

Sunday... 20050807

Ric and family just got in a little delayed but safely.

I got home last night at about 20:00 H

I had the highlite of my tour at Stone Henge. I'd been before in '76 when you could wander through and touch. This time I walked leisurely with a 30 lb pack for 5 hours, 7 miles up the Avon from Salisbury intending only to sleep out overlooking the Henge. Arriving at around 1700 h I was disappointed to see a zillion tourists bustling about. So went for a hike to the Druids Cottage. farther on. Lopping backside I hiked along the Barrows (burial mounds) to the south across the hwy and along the larger Kings Barrows to the South West... on the second to last and tallest mound, The KING's Barrow... I dropped my stuff and set up for the night about 2000 h. My ex Cath would recognize dinner- baguettes, Edam cheese, wine, toms, peppers, figs & fruit.

My frameless pack stands up nicely to lean against and I sat and read JRR's biography. I've never liked the reviews of any of the others and had never bothered reading them. I'm passing this one by Michael White on to Stuy and Thms and I'm going to encourage my dad to read it. He has never been one to read fantasy and especially LOTR. He and "The Prof" from Oxford had much in common- army, education, temperament, outlook, etc. I'm hoping once read, he'll read LOTR before he dies.

Back at the Henge, I read and watched and filmed the sunset over SH and then around 2230 h I lay down to watch the stars.... Wowwww! No city lights so a lot like C-wack lake at nite. AT 2300 h the Nrthrn sky lite up with flares... and

then the war-games began with far-off thuds of tank fire. (Two days later at B&B breakfast I met two ex-army tank drivers, (Gulf War 1) squat, heavily, tattooed Leeds fellows, now retrained and contracting as software network engineers. They had been at the Salisbury plains training grounds to witness the tank killer system they had worked on in action. "Brilliant results. No friendly KIA", they said. When I said they reminded me of Merry and Pip from LOTR they said, "don't read much... dropped school at 16. Like the Maths though! Fuckin brilliant we are".)

Back at Stone Henge, I fell asleep shortly after 0100 h... all the while prior, laying on the King's mound, thinking and listening, I heard in my head over and over the short poem-

"I shall lie like this when I am dead but with one more thought in my head"

I believe it's Dorothy Livesay, UBC Poet

In my case, I'll perhaps here naught but the slice of scalpels or perhaps the hiss of the crematorium when I'm gone.

I found my smallest poem written about our childhood Trafalgar beach, lacking:

"Stones laying side by side  
Taking turns, being the stone"

At around 0200 h, the rain started softly until about 0400 h, so I pulled the thin tarp over myself a little farther and snuggled in. I've got it all on DVD from iMovie.

I woke at 0500 to birds chirping around me. Two squirrels were arguing or doing the mating dance. I ate oranges, grapes, bread and cheese for bfast... packed and climbed the stile to walk the great-way towards SH with the rising sun at my back. It didn't open 'til 9:30 so a sat at a table reading and the talked to a Swiss

German mom and her daughter. They spoke perfect English. They were “enchanted” that I had obviously slept out on the Barrow. They want to go to BC next.

No buses arrived until after 1015 so about 20 of us had the Henge to ourselves for a good half hour. I did decide to go because the ladies told me they had heard the audio guide was excellent. It was and took about 25 minutes. I took tonnes of beautiful photos. A German father of two, and I took a couple of photos in different locations with each other in them.

When the busses arrived, there were about 10 of them, all at once. That has to be about 400 people. I left just as they were streaming up the pathway, but not before stopping to take one last shot of the hordes blocking the stones.

Walked all over Salisbury reading beside the Avon in the shade of trees, off and on. It was a cloudless day, with a breeze. Thursday, I went for a beer with the rugby club after their practice. The car guys name was, SERIOUSLY- Llewellyn Flewellen. Isn't that terrible. His mates call him Fluey.

I had booked a car for the Friday and when I told the manager I couldn't remember my B&B for reg, I said it was across from the Salisbury rugby club. His club he said. We chatted rugby. When I went to get the car on the Thursday nite, he said, “ALL we have in is that black Renault convertible”. A very posh 4 seater sports car with all the bells and whistles, but 45 mpg. He let me have it for the same price, but I took the extra £13 insurance for the day.

I drove around the forests and hamlets of the New Forest and saw huge stands of ancient giant oaks... ate at a 500 year old pub and then drove back the back roads and caught the train to London.

Bear with me here... because, I wasn't so keen to be back in London which I had explored for weeks in '76 and '81... all I wanted to see was the William Wallace plaque and go to the new Globe on the Bankside near where the old one was.

As I was wandering through London from Leister Square to the Smithfield market where the Wallace memorial is, I realized as I had not brought my laptop to download to, I was running out of memory. I contemplated buying an extra flash card... but I was in the Fleet St. business area and the bobbies told me naught open on weekends. I sat down in a small courtyard amongst the law offices and Royal Courts of Justice to delete duplicate video and jpgs... something I usually do on the laptop when I can see the “better of”. After about 10 minutes I started off though the gardens when I thought I heard a distant sound something like “Mr. Read! Mr. Read!” I didn't even turn to look because I realized it could'na be. As I neared the exit archway, I heard above me, “Hey Read, ya goin' deaf?” I looked up over my shoulder out of the shade into the sunny sky and saw a woman standing there. Squinting at her I didn't recognize her and she said, “Stay right there. I'm coming down!” Moments later I hear her running from behind and I turned and look wide eyed and immediately get all wide eyed and blurt, “Vanessa Carboneau?! What are you doing here?” as she jumped up and wrapped herself around me with the biggest hug.

“I'm going back to Romania!”, she squeals.

“But...”, I say, “What are you doing down here in Fleet Street Vanessa? Where's your dad?”

As she slides down she says, “I'm Adrianna now. Call me Adrianna. And

I'm staying with my big sister".

"But you were an only child?", I query, "... and adopted? How did you find...?"

Just then a striking, dark haired woman walks up smiling, "I've heard enough about YOU in the last few minutes... Mr. Read?" as she shook my hand.

"Mr. Read... meet my big sister- Mazia", 'Adrianna' says proudly.

Now let me clarify here that Vanessa, now Adrianna, was an ex-student of mine. She was one of the first Nikolai Chauchesku orphans to come to Canada, when her mom and dad, high priced Montreal lawyers, adopted her.

She once showed me an article from the Montreal paper that her well known parents were fighting each other for custody over a "Chauchesku orphan". Her mom had become mentally ill when Vanessa was about 8. Then she stalked her dad until he moved to Vancouver.

I first ran across her at Hazel Trembath when she and her dad moved to Coq. I was doing a computer workshop next door at Hazel with her class during my spare block one fall day, for an old teaching colleague Bill Bleasdale, who quickly filled me in on "Miss Chatty Cathy. Nice enough kid, good dad, insecure as hell".

I next ran into her that spring, when my Citadel grade 8 v-ball girls were running our regular spring clinic for grade 5 girls at Hazel. She was a chatty handful still and after 3 practices we had to ask her to quit coming. The following week when two of my girls and I were setting up nets at 7:30. she came early and said, "Coach Read may I please speak with you?"

I said, "Vanessa isn't it? Go ahead ask away". "In private?" she asked.

I said, "anything you've to ask... these coaches can hear".

She looked at the floor and very quietly sobbed, "Please can I have another chance? I need to play volleyball. I don't have anything else. My dad won't take me to soccer or anything. He doesn't have time".

That's the kind of thing a coach or teacher never forgets.

I looked at Jill and Kim who were misty eyed kind of smiling nervously and said, "Whatta ya think ladies? Second chance?" They both said, "We're in if you are?"

I said, "So Vanessa! Here's the thing. You've got to show up every Wednesday morning at 7:30 and help us put up the nets". She smiled through her tears and said, "But I don't know how".

"Oh we'll teach you", the girls said.

"And..." I said... To which she immediately chirped, "Stop talking at practice". She still tried to chat occasionally, but she always caught herself after that.

'Big sister', Mazia, it turns out was one of the very first orphans to be adopted, in her case 5 years earlier to London. She had graduated high school at 15 and law school at 19. She is now a Queens Representative or Crown Counsel in criminal cases.

She and Vanessa and I walked and talked to the Wallace memorial, where they took pictures of me. We had coffee nearby and they asked me more about the Vanessa I knew. "Yes she was a horrible little bitch in grade 6, manipulating and lying to win or steal friends off others and she was becoming

very unpopular and very unhappy in Middle School, until several of us suggested she deliver her public speaking on the Orphans and her past. I helped her edit it and learned a lot about the subject. Giving that speech to the school, she did not win a final spot in the districts but it changed her life and relationship with her school mates. She started to stop lying and hurting others... the underlying psychology we all understand so I will not delve there, herein.

Mazia had looked to help a child with a similar background through an international Romanian orphans support group or some such thing. Vanessa's dad's sister saw an article and responded. Mazia consulted Mr. Carbonneau and he was very happy to have her live with Mazia and go to post secondary in London, footing the bill. She is a 4.0 student with less baggage than she had in grade 5 and it almost feels like I had something to do with that.

I now, suddenly realized it was 1:25 and how far the 2 pm matinee at the Globe was from Smithfield. Mazia deftly hailed a cab and handed him £10. Vanessa handed me her e-mail and said one last thing to Mazia. "You see what kind of a teacher he was. I asked him once today to call me Adrianna, and the whole time we talked he never once called me Vanessa". I got in the cab, rolled down the window and just winked and said, "Hey Vanessa... Adrianna's a pretty name".

Now isn't that an nice little teaching anecdote?

I arrived at the theatre at 1:45 and went to the window. The clerk said, "There aren't too many "good" seats left in the covered gallery". ( £20-40) "BUT", I said, "I really wanted to stand in the courtyard". She said, "always room there for another 'groundling' @ £5. There's

no sitting on the cobbles you know!" Whatever that meant I didn't know or care. I was going to stand at stage and take it in, all.

The theatre is an exact as possible replica with a nice difference- barely noticeable sprinkler heads peaking up along the straw roof ridge. The courtyard is roofless and open obviously, just like the original. Much like I sort of thought it might be when I went to see Taming of the Shrew in '76. Alas! that theatre then was just like the Playhouse.

And the bonus was, it was not Shakespeare! It was a Greek play. A comical tragedy about two whores and a pimp and the gods and underlings all in Greek robes. They had advised it was quite bawdy and could offend some. The variety of English Accents was wonderful... from cockney, through jordy to posh. It was hilarious, thought provoking, moving and best of all, Shakespeare apparently loved it when he was a teen. AND super bonus... "No photos are ever allowed of Shakespeare's work at the Globe", BUT because this was not Shakespeare... they were allowing photos. I even snuck some video. It was only 1.5 hours but excellent.

I walked back towards the Vauxhall bridge and the B&B in Pimlico to pick up my pack and the train to Tring... thinking it was a wonderful end to a week that I would have been ecstatic just to have slept out at Stone Henge for.