

A trip to remember

2011 - ENGLAND

5 April 2011

Its been 30 years since we visited UK. The place has got heaps busier between trips!

TROUBLE

Today we visited Luton for the second time. The first time to pick up the van and the second time - to pick up the van again. Don't get me wrong - Luton is a nice place (well not that nice). It has a long history going back many centuries. But since the departure of Steven Clarke (the English Bard) some years ago, Luton has been in gradual decline. His famous statue, resplendent in bronze with Shakespearian hat and purple feathers may still be there in the main street but the pigeons and the vandals have left their mark. "Stevo" learned his trade in Luton and when he left, the town went into mourning for decades. Imagine what Luton would have been like if he had stayed. Like Griefswald in Germany, Luton town had all the potential but this evaporated quickly when the Bard left.

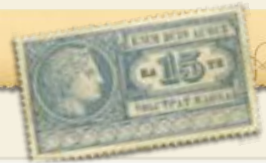
Anyway back to Luton. Why visit the place for the second time? Because our bloody van developed engine problems!! It developed a lethargy which made it reluctant to climb even the smallest incline so we decided to drive back to the depot and have it checked out. Luckily there were no steep hills. To their credit the van hire company, Amber Leisure, were extremely sympathetic and quickly identified and fixed the mechanical problem so we were able to get back on the road again. Shit happens (even to us) - its not often that a turbo pipe falls off an engine by itself, we were told.



Our van



Its cold inside and outside



Not the white horse but the big grey lion



Our folded bikes

THE COLD

The English would have you believe that this country has a grand history due in no small measure to its explorers and immigrants (read “convict criminals”) who were courageous and bold enough to leave the mother country. There may be more British people in Australia than anywhere but you cannot pull the wool over this little black duck’s eyes. They left because they could not stand the bloody weather here!! Its friggen freezing!! No wonder they left - nothing to do with boldness or desire to rule the world - everything to do with freezing the tits off a bull!! Luckily we bought really heavy rainproof coats. The inclement weather has also meant that we have had to curtail riding our bikes. This has put Heather in a bad mood. She wants to lose a couple of kilos before we meet our Polish relatives at Easter and exercise is the only way to do this. Maybe the weather will improve tomorrow so we can enjoy our sweat.

Whatever happens, we are enjoying our trip. Anywhere we go in UK is exciting and different - even if its not.



Encroaching hedges



More beauty sleep definitely needed



New type of warm pyjamas



OUR VAN

Our van is a little over 6m long. There are two single beds on either side, with a collapsible table between. They can be made into a double bed. We prefer to leave the single beds up and use them as couches because making up the double bed is a pain. The kitchenette is at the back of the van with the bathroom and toilet and shower on the sides. The door is also at the back of the van. There is a full sized fridge which runs on gas, battery and electricity. Everything else runs on gas - heater, boiler, hot plates and small oven/griller. There is lots of storage space. The van has a GPS but the voice is so terrible and the GPS so hard to program, we decided to use our own. We bought it in Berlin 2 years ago when we traveled through central Europe. The van is a manual 2.2l diesel. It has excellent power and keeps up with general traffic easily. It is well insulated - thankfully. Unlike the van we had in Europe, which was actually bigger in overall dimensions, this van has big windows and seems much more open.



Tomorrow we head for Heather's ancestral lands.