

"A TRIP TO EUROPE"

Eighth article in the series by Miss Margaret Laundry.

England

Having given up our jobs before the Coronation and stored our trunks in Residence, an Aussie Nurse, Joan, Kath and I left London June 5th to start an 8½ week hitch hiking tour of Britain. In blue jeans plaid shirts heavy shoes and a 25 lb. shoulder pack sack, we were on our way. The morning was grey and chilly and by the time we had walked 3 blocks with those sacks we were ready to go back and dump half the contents. Once out of the city, near Kingston we tried out our thumbs (which by the way in the course of the trip grew several inches longer). Luck was with us for the first car thumbed stopped. We had a difficult time packing ourselves in those little Prefects and Vauxhalls so found that most of our rides were with the lorries (trucks for Canadians). Passed misty Windsor Castle, and following the course of the Thames arrived in Oxford in the late afternoon.

In London we had joined the Youth Hostel Association for \$1.30 and stayed at the hostels in every country we visited. Two blankets a mattress and double bunk in a dormitory are supplied, while each member provides his own sheet sleeping bag, pays 25¢ per night and does ½ an hours duties (usually sweeping or dishwashing) assigned by the Hostel Warden)

In Oxford, Mr. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia was being publically welcomed by the city and later next afternoon who should I meet in one of the University Chapels but Mr. St. Laurent in morning dress discussing a stained glass window with 2 other Canadians. I didn't bother disturbing him to introduce myself. After visiting many of the University buildings scattered throughout the town we travelled on north to Stratford-Upon-Avon, the land of Shakespeare, of low stone cottages with thatched roofs covered with clinging roses and enclosed by a hedge row or low stone wall. Village after village, the quaintest you can imagine with names like Chipping Camden, Little Compton and Shipston on Storr. Stratford itself is built chiefly of the Tudor style half-timbered houses of black and white with low beamed ceilings and leaded windows. Of course we visited the homes of Shakespeare and his family and Anne Hathaway's Cottage with its colourful and beautiful garden. We were able to get tickets to the first night of "The Taming of the Shrew" at the
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modern Shakespeare Memorial Theatre overlooking the Avon River, but did feel a little out of place in cotton dresses sitting between tuxes and evening gowns.

An old Church of England vicar drove us (with hearts in our mouths) 10 miles on to Warwick Castle built in 1400 and the best kept of any castle we saw. It was a litteral museum of armour and weapons, including a helmet worn by Cromwell. Its rooms were richly furnished with elaborate candelabras, rich tapestries, and tables and cabinets inlaid with brass and Mother of Pearl. Nearby was Kennilworth, a red stone castle, now in ruins made famous by Sir Walter Scott.

Continuing north we had a drive with Major Gibbons, a one time Canadian Mountie, to Coventry in the Midlands. The Cathedral gutted by fire in 1940 has been kept as a memorial of the Blitz. Here we created enough interest to have our pictures taken by the Birmingham Post. Of course we didn't leave Coventry without first seeing Lady Godiva, mounted in the central square.

Through Sherwood Forest and Nottingham we arrived in a heavy rain at Sheffield (the knife and fork place) sitting on wooden kegs of ale and stout in the back of a beer wagon. (It didn't seem so funny at the time) How such an ugly dirty city could be blessed with such beautiful countryside is hard to comprehend. It is located in the center of the Peak District of Derbyshire in rolling moorlands covered with heather, bracken and gorse, roaming wooly sheep and lambs, small streams and cuckoos. The hostel situated on a high wooded hill commanded a wide and beautiful view over the valley and surrounding hills. It was here under the guidance of my cousin Pat that we were introduced to English country pubs, the social centers of England, where ring toss and push-penny automatically go along with a glass of oatmeal stout. At "the Scotsmans Pack", Pat was congratulated on his talent for blowing the 4 foot hunting horn which causes the blower to become extremely red in the face, eyes bulge and ears wiggle before any thing more than a deep bass unmelodious growl can be produced. He did a good job but it took several ales to revive him.

We remained there three days, walking an average of 8 miles a day over styles, through gateways, across the misty moors
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