

A Letter from Africa Sept 26 2012

My African news is a little short this time as we have not been here to know what has gone on. It is clear that the international media is not that interested in South Africa. Mind you this silence was interrupted by the news of the **killing of some 34 striking miners** by the police.

The police have wisely avoided a repeat of this horrendous act and so that was about the lot as it related to SA news....well not quite, because there was the **Blade Runner**.

We were in **Europe** for a few weeks and the Blade Runner was all over the UK and is a kind of hero to the Brits. He seems to expound a level of determination and courage that has touched the soul of people and catapulted the Paralympics onto the front pages of newspapers.

However, it has not taken long for SA news to start up and I can tell you that the ex President of the ANC Youth League, the one and only **Julius Malema** was arrested today together with a few of his mates. His charges of fraud, corruption and other things seem most likely to be true as he has amassed huge wealth out of nothing.

Of course his anti Zuma stand of late makes the timing of the arrest suspicious, as Zuma starts his re-election campaign in a week or two.

By the way the killing of the miners has not stopped lots of other mines and companies being affected by more violent strikes as the gains won by the miners are now expected by everyone else and violent disruption seems to be their route to "success".

So this letter is really going to talk about Europe and the people and places we saw. Where to start? Perhaps at the beginning.

It was **Melanie's birthday** and a rare sunny day allowed for an Ilkley Moor picnic, garden drinks and a challenging very hot curry at an Ilkley Indian restaurant.

The group of some 13 people walked into town to avoid any drinking/driving issues and the kids decided to scooter in with machines being parked by the Maitre D!!

Melanie seems happy with the day's events.



Then it was a time to be with **Mackenzie** and get to understand and know more about her day to day life and what drives and motivates her. Guides, horses, school are big players and we were fortunate to be able to attend one of her horse days that dealt with grooming and riding skills. This picture captures the general feel of the day with rosettes already proudly worn. She had just come back from a Guiding Camp in Holland.

We have always been impressed with Yorkshire and Ilkley offers a view of England as it used to be. If only it was warmer and dryer.

We went into Skipton and took a short boat ride to the castle. By the canals is a statue of fast bowler **Fred Trueman**. We were told by the guide on the boat that the statue was rejected by most towns but Skipton was the one (perhaps only one) to accept it. For me he was a great fast bowler but to the locals he had another social side that was not well received and thus the rejection of his statue by many places.

Our journey took us to London and Dorset and we were to be well impressed with what we saw. More about this later.



We always manage a short stay in the **Lake District**. You all know that the lakes sit in the glaciated valleys that were set a long time ago. This produces the wonderful landscape of steep mountains and lakes.

We hired some boats on Lake Coniston but could not get up to the pace of ex world water speed record holder Donald Campbell who died on the lake during one such speed record attempt.

Note looming paddle steamer with Alex and Mackenzie about to break new Olympic record.

Our base was Stavely which has become more desirable since the by pass arrived leaving the little village alone to return to its quiet self. The gentle condition is punctuated by the local brewery and hikers who seek out the old pubs that provide a safe, warm, dry spot to eat and drink.

The charm and beauty of this area gave way to the vitality and bustle of **London** amidst the Olympic programme with the **Paralympics** in full flight whilst we were there.

We had people to see and Olympic park and London to visit. So the best option is to combine the two and so it was.

London was the place to be and the fan parks in Trafalgar Square, Stratford and around the city kept the Olympic focus burning.

During one day Bev met up with some old friends and I headed to the Thames to meet my brother. As it turned out our routes coincided at the New Tate on the South Bank although never actually seeing each other. One day, perhaps, I will appreciate most of the art on display....perhaps. I keep visiting and looking and seeking inspiration....not found it yet.

But Thames festival was on and my journey by foot took in Trafalgar Square, Strand, Covent Garden, St Paul's, Millennium Bridge, Festival Hall, Holborn, and Charing Cross Rd.

I even managed to get Ken to have a beer in Trafalgar Square as the Paralympic dramas unfolded on the big screen. All great stuff.



Pictures capture the actors in this small play with the wonderful backdrop of London's skyline.



Seen here are old school friends **Catherine and Barbara**. I then joined Catherine and Bev in the evening and we met up with Tommy and Carol **Youldon**.

A busy exchange arose, made the more difficult as everyone wanted to watch the Paralympics on TV and talk at the same time.

So that made 2 Old Camdenians and 3 from Camden School for girls.

We were staying with **Verona and Frank** who were the perfect hosts and together we tried a few local beers, found some great eating places and together visited the Stratford Olympic site, the Javelin Train, the new St. Pancras international train station, British Museum. Then came shopping along Oxford St. Regent St. and camera hunting in Tottenham Court Rd and along the way Soho Square and Foyle's. Frank and Verona in front of their house. Oh no it is the British Museum. Then they all collapsed from all that walking.



Frank is also a keen Arsenal supporter but he will not mind a pic of another Old Camdenian with wife Jo.

Richard and Jo visit SA a lot but this time it was us meeting up in Wakefield.

As with Frank the men always seem to want to hug the girls in situations like this.

Richard is a Spurs man and Jo...is Jo.

The other lady is of course Bev.

I am fast running out of space but with so much more to talk about and show you.

So quickly we must go to the desirable County of Dorset where we met up with ex London workmate **Carol** (and family members) plus PE girl Judith. This meant going to Poole where Carol kindly hosted us (such a good cook) and took us around (with John's knowledgeable help).

A trip to lovely Dorchester allowed for a few hours of talking with **Judith** and to see how her new life in the UK was getting on.



With Carol as tour guide we were able to visit some of the sites from Corfe Castle to Lulworth Cove and the Jurassic coastline where fossils were duly hunted down and some even making it back to PE. Then they found their way into Courtney's classroom where this

subject was being taught. Little lanes lead to pubs and cream tea places and green rolling hills and quaint villages.

A lovely stay in a most pleasant part of England. Brought to life by the detailed and clever routes and destinations that had been pre selected.

A wedding picture!! What has this got to do with anything?

A good question.

The answer is that as we were walking along one of the stream lined walkways of Dorchester we came upon a newly married couple. The photographer wanted some walk about shots as perhaps royalty might do. So into the frame went Judith and Bev.



Our deepest thanks to all those we met who treated us with such kindness. I have not been able to name everyone and we are also aware that we were not able to touch sides with many others during our short and tight schedule.

A change to politics in SA. The local University in PE has just once more voted in the DA lead student body that now have 16 of the 21 posts. Some hope for the future of SA which is also reflected in more gains by the DA in Cape Town over the last few days.



One last report and this deals with our super journey to Estonia and Tallinn. This medieval City has survived the “terror” of Russian and German occupation and is today a delightful spot to visit. I use the word “terror” as this is how the Tallinn museum describes these dark times in their history. I could write a lot about this trip but will not. You have endured enough already. We ate Russian style and Estonian style and drank the local brews.

Special thanks to Melanie and Alex for what they did to assist the whole journey.

That’s it, no more, finish, end, quit, desist. Just stop. OK, ok I get the message. Bye and love from

Bev and Alan