the hands of the National Trust since 1944, so is virtually untouched by modern development and is a popular choice for costume dramas. The Abbey was used for some scenes in the first Harry Potter movie with Harry, Ron and Hermione walking through the cloisters. We did a walk along public paths through private fields and passing over stiles between fields - apparently a very popular English pastime - around the Lacock area. Once again, the scenery is breathtakingly beautiful and so green!

Afterwards we headed back to our accommodation for a BBQ tea. It seems the English don't do BBQ's too well. The one we had only warmed up the meat without cooking it so we had to finish it off on the stove inside. Another fine day. 44 miles.

Saturday 7th of May 2016

The forecast for today is 22 degrees! Shorts weather! It's going to be a big day so we headed off straight after breakfast to Bath. This time we had done our homework to find the "park and ride". GPS is a godsend. I'm glad we didn't drive into town. It was very busy. Once in Bath our eyes were popping out of our heads. This place is magnificent! A real contrast from the other English towns we've seen so far. There is the smell of money - and lots of it. We did the obligatory tour of the Roman bath house. This was an extremely interesting and well managed facility. We strolled up the hill to The Circus and then to Royal Terrace - dripping even more money. Real estate here would be even more expensive than Melbourne ;-)

Next stop is Salisbury. We stopped at Warminster for lunch. We called into the Bath Arms Hotel intending to have a light lunch such as a chicken wrap or a BLT. We ordered BLT and it came out with 2 BLTs on each plate with a pile of chips - but not expensive at all. We witnessed a bit of excitement when an elderly lady fell over on the road just outside the window where we were seated. Luckily an ambulance was not too far away and she'll be fine. Off to Salisbury park and ride and into town. Saturday is market day here and was similar to local markets in Melbourne. The main attraction in Salisbury is the cathedral. And what a cathedral it is - a huge edifice in English Gothic style set in a walled medieval close. An interesting display inside told of King John getting above himself and upsetting his barons when he had sucked the public coffers dry in a series of ill-fated military campaigns. The barons created a set of guidelines to formalise the fact that the crown was not above the law and that his subjects had rights - the Magna Carta, which King John signed in 1215 and promised to abide by. He didn't of course - he got annoyed with the Pope's appointment of a certain Bishop and withdrew from the agreement. It has been rescinded and reimposed a number of times since then, and forms the basis of our legal system and constitution. One of the 4 known copies of the original Magna Carta is on display inside Salisbury Cathedral, and we've seen it! On the way home we drove past Stonehenge and were surprised how small it looked - and crowded. 84 miles. Sunny and warm.

Comments

Sounds like you're having a fabulous time. Reminiscent for me too. Went to all those places on my trip nearly two years ago. Happy Mother's Day mum!

— From Steph, on May 8, 2016 at 12:17AM

So pleased that you are enjoying the lay of the land. This is a fascinating place, so much to see and do. The history is astounding! I still cannot get used to how much is around. V. V. Pleased that you are having a great time.

— From Craig McArthur, on May 8, 2016 at 08:15PM

Pictures & Video



Brad at the Red Lion
opposite Avebury Henge



Avebury Henge



Our accommodation at
Devizes



Our car



Devizes



Canal in Devizes



Anna at canal in Devizes



Caen Hill Locks, Devizes



Caen Hill Locks



Lacock Abbey



Lacock Abbey cloisters



Inside Lacock Abbey
cloister
Story!



Bath Cathedral



Bath Roman Spa



Royal Terrace, Bath



The Circus, Bath



Salisbury Cathedral



Stained glass windows -
Salisbury Cathedral
Story and comments!



Abbey roof detail



Salisbury Cathedral



Salisbury Cathedral



Brad at the Red Lion opposite Avebury Henge

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Avebury Henge

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Our accomodation at Devizes

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Our car

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Devizes

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Canal in Devizes

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Anna at canal in Devizes

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Caen Hill Locks, Devizes

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Caen Hill Locks

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Lacock Abbey

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Lacock Abbey cloisters

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Inside Lacock Abbey cloister

Harry, Ron and Hermione walked along here in the first Harry Potter movie.

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Bath Cathedral

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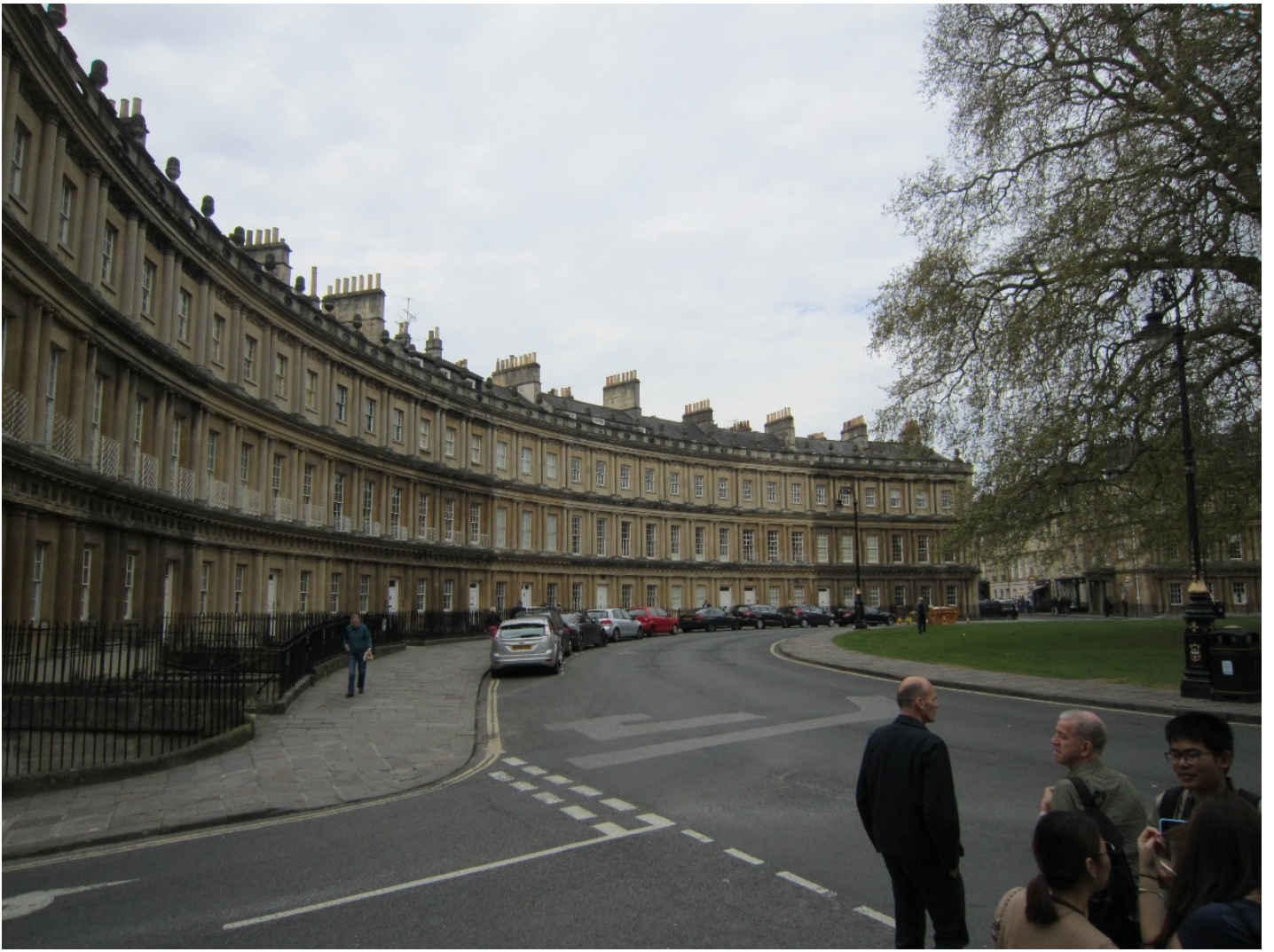
Bath Roman Spa

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Royal Terrace, Bath

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The Circus, Bath

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Salisbury Cathedral

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Stained glass windows - Salisbury Cathedral

This room is where an original copy of the Magna Carta is on display.

Comments:

That's some serious stained glass!!

— From misterphilby, on May 8, 2016 at 02:41AM

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Abbey roof detail

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Salisbury Cathedral

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Salisbury Cathedral

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