

# Following Frances Good

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Today was my first expedition in pursuit of Frances Good, to Sydenham. Of course I knew from her diary that the train was from London Bridge mainline station. The passage from the Underground to the Mainline Station is through an undercroft of brickwork arches reminiscent of the crypt of a cathedral or abbey, and I imagined Frances Good's appreciation of this "quaint" touch. Today a series of most salubrious-looking food shops are set in the alcoves between the pillars along the sides of the passage way.

The trip to Sydenham was quite quick, a bare quarter of an hour, and only three stops along the way. I wondered if the station would be newish because of the bombing FG records, but it was a suitably old one, set in a dead end below the main road and railway overpass bridge. I was in desperate need of a toilet, but there was none on the station and I was directed to one in the road just outside. This was a most curious affair. Both the original men's and women's entrances were barricaded and between them was a construction which seemed devised to prevent vandalism, filthy outcomes, and assault. The single door led directly into the closet and was operated electrically by pushing a green button. Inside there was a metal grid for a floor, set a few inches above the concrete slab below, presumably so that spillages would go through and users would not be obliged to stand in puddles. Toilet paper was

delivered into a niche in the wall by means of a similar green button, with the roll itself out of sight, and water to wash one's hands descended into a basin set in the wall, again, no taps, just a green button. There appeared to be no flush mechanism and the toilet dribbled continuously. Although everything was far from smart and new, one did not have the feeling of shrinking from surrounding contamination.

I should say that my exit from the train immediately gave me the feeling of being in another world from my central part of London, just as did my emergence from the train last year in Deptford, both the people and the buildings being on the lower side of the mean in culture and refinement. I decided to look for a café in which to re-read my FG material and plan my route over a pot of tea. There was just the place, a "workers' café", on the other side of the main road, just before the bridge over the railway, and although I couldn't get a pot of tea I got a large, satisfying cup for 50p. The woman who served me was one of those delightfully caressing-voiced beings who address everyone as "darling" – which most people say they resent but I always warm to. I listened to her on the phone bestowing such a profusion of endearments with matching voice quality that I felt sure it must be a private conversation, when suddenly "and you'd like the chops well done" was interjected in the flow.



At the table between me and the window sat, in profile, an elderly woman and a little girl, aged about ten, in a smart beanie, whom I thought unlikely customers in that setting. They carried on a very seemly, polite and friendly conversation throughout my stay. The little girl mentioned, as of no great moment, that she was running in the District sports, and her grandma (I suppose) received the news equally calmly – none of the effusive praise and enthusiasm that would be requisite in Sydney. The woman’s main solicitude was that the child had eaten enough, the child constantly reassuring her, and she remarked of her to the proprietor, clearing away, that she had a very small appetite. She was a pale child, fair hair, with a profile rather like those common in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch paintings.

FG provides the street numbers of all the army-occupied houses in the area with which she was associated, and all except one were in the same street, West Hill, now called Westwood Hill although it is still West Hill in my old pre-World War II *A to Z*. This is the name of the main road from the point where it leads west from the railway bridge,

while Silverdale, where the house she went to first was, is a side street parallel to the railway line, on the station side of the bridge, so I decided to go there first. She describes Sydenham as an area of large, formerly comfortable houses, now decrepit and deserted, and her first billet, housing 70 “girls” was in a house bearing the street name, “Silverdale”, No.34. Alas, the street has been entirely rebuilt with new development housing (about 20 years old), not high rise but taking up all the space of grander grounds with courts and lanes. The street numbers have been maintained (as in ‘22-40’ etc.) and I found No.34 on a corner appropriately at the crest of the hill, and still an individual block and building, but obviously not the original. Old footings could be seen in the backyard, where I imagined FG lining up her girls for remonstrance. From this point, the older pre-war houses survive.

I then set off up West Hill, which is indeed a long hill, rising up from the station and a shopping cluster at the bottom of the ridge, a main thoroughfare. After a single “row” of attached buildings with shops below, the London style of terraces disappears, but on the left hand side all the old houses have been replaced with new housing developments, though trees remain, and they are set back from the road. On the right, the old, large individual or semidetached houses persist for a while. On one of them, next to St Bartholomew’s Church, I saw a blue plaque, which said the house was occupied by Ernest Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer, from early in the century until 1922. This was a nice confirmation of FG’s record of seeing Shackleton’s father wheeled in a chair by his nurse, and they may have lived in the same house. I have an interest in Shackleton, as one of the curators in the Australian

Museum, where I worked in 1963, went on one of his expeditions in the 1920s, and on some occasion we were shown a black and white film of the expedition setting out, from Australia or New Zealand, in a ship with masts and rigging.

The houses I was looking for were nos. 44, 68, and 70, all on the right hand side, and Horner Grange, the Officers' Mess, for which no number was given. FG had been moved to a billet while continuing to supervise, and to eat, at Silverdale. The house numbers on the right hand were very low, 10, 12 etc, and sadly before long they too gave way to redevelopment housing. As I went higher, however, the new housing on the left hand side gave way to the older houses, and the first group of these bore the sign 'Sydenham High School, girls 4 – 11, Junior School', and I wondered if this old house (with newer school buildings in its grounds) might be Horner Grange. I determined to go in and enquire after pursuing my route to 59 Coombe Road, where FG had lodgings with a tradesman's family after she left the British Army and began work with the Australian Army Post Office.

This involved leaving West Hill, which followed the ridge, and plunging down through a housing estate. (I was sure by then I was past the old Nos. 44 – 70, although no numbers were offered for these estates.) The map showed Taylor's Lane running beside part of Well's Park (see later), and a pathway to the right leading into the dead end of Coombe Road, which seemed rather a short road to achieve numbers up to 59. The pathway was through a new (20 – 30 years old) development which had replaced the houses of Coombe Road, and the only numbers in evidence fell short of 59; there was no real street frontage any more.

The only remains of the old street were at the far end, where it abutted on Wells Road, a traditional pub on the right and a church on the left (no longer C of E), which probably wouldn't have pleased the "enlightened" anti-religious sentiments of FG. She mentions neither.

On checking the address at Coombe Road in my old *A to Z*, I discovered it was, and is, in fact Upper Sydenham (upper in the sense of higher, rather than more northerly as I would have assumed), and I saw also that there was also an Upper Sydenham Station on a different line from Sydenham, although like it terminating at London Bridge, and this made me fear (correctly I now feel sure) that this was the station she used on her daily trips to work in London, although Sydenham was certainly the one for her first arrival to work for the British Army.

So far things had been pretty fruitless, but at least I knew Wells Park was there, whose history she describes in some detail, and where she went to sit when recuperating from influenza and in her time of lowest spirits near the end of the war. It was a far more extensive and better kept "green and pleasant land" than I'd expected, set on to the side of the hill or ridge with West Hill roadway along its crest. It had been raining lightly, and the park was pretty deserted apart from park groundsmen at work with their trucks and machinery. I asked one of them, a young man, if there were any ponds in the Park and he directed me very carefully and assiduously.

As I made my way in the direction he had indicated I spotted that most unlikely oasis in the rain for a town park in Australia on a weekday, a kiosk that was actually open, so, as I was feeling in need of something, I made my way towards it circuitously, keeping off the wet

grass, and hoping my guide wouldn't be watching and thinking I had lost my way. There were seats and tables outside the kiosk, wet from the rain, but none inside, so I got the man to wipe them down, but this was unsuccessful with his skimpy rag so he brought out a black garbage bag for me to sit on.

The ponds, very pretty with ducks and overhanging trees, but fenced with the usual black wrought iron, were behind the kiosk, a higher and a lower one. These were not the wells of mineral water used by George III. A notice said that the present park was made in about 1900 as a result of residents' concern that housing developments would obliterate it, but the wells themselves have disappeared underground. The ponds seem set in a natural declivity where a stream might have run. As I went up past the ponds, I spat into the grass at the side of the path – being at the very phlegmy stage of the cold I caught on the plane – and then was embarrassed to see the young gardener who had directed me wave from higher up the hill, as if in cemented friendship and recognition that I had found the ponds. I hoped he hadn't seen what I did. Spitting isn't something I usually do. I only developed the art in January 1964 while hitch-hiking up through Spain after leaving the boat at Gibraltar, and suffering from a very phlegmy cold caught on the boat. I would never have contemplated so disgusting a practice but for the fact that all the city pavements were covered with the expectorations of the natives, and that while travelling it was hard to keep up a supply of clean handkerchiefs.

I made my way uphill to the road bordering the top edge of the park and then into West Hill a little further up than I had left it. Across

the road, just down a side street, I could see the towers of a really big house which seemed an even better contender for Horner Grange, and when I approached I found it was the Senior School of Sydenham High School. It was entered from the side street because new school buildings were in front of it (also what looked like an old gate house or gardener's bothy), and I went in to ask at the Office. The house entrance was into a central roofed court with a staircase and several storeys of enclosed galleries around it. It was, indeed, quite grand, a lovely place for officers. The first receptionist I spoke to didn't know if it was Horner Grange, but she called a companion, an older woman, who confirmed that it was – my first success. They allowed me to take photos in the court – it was school holiday time – but unfortunately my camera chose that moment to malfunction, and I managed only one.

As I began my return down the hill to Sydenham, the first house I had seen now looked quite modest. I needed to buy a new film to photograph the outside of the building, and found a Chemists, and this time caught a bus up to take my photos, then walked down again. It was raining again, and I took refuge in the church next to the Shackleton house, and consulted my papers, only to realize that I had forgotten to visit the house of the Chaplain's mother in Langton Road, where FG once visited, and this turned out to be the road along the top of the Park – much closer to Coombe Rd than I had imagined.

I'd also by now discovered that the Upper Sydenham line no longer existed on the modern railway map, although it was still there in my old A to Z, which showed a dotted instead of an unbroken red line just before (from the out-of-town direction) Upper Sydenham station.

Having seen the lay of the land I thought this must represent a tunnel under West Hill, emerging just above Langton Road. The map showed what looked like a pathway, not a full road, leading to the station from Wells Road, a little uphill from the Park. Having recovered my energies from sitting in the church (not remarkable or beautiful – later I saw it in a painting by Pissarro in the National Gallery, entitled ‘The Avenue, Sydenham 1871’, now Laurie Park Avenue – the church is on the corner where it joins West Hill) while I made these discoveries, and as it was still only about three o’clock, I decided to return yet again, and again caught the bus up the hill. (An elderly superior lady gave me a very dirty look when I required her to move up and make room for me on the seat in the bus shelter.)

Returned to Langton Rd, I discovered that while the houses were intact on the upper side of the road, only two remained on the Park side, numbers 20 and 22, and I was looking for No.36. The rest of the houses on that side must, after demolition, have had their land subsumed into the Park. So, another disappointment, but I did, this time, get an idea of what it probably was like – the houses on the upside were quite large, though undistinguished, having very much the look of semi-detached English houses in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but in fact each was all one house.

As I was again in the vicinity, I thought I might as well see if I could locate the old Upper Sydenham Station, not knowing if it was still there or not; so I continued to the end of Langton Road and turned left uphill on the left hand side towards where the footpath to the station should be. Quite soon I came to a narrow lane between high side fences

of houses. It was covered with long grass but with something of a track. After forty metres or so downhill it terminated – a cul de sac of backyard fences, but none of them providing access to the yards beyond. It might have been the path, now cut off, but as I returned I noticed parallel cement car tracks hidden by the grass, which suggested this had not been a path for people.

Although I was getting tired, I thought it would do no harm to search a little further up the hill, and lo and behold, just past a rather dour, large brick building or house, set a little below the roadway, I came upon the real thing – steps, then a path, leading quite steeply down, fenced by iron railings of the hooped top variety, obviously no longer in use but unobstructed. It zig-zagged down quite a long way, and then I saw below me on the left, looking back, the arch of the tunnel set in the hillside, where the line had emerged. There was no sign of a station, but I was able to make my way down, through weeds as I left the path, to where the track had been. The mouth of the tunnel was blocked to a good height by a solid wooden (I think - maybe metal) wall with a large sign across it above head height saying, “Danger – Keep Out”, and below it the expected graffiti. It was quite dark and dank down there, as the hillside and track area were clothed in trees and bushes. The pathway, in its civilized form, appeared to have come to an end, and I felt disposed to leave it at that, and not try to explore further along the line. It was a massive tunnel entrance, a high, slightly pointed, arch, alone in the overgrown hillside.

So that was quite an exciting end to my day. I had to return to the Sydenham end of Langton Road to get back to West Hill, and this time caught the bus *down* the hill, and so to the station.

### Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> June

Returning from visiting my daughter in Ireland, my cheap Virgin train ticket required that I catch the 7a.m. ferry from Dublin, and as a result I found myself changing trains in Chester at about 10 a.m. and likely to arrive back in London by midday. As Chester is one of the FG locations which I'd thought there would be no chance of visiting, and it was so early, I thought I really should look at it, the disadvantages being that I had not brought the relevant bit of diary with me and that there was no "left luggage" at the station, which would mean humping my quite heavy bag with me. I set out, but it was not quite clear where the town centre was and I vacillated and returned, thought of taking an advertised open-top tour bus from a stop opposite the station as a means of getting there, but none was in view, and then was saved by spotting the arrival of a special little station-city centre bus at the station entrance which turned out to be free if you had a train ticket.

The bus dropped us near the overhead (over the road) Eastgate Clock, almost at the junction of Eastgate and St John Streets, where one enters amongst the plethora of tall black and white half-timbered buildings that dominate the town, some Tudor, others Victorian and rather overdone, I thought – not as tasteful as Shrewsbury. There were signposts to the notable places of interest but, as I experienced in

Birmingham a couple of years earlier, they had been twisted out of the right directions, so I was ready for this, and as soon as I felt uncertain asked for directions to the Cathedral, which was quite in the opposite direction to that indicated. This took me further along Eastgate Street and up a side street to the right, and there was the Cathedral with the Town Hall opposite, and a Costa's on the corner. I hoped to be able to put down my pack on an out of the way pew in the Cathedral, without the railway station flurry about abandoned bags, but as it turned out an elderly gentleman at the entrance took an interest in me, and allowed me to leave it beside the desk, against the rules of course. He insisted on taking my photo, with my camera.

The cathedral is so-so, has all the right attributes and is fairly uniform in style, but somehow doesn't pull off that special beauty. But the carvings on the misericord seats and arms of the quire pews, which I had come to see again after 41 years, are really exceptional, living up to my memory of them as something really special and fascinating, although I couldn't remember why (not funny like the Sherborne ones). The first I looked at were of Aesop's Fables, which surprised me, and then they went on to representations of what seemed like medieval tales of chivalry and monsters, and then to the specifically Christian, angels and the Trinity. In a couple, strange hirsute men appeared, as if wolf men, but the hair in overlapping locks – like the lion man on the front of Avila Cathedral, but without his displeasing effect. Some of the knobs on the pews were hollowed out in the carving; and there were ladies mourning dead or wounded knights.

An oldish man was taking photographs of the carvings at one end and I had to work my way round him. He spoke to me: I said I thought the carvings must be the best in England, better than those in Sherborne Abbey, and he said the competition is between Chester and Lincoln – the latter made no impression on me at all when I went there a few years ago. He also told me that some of them are Victorian – a bit disappointing as I honestly hadn't detected a difference. I asked him about the hirsute men, and he looked them up in the register he was working from, but all it said was "Wodehouses" and neither of us knew what that meant. It was so dark that I thought there was no point in taking photos without a flash, and that a flash probably wasn't permitted, and my camera needed reloading. (When I reloaded it later it refused to work and I had to buy a disposable one.)

I made my way into the Cloister, which is complete, and the most attractive Chapter House I can recall gave off it, also what used to be the stairs to the monks' dining room, with some of its round windows now blocked by later building. The courtyard had a pretty garden with an ugly modern sculpture stuck in the middle of the central pool. When I went to pick up my bag, an 'older' woman had replaced the elderly man, and she marvelled at its weight i.e. that I could carry it.

By then I wanted lunch and hoped to get it at Costa, of whose coffee I had pleasant memories from my last visit to England, but they only had high carb. food. I'd acquired a 'map and guide' from the Information Office in the Town Hall and wanted to sit down and look at it, and saw a sign up some steps in Northgate Street to the Courtyard Café, and the menus looked suitable. The steps led to a sort of verandah

(which I later realized was an example of the unique Chester “rows”) on to which the café, entirely deserted, opened, and the courtyard was a minute little area suspended at first floor level, in the light well of surrounding buildings. The meal was passable, and when I went out, after dining alone in the courtyard, I found the main café area transformed and full of people.

My memory from FG was of her finding and being thrilled by a medieval undercroft in a shop and being taken through to a bit of Roman wall, and I thought I might have discovered this in Watergate Street, led to it by the guide’s mention of The Rows as 13<sup>th</sup> century, in a pub with the sign “The Watergate Bar, The Old Crypt AD1180”. It had two sections – the posh bit with gothic arched roofing, and an adjoining simpler room with cream paint over the stone wall. I then made my way down to the Roman Amphitheatre, which, it has been discovered since FG’s day, is stone, not wood, and recently that it is much larger than thought, really a Theatre, and a recent public building has been built over half of it; and then on to the adjacent St John the Baptist church, which was initially the Cathedral, and stands at the edge of Chester’s big park, Grosvenor Park. (I never got as far as the River Dee, thanks to the impediment of my pack, nor did I attempt to walk the walls, which I got a glimpse of, crossing the road where the “Amphitheatre” is – but John and I had walked them in 1964.)

St John’s was remarkable for the sheer size – huge diameter – of the columns of its nave – they reminded me of those in a very Norman church in Limoges – and I was able to leave my pack on a pew as I looked around. This was obviously the “old Saxon church” FG saw

on her second visit to Chester. The large pillars didn't strike me as leaning, nor did I notice the iron bars she described supporting them, so perhaps they have been straightened in the meantime. The fresco on one of the pillars at the east end must have been cleaned since FG mocked it as a bit of mould, as it is quite obviously a painting now, of a saint, St John the Baptist, I think, sitting in monks clothing with a book – which doesn't sound like John the Baptist. It reminded me of the fresco in the church at St Martin de Jussac near Chanliat (in France, Haute Vienne), so perhaps that was St John the Baptist too.

The western tower had half fallen down in a storm a century or so ago, and it is remarkable how the remaining stone has weathered far in excess of that of the main structure – perhaps it was of the brown sandstone, and the rest is of something harder. I forgot to comment on the peculiar milk chocolate coloured stone of the Cathedral, but when I asked about it I was simply told it was sandstone – surely admixed with mud, I thought, not the crisp yellow/white of Australian sandstone. My town guide showed a little stone house near the church which it called the Anchorite's Cell, which I refrained from visiting, but perhaps that was the building where FG said Harold had lived, of which there was no mention. By then I had had enough of lugging my pack and decided to settle in Costa's with a coffee for an hour or so until it was time to get the bus back to the station.

As I was crossing Watergate Street, I was accosted by the elderly man from the Cathedral porch. He was not going to let me pass with a greeting, but was determined to show me the Roman bits of Chester, and although I was longing to sit down this turned out to be

well worth it, or otherwise I'd have missed what FG specifically described. He stressed to me that Chester was not a Roman town, but only a Roman camp or fort, an outpost on the frontier, hence no prefix to its name, as in Winchester or Colchester. But nevertheless it had living facilities. He, like the lady at the Cathedral, made a great to-do about how heavy my pack was, and insisted on carrying my purple bag, whose weight he then complained about.

I'd mentioned wanting a coffee, but he led me down Bridge Street in the opposite direction from Costa, to a basic sort of take-away café with tables outside, and into the shop, where he introduced me by saying, "This little old lady is carrying a 50lb pack" (really only about 30, I'd guess), and showed me a steep set of stairs (almost a ladder) going down through the floor at the back of the shop, to one side, just before the counter. He asked the young girl for permission to take me down and leave the pack at the top. Down below was a smallish cellar room, rock floor and walls (I think), and about half way up the far wall was a deep (as far as one could see) rocky slot about two feet high. with its ceiling supported by numerous rock pillars only a couple of feet apart and about a foot thick, just like the under-floor central heating arrangements of Roman houses, except stone instead of those piled up thin Roman bricks that usually support the floors (which Charles, my guide, pointed out – stone being used in Chester where it is plentiful). This was the heating system for the Roman baths here, and at one end of the room, near the stairs, was a deep "bath", about 4`x 6`x 4`, cut into the solid rock floor, with about an inch of clear water in the bottom – not hot water. I didn't see the stone steps leading down that FG refers

to – the ladder we came down was wooden. When we came up, Charles again drew the girl’s attention to my load and said, “She’s a Doctor of Philosophy”, at which the girl looked more delighted than I would have expected. (Charles, a retired chemical engineer, aged 81 or 82, had asked me about my qualifications.)

Next Charles led me back up Bridge Street to a bookshop on the opposite side of the street, and took me in with the usual introduction. It has a wonderfully intact fan-type gothic arched stone roof, worthy of the nave of a church, long and narrow, but with less height. The leaflet given me says:

*There are a number of these medieval crypts, or cellars, known to exist in Chester, possibly as many as 25. They formed the lower portions of Merchants’ houses, the upper storeys, sometimes timber framed, having usually been rebuilt. It is thought that the crypts were used as safe storerooms or workrooms, serving a shop or booth in front, the proprietor, his family and apprentices occupying the rooms above.*

They were certainly well built. This one has been dated as 1220, making it the oldest in Chester, or 1270-80, making it the second oldest, after 11 Watergate Street, although the pub I saw claimed 1180.

Next my guide took me back up Northgate Street, almost to the Town Hall, where the building of a new shopping centre had left a gap to allow one to see a bit of old bridgework (medieval, I think), and through a plate glass window of a bank or insurance office one could look down onto some stonework that was Roman – I think he said it was a treasury, or something of the sort. He said something about a broken-off pillar going through the wall, but I didn’t see this, and by

then weariness had dulled any motivation to seek further enlightenment. This was a pity, because this may have been where the paper shop was that FG describes having a cellar with a row of big pillars, one broken off lying half into the next door cellar - but I saw nothing as remarkable as this.

There was a pub opposite, and I gladly accepted the offer of a drink and enjoyed half a pint of bitter, my friend coming back several times when ordering to make sure I didn't want a shandy. He, Charles Henry Walker, turned out to be a widower of some 10 years, and has several family members in Australia, or rather, Sydney. He had worked for ICI, which has a big works nearby because of something in the soil/geology of the area that is needed for chemical processing. He was a good source of information of that nice male factual sort, and also something of an interrogator and organizer, reprimanding me for carrying a laptop (the weight) and for having my scarf round my neck on a warm day (the simplest way of carrying it as I had no space to stow it). I got his address and will send him a card when I get back to Australia.

He released me in time for my bus back to the station. The train was one of those beautiful new Virgin ones and stopped only at Crewe, rushing us back to Euston by six. The snack bar was less well appointed than usual, with only one rather surly man in attendance. He was visibly annoyed when he misheard my request for a capuccino as 'cup of tea', and less than gracious in replying in the negative to my enquiry about hot food. Then when I added a small packet of chocolates at the last minute he got the price wrong, which made things even worse. A

well-dressed young man was waiting by through most of these transactions. Shortly after I was back in my seat, he came up and addressed me, saying, “It’s good to know that customer service is still alive!” – ironically of course. I just laughed. He’d come on past his seat to find me, which was nice of him. I hadn’t actually taken that much heed of the man’s manner, just thought he was a bit difficult.

It’s interesting that the trip to Dublin took me a full day – from 8am to 8pm – while the trip back was almost inconsequentially fitted round a day’s sightseeing in Chester.

Referring again to FG’s account, I didn’t notice the presence of the Cheshire regiments in the Cathedral (as I did in Canterbury). Perhaps they were more in evidence then, in wartime, and she was attuned to it; but my viewing of the main part of the Cathedral was very cursory, apart from the carvings in the quire (that’s how they spelt it). There is no reference to Stanley Place, which so took her fancy, in the guide material I obtained.

Chester gave the impression of a very prosperous town, or one with a wealthy feeder population, for not only were all the big chain clothes stores there – like Gap – but there were also some very exclusive, expensive-looking small individual shops with the nicest dresses and skirts I’ve seen here, tasteful and original with flare, better than Bond Street and the Burlington Arcade.

### Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July

I have been remiss about making my way to the City to follow Frances Good’s wanderings there, so thought I might make a start with the one

bit this side of town, when she walked back from Euston Road and came across an old church with a grassy churchyard and seats where prostitutes slept in the sun. The problem then appeared that no churches are shown in the AtoZ maps on either side of Tottenham Court Road where she said she wandered, and if she'd wandered on the east side I'd have expected her to mention the British Museum. I thought to tie in an investigation with my visits to the Museum. I had noticed a church near the turning into Museum Street which I take, but it is relatively recent and fronts on the street, and my first attempt was to look for Drury Lane where she went next. I got quite disorientated but found myself in what might once have been a small square opposite a church (not C of E), but again not at all an old one. Drury Lane has become even more insignificant than when she saw it, a real lane lined with what seem more the backs than the fronts of buildings, and only one theatre that opens on a side street. It is hard to believe it could have been such as to make its name synonymous with theatre.

After these failures, I scanned the map further afield and, knowing she was such a great walker, hit on two churches in back streets in the small area bounded by Upper Regent Street and Oxford Street, to the east. I decided to look at them after my visit to the Social Affairs Unit, where I dropped in just before lunch time, but again they were much too recent and lacked that plot of grass, though one had a sort of half court in front where people were sitting. Examining the map again (my 1930s AtoZ), I spotted another church on the other side of Oxford Street, in Soho, near Old Compton Street and Wardour Street, almost on Shaftesbury Avenue, and therefore fitting her description as

“within a stone’s throw of Piccadilly”, although it seemed an unlikely point of departure for Drury Lane – however she might have joined the latter in the middle, on her way to Fleet Street, St Paul’s and London Bridge Station.

This, St Anne’s Church, Soho, at last fitted the bill. There was quite a large patch of grass containing shady trees at its rear, which fronts onto Wardour Street, with steps leading up from the street, and benches, and a stone terrace adjoining the church. Instead of prostitutes, it was now full of office workers, on the seats and the grass, eating their lunches in the sunshine. The stone wall that divided it from the street was topped by a high steel fence curving outwards. The gates at the steps are doubtless shut at night to keep out undesirables – drug-users, rather than prostitutes, today – who would make it unusable for lunchtime picnics.

The only doubt in this identification was my inability to find Pendrell’s grave. I examined all the memorials fixed to the church’s rear wall (the green space, as I said, was at the rear of the church) – there was one to the King of Corsica who died bankrupt and bequeathed his island to pay his debts, and another to Hazlitt – and the couple of altar tombs in the churchyard, having to peer round the legs of people sitting on them; but there were no headstones *in situ* or stacked round the edges of the churchyard. This was not long after the tube bombings, and I noticed a memorial to three young men killed in an earlier, presumably IRA, bombing in 1999. The entrance, at the front of the church, is in Dean Street, and was closed, but FG does not suggest that she went inside.

I ate my own lunch in the churchyard, then walked through Soho Square (with its central half-timbered cabin – mock?), also full of office workers, to the British Museum, and had a pot of tea as usual at the Ruskin Café in Museum Street, then up Gower Street to University College and visited Bess in the library, and came away with two Gissings, the purpose of my visit. Lots of nice wood in the library and fine domes to look up into.

### Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> July

Set out today for Chiselhurst – train to Orpington – killing two birds with one stone, to meet Jean Pailing whose little history of the life and work of the Oxford Movement's Rev. Francis Murray, who was the incumbent of the Parish for about sixty years, I had so enjoyed, and to follow up one of Frances Good's excursions, by bus and then walking, from Sydenham.

I caught the train from Waterloo East (Charing Cross would have been better) and it stopped only at London Bridge, FG's city station, before Orpington. The day return fare, with my Seniors Travel card, was only L2. A bit after leaving London Bridge, an elderly lady struggled up the aisle with a big pull-along suitcase and a largeish dog (a bit like a boxer) and asked if I minded if she sat opposite me, with the dog – a table between us. She then proceeded to lay a red tartan travel rug on the seat next the window, on which she settled the dog. It was very well-behaved and sat with an alert expression, although it resisted her efforts to get it to go to sleep. She told me that for L25 a year it can have a seat on any train journey she takes. It could travel

free if it stayed on the floor, but “of course she wouldn’t do that”. I felt that FG, like me, would have been amused at this difference from Australian custom, whereby dogs can only travel in a dog-box in the guard’s van on long-distance trains, and not at all on local transport. On re-reading the Llangollen section of the diary, I found that this was indeed her reaction when she had to take Aunty’s poodle on the train, and expected to put it in a dog box, then found she had to take it on her lap. She expected the other passengers to object, but found that, to the contrary, they were entirely welcoming. How intolerant that makes we Australians seem. My son suffered from the Australian rules when he first went to Adelaide and had no car or money for taxis (would they allow them?), and so was really isolated by his responsibility for his dog. A rare exception is the bus that meets the ferry on Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay, near Brisbane, which packs in everything – surfboards, fishing rods, and dogs – I suppose because it is understood that so many people will be without cars on the island.

I phoned Jean from the station and she turned out to be a lovely-looking lady, grey hair and about my age, and we got on very well. We went to St. Nicholas Church first, which Francis Murray reorganized and enlarged on Oxford Movement principles, but only looked at the exterior and graveyard, distinguished by the un-English use of crosses, before having morning tea with a friend of Jean’s in her antique shop; and then to St. Mary’s of the Annunciation, which he had established and built to serve an area of new growth on the borders of Chislehurst. Near the latter is a row of pretty arts and crafts almshouses, still in use, and one of the tenants unlocked the church for us.

Jean referred to it as Murray's beloved church built on Italian lines, and it was indeed like churches in Florence in its rugged unprepossessing exterior and use of frescoes inside. Against my expectations, I really did find it unusually beautiful, the use of colour in windows and walls perhaps having a degree of English restraint that did not overwhelm me. It is protected by English Heritage, who have funded some recent restoration.

Only St. Nicholas, the older church, is mentioned by FG. Its origin, as regards date, seems uncertain from the guide – Saxon fragments, perhaps the core 11<sup>th</sup> century, and then additions. It is a flint church.

FG made her way there by bus to Lewisham, and then to Sidcup, where she had lunch and then walked to Chislehurst, a substantial distance, along “a country road past wayside cottages with lovely gardens” that moved her to rapture. To indulge my desire to see Sidcup, where she had “an egg and bread and margarine and tea”, and also bring into reality a place name that was in my consciousness with a mocking association derived from some forgotten source in literature (Jean identified it, rightly I think, as from Pinter's *The Caretaker*, in which a character keeps saying everything will be all right when he gets to Sidcup), she drove us there, and it was quite a nice little town with a wide main street and red double-decker buses (but not from London), and the buildings on one side at least dating back to FG's time, but not long before.

The road between Sidcup and Chislehurst has, however, lost any vestige of being a country lane, and of wayside cottages and

gardens. It is a busy two-lane bitumen road with concrete kerbside edges, scarcely room to walk beside it – it would be a nightmare walk today. And one wouldn't take children to Chislehurst to pick blackberries today, as Frances did her landlady's children.

Before our return to St. Nicholas, we had lunch in a pub that seemed to be the lunch time club of the ossified upper middle classes of the area – I was surprised to see those grim elderly female faces, which I do remember from the 1960s, but haven't before seen on my more recent travels. Many of the clients were couples, sitting for long periods without apparent conversation. I noticed here, too, the tolerance of dogs. Smart casual dress was required, and dogs were admitted, right beside the tables. I'd already seen a similar acceptance in London's half-on-the-street cafes, and in food shops. Dogs aren't allowed anywhere near food in Australia.

At St. Nicholas we found the tablet to John Rands, that had taken FG's fancy, immediately, above the church door inside, not outside where I first looked. But nowhere, in or out, could we spy the tablet to the "old girl" who left an annuity to care for her grave, and as FG does not give her name we couldn't look for the grave either. Back at her house afterwards, Jean brought out a recent "History of St. Nicholas" (or of Chislehurst) which lists all the inscriptions in the church, and the names on the headstones, but I could find nothing suggesting it amongst them. I also noticed that the Rands inscription was transcribed as "at the church door", while FG gives it as "dore". I wonder which is correct, as it was too late to go back and look – a typo by FG or an unwitting "correction" in the transcription.

I had not expected to be able to visit the Frognall Facial Hospital, but Jean was well aware of it as a local grand house, which is now an old people's home. The gates were closed, with an intercom, but we were unhesitatingly allowed in when Jean explained my historical interest. Many new buildings have been erected to the side and rear of the original largish Georgian house, which still fortunately looks out unobstructedly across a terrace, and lawns descending to a strip of woodland. Its aspect with the terrace across the front was immediately evocative of an image or images I have seen of a WW I repatriation hospital, either as an old photo or a reconstruction in a film. The main, central, door was open, but it led only into a pokey little room, which made me think the interior must have been reorganised. The house was built by the Sydney family, after one of whom Sydney, Australia was named. Jean said that they were still very prominent in the Chislehurst area in Murray's time.

At her house, Jean also brought out a book of postcards of Chislehurst from about 1900 to 1920, and one of a bus made me realize my a-historical error in envisaging FG and friend travelling about in a double-decker bus like those of today and the 1960s. It was a much smaller affair, with an open top and open staircase curving up the back, and a sticking out engine – of course.

A strange connection – she mentioned “The Towers of Trebizond” as her favourite book, which I don't think I've heard mentioned, apart from talking to Ellen, since the Dimmocks were so excited about its advent, during the time of their fortnightly Sunday morning visits to us on Dornoch Terrace in the late 1950s and early

'60s. I must read it again. She belongs to the Dorothy L. Sayers Society, author of *Father's delight* in *Lord Peter Wimsey*.

Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> July

I met my Sherborne friend, Margaret, at Salisbury station, with the plan of visiting Amesbury (in the hope of tracking down FG) from there, rather than starting from Sherborne, which is much further west. But first we looked at Salisbury Cathedral. I had been sure I had seen it before, but now feel fairly sure I hadn't. I found it quite breath-takingly beautiful, both outside and in – the wonderful completeness and balance of its form outside, with the central tower above the intersect of nave and transept, and the prolonged chancel well beyond the altar. The external sculpture figures have a modest and charming individuality. Inside, the length and uniformity of a relatively simple gothic, and the colour of the stone – a sort of grey-green and brown, I recall – are stunning. The outside is better than Notre Dame even, and reluctantly I submit that the interior is better than Sherborne Abbey. It is so spacious, perhaps not so high.

Margaret said that it is the setting of Trollope's Barchester novels, so I looked with interest at the Close, and Margaret pointed out ex-Prime Minister Edward Heath's house – he never married and had died recently. (His funeral was shown on television last night – 25<sup>th</sup> July, which seems rather a long wait – with the coffin merely wheeled from house to Cathedral. Salisbury looked a pretty and interesting town, with a nice little river flowing through it.

We had lunch in the car park just below Old Sarum Castle, a ruin, in the car because it was raining, and then didn't go up to the Castle because at the crucial point the rain and wind came on very fiercely – then stopped as we departed. Still, there had been a nice sense of height and view as we drove up the steep narrow road.

Then on to Amesbury. My abiding memory of FG in Amesbury is her arrival at midnight with nowhere to stay, midwinter, and the streets teeming with soldiers from the nearby assembly camp at Lark Hill (still a military operation, according to Margaret), and eventually finding accommodation in a tiny, cold room in The New Inn. Margaret was pessimistic about our finding it, but sure enough there was The New Inn on the right, shortly before a T-junction, our road in and the T-bar being the main streets of the town, which is full of picturesque old buildings – shops and pubs – quite unspoilt by development; and opposite it, absolutely according to script, the King George to which she had been directed, a much larger hotel. The New Inn no longer has its thatched roof – it is now tiled – but it is a nice long half-timbered pub, and sure enough there was a small window at upstairs floor level that matched her description of her room.

We had to go past, and into the T-bar, to park, and then walked back. I suggested we walk through the town and look for the address of the “ugly” new house she then took rooms in, by which time we might go into the New Inn for a drink for afternoon tea. We called into the Post Office to buy a map, and found the street without difficulty, branching off our road in, quite close to the centre. While there (I was buying a stamp), I asked about the location of the station (now closed

and removed) which FG said was a mile out of town, and another customer (a man) gave directions (through the town, right at the T-junction) and said it was where the NAF canteen is/was. I've forgotten what NAF stands for, but again, something to do with armed forces. We walked out along Earls Court Road, which soon became lined by those standard 20<sup>th</sup> century English semi-detached houses, brick on the ground floor, pebble-dash above, not strikingly ugly, but by no means attractive. I thought they might just date back to pre- WWI, but Margaret doubted it. However, before we got to No. 121, beyond the first side-street on the right, they disappeared into a new development, so, as at Sydenham, FG's address has been reabsorbed.

M. then announced that she did not wish to have a drink in the New Inn, and that it was probably now closed, as if intending to prevent my entering it; but she wanted to buy some plants at an open-air nursery right beside it, so I took the opportunity to go in alone and enquire of the publicans. They turned out to be a very pleasant middle-aged couple, Pat and Allan Brindley, who had only taken it over recently, and they were very welcoming and helpful. The public ground floor has two long rooms (that on the left probably private in FG's day) in typical English country pub décor – dark woodwork, furniture and carpet.

I asked about the little room with the little window at floor level, and Pat said, yes, it's still there, and in fact that was where they had slept when they first took over because the rest of the upstairs was such a mess. They had been very shocked when they arrived because the previous owner had removed just enough of the better furniture and

fittings to make it look half abandoned, and left so much of a dilapidated kind as to make it difficult to begin clearing up. However, Pat was very happy to take me up to look and for me to take photos. (M. had by now arrived.) We also went into the courtyard behind, no longer cobbled but paved with cement slabs, and alongside it the kitchen where FG put her foot in the door to insist on a room, but Pat did not invite me to look in, so I didn't see where she chatted with the Australian soldiers.

The upstairs was quite large, a whole series of rooms of good size, but everything "in pieces" – carpet, paintwork, bathroom – on both sides of a hall running the street-length of the building. Pat and Allan had now moved into one of these, and their son was painting another. The conditions upstairs were in marked contrast to the good presentation below, and Pat was very depressed by the prospect of the unexpectedly large task ahead. FG's little room was certainly the smallest, set between two larger ones also with floor-level windows, but larger ones. True to description, there was no fireplace, but it now had a small radiator. It was rather full of junk furniture, and Pat offered to clear it out for a photo if I came back tomorrow – very kind of her, but I would not be back. Both the room and the window did not impress me as quite as small as FG felt, but Pat was more of her opinion, particularly, she said, with a bed taking up floor space, and with the ceiling sloping down to the floor so that one could only stand in a restricted area. With their double bed they had felt it was very small. Still, FG's description of three steps each way seemed a bit of an exaggeration – perhaps five.

When we went down, the pub had filled with people, so Pat had to get back to service. I thanked them warmly, and promised to send a copy of the book if it is ever published, and left my copy of the bit of text describing FG's experiences with them; I hope they found it interesting. FG described looking down from her window onto soldiers' hats constantly passing in the street below. I looked about me and tried to imagine the street swarming with young men, soldiers, in khaki, where today a few local people, mostly elderly, were pottering about.

We drove out to where the station used to be, which was indeed about a mile, but there was no evidence of its ever presence. Just beyond a Motorway on piles rushed through, crossing over our road which splayed out into access lanes. Then we drove back through Amesbury and on to Stone Henge, on our way to Sherborne.

### Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> July

After a catching-up morning, I decided I really must go and photograph St Anne's Soho, although it would be too late to catch the grounds full of lunchers, and that I would follow up with the British Museum – the last bit of the Egyptian Gallery and perhaps start the Assyrians. By the time I got to the BM it was about 4. I had almost finished the Egyptians when a glimpse, through the end doorway, of people moving made me wonder if perhaps the downstairs gallery of Greek and Roman architecture was at last open. I had written to the Museum before I went to Paris, about my failure to access it because of no schedule of opening, but as I'd received no reply had made no further attempts. It was indeed open, so I abandoned the Egyptians, unfinished, as there

was barely an hour till closing time, and I might not discover it open again. This proved to be a very unrewarding visit as much of it was fragments of places I had visited in Greece (or almost visited) – the buildings on the Athenian Acropolis (apart from the Parthenon), the temple in the market place below, the temple at Sounion, and the temple at Eleusis. There were also fragments from the Mausoleum of Halikarnassos (the original), that is, the surrounding temple, while the tomb itself is exhibited on the floor above, and this made the latter, with its Persian design, more interesting to me, matching the interest of its frieze, which is in a similar style to the Bassae frieze. I just had time to finish the Egyptians before being turned out – and I then noticed that there are several more basement rooms of Greek sculpture. I wonder if I will ever get into them.

It was now peak hour and I didn't fancy joining the crowded number 9 bus in Piccadilly, so decided instead to try to make my way down to catch it near its origin in the Aldwych, which my map showed me was actually quite close as the crow flies. But first I had a rest and a coffee in a Starbucks, in New Oxford Street, which actually turned out to be very pleasant. It actually became my favourite café, replacing the Ruskin. It has armchairs and a one-way window to the floor, giving a pleasant feeling of looking out without being seen. In the UK, Starbucks lets you sit down straight away with your coffee instead of perching on a bench waiting to be called by Christian name. My attempt to go due south led me straight back to that disorientating multitude of crossroads which includes Shaftesbury Avenue running, it seems, in quite the wrong direction, where I'd had so much trouble,

before, in locating Drury Lane. My task was to find Endell St, running into Bow St, and continuing straight down to the Strand, but I ended up confused, between St Giles High Street and New Compton Street, which I could not find on the map. My default response was to continue walking in the hope of seeing something defining, when lo and behold I came upon a church with a patch of green around it which I immediately knew, with a sinking feeling of more work to be done, was a possible contender for FG's church of Pendrell's tomb.

It was not, however, a very old church, rather of the Wren period, but then, so also was St Anne's. And it was a finer specimen, with a prettier, more varied churchyard, and not fortified against night-time marauders. Luckily it was fully open – there were clergy about. After a brief look at the nearby graves without finding Pendrell, I went into this beautifully-kept Queen Anne church, St Giles in the Fields, which of course replaces a much older one, from when it was truly outside the City of London. I began looking at the wall tablets, beginning on the left hand side, and the first I saw was for William Balmain, for whom Balmain in Sydney was named, the surgeon of the First Fleet. He returned to England in 1801 and died soon after in 1803, as so many of the early office-bearers in NSW seem to have done – Phillip and Macquarie, for example.

There was a plaque to Milton, although he isn't buried there, and memorials to Andrew Marvell and to George Chapman! I then discovered a church leaflet which calls it "The Poets' Church" and gives further information. The Edward Herbert buried there was the brother of George Herbert, and Shelley's children William and Clara,

and Byron's daughter Clara Allegra were baptized there. And the Brownings were married there.

I couldn't find Pendrell, so I went outside again and walked round the church to the east end where there was a larger area of graveyard, but again no sign of Pendrell. As a clergyman (I think) had greeted me in the church I thought I should make the effort to ask him, so went in again. By then he was talking to someone in the vestry with the door open a fraction, so I knocked apologetically, looked in, and asked – with immediate success. Yes, Pendrell was there, still buried in the churchyard, but the headstone had been brought in and set in the wall in the church porch, to the right of the west door. I went and looked, and there it was. I didn't peruse it carefully, because by then I was getting pretty tired and still had to find my orientation for making my way down to the Strand and the number 9 bus, but I took a photo, though without much hope of its turning out readable as my disposable camera didn't have a flash.

### Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> July

I decided I should return to St Giles and transcribe Pendrell's monument properly. This time the main body of the church was closed although the porch was still open – how lucky I was with my timing yesterday.

Here is Pendrell's inscription, fulsome in praise as Frances Good intimates:

Here lies Richard Pendrell

Preserver and Conductor to His Majesty

King Charles the Second after his  
 Escape from Worcester Fight  
 in the Year 1651  
 Who died Feb the 8<sup>th</sup> 1671  
 Hold passenger here's shrouded in the Hearse  
 Unparallell'd Pendrell thro' the Universe  
 Like when the Eastern Star from heav'n gave light  
 to three lost Kings so he in such dark Night  
 to Britain's Monarch lost by adverse War  
 on Earth appear'd a second Eastern star  
 a Pole a Stern in her rebellious Main  
 a Pilot to her ROYAL SOVEREIGN  
 Now to triumph in Heaven's eternal sphere  
 he's hence advanc'd for his just steerage here  
 whilst ALBION'S chronicles with matchless fame  
 Embalm the story of great PENDRELL'S name.

Beneath is a later inscription:

'This slab was removed from Pendrell's tomb in the churchyard in Jan 1922.

Wilfred H. Davies MA Rector  
 + the names of 2 church wardens.

Other slabs in the porch record that Sir Wm. Cony Knt. gave fifty pounds, the interest to be used to buy bread for the poor, in 1672, and that Richard Holford, in 1658, gave twenty-nine pounds per annum for "issueing out for ever of 3 messuages or tenements lying in the said

parish to be distributed quarterly amongst ye most aged and necessitated poore people of the said parish ...” I was hoping to find a tablet to the “old pot” who gave money to provide coals, forever, but neither of these quite fitted. Actually she saw this in St Olave’s, Pepys’ church.

I later discovered that St Giles is very close to Charing Cross Road, and so absolutely right for wandering into just beyond Tottenham Court Road, although the stone’s throw is to Shaftesbury Avenue rather than Piccadilly. Also, although Drury Lane is devoid of theatres, the streets nearby are awash with them, as one discovers if walking through from New Oxford Street via Bow Lane to Covent Garden and thence the Strand.

My 1967 London Transport guide to Wren buildings in and near London tells me that St Anne’s Soho is a Wren church, or at least the outer fabric is, and calls it a “beautiful remnant”, a beauty I completely failed to perceive – the rear to me was quite ugly and the rest seemed to be entirely built in (or out) by commercial buildings, with only entrances exposed, and dingy from every direction. St Giles, however, in its present form, was designed by Henry Flitcroft (his name is given to an adjoining street about 10 metres long), and built in 1730-34 (Flitcroft also designed Woburn Abbey), but could well be a Wren, from its appearance. St Andrew’s, the church FG got locked into on an earlier wander, is a true Wren, built 1686-7, and I first encountered it, unknowingly, this same day. When she described both these as “old” churches, I’d imagined something medieval, and I’m a bit surprised she didn’t note their later style of architecture.

As St Giles had put me in the Holborn area, I decided to continue east as I wanted to fit in visiting Charter House before the Anglo-Catholic History Society excursion on the 31<sup>st</sup> July (Saturday) so that I could hand over FG's account to the secretary, Michael Farrer, who is a resident. I had learned from Jean Pailing that it is a sort of alms house, and that Michael Farrer had suddenly lost his money just when another member of the Society who lived there suddenly came into money, and so they were able to exchange places.

Because I anticipated a lot of walking I had left my heavier 1930s A to Z behind, thinking I could make do with my single sheet London map, but this proved to be my undoing, as once one gets to Holborn Circus the streets are very complicated, going off in all directions, and Charter House itself was not marked on this less detailed map. At Holborn Circus and viaduct, unsure where to go next, I paused to look into a church right on the Circus, only separated from the roads by a small garden. This was St Andrew's, the Wren church, and it didn't occur to me in the slightest that it might have been the old dark church FG was shut into, which I imagined as gothic, and much closer to Fleet Street. I was interested to find it had a role in Thomas Coram's founding of his Foundling Hospital, which I visited with Bob last year, over in the Bloomsbury area. Two plaques, a boy's and a girl's head, in Foundling uniform, are set above the (side) entrance, in enamel like those of the Foundling Hospital in Florence, and in the foyer is a tablet giving this bit of history – Coram rescued his first foundling from the church steps. (I took a photo but, without a flash, it

didn't come out.) [ Since then I have read a TLS review of a new biography of Coram which says that this story is apochryphal.]

I went on along Charterhouse St, but was discouraged when a gatekeeper to a set of buildings round a courtyard, which I thought might have been it, had apparently never heard of it. (As I later found, it was only a couple of hundred yards further on. This amazing ignorance of surroundings reminded me of the young receptionist in the Bristol hotel who knew nothing of 's famous iron bridge over the Avon gorge, which similarly was close by, just a bit up the hill.) I was then distracted by coming to the amazing structure of Smithfield Markets and couldn't resist going through the large open archway which took me to Bart's Hospital, and then to St Bartholemew's Church, a lovely glimpse of a flint church at the end of a narrow, short street. By then I was getting rather tired, and needed to get home in time to go to Julian Barnes' reading of his new book, "Arthur and George" at an Ottokar's bookshop in Putney, which I'd bought a ticket for. It took me quite a while to get down to Fleet St, passing by St Paul's and I'm sure going much further than I need have.

### Wednesday, 3rd August

One of the elderly Christian gentlemen on the Anglo-Catholic History Society excursion was Raymond Salisbury-Jones, an ex-marketing manager for Rolls Royce who had visited Sydney and Adelaide in that capacity (and like me preferred the latter), and played the organ. When I walked out to look at the grounds of the Ascot Priory (one of the high Anglican buildings we visited) and find the nuns' cemetery, there was

Raymond, wandering alone on the greensward – he had drunk too much at lunch, he said, and could not attend to the little talk in the chapel. We walked the grounds together and then found the others all drinking tea in an annex, and in the process I told him about my failed attempt to find the Charterhouse. His kind response was to invite me to visit him the following Wednesday, today, and he would show me round, as he was a resident, as well as the Society secretary. I would therefore be luckier than FG, and would get to see inside for free. He pin-pointed where it was on the map for me, and where the entrance was in relation to the Green.

The church I felt I most should see in the City or East End was the one in which FG was inadvertently locked in mid-winter, and in the course of checking the route to Charterhouse and FG's diary entry I discovered she had given its name, St Andrew's, and that this was the church I had happened on, on my previous attempt to find the Charterhouse; so I planned to visit it again at the same time and look for the vestry and the little garden which provided her way out. My impression of it had been as free-standing, rather than interlocking with further buildings as her description suggested to me. It is certainly no longer hidden by big modern shops, but stands right on the huge roundabout of Holborn Circus.

My trip, this time employing buses along Fleet Street and then up towards Holborn Circus, again took me past Smithfield Market, and I realized I had been only fifty metres or so from the entrance to Charterhouse Square when I abandoned my search the previous time. When I found the entrance (and I was glad I knew where to look), there

was a cluster of people inside, marshalled by an elderly gentleman, and it turned out that he was one of the residents, or Brothers as they are called, about to take them on a tour of the place, for which there was a charge. I only then realized that that must have been what the servicemen and women were being let in free for in FG's day, and it brought home to me more strikingly than ever how little has changed in the tourism of England in almost a hundred years – people paid to look at the Charterhouse in 1917 or '18, as they do now.

Its history, briefly, is that an abbey was founded there in about the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it was dissolved by Henry VIII and the abbot and six monks executed, partly destroyed but given to Lord North, from whom it passed to the Howards, Lords of Norfolk and Suffolk, and then to Thomas Sutton who had held administrative positions and become very wealthy through property dealings. He had no legitimate children and in his will established it as almshouses for 80 men and a school for 40 boys. The school grew too large and moved out in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Brothers are reduced to 40 – financially distressed elderly Christian gentlemen (i.e. educated), but it is so large that parts of its buildings are let to professional firms and as private dwellings.

It is like an old Oxford College, with that magical ever expansion from court to court behind what seems a modest street frontage, and with the same lovely old chapel and dining room and lovely gardens. What a paradise to find oneself in, in old age, and with educated companions to boot. Raymond had to go to the doctor at mid-afternoon and passed me on to Michael Farrer, the secretary of the society, with an invitation to a special afternoon tea gathering in lovely

glasses-in cloisters below the newly refurbished infirmary, where we were elegantly waited on, with a sausage roll and a delicious jam macaroon accompaniment. We had a lovely talk about cathedrals, with a priest who has rung the bells in St Paul's since 1952, and was full of funny stories about clerics, particularly the present Bishop of London. A memorable encounter, while with Raymond, was with one of the private inhabitants, wheeling a bicycle and wearing trouser clips and a crash helmet, who has "gone over to Rome".

The Green, outside, was a mass burial place for victims of the Great Plague of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The miserable environment of FG's observation has disappeared. It is now quite a part of the City, a commercial and professional precinct. Most of the surrounding buildings would be the same, now restored, although ugly newer ones press around; and there are no crowds, just the occasional well-dressed worker. An old building next door has been discreetly made into an expensive hotel, and on the other side is an extension of Bart's Hospital.

After a long sociable afternoon, it was after five when I got back to St Andrew's, to find it had shut 10 minutes earlier, so I was unable to check the vestry. FG's debacle there was at the end of a wander beginning at the Law Courts in Fleet Street, and as I wanted to return there I set out to do it in reverse. I had noticed Bell Yard, just past the main entrance to the Inns of Court, as the bus took me along Fleet Street on my way to the Charterhouse, so knew where I was heading eventually. This was her first turning after "poking [her] nose into [the] ancient holes and corners" of the Inner Temple, which, alas,

one can no longer enter at will, though, like 10 Downing Street, one probably still could in the 1960s. My first goal was to find Staples Inn, her last encounter before The Charterhouse, which she came across through a stone arch in the setting of a garden courtyard with a bubbling fountain. This she described as near New Square, which had been hit by a bomb in the most recent air raid, and which my map showed me as a little to the east (away from Lincolns Inn Fields) of New Fetter Lane, as one makes one's way south, downhill, towards Fleet Street from High Holborn – at least so I thought, but I now see that what I was looking at was New Street Square, and New Square is adjacent to Lincoln's Inn Fields, as so more en route for FG.

Rather appropriately, as I approached, I saw the devastated open side of a tall building, but this time the destruction was caused by demolition in preparation for the construction of a new large-scale city development around, and possibly in, the old square. The entire square was surrounded by protective hoardings, and the closest not-to-be demolished buildings were draped with protective sheeting, to keep out the dust, presumably. One could, however, walk round most of “the square” where buildings to the south of it were remaining intact, and at the south-east corner was an archway which I hoped might lead to Staples Inn, but no. Just through it, however, was Dr Johnson's house, which, I thought, FG must have missed on that occasion, and when I returned to the area of destruction I discovered that the hoardings displayed a series of word definitions from Johnson's Dictionary, featuring his idiosyncratic allusions. Perhaps Staples Inn was destroyed in WWII, as it is likely that it, like Dr Johnson's house, would not have

been allowed to be demolished for development. FG liked Staples Inn so much that she returned to it with one of her male acquaintances, but she gives no clue to its function then, or its history.

This part of my investigations was largely a mistake, for at the time I took Staples Inn to be an inn as in pub, but I realized later (back in Australia) when reading George Gissing's *Born in Exile* that it is a precinct, as in Lincoln's and Grey's Inns, and I found it in my new little London Atlas, now Staples Inn Buildings. It is on the opposite (west) side of New Fetter Lane from New Street Square (but on the same side as New Square), up against High Holborn quite close to the Circus. It is still called just Staples Inn in the 1930s Atlas, but I failed to find it because it is not listed in the index. Single young men in both *Born in Exile* and *The Emancipated* have rooms in Staples Inn, and Gissing represents them as absolutely charming male digs, but there is no mention of a garden or a fountain.

I then returned to New Fetter Lane, and made my way, via Bream's Buildings (a street), Chancery Lane, and Old Buildings (a court), to New Square (the real one, which I didn't notice) and Lincoln's Inn Fields. There is certainly an abundance of interesting old and not so old buildings and gateways, and there was no hindrance to walking through even at that comparatively late hour, although car access was obstructed. Although there were a number of gothic buildings raised above ground level, I found nothing that really answered to FG's Chapel, "raised on stone archways", though now I see a chapel specifically marked on the map at Old Buildings, where I wasn't particularly looking for it. Lincoln's Inn Fields themselves

looked rather tired, compared with my memory of it in the 1960s when I listened to band concerts there in my lunch hour (deck chairs for hire). Indeed the bandstand I remembered seemed to be missing, with only a small affair in the trees on the south side, which didn't match my memory.

I then walked down Serle Street and along Carey Street so as to finish my walk down Bell Yard (where FG began). By then I was looking for a pub for a glass of wine and a rest, and to enjoy one of my last evenings in London, before returning to my bed-sitter for dinner. Carey Street, which runs right behind the Inns of Court, is made charming by a variety of buildings, of various ages and provenance and current occupation, and there was a nice little pub there, but so full, with people, nearly all men, spilling out into the street, that I didn't feel easy about going in, or drinking leisurely there.

On the corner of Bell Yard, I consulted FG's text again and was reminded of her reference to the Seven Star Inn. I looked back along Carey Street, but the signboard I picked out was something different, so I began to walk down Bell Yard. Then it occurred to me that the pub had looked a bit more decrepit than other buildings in the street and that even if its name had changed the date might still be there, so, reluctantly, I decided to go back; and fortunately, for this was my one real success of the afternoon. The sign I had seen from the corner was for a small trades business, and the busy pub was still, after all these years, called the Seven Star Inn, and the date, 1602, was still there.

Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> August

It has taken me until my last week in London to really get myself into FG's City and East End, which it was apposite for her to explore because her train from Sydneham arrived at Tower Bridge Station. My focus for this last free day was to be Seething Lane where she enjoyed envisaging the goings on of "old Pepys". I picked out a string of buses that would take me past the Tower of London and into Whitechapel, although I didn't expect to still find there the Jewish quarter, where Rabbi Lionel Blue, in his TV series Holy England, described himself growing up, in a sort of seclusion from the rest of London, and England.

I began with a mishap, leaving the nice purple Topshop bag I'd adopted for carrying extras on the 49 bus when I got off at the Kings Road, and then feeling I had to ring 999 in case it caused alarm as a bag left on a bus (after the bombings) – but I got the impression the police thought I was fussing about nothing. I was sorry to finally lose my collapsible umbrella with its pretty formalized wooden duck's head handle. On the 11, a rather hippy-looking middle-aged woman sat next to me in the top front seat and was determined to talk. She was actually quite interesting, and even more, was interested in my political/historical views. Although it was an enlivening conversation, it meant I was distracted from gazing at Whitehall and The Strand, which I had deliberately chosen the 11 bus to look at for the "last" time. She commented, quite independently, that the 11 is called the tourist bus, because it takes one past all those significant buildings. She was a current active member of the CND – I'd thought it was probably defunct.

Somewhere along Fleet Street I changed to a number 15, and got out a stop or two past the Tower of London, and sure enough there was no sign of FG's busy Whitechapel, just desolate streets with a mixture of barren new buildings and the occasional older one. It took me quite a while to walk back to the Tower and get some lunch, but eventually the real pursuit began when I easily found Seething Lane, more or less behind the tube station, and subject to workmen's barricades because of work on some of the buildings. There were houses on the left and the greenery of a park or square on the right. I fear that both the houses and trees are "horribly modern" and are not even the ones FG saw, with the possible exception of the "brazen" Cork Steam Pk. Co., an unmarked older building near the middle of the street, about to undergo restoration or demolition. I was surprised there was no "blue plate" for Pepys, and wondered if FG might have got his address wrong. As I said, the trees across the narrow street didn't look old, either.

St Olave's is still there, at the far (northern) end of Seething Lane, officially in Hart Street which forms a T-junction. It was entirely shrouded in scaffolding cloth, so is probably being restored. It seemed unlikely that one can enter at all at present, though one door was left uncovered and had a notice beside it with information about the Parish Office. I was unable, therefore, to check up on the several monuments and tablets in the church that amused her.

I was really hoping to find the archway with the skulls where, she said, Jo died in "Bleak House", but there was no sign of it at the end of the laneway. I could see an arch well along on the right wing of

the T-junction street, Crutched Street, but on closer inspection it was not ancient, there were no skulls, and it led into a warehouse yard, not a cemetery. Further along there were more arches under the railway lines from Fenchurch St Station, but these were arches over several converging railways.

Mark Lane no longer exists as a tube station, but after this series of defeats I thought I would make my way there (to the Lane, that is), thence to Mincing Lane which, describing subsequent passages through this area, FG says is where “old Mills and many of his friends” lived, and thence back to the Tower region. (I later found that the tube station was still marked in the 1930s Atlas and, comparing its location with the current Tower Hill tube station, it seems that it has simply been renamed – it wasn’t in Mark Lane itself in 1930, but rather, close to Trinity Square.) At St Olave’s, Crutched Street becomes Hart Street, which leads into Mark Lane.

Diagonally across from St Olave’s was a sturdy building, a sort of hall, I think, and to its right, set well back from the street, was a much older structure, a tower. Spikey iron railings fenced off its forecourt, but I could see a notice on it that was too far away to read. I hesitated to take the trouble to make my way in to read it, particularly as the iron gate had the look of being locked (though it was low enough to climb over). As so often, making that one last effort delivered the explanatory reward for previous failures. In fact the gate was not locked and opened easily, and I read from the notice that it was the tower of All Hallows Staining, built in about 1320, and had served as the chancel for a “pre-fab” church of St Olave’s from 1948 to 1954, after

the latter was gutted in WW II. The church of All Hallows had survived the Great Fire, but collapsed in 1671, probably due to the large number of burials in its churchyard.

So here was the answer to the disappearance of Jo's arch and the graveyard, which were still there when FG visited. If St Olave's was gutted, it is likely that bombs also destroyed the archway and the graveyard of All Hallows, of which there is no sign. I was so pleased to eventually find this answer to my search. Bombs may also have destroyed the old trees in the square alongside Seething Lane, though it is also possible that this only became a square after bombing destroyed houses along one side of the Lane. Indeed, the 1930s Atlas shows no spot of green alongside Seething Lane, and its name is not even given, although the street is there. (Pepys Street runs off it to the right in both old and new atlases.) In this case the old trees FG remarked on were probably those in the Square closer to the Tower of London, Trinity Square, which is now part of a War Memorial area for seamen.

I walked up Mark Lane a little in order to cross through into Mincing Lane, and down a side street to the right saw the very pretty façade of Fenchurch St Station, which seemed very quiet, almost as if deserted, and so tucked away for a major station. There was no sign of blue plates for the "old Mills" in Mincing Lane, whom I took to be John Stuart Mills and his father. Later, by chance, I came across one for John Stuart Mills in Kensington Square, which did not necessarily mean that he and his father did not live in Mincing Lane earlier. Then, it occurred to me, that FG's reference might be to a Mills and other friends of

Pepys, who are often mentioned in Pepys' diary, and a re-reading of the text suggested that this was so.

I was in doubt about whether the church with the statue with a bird's nest on his arm, where FG imagines Pepys strutting in his new wig, was St Olave's or a church, another All Hallows, closer to the Tower and opposite the passage from Thames St into Seething Lane. If the naval memorial park is where the old trees were, it probably was, so I went to investigate. I walked all round it and inside, without finding it – but I think I was mistakenly more on the look-out for the St Olave's memorials she described at the time and may have missed it – I still hadn't clearly sorted out which church was which. Certainly there was no free-standing statue outside either of them, though there was ground space for one outside this All Hallows, while St Olave's directly abutted the street. Probably it was in the façade.

I then made the mistake, for the second time I believe, of walking west, rather than east, at the Tower to find a bus stop, along Lower Thames St where the route divides, and having to walk all the way almost to St Paul's to find a stop, where the east and westbound routes rejoin each other. I walked up from The Strand via Covent Garden, hoping to buy a theatre ticket on the way in Earlham St, for a "last" visit to the British Museum. It was a full house, but I did find, to my interest that the interesting shopping seems to have moved east of Oxford St across Charing Cross Road to the area just south of New Oxford St, now that Oxford St has been taken over by the chain and tourist shops. There were malls in old warehouses, and it was alive with young people, fashionable like the shops.

The basement Greek rooms at the BM were again closed, but I had time to look at most of the Assyrian galleries and was very impressed. One can see here the forerunners of the Greek bas reliefs. They are full of interest with their battle and hunting scenes, a different world from the Egyptians' frozen depictions of oblations. Also the entry of the horse and the chariot suddenly marks out a new era.

Note: I could not locate a Mount Pleasant anywhere near central London in the '30s Atlas – it needed to be within walking distance of London Bridge, but finally found it, “Mt Pleasant Mail Centre”, in the new one, situated at the corner of Farringdon Road and Rosebery Avenue. This is where the Australian Forces Post Office was, to begin with, then moved to Kings Cross.

### Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> August

By a happy coincidence, this year the Powys Society Conference was at Llangollen, which also required visiting on FG's behalf – she joined “Aunty” there for a summer holiday in the first phase of her time in England, which she spent near Chester. I was making my way there direct from Dublin after spending two weeks with my daughter, Jessica, now installed in her new apartment in Celbridge. Due to a last minute change of plans I could only get an 11 o'clock ferry. It left from Dun Leoghaire (Dunleery), and we had an awful time getting to the ferry port as a result of the inconsequentiality of Irish road signs. Once we left the motorway we were abandoned to our fate, and what signs there

were seemed to be misleading. However I did catch it. I wanted to be in Llangollen by five for the welcome to the Conference, but this seemed unlikely as the trains by-pass it. The recommended station is Ruabon, from which my guide book said there are frequent buses. I got the impression that FG went all the way by train, and there is a train line through the town, but now only running short rides as a tourist attraction. I had to change at Chester for the Ruabon line which runs south to Shrewsbury, and by pure good chance made a wonderful connection, just nice time to get my suitcase up and down the lifts and enquire for the time and platform, and on to the train without hurry or much waiting.

Finding the bus was the next hurdle. Ruabon station was clearly on the outskirts of the town, and was unmanned, meaning that resources of help were not readily accessible. By great good fortune, it turned out, I asked a lady, walking out beside me, if she knew where the bus stop was, but she didn't. I then spotted it nearby and another woman joined me and we both tried to work out what the timetable attached to the pole promised. Whatever it was, it didn't look as if buses were very frequent. But before we had come to any conclusions, a car pulled up, driven by a man but with the lady I had spoken to beside him, and offered us a lift to Llangollen. How very kind of them.

It turned out that the other woman was going to a family reunion with her son (who appeared from the station). It seemed rather a long ten miles, up hill and down dale, and she was dropped off first at a large modern conference-type hotel, and then we went back to the

centre of town, and I was dropped at the old and quite picturesque yellow-painted Hand Hotel, and it was only about 4.30.

However, by choice I missed the drinks and welcome and only went down for dinner, because I wanted time to settle into my room, unpack, and enjoy a cup of tea in quiet privacy. My room was just what I like best, high ceiling and large sash window, and looked out over a cobbled street into backyards and up to a wooded mountain slope – for Llangollen is very much in a river valley with hills rising steeply all round. It was, in fact, very like my room in South Kensington, and although it was en suite the facilities weren't jammed into the room, as often happens, but led off one of the far corners, beside the window.

#### Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> August

The places specifically visited by FG were the Valle Crucis Abbey, two miles out of Llangollen upstream, and the house of the Ladies of Llangollen, Plasnewydd. However, on the free Saturday afternoon which the Conference programme allowed, my first choice was to climb Dinas Bran, the bare mountain in full view from the town, with a ruined castle on the very top. A lot of the society members were visiting it, variously driving to the foot of a final steep climb, at the rear in relation to the town, or taking the rather longer footpath directly up, from the other side of the river (the Dee) from where the Hotel and the main part of the town lie. I found a place in a car to begin with. It was a steep but short climb, and a perfect day, as most days were during this three months long summer visit to England, though windy on top. Looking back, away from the town, there was a curiously revealed

example of geological strata in the long cliff-like side of a flat-topped mountain. Another visitor, overhearing our curiosity, said that it used to be the shoreline, and one could well believe it. Neither the signs for the castle hill reserve, nor the information centre brochures, gave any historical information about the ruined castle, which probably had a succession of manifestations, the latest at least Norman.

I decided to go down by the longer track to town, partly because I wanted to enjoy a longer walk, and partly to make sure I fitted in a visit to Plasnewydd and didn't miss out through being dependent on other people. About half way down, the grassy slope became a perfect opportunity for indulging in a "Hills are alive to the sound of music" imitation combined with the old bushwalking skip for descending a mountain – not something one would indulge in alone with an obvious audience, but below me where the slope flattened into a brief dip were only two little children, and their mother (I assumed) on a seat where it rose again slightly, waiting, possible reading. So I did my skip but drew the line at singing and flapping my arms up and down like wings, and enjoyed it, though my coordination was no longer quite as smooth as it had been in youth. I desisted while still at a distance from those below, but when I passed the youngish woman, the mother, she addressed me, "That was lovely," she said, " seeing you skipping down the hill." How nice of her, to say so, and that she didn't just think, "Queer". It gratified me, but also embarrassed me, as appreciation always does, and I foolishly tried to neutralize it, saying I used to be a bushwalker in my youth and that was something we did descending mountains, it saved the knees. How silly. That wasn't why I did it, but

for the pure pleasure, and that was how she'd seen it. Undeterred, she repeated how nice it had been to see me. Such occasions are a rare gift, to enjoy oneself in one's eccentric way, and have someone see it for what it is.

The house of the Ladies of Llangollen was on the opposite side of the town, and I followed the Visitors' Map back through the central area and then uphill, a narrow bitumen road. Eventually I came to the gates let into a large parklike garden, the house down a slight slope to the left, the stables, where one bought one's ticket, refreshments and souvenirs to the right. I went there first, for a pot of tea and a rest, even though it was only about an hour to closing time. The appearance of the house was quite unexpected, and even more so inside, and I'm surprised FG did not comment on it, confining her account to the history of the Ladies, and the maze in which she enjoyed herself. The house, a transformed labourer's cottage, is very elaborately half-timbered, black on white, with decorative fret-work in the half-timbering; while the inside on two floors and the staircase is almost entirely lined with medieval carved panelling, apparently obtained from medieval structures that were being demolished at the time – much as the buildings of the artists' colony at Mount Salvat, just outside Melbourne, was constructed out of Victorian gothic remnants of buildings being demolished in the 1920s and 1930s. Only the maid's room, the third of the trio, was in its plain workers condition.

Two delightful young women were in charge, and actually invited me to leave my small rucksack with them near the door – a sign that I was far from London – and I took advantage of the offer of a

guided tour to see the upper floor. I was interested to learn that one of the Ladies, all of whom were Irish, was of the Fitzgerald family – the Geraldines – whose castle I had just visited at Maynooth, near Celbridge, and whom I had first come across historically in Susan Brigden’s history of the Tudors. Their representative at Elizabeth’s court gained a permanent place in my imagination for complaining that he was “unregarded and unrewarded”, which was how I was feeling in my employment at the CIS at the time I read it.

There was a nicely kept formal garden in front of the house (which the leaflet said was created after the Ladies’ time), but I saw no sign of the maze, so I asked the curators about it. They said there was no record of it, although others had asked about it, and it was thought that perhaps children’s memories of the low clipped hedge borders of a formal garden, like the present one, had assumed the size of a maze. But FG’s account makes it clear that it *was* a full-size maze, to her as an adult, too high for her to look over the top of the hedges. Rather than not wanting to know, which one usually encounter in authorities in such circumstances, the young women were genuinely interested, so I left the relevant pages of the diary (my typed version) with them – they intended to pass it on to whoever was in charge of the current restoration project on the grounds, which is looking for signs of the Ladies’ work. They said that the stumps and roots of large shrubs had been found in the area to the right of the house – these might be the remains of the maze hedges. (The area had been cleared recently and the surface was scraped back to the soil and some thin grass.) They also

noticed that the date FG gave for the Ladies' death, about 1788, was actually when they arrived.

It had been a toss up between Plas Newydd and Valle Crucis Abbey, and I chose the former because it was closer, but I still half thought I should try to visit the latter, two miles from the town upstream, although I didn't relish the prospect of a four mile walk so late in the day. However I did make an attempt to find the riverside path, but the maps were far from clear and I abandoned the attempt after finding myself in a dead end and no sign of the path, on the far side of the river. I at least knew from the Coxes (a couple at the conference who had arrived a few days early and done their sight-seeing already) spontaneous description, like hers, that it was mainly roofless ruins but in one section the roof and a second storey (I think), were still in place.

A third outing FG related was to a particularly charming Inn a little way into the country, but as she doesn't name it there seemed little hope of identifying or visiting it. However, on the return from my failed attempt to find the path to Valle Crucis I walked through the station (which runs short steam train trips for tourists) and saw on the platform a poster for 'The Sun Inn, Rhewl – 14<sup>th</sup> century Drovers Inn' about 3 ½ miles from Llangollen, "nestling in the Dee Valley", and felt that it very likely was the one – so much do the tourist attractions of 1917 remain those of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

FG thought Llangollen was absolutely charming, but that was before she had seen the villages of SE England. It is a nice little town, in a striking setting, though I find being at the bottom rather than the

top of all those hills a bit claustrophobic. But I felt it didn't have quite the prettiness and charm of English villages – something about the proportions of the buildings just not being quite heart-warming, rather more late Victorian and industrial in visual effect, than 16<sup>th</sup> century and rural. I'm not sure if that is a feature of Wales generally. Holyhead, what I saw of it, had a similar impact – not quite making the charm.

Returned home to Windsor, and back to my interrupted reading of a “History of the British Isles 350 – 650”, there Morris recounts a great defeat of the invading Irish in the hills above Llangollen, by the British led by a Bishop, an ex-Roman Commander, who laid an ambush which consisted simply of his troops all shouting “Alleluia”. This so terrified the Irish that they rushed down and drowned in the river. It was satisfying to have a real mental picture of the concentrated clustering of the steep hillsides which possibly magnified the sound swelling out from high above the invading army, but seeing the River Dee today, it is hard to know why the Irish should have drowned in it, for it is quite small and shallow. Perhaps it was deeper then, or in flood at the time.

I left England having visited most of the places in and well out of London that FG described, but, apart from Chislehurst, I had missed all those places on the outskirts to which she made bus trips, and these were what I had looked forward to most. It was not that I had not attempted to organize these expeditions, but that whenever I tried to come to grips with the means, I was frustrated. The London buses seem no longer to run so far afield, although possibly the interurban buses

would have taken me, and there was also a train alternative, but this would have been a different trip. Worse, the country roads between villages that she so enjoyed walking, all seemed now to have become major roads, like that between Sidcup and Chislehurst, and would have been hell to spend any time on. If I do replicate these outings on a later visit, it must be for the towns alone. The really big changes since FG's time have been in the transformation of the rural fringes of London into transit zones for the motor car. The not obviously touristic, in which she perhaps joyed most, is what has been lost – near London that is, for they still flourish – the English spring, the English cottage garden – further afield at levels of impeccable prettiness beyond anything I recall from the sixties, when I lived in England, but may, or may not, have been quite so perfect in the time of FG.

*Kensgate House, Emperor's Gate, London SW7*

Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2007

My first full day in London. I met Bob at Gloucester Road tube. We then walked to Hyde Park and caught the number 9 bus to Piccadilly. He was happy with my proposal for a favourite bus ride and a coffee in my favourite Costas, in New Oxford Street near the British Museum. Since we were comparatively in the vicinity, I had in mind to look again for Staples Inn, and he was happy with that too.

He was familiar with FG's St Andrew's church, in which she was locked, and I thought that this time, at about midday, we might get into it, so we went there first, although it is a little further along High Holborn from where the entrance to Staples Inn is marked on the map. Bob, like me, found her choice of the word "old" misleading. It is in fact, we discovered, a Wren church. He also took exception to her description of it as dark, as it has large, light windows. But then, she saw it at 2.30 pm, only an hour before dark, on a mid-winter's day. Perhaps there were some black-out provisions too. We did get in - both a side and the rear door were open. I, of course, was looking for the vestry door that led through a passage to a hall, from which a young boy let her out. On re-reading, I see that the pitch dark she experienced was between the outer and inner doors to the nave, probably the vestibule where the memorial to Coram is situated - he would have pleased her as a character as would the weeping cherubs. It probably attests to the darkness of the day that she didn't notice the blue and white figures of a Coram boy and girls above the west door, outside. She did find it lighter right inside, but dark enough to need to accustom her eyes.

Leaving Bob in the nave, I ventured into the vestry to the right of the chancel (the door to the exterior, just before it, was locked), and out through a farther door into a passage (not a hole filled with lilies). Through a door on the right I could see numerous clerical workers at computers, but none accosted me although I was out of bounds. A short distance along the passage terminated in a staircase with a right angle at a landing, and the passage also turned to the right

to an outer door, which opened onto a courtyard with parked cars, and an exit into St Andrew's Hill, which becomes Shoe Lane, one of the six ways of Holborn Circus.

St Andrew's is no longer "hidden away by big modern shops", but is all too exposed to the swirling traffic of the roundabout, occupying one small sliver of land between the six spokes of the wheel, with Holborn Viaduct on one side. But it does have a small, well-kept sunken garden between it and the traffic which was well patronized by sitters on both my visits.

The architecture and the information that it is a Wren church both contradict FG's guide book, which said it escaped the Great Fire of London - unless it met some other end at much the same time, like All Hallows Staining.

A church history notice board on one side of the nave gratified another of my interests, telling that Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's beloved friend, was baptized there. This makes perfect sense as Southampton Street and Southampton Buildings, where the Earls had their palace at the time, intersect with Holborn not so very far along to the west. John Donne, the poet, had some role there early in his career.

It was then time to look at Staples Inn, so we made our way back across the end of Fetter Lane a little along Holborn, to see what we could find. What a gift! It was all there, although we did not take this in at once. We went in under an archway leading into a stone-paved court with a pretty little tree in the middle, nice, but not matching up to FG's charmed response, and no fountain, so I assumed it had been

much simplified in the meantime. However, I had acquired a second interest in Staples Inn since my last visit on account of my beloved Gissing settling two of his bachelor characters there, who found it a delightful place for different reasons, which included the masculine simplicity of their rooms, featuring good old wood, leather and stone. The buildings forming the court were Georgian or earlier, and the general plan seemed to be that of an Oxford College, with a doors at ground level opening on to stairs which lead to the rooms above.

We returned to the deep archway to read a plaque high up on one wall that gives details of various restorations which seemed self-contradictory, and it was only when I read historical details Bob printed out from the website later that these apparent contradictions were resolved in my mind. The statement that the original 16<sup>th</sup> century building remained (although it was also burned and bombed) prompted us to go back onto the street and take another look. Astonishingly, I had entirely failed to see the elaborate black and white half-timbered building on the street frontage, quite up to the standard of Shrewsbury, and Bob said he had not noticed it before, or had thought it was mock.

We returned to the courtyard to see if we could get into the “hall”, which was made most of in the plaque, and which looked like a chapel from the outside. It had been badly bombed in WWII and the website gives details its restoration in the early 1950s. Surprisingly, there is dispute over whether the roof now incorporates only small pieces of the original beams, or whether they are completely original - surprising that there are not precise records from so recent a time. In looking for an unlocked entry, we passed through another archway, and

found ourselves in what was really FG's garden - just as she left it! Or almost. The fountain was there, in a sunken garden with descending garden beds (the rockery) and stone steps, but it was fenced off from the public by iron railings and a gate, and the people sitting there in the sun at lunch time must have been employees of the Actuarial professional body that now inhabits the Inn. Perhaps they came through the door from the Hall, where some were sitting on the steps down into the garden. The clock was there, at one end of the Hall - it also has a face into the first court, the website pointed out. A paved path skirted the sunken garden on two sides, leading out to elsewhere at its open side, to the right of our archway entrance. This would be the side from which FG entered through a narrow arch, so perhaps its buildings or wall were bombed - there is, I think, a stone wall protecting the garden. The two sides adjoining the path were Georgian, or earlier "rooms", as in the first court, and there was a flowering magnolia tree in their angle. However, the whole setting didn't, for me, have the exceptional prettiness and charm it had for her, despite the fact that I saw in it flowering spring season and she, in deep winter. Perhaps its unexpectedness made it magical for her, or it was her first vision of a courtyard garden.

Leaving by the way she had entered, and turning left towards Lincoln's Inn, we saw before us, as indeed according to her description we should, the Chapel "up off the ground, raised on stone archways - a sort of crypt". It is an "open crypt", the chapel leaflet told us. The floor of the crypt was now clean and clear, apart from a skip in one corner. As we paused nearby, a young woman hurrying by stopped to invite us

in to a recital, or rather free concert, by a youthful quintet. On the way in we picked up the leaflet together with a program - it was Brahms and Schubert, but the acoustics were rather harsh. The chapel is Lincoln's Inn Chapel, and the original design was by Inigo Jones, but it was restored by Wren, and again the late nineteenth century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries it was not uncommon for newborn babies to be left at the chapel (as at St Andrew's); they were adopted and raised by the Inn, and often given the name Lincoln.

There is a tiny memorial to John Donne in one window; he was a preacher there at the time the chapel was built. It was the custom to toll its bell when a member died, whereon inhabitant lawyers would send a boy to find out who had died. Donne had a post there for a time, before going to St Paul's, and this practice is the source of the famous line from one of his sermons, "Therefore send not to ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee".

I realise now that I misinterpreted the diary entry in thinking that FG passed through New Square and saw bomb damage there on her way to Staples Inn. She writes, 'Later I discovered "the damage" nearby', so she "wandered" from the Chapel, not from New Square, which misled me by being across Fetter Lane.

We went on down past Grey's Inn Fields, which I'd have liked to look at again to see if this time I could recover my 1960s memory of them, but it was well past lunch time and we were looking to ear or go home. I hoped we might eat in the little Inn behind the Law Courts which I'd felt too timid to enter on my own last time, but Bob for some reason was against it - said it was too crowded, though it

looked average to me, and certainly there was no overflow onto the street like last time - and we exited into Fleet Street via Bow Lane, as I did before.

I'm a bit disappointed not to have been as utterly charmed by the Chapel and Inn as FG was. Perhaps it was the mounting succession of fascinating discoveries for her. But I was so pleased to have succeeded with these three important locations, where I'd failed last time.

### Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March

Like FG, I visited Harrow-on-the- Hill, with Bob, on a Wednesday. Surprisingly she merely reports that she visited it with Carl and "Uncle George and Waldemar", as it's the sort of place I'd have expected her to rave over, with its wonderful view in two directions from the paved yard on the crest of the ridge, in front of the oldest of the school buildings, and the interest of climbing up such an unusually steep hill, and then the narrow street along the ridge, with school buildings on one side and a row of "quaint" shops and cafés on the other; and the boys in their unobtrusive school uniform walking between classes.

I'd meant to visit Harrow on my last few trips, bringing with me two old brown photo postcards which fell out of a book, but which this time I left behind. Harrow School entered my imagination when I read "The Hill" in my teens in my phase of jealously reading boys-school novels - "Tom Brown's School Days", "The Loom of Youth", and books by Gunby Hadath which the Kurilpa Library still held in their adult section. Harrow and Rugby were the ones that stood out.

Ellen and I have conflicting memories of an Eton boy, in a book, saying that the only thing he envied Harrow was its position on the hill (mine), and *Forty Years On*, the school song (hers). Perhaps they were different sources. However, I didn't at all expect the hill to be as significant nor as precipitous as it is, seeming to need a geological explanation, rising so suddenly out of the plain and England's generally flat land. Much the same query struck me with Windsor Castle's hill, though in its case the Thames immediately below offers some explanation. But while Eton is on the plain at its foot, the Castle having bagged the hill, Harrow is on the hill, like the Castle.

We hadn't realised the distinction between Harrow on the plain, the town, and Harrow-on-the-Hill, mostly the school, and arrived at the wrong station, unsure where to go, and had quite a walk to the top. A youngish man from whom we sought directions stressed that the way was very steep, as if fearing that our age might be a hazard.

The surprise find of this visit was a memorial plaque to Byron's daughter, Allegra, in the wall near the entrance to St Mary's church which, surrounded by its graveyard, is on the very highest point of the ridge. I'd thought very poorly of Byron for forcing her mother, Claire, Mary Shelley's half-sister, to leave her in that Italian convent where she died, aged five, in an infectious disease outbreak. This suggested that he took the trouble to have her body brought back for burial in the environs of his old school humanizes him a bit, and of course she might well have died if she had gone to Leghorn with her mother and the Shelleys, as the Shelley children both did. The plaque, placed by the Byron Society, said she was buried nearby, but whether

the grave was marked or not I didn't find out as by then we were tired and hungry, and I lacked the impetus to search for a headstone that might not be there, if Byron was, after all, careless.

We had an elegant lunch in one of the small restaurants hanging on the side of the ridge along the High Street, which I imagined serving the visiting parents of pupils, and then caught a bus on the street outside, which took us back down to the closer station from which we caught a fast comfortable train (infinitely preferable to the tedious noisy Underground network train that Bob had chosen because it went through Baker Street), which delivered us at Marylebone Station, a whereabouts unfamiliar to me. However it allowed me to check out my newly discovered London Club, the New Cavendish, (a membership bonus of the Society of Authors), near Marble Arch, where I planned to stay en route to and from France later in my trip. I was pleased to find that it would give me the experience of staying amongst Georgian architecture, in contrast to the Regency of South Kensington.

Hampton Court is too familiar, on the regular tourist trail, to have needed a tracking down visit. I went there with Bob some years ago, perhaps my 2000 visit, and little, in my recollection, has changed since her visit. I remember the tapestries, but also the beautiful linen-fold wooden paneling in one of the Tudor wings. The old basement kitchens are now put to use as a visitor's café. Today there are guides dressed in period costume, which irritates me. I think it spoils, rather than

enhances, the illusion of immersion in the past one can create by concentrating on what really *is* old.

FG comments on the modest exterior. *I* entirely failed to notice it, just across the stone bridge over the Thames from where we came out of the station and, thinking it must be some way off, tried to catch a bus to it, thereby bewildering the driver. She doesn't mention that, as well as its grand garden water vista, Hampton Court, like most early grand buildings of London, is on the Thames.

Windsor, too, falls into the category of too familiar to need hunting down. I went there in 2004 with a friend, Australian but long resident in London, for the sake of an outing together to visit Windsor Castle where I hadn't been before. Like FG, I was taken aback to discover that Eton and Windsor are twin towns, on either side of the River Thames. Nothing in all I had read about Eton had awakened me to that fact that Windsor Castle is right at the end of its main street.. Jill and I paid the entrance ticket for Eton, and while she looked into the Chapel, I went in search of the grave of Karen Blixen's lover, Denys Finch-Hatton ( from seeing the film of *Out of Africa* and reading a memoir), which I wrongly recalled as being across the playing fields. I didn't get there, it was too far and there was no sign of a graveyard; but when I checked later, I found I should have been looking for a memorial bridge between the playing fields. I did in fact reach such a bridge but, not looking for a plaque, I missed it if it was there.

Unlike FG, we were able to pay and look through Windsor Castle – I do find the furnishing of the British Royal Family's

residences in poor taste – too much red and gold, and too much altogether. Sandringham is the same, apart from the room furnished by Queen Mary. We too enjoyed the view from the Terrace, and then walked back down towards the entrance, appreciating the sunken gardens in the moat-ditches, looked into the Dean’s Cloisters, and unlike her were able to visit St George’s Chapel (truly as lovely as King’s College Chapel, Cambridge) by attending Evensong – Jill is a great follower of church music and will try to conclude any cultural pilgrimage with a sung church service.

We both arrived and returned by the Paddington-Windsor Town Station line, which as FG says is not very interesting, so I’ll try to sample the Waterloo-Windsor Castle Station line on some future occasion. Windsor Town Station is pleasant, but Windsor Castle Station is really something special, being incorporated in a fine wrought-iron and glass Victorian Arcade. We did at least have morning tea there.

### December 2008

#### *Kensgate House, Emperor’s Gate, London SW7*

Pondering the problem from time to time over three intervening years, I came to the position that rather than not visit FG’s outer London destinations at all, in the face of the disappearance of the bus routes she made use of, I should simply go to them by the easiest convenient transport, which is now by train; and that I should make no pretence of walking between towns, given my now advancing age and even more so my dislike of the proximity of rushing traffic, which now was sure to fill what in her time were quiet country roads. Starting too late, and so

allowing inadequate time, and with inadequate preparation, I fitted two visits into my last of three weeks in London which were largely occupied by nursing a cold that threatened to turn into pneumonia.

Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> December

Dorking

Going to Dorking in almost the middle of winter, when FG had seen it in glorious summer, I could hardly expect to receive the same impression of utter blossoming prettiness, but I think that even in summer she would find it greatly changed. It seems these villages on the outskirts of London are what have become unrecognizable, while central London and towns and villages elsewhere are little altered.

Even the available transport as changed, shrunk it seems in the face of urban and the motor car. London buses no longer go to Dorking, but the railway is still there, so I went and returned by rail, from Victoria Station. Interestingly, the rail route was the same as her bus route – Clapham (Junction), Epsom, Leatherhead, Box Hill, and then Dorking. Of course the train runs flat, but past Epsom, as she noted, we began to run through quite hilly country, and Dorking itself is on a hill. Also after Epsom, the train did run through some countryside, and I saw quite a few cattle, but none of the “noble looking” residences she remarked on. Box Hill still has its old station, apparently well away from any township.

Because of posting and shopping jobs, I only got away quite late, and arrived at Dorking station at about 3.30pm, so that only another hour of daylight, on a cloudy, lowering afternoon, was left to

me. The station, not that of 1918, is ungainly and unattractive, and the exit is onto a busy A road, apparently cut through the Victorian spread, with no sight of the old village centre. Fortunately there were signs to “Town Centre”, which took me down into a dip under a (different) railway line, across the main road, then uphill, past the town library in quite a grand oldish building, probably originally a house, to meet the old village street, which runs on a contour a little below the crest of the hill on the slope of which the town is built. Houses fill the slope below it, but there is countryside where the next hill rises beyond the valley. This must be where the stream (with water mill) ran, but I did not get down to see it, and there was not sign of it where the main road crossed the valley just below the station.

Houses also climb up above the main street, mainly old, while they are mostly post-Victorian below it. I climbed up one of the narrow lanes, and on top was a bare park or common, half ringed by large houses just below the crest, and looking out to trees and further hills on the open, far, side. The main street has a typical lining of a mixture of old and few new buildings, and is quite attractive except that it is full of constant traffic. Unfortunately I didn't check FG's description – otherwise I would have persisted in my walk along it to where it might have broadened out into the market place she described.

Although solid housing obliterates the pattern of the village FG saw, it is not the ugly post-World War II type that disfigures Sydenham, but possibly mainly between the Wars, and it doesn't seem that old buildings have been demolished to let them in on the space there was. But in all the parts I walked through there seemed not even

the possibility of the multitude of flowery gardens she delighted in. For me, the hilltop park in the gathering dusk, with its “fortifications” of Victorian rooftops, was the highlight.

The shops were odd – they didn’t seem to fall into the usual divisions of commodities, but had assortments of goods, or else a narrowness of selection, that I couldn’t readily identify as a usual shop category. FG’s pubs with hanging signs were not notably in evidence, though not absent. One of the current coffee chains was there, Starbucks, with a long glass frontage at one end of which, in what might have been a private room if it were not fully exposed to the street, was what seemed to be a meeting of nursing mothers, all occupied as one would expect.

I didn’t come upon an Information Centre, to acquire a modern guide book or leaflet – perhaps it was up in the market square. I was conscious of the late hour and unfortunately didn’t explore as much as was probably needed, but halfway down the quite steep narrow road (once a lane) that I took, returning to the station (and the valley), was a cluster of old cottages. Are all the gardens running down to the water’s edge now entirely built over, and the occasional old cottages the sign of where they were?

Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> December

London

Went with Alison to look at Southwark Cathedral, then crossed the river and discovered the beauty of St Mary Woolnoth (1727 – Hawkesmoor), and the incomparable interior of St Stephen Walbrook

(Wren – 1679), and then the touching elegance of the stone font by Grinling Gibbons in St Margaret Lothbury. The first of these is the church of John Newton of “Amazing Grace”, played by Albert Finney in the bicentennial film about Wilberforce – his monument is there.

By then we needed a break and a drink, but only high-flyer modern places were to be seen. When I spotted a No 11 bus near the Bank of England and old Royal Exchange insurance company building (now solid eating/drinking space), we abandoned the projected visit to the Guildhall and caught it to Fleet Street and the Courts of Justice, and walked up behind them to FG’s “Seven Stars” inn, and fulfilled my ambition to drink there. In company with Alison it was easy to enter and at 3.30 pm wasn’t crowded. It was filling up by the time we left, haunted by the wonderful cooked-vegetable smell of someone’s meal. We just had a glass of red wine each.

Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> December

Hadley Wood

As predicted, it rained all day, the day of my projected visit to Hadley and Hadley Wood, not heavily, but persistently. As with all FG’s outer London visits, there are no longer bus, let alone tram, services from the centre – although she did have to change twice. There is a train service to Hadley Wood from King’s Cross – Welwyn Garden City was the final destination, but not to Barnet, which misses out between High Barnet on the tube Northern Line and New Barnet, the station before Hadley Wood. However, as I came up out of the station, onto a

suburban road with a small string of shops, there was a bus waiting, for Barnet.

As FG said nothing about Barnet and her enthusiasm began at Hadley, I asked if it went there. “This is Hadley,” said the driver, but then understood that I just wanted to go “further out along the road”. I was the only passenger. It was a short run of not five minutes, very soon away from houses and through woods and clearings, and then an obvious village with an old flint church. The fare was £2, as against FG’s 10½d for a total three hours run, and the train return fare of £3 odd!

A number of pretty, old cottages stood near the church, while those further off were of a distinctly large and grand style, pleasing and not over-new. I walked all round the soggy churchyard (in my good Ecco boots that don’t leak). But no tombstone to either Thackeray or Trollop caught my eye. In fact, none of the gravestones looked of a suitable age – all much older, with the inscriptions almost lost, except one in shiny pink marble, 19<sup>th</sup> century but not theirs. For some reason, an odd omission, I didn’t even try to go into the church (it had such an uncared-for look, it probably was locked), but I discovered from the board in the porch that it was St Mary the Virgin, Morken Hadley, perhaps not the right church after all. A path led right through the churchyard to another main through road with another large open “common”, bordered by woodland, that I thought could have been a suitable place for a battle.

I’d ascertained from the bus driver that there was only one more bus back to the station that day, at ten to three, which gave me

about three quarters of an hour in total to look around. As I set out along the footpath I encountered a young woman walking two dogs and took the opportunity to ask if there was a “Hadley” as opposed to “Morken Hadley”. She thought not, nor had she heard of the Thackeray and Trollop graves in her local churchyard, and it seemed that Barnet was only a short distance further along the road, for when she suggested another church in the “main street”, she meant Barnet. But she gave me directions to Hadley Wood Common, and thence St George’s Common, further along and to the left, where she thought the battle might have been and there was a notice board. This put the battlefield on the Barnet side of Hadley, not the Hadley Wood side as I’d thought, but on re-reading FG I saw that this could fit her account. (As so often when I enter into casual conversation in England or Ireland, my informant had spent a couple of years in Australia – it is usually Sydney – of which she spoke positively.)

I only got as far as a pond, called Brewery Pond, with open land around and beyond it to the left, before my time ran out, and in any case, I was unsure of her directions – if the turn to the left was here or further on. There were houses facing the open land across a road, all large, two storey, distinctive, in their own gardens, and a set of low almshouses on the corner. All this time it was raining.

When the bus (the driver waived my fare this time) re-entered Hadley Wood it took a very roundabout route to the station (round and round in several circles it seemed to go), and it seemed an endless suburbia of almost identical houses in terms of size and style – largeish, detached, two-storey, and depressingly lacking in aesthetic appeal. The

only other passenger, an old man, got out somewhere amongst them. There was nothing at all to suggest a loveliness “beyond description”, but one could imagine it as a suitable setting for swaggering German officers. I imagine the point of the bus service is to take people from Barnet to the trains. The station was charmless too, but in a penurious way not even up to the boring upper middle-class standard of the houses.

On the way home to Emperor’s Gate I found the orange ice-cream I’ve been waiting for for more than sixty years in the Patisserie Valerie on Piccadilly, and it was as delicious as I remembered. I was bought my first and only, until now, orange ice-cream (in a cone) when I was probably as young as five or six, back in the unclear mists of memory, not, I think, when my mother was still alive, while returning from Redcliff, or Margate, on the Bay north of Brisbane, and I think it was with the Sumners, our neighbours, who had a car, and *did* take us, to the beach there, and on the journey back we also saw the consecutive side-streets, Ellen Street and Lucy Street, which they had told us about earlier – my sister’s and my own then very unusual names.

I have seen orange-coloured ice-creams on occasion since, in specialist ice-cream shops (most recently in Berlin, where I was hopefully expectant), but they have always been some other flavour. In adulthood I have been rather half-hearted about ice-cream – perhaps I have been wanting to taste that orange ice-cream ever since and nothing else has been good enough. And yes, it lived up to my memory of it. I ate it waiting in the dark, rainy street, crowded with late Saturday afternoon Christmas shoppers, for the number 9 bus, holding my box of

two Patisserie Valery cakes – I had only spotted it as an afterthought while buying them. The number 9 failed to come and I went home by a combination of number 14 and tube.

Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2009

Windsor NSW

With my last surviving uncle's death, my maternal grandmother's letters to him while he was in the British Colonial Service have come to light. In September 1945, a few months after my mother (her daughter) was killed, she tells him that Olive (our aunt), during a visit to Brisbane, took Ellen and me and her daughter Naomi for a drive to Redcliff. That, I think, is the answer to who bought me the orange ice-cream. The Sumners did not quite ring true, and it was probably on a later occasion that we saw Ellen and Lucy Streets, but not, I think, with the Sumners.

Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2009

Putting the photos from my Hadley visit into the Frances Good album, I was again faced with the problem of Hadley versus Hadley Wood. Consulting in combination my up-to-date map of South Central England, my 1960s London A to Z, and my between the Wars Greater London Atlas, which all differ somewhat except on the position of Monken Hadley, it seems that Hadley has, over time, covered a generic area stretching from just north of Barnet, where there are, or have been, streets named Hadley Grove, Hadley Ridge, and Hadley Green Road leading to Hadley Green, to Monken Hadley on its north-east edge, and

thence, moving east, to Hadley Common and Hadley Wood (a wood, not a town), with the Hadley Wood station on the western edge of that large newish “suburban” development probably prompted by the station, of which the bus driver said, “This *is* Hadley”. So Hadley Wood is the name of a station (as well as a wood), but not of a town or village. Perhaps the name Hadley has moved there, but in the 1960s A to Z it was firmly printed just north of Barnet, and not way over to the east, near Hadley Wood station.

This resolves three matters, but still leaves a major query. Firstly, it seemed FG had walked an immensely long way to reach Hadley from Barnet, if Hadley was in fact adjoining Hadley Wood station; secondly, it seemed she had described her encounters out of order, for if the churchyard she visited was there she would have passed Hadley Wood before reaching it; and thirdly, it would confirm the advice given me by the lady with the dogs, that the battlefield was further along the road to Barnet, and makes plausible her suggestion that the church with the graves might be in Barnet itself. I didn’t realize then how close Barnet was – I could have walked there more easily than back to the station (which really needed the bus).

So I still don’t know if the church in Monken Hadley was FG’s church. If it was (and certainly it was not as old as the year dot, but then she was inclined to attribute exaggerated age to churches), she didn’t register that the village was Monken Hadley, not Hadley; and things are still not described in exactly the right order – the battlefield should have come before the church, although the wood properly comes after it. So perhaps I still need to look for a church with the right gravestones a

little to the north of Barnet proper, but I don't think I need to look for it in the environs of Hadley Wood station.

Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2010

London    A perfect day

Having largely repeated with Bob last week, visits to three of the churches I went to with Alison two years ago, I decided to take up the East Walk in the City Churches booklet. (Sadly, St Stephen Walbrook didn't seem so stunningly beautiful on this second visit, St Mary Woolnoth no longer had the surprise of finding the tablet to John Newton, rector and slaver, and St May Abchurch was still closed.) I got there quickly taking the District/Circle Line (largely above ground) to Monument, and visited in turn St Mary-at-Hill, St Margaret Pattens, St Peter-upon-Cornhill, St Michael and St Edmund King and Martyr. The first had a lovely open interior and a pretty wine-glass font like the one at St Margaret's Rothbury. A chatty church warden (a woman) told me it was by Wren (the other was by Grimling Gibbons). Numbers 3 and 4 were closed, but took me through little lanes past the Jamaica Wine House, reputedly the earliest coffee house in London. The last had become a "spirituality centre".

But the real excitement was discovering an entirely different London – a medieval city with small steep cobbled streets and little old pubs, and of course churches round every corner, and mainline stations – Fenchurch St, Liverpool St, Cannon St – tucked into out-of-the-way corners, so different from the West End around Kensington, with its level, rational streets and lovely Palladian terraces that I love to think of

as London. So I learned that London, too, like the cities of Europe, has its quaint “old town”, while Kensington and the West End are the “Newtown”.

I had coffee in The Walrus and Carpenter at the bottom of St Mary-at-Hill Street, before going on to my second church. Another surprise was coming upon Leadenhall Market with its brightly coloured arcades on my way to the two closed churches, and was lured into a Jigsaw shop and bought a silk dress. After a long wait I caught a bus along Holborn – a friendly lady giving advice, and then from the British Museum to the Patisserie Valerie in Piccadilly where I bought a mandarin icecream in default of an orange one (nearly as good, plus cakes, and ate it in Green Park. Then train to Gloucester Road and home for lunch – very late.

I didn't quite put off going to the V&A, but made visiting it part of the FG project. The pages I'd brought with me described a visit to the “Kensington Museum” with Carl on leave, and his fascination with the working models. Which Museum would they be in, if they survived? The Natural History Museum seemed unlikely, but there was no likely room on the V&A map. On the Information Desk were a young black woman and an elderly white woman, both free. I thought the latter a likelier bet, and she came up trumps, directing me to to the Science Museum, hidden behind the Natural History Museum, though she thought it unlikely they were still there. I'd had no idea it existed and the models were not what I'd expected, in fact not models at all but the real thing. I had only an hour or so before closing, and didn't get past the James Watt steam engine – such massive black wooden beams,

huge wheel etc, and used to polish buttons! Also the steam turbine for making electricity invented by the son of the Irish landowner at Birr (Ireland) who was an astronomer and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had the largest telescope in the world.

An entrance to South Kensington Station is just outside the Museum and I decided to use it to walk to the Underground – just in case it was closer than the bus stop (no). A very long tunnel but not far into it was the sound of music, cheerful with a good beat to walk to, getting louder and louder but still the source out of sight – it reminded me of the sequence in *La Strada* of bands of musicians converging on the town for a religious procession, and took away my tiredness. So I got out a good coin to reward the young man as I approached, and he more or less accompanied me as I passed him close by to drop it – unaware till then that I must have fixed my gaze on him with the pleasure I felt in my face – unaware, that is, that he would notice and respond.

Altogether a varied and rewarding day.

Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2010

Caterham

Alison lives in Surrey and was happy to visit Caterham for our day together. I felt we would have difficulty reproducing FG's walk as the only specific details are the (H)arrow Inn and the old tower (nameless). The former might not still function or have been renamed, so I was delighted to find a "Caterham Walk" in the second of the 1960s London Transport *London Walks* books and that it mentions The Harrow Inn

and the White Hill Tower nearby, at the end of the walk. As their walk was longer than FG's and longer than we wanted to do, I decided to start at the end and at least find those two features.

At the beginning I had awful trouble orientating our position from the walks map and Alison's detailed county atlas, but after a young woman set us off in the right direction for Stansted Road it fell into place. It was a long steep climb up a busy road from the station to the Stanstead Road turn off, but it *was* leafy, and there was a tempting park on the steep slope on left, as if down to a river. I didn't think of identifying the unseen church at the turn-off (Church Hill) with FG's funny old church dating back to King John. What we could see is much developed, but still religious..

The road then became quieter, but both sides ere lined by prosperous houses, then a private school, after which the mad footpath disappeared, but we could still walk on an informal path which at one moved a little away from the road, masked by greenery, and the houses were interspersed with fields. At one point I was tempted across the road by an opening beside a farm to a broad view over fields falling away from this high land, the North Downs, then rising again – perhaps FG's "most lovely view I have seen in all England".

We had walked for about an hour and were looking out for the Harrow Inn, for lunch, but it was not marked in Alison's atlas though other inns were. I surmised it might be where two side roads joined ours a little distance ahead, but suggested we sit on a house wall for a rest as it was not in sight. When we got up and passed some protruding

greenery, there it was, just next door! with the two roads entering, not quite as crossroads.

Still the Harrow Inn, but no sign board of a harrow – perhaps they now think it is named for the town. It offered special lunches of over-60s, and we enjoyed one each, with wine. Alison shouted me the whole way. On the way up the hill from Caterham I'd noticed a “middle years” cyclist pass us, and thought it a stiff ride. Not long before the turn-off we found him resting by the fence rails and he asked if that was the top – which we didn't then know. Then he overtook us some way along Stanstead Road, and finally, as we were finishing lunch, he walked by, in the inn.

We asked in the inn about the tower. The young bartender didn't know of it, but an older customer overheard and said it was just round the corner. On our asking, he said it was built as a memorial to the son of the landowner, drowned at sea – so perhaps he knew better than FG's villager, and the walks book (which struck me as not too good on antiquities); but when we saw it, it didn't look like a memorial tower, but more like a medieval church tower left standing after the church was gone – like St Michael's tower on the Tor at Glastonbury. It wasn't very visible till you went well round the corner, and stood in the grounds of a large building, set back, which seemed to be being prepared to be some sort of function centre. There was nothing there identifying it.

After that it was a race downhill back to Caterham in half an hour to avoid having to pay £20 for parking instead of £3, if we exceeded 3 hours. We made it by about 1 minute.

We then took the car back the way we'd been, and continued on by road to several of the places noted in the Walks book. FG probably went back to Caterham past the tower, always turning left as the policeman told her, but we went straight (but winding) on, the road now becoming a very narrow lane, while the walk was much on footpaths: Place Farm, with its Tudor doorway built over by a Palladian porch and windows altered; the beautiful Georgian Brewer Street Old Rectory, with ha ha the book calls a moat; the White Hart in Bletchingly (1388) which the young bartender told us incorporates old oak timbers from ships, and the church opposite with massive square towers; Godstone, where we kept getting the one-way system round the green and pond wrong; and then along incredibly deep and narrow lanes to Church Town, whose church of St Nicholas, on a hill, is the church for Godstone down on the river.

We were fortunate in just catching the warden who was shutting up, and let us in to look round. Sir John Evelyn and his wife are buried in the church, with marble effigies on their tomb, but he is not the diarist, which the Walks book didn't make clear, though it did tell that he founded a gunpowder mill there. Next to the church was an elaborate set of aged mock Tudor alms houses with lovely gardens and an odd, out of character, chapel.

Our route back to Woking took us through Dorking, so I was able to ascertain that I need not go back to see the market place I thought I'd missed through turning back too soon on my winter visit. There is just a slight widening of the main street with no indication of a market square now. We then drove through Wotton, where FG noted

the diarist Evelyn lived – a branch off the gun-powder family – but didn't get to. Almost nothing there – an inn and a few buildings, but I think I saw, as we flashed past, that Evelyn's house was Wooton Place – so FG didn't get the spelling wrong, nor need the spelling have changed since her time.

Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2010

London

I hoped for at least one more assault on City churches, and this seemed likely to be my last fully free day before leaving London. Again I began from Monument tube station and headed down towards the river to St Magnus the Martyr. Hemmed in by new buildings, except Wren's massive square tower with open arches at its base, it is rather shabby, but impressive. Then east and uphill to St Dunstan in the East, a bombed church that has been preserved but not restored. Like a ruined abbey, gardens have been made in its shell and around it, making a charming precinct, above which rises the surviving gothic tower, restored by Wren, with its fancy pinnacles and flying buttresses giving a unique lace-like appearance.

Then to All-Hallows-by-the-Tower, which stands on a traffic island, in view of the Tower of London, which I visited in 2005, looking for the statue with a bird's nest which FG remarked on, after being thwarted at St Olave's. The Walks book gives it a Pepys association – that he watched the Great Fire from its brick tower – “the saddest sight of desolation that ever I saw”. It was bombed and is part old, the remaining part not restored, but rebuilt in sympathy. William

Penn was christened here (I now know that his father of the same name was Pepys's neighbour and work colleague), Laud buried, Judge Jeffries married, also John Adams, 6<sup>th</sup> President of the USA. A church was founded here in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the crypt and undercroft display Roman and Saxon footings and artifacts.

Seething Lane runs north opposite, and I wondered if a blue plaque to Pepys might have appeared since my previous visit, and whether I might return from Fenchurch Street Station, so I took my way thither by great good fortune, for as a result I found the true answer to the whereabouts of the arch with skulls where, FG said, Jo in *Bleak House* died. The scaffolding cloth that shrouded it is now gone, and the proper entrance is indeed through the archway with death's heads, crossbones and spikes (the Walks book refers to Dickens' "Sir Ghastly Grim" and the notice to another of his books – not *Bleak House*), and a small graveyard. The church was open and deserted. It was rather dark, and so, difficult to read the plaques, but I thought I identified one to Pepys's wife to the left of the altar, high up. The walks book says both are buried "beneath the high altar without tombstones", The woman attributed to bringing the Great Plague to London, Mary Ramsay, is also buried here.

I didn't remember the large new building opposite the closed street door of the church that, with plastic-covered notices was the only sign of life on my last visit, and wondered if the tower of All Hallows Saining had been demolished, but it was a little farther off than I'd remembered , and seemed less deserted than before – there was a flower and/or ice-cream seller parked just outside the fence, and

Fenchurch Street Station is in view down a side street – it seems a very secluded location for a major station.

I then walked on to Leadenhall Market and had a coffee, but lacking the surprise element of its circus colouring, it seemed less interesting this time – almost nothing but restaurants and less extensive than I'd imagined. I think I then found the No 11 bus to return to Chelsea and the 49. In my returns from visits to the City I passed St Paul's from the rear several times, and became quite bewitched by its beauty – hard to explain but each time it brought tears to my eyes - so much so that on my last evening (Wed 15<sup>th</sup>) I made a special trip beyond it in order to return past it before crossing the river to see “Danton's Death” at the National Theatre (an enthusiastic review in the TLS – I thought it indifferent and that the STC would do it better, and unlike the reviewer I was not impressed by full-frontal beheading). At my turn-around point I bought a chicken and veg pasty in a little immigrant shop, that was cheap and delicious.

While living in Islington in 1968-9 and working at Canberra House (just off Strand/Fleet Street), my bus skirted the rear of St Paul's then undergoing its first cleaning, emerging a beautiful pinky-cream instead of the chalk white with sooty edgings. I can't identify that bus route on the current map. I remember it as 171, which is now quite different. There is a 172 that emerges that way into Cannon St, but it starts close by and doesn't come from Islington.

Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2010

London

Caught the train from Victoria to Orpington to visit Jean. It goes by a more roundabout route than the one from Waterloo. To my surprise I found myself passing through (stopping at) FG's Sydenham Hill, whence we entered a very long tunnel (passing through the hill of West Hill, as my 1930s London Atlas shows), and the next station was Penge East. That answered my question regarding FG's Penge Theatre - whether Penge was the name of the theatre or of a place, its location - and also where it was - the next suburb to Sydenham.