

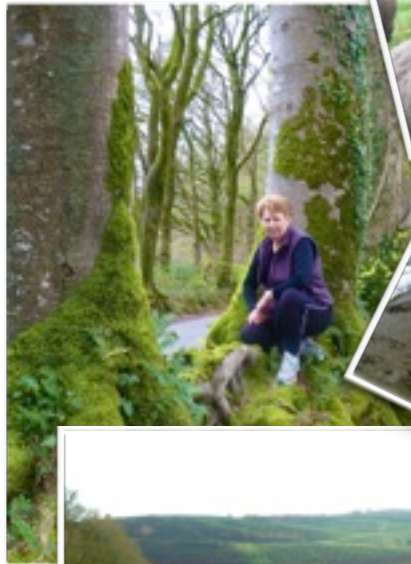
2011 - ENGLAND

15 April 2011

LYDFORD

We have swapped roles tonight. I (Heather) am to do the newsletter and Sig will read the literature and plot our course for the next few days. We arrived in Devon, on Dartmoor, late last night and decided it would be a good spot to stay an extra night and do a little bit of exploring. We are in Lydford, a tiny village on the western side of Dartmoor. Today has been grey and damp, but very enjoyable. This morning we set out at about 7 (no one is around at that time) and walked along the local bridle-way to attempt to see some wildlife and a bit of the moor. Most of the trees are still bare, but some are just getting their foliage. The colors are quite beautifully subdued – light greens, browns and a very beautiful lavender. Very thick moss hugs all of the branches and trunk - it is up to 5cm deep and quite lovely to feel. Spring hasn't really sprung here yet, so not many flowers are evident. Sheep are the main kind of domestic animals. Many of them have black faces and legs. We came across one curious herd of totally black ewes obviously ready to drop their lambs soon. Our white sheep seem quite drab compared to these.

After breakfast, we took off on a bike ride via a cycle track over the moor, called the Granite Way. It mainly follows the old railway line (a la South Gippsland's tracks), and goes from our local village to a bigger town of Tavistock. The first part was great – level with good views of the surrounding moor. But of course good things always come to an end and the track took to the road with its serious inclines and descents. Naturally what goes down, must come back up again (unless I could convince Sig to go back and get the van to give me a lift home - fat chance). We stopped at a small pub to have a hot chocolate and headed back. We then got up close and personal with some local wild life - it did happen to be dead, a recent victim of road kill - but it was an American grey squirrel no less, (a pest in UK).





After about 15 kms we returned very hot, and cold, at the same time -- if you can get my drift! A quick dash to the shower was necessary for both of us to stave off pneumonia. The van is seriously cold without a heater. We even leave the hotplate on, to try to take the chill off the air. The first week was fairly warm and thus we did not really miss the heater. This week though, has been very cold. However, only having a week left, meant we were not inclined to buy a small fan heater -- maybe this was not a good decision.

After warming up, we headed out to the local tourist attraction - Lydford Gorge - as the name suggests a rugged gorge area which is cut by a torrent of water coming off the moor. The moor is apparently the headwaters of most of the Devon rivers. The National Trust care for it. Everywhere we have been that is controlled by the Trust has been fabulous. In this case the pathways were excellent. The walk enabled us to get very close to the stream and the White Lady waterfall. Many people were strolling around despite what we would label as dismal weather. They all seem to have their dogs with them. The English love their dogs - usually more than one.





After one and three quarter hours we were hot (and cold again), and as we slowly walked back up to the village we decided to drop in to the Castle Inn for an ale and a meal. Unfortunately, they had no mead - something I want to try, but a beef and ale pie with mash (not sure what that translates to in Australian) which was very tasty. We have included a photo of the menu for Cheryl - thought you might be interested.

We think the prices were quite reasonable too. One pound is equivalent to about one dollar fifty. Take a look at the interesting information about Lydford coins.

Just a note about the names of things here - we are fascinated by them. I know Sig has included some photos of name plates from time to time. The English seem to have no sense of humour, or they are just very straight forward. For example, I saw three villages on a map -- East Hampton, West Hampton and Middle Hampton! No imagination required there. Another example - the Dart river flows through Dartmoor. It starts as the West Dart and the East Dart and meets at, you guessed it, Dartmeet.

