

England

Christmas and New Year

December 2016-January 2017



Bob and Molly Hillery

This was our annual winter pilgrimage to England, where we stayed for six weeks in our nephew's apartment in Ilkley. As usual during these visits we followed a routine very similar to that we have in Mason: walking, daily coffee shop visits, meals in local restaurants or at home. Molly shopped almost daily, to provide a little exercise as well as provisions.

Of course, we saw lots of family and friends and enjoyed visits to nearby towns and tourist attractions. In general, however, it is "home away from home" - with quite different scenery.

This time our stay encompassed both Christmas and New Year so we were able to enjoy these Holidays in an English setting.

Despite seeing most of our family, we didn't always have the camera on hand or—more likely—had it but failed to take any pictures. So, we hope our family forgives us for an almost total lack of photographic evidence of our meetings, but we have good memories of those times.

So, this journal contains a few pages of pictures that we did take, together with a rather cryptic daily record of what we did—often little more than a record of where we ate!

It was a very relaxing and pleasant six week visit with generally decent weather. The temperature didn't stray out of the range between 30 and 50F and there was only a dusting of snow. Winds were strong at times, however, and 30 degrees with a 25 mph wind can feel very cold on damp sidewalks.



The Christmas tree in the apartment, kindly decorated by Toby



The Crown Hotel, Harrogate, where we spent Christmas



Christmas

*A Christmas Eve drink,
Christmas Morning Church
Our friends Mike and Joelle
Sunlight in Harrogate*





A visit with Richard

Skipton with Elizabeth and Robert



Mrs Dog meets Elizabeth and Robert at the apartment



*Snow on the hills around
Ilkley*

*A misty but pleasant walk
over Ilkley Moor*



England, New Year 2016

Sunday December 18

On returning from breakfast we found out by text that there was a delay in our first flight from Cincinnati to Atlanta. Calls to Delta suggested that we should still make our connection in Atlanta (to Amsterdam) but as a backup, we were given an alternative routing for departure on Monday. We were told that all earlier flights from Cincinnati (also delayed) were full so we were left with little to do but hope.

We left for the airport early, turned in the rental car we had picked up yesterday, and started the check-in process about noon. It turned out that there was some room on a 12:30 departure but we were not allowed to take it as it was now too late to get through Security, etc. Had we known a little earlier we could easily have been at the airport before noon. Again, all we had left was hope – and our backup for tomorrow!

Monday December 19

As it turned out we made all our connections – Atlanta was a bit of a sprint but we had plenty of time in Amsterdam. So, we arrived in Leeds a little ahead of schedule, around 9:20 local time. Unfortunately neither of our bags was there to greet us, so we had to take a little time to fill out the necessary paperwork. We were hopeful that they would be delivered later in the afternoon.

Picking up the car was about as simple as it gets in the UK so we were in Ilkley – and having coffee at Caffè Nero – by 10:30 on a cool but bright morning. We then spent the rest of the day in the flat, getting the heating working properly, finding where everything was and taking a long nap! Joanne had done her usual great job of stocking basic foodstuffs as well as flowers on almost every flat surface. We even have a four feet high, fully decorated Christmas tree. Everything looked great.

The bags didn't arrive this afternoon but we were able to get dressed up with our Ilkley wardrobe for dinner at Piccolino.

Tuesday December 20

We were up late (after nine) and drove down to Caffè Nero for breakfast, after which we did our first shop at Tesco. While in the supermarket, I got a call to say that the courier was at our front door with our delayed baggage so I left Molly to shop and raced up the hill to catch him before he left. I did get the bags and then returned for Molly, so now we had everything we needed.

I went for a 4 mile walk in the early afternoon, after which we stayed home for the rest of the day and evening. We had Shepherd's Pie for dinner!

Wednesday December 20

It was after nine again before we got up. Today we had breakfast at home and then we both walked down into town where I continued a walk and Molly went to do a little more shopping. We both got wet as unexpected showers occurred before it brightened up in the afternoon. We had a mid-afternoon coffee at Caffè Nero and then stayed home until dinner at Monkman's.

As usual, we had an excellent meal, together with a complimentary glass of champagne. After dinner, we were talking to Mike and Joelle and they invited us to join them at their Anglican church in Harrogate on Christmas morning and then to have a drink at a local pub. As we will be in Harrogate for the Christmas period we gladly accepted.

Thursday December 22

We had breakfast (Full English) at the Wheatley Arms and then I went for a five mile walk towards Addingham and back on the Dalesway. It was a mild and sunny day so it was a very pleasant walk – despite feeling very tired at the end.

Tonight we met Joanne and Robert for dinner at Siam Square and had a good chat as well as enjoying sharing a number of Thai dishes and a bottle of wine.

Friday December 23

It was forecast to be very windy today but the morning was relatively calm and dry so we both walked down the hill after breakfast. Molly did a little shopping and I completed a 4 mile circuit – before driving into town again for a coffee and mince pie.

Tonight we ate at Quinta and, as with Monkman's, we were treated like old friends.

December 24, Christmas Eve

We packed one suitcase and left Ilkley (with a stop at Caffè Nero) for our weekend at the Crown Hotel in Harrogate. We arrived before 12:30 but were able to check in and get into our room. We had booked a Christmas Eve to Boxing Day package which includes a number of events - starting with afternoon tea later today. We went down for tea about 2:30 and had a full three tier cake stand of sandwiches, scones, cake and small fruit dessert; far more than necessary but very enjoyable. If we had a complaint it was that the room was wood-paneled with a very high- ceiling so wasn't particularly cozy or intimate. However, the first meal was good so we accepted the less than ideal ambiance.

We returned to the room for a couple of hours before going down to the lobby for our welcome drink of Prosecco and to listen to some carol singing. The eight-person group from Pateley Bridge was pretty poor but we accepted that they had given up their Christmas Eve to entertain us, so gave them an "A" for commitment!

Again, we returned to our room for another hour before the 8pm Christmas Eve meal. This was in the same large room as that used for afternoon tea but, again, the food was very good. There was a selection of starters, mains and desserts and Molly and I both chose the lamb for the main course, which was excellent. We finished the evening with a nightcap in the lobby bar.

December 25, Christmas Day

We had a rather late breakfast in the hotel and at 10:30 left to walk to St Peter's Anglican Church, about 10 minutes from The Crown. Here we met Joelle and Mike Monkman, who had invited us to join them for the Christmas Morning service. This was a very nice service of lessons and carols and a short sermon and was completed in about 40 minutes.

Following the service we walked down the hill and went to the bar at the White Hart Hotel and enjoyed drinks with our friends. It was a nice way to start the day and gave us a chance to talk at much greater length than we usually can in their restaurant.

At 1pm, we left the bar and our friends and walked back to our hotel (essentially across the road) and met Dorothy and David who were joining us for Christmas Lunch. The meal started at 1:30 and at 4:30 we were just about finished! Again the food was very good and very filling – so much so that we all skipped the cheese course. It was a very pleasant afternoon and we had a good conversation with Dorothy and David.

After Dorothy and David had left to go home, Molly and I spent the rest of the day in the room, emerging only briefly to sample a small plate from the evening buffet. Other than that we watched television and slept!

December 26, Boxing Day

Once again we were up quite late and I had developed a cold overnight. We had breakfast in the hotel, finished packing and checked out about 10:30. We then walked into town and spent time at Marks and Spencer spending the gift certificates that Dorothy and David had given us. We then walked back to the hotel, picked up the car and drove to Ripon where we were to spend the rest of the afternoon with Dorothy and David.

Shortly after our arrival, Amanda, Chris, Isobel and Ellis came following their Boxing Day walk. They stayed for several hours, during which we enjoyed a fabulous buffet lunch that Dorothy had prepared. For many years, her Boxing Day family meals had been a highlight of the Christmas season and this was no exception with an amazing array of salads, meats, pies, relishes and, of course, rich desserts.

After the younger members of the family had left, the four of us continued our interesting conversations until Molly and I left

about 8pm to drive back to Ilkley. Once home, we unpacked again and spent an hour watching television before retiring at 10:30 after a very pleasant three days away.

Tuesday December 27

We were up before nine and went to Caffe Nero for breakfast. The town was very quiet – unlike the frantic pace of last week – so it was nice to just sit and watch the few shoppers start their day. I went for a walk later in the morning and by this time most of the shops were open and there was a much bigger crowd in town. The park area down by the river was packed with kids and grown-ups alike enjoying a cool but bright day and working off a few Christmas pounds.

We spent the rest of the day at home and had dinner in the flat.

Wednesday December 28 (Fifty Years since we emigrated to the US)

It was a bright and cold (Freezing) morning but we decided to go ahead with our planned trip to Keighley. I left soon after 9:30 and walked over the moors (tough for the first hour but pleasant afterwards) and met Molly who arrived by bus. We did a little shopping, had a coffee and then returned together on the bus.

We stayed home for the rest of the afternoon and evening.

Thursday December 29

We had a light breakfast at home as we were meeting Keith and Zena for lunch at 11:30. We met at the diner in Salts Mill and had about 1 ½ hours chatting and a soup lunch. They had walked over from Eldwick and when they headed back along the canal bank, Molly and I drove home via Bingley, Keighley and Silsden on a very pleasant afternoon. It had been very cold first thing but warmed to about 40F as we got back to Ilkley. Here we did a little shopping and had a coffee before returning home.

Tonight we had another very pleasant meal at Monkman's with Joanne and Robert. They picked us up at 7:45 and it was 11:15 before we left the restaurant. We still find it amazing that they seem to enjoy our company as much as we enjoy theirs.

Friday December 30

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and I went for a five mile walk later in the morning as Molly walked into town to do some shopping. We then stayed home for the rest of the afternoon and evening.

Saturday December 31, New Year's Eve

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero again and I went for a short walk. At 7pm, Keith and Zena arrived and we spent a little time at the flat planning their trip to the US next September. We then enjoyed a New Year's Eve dinner together at Monkman's, after which Molly and I watched the Ilkley fireworks which were quite amazing for such a small town. There were several separate displays across the valley and they appeared to have been somewhat coordinated to give an almost continuous 20 minute display.

Sunday January 1 2017

We had breakfast at home and then went to church (an early 10am start). We then had coffee at Caffe Nero before I went for a 4 mile walk. We then stayed home for the rest of New Year's Day.

Monday January 2

This was another Holiday so we stayed in Ikley (limited bus service around town, etc). I went for an eight mile walk – on the north side of the river to Nesfield and across the suspension bridge to Addingham and back along the Dalesway. It was cold (around freezing all day) but bright and sunny so it was a pleasant walk – with lots of company.

We went for coffee in the afternoon and went to dinner at Piccolino.

Tuesday January 3

We did a Tesco shop and had breakfast at Caffe Nero and then I went for a local walk. In the afternoon I disabled the flat alarm system and caused limited panic despite the alarm sounding for 15 minutes! We stayed home for dinner.

Wednesday January 4

We had breakfast at home and then I set out on my walk over to Keighley. I departed from my normal route at Riddlesden and walked as far as Crossflatts before getting the train to Keighley. There I met Molly who had just arrived on the bus and we did a little shopping, had a coffee and then got the bus back to Ilkley.

Tonight, Dorothy and David came to the flat about 6:30 and we had a chat for an hour before dinner at Emporio Italia. The meal was good as usual but we were saddened to hear that Luigi has liver problems and is waiting for a transplant. His wife told us that they are planning to keep the restaurant open for lunches but will only have dinner meals available on "special request". We have one already booked for the time when Robert and Elizabeth will be in Ilkley.

Thursday January 5

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero on another cold morning. It brightened early, however, and was perfect for my walk across the valley to Middleton Manor and back via the river and park. We then stayed home for the rest of the day.

Friday January 6

It was a dreary morning as we drove to Skipton after breakfast and everywhere felt very cool and damp, despite rather moderate temperatures. The market was very small – only about half a dozen stalls – but Molly found a few things she needed in the main street stores. After a coffee we returned to Ilkley via Embsay and Nesfield.

I took an afternoon walk and we ate at Monkman's this evening.

Saturday January 7

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and later in the morning Molly walked into town to do a small shop while I walked again across the valley to Middleton Grange and back. It was very mild (50F) and there was a very slight drizzle on the hills but not in town.

At a little after six we drove to Dunkeswick to pick up Joanne and Robert for our family dinner in Harrogate. We met Dorothy and David and Amanda and Chris as planned at William and Vincent but were surprised that Nigel and Sam were there also. They had driven north from Andover to return their daughter Jessica to York University and had found time to join us for dinner. It was a lively table – although a little cramped as we had to squeeze ten around an eight-seater – but the food was good and it was nice to catch up on the family life and, we presume, especially pleasant for three of four cousins to be together.

It was after 10 when we left Harrogate and we got back to Ilkley soon after 11pm.

Sunday January 8

We had breakfast at home and went to the 11:45 service at St Margaret's, followed by coffee at Caffe Nero. I went for a short walk in the afternoon and we then stayed home for the rest of the day.

Monday January 9

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and I went for a walk later as Molly did some shopping in town. In the evening we met Dorothy and David and Linda for a very pleasant evening out at Piccolino.

Tuesday January 10

Joanne came to Ilkley about ten and she and I went for a walk around Ilkley, meeting Molly for a mid-day coffee. We then stayed home for the rest of the day, although I did go for another, shorter walk. Later in the afternoon we spent some time communicating with Elizabeth about the Shepards' visit to England this summer and we got the flights booked.

Wednesday January 11

We went to Caffè Nero again and then did a Tesco shop before I went for a walk. Unfortunately I mis-timed the showers and got soaked on a very windy walk. At 2:30 our neighbors Jen and Phil came over for coffee and a 2 ½ hour chat. In the evening we had a superb dinner at the Box Tree restaurant.

Thursday January 12

We had breakfast at the Lister Arms (on the recommendation of our neighbors) and then drove to Harrogate to do a little shopping. Unfortunately, Molly was once again disappointed in the selection and came home almost empty-handed.

On returning to Ilkley I went for a three mile walk and went through a rather heavy snow shower. It didn't stick at the lower elevations but there is a pretty dusting on the hills. We had dinner at home.

Friday January 13

There was another covering of snow again this morning but we were able to drive down to Caffè Nero for breakfast. We had thought of going to York today but decided against it and spent the day in Ilkley. I walked via Ben Rhydding and Carter's Lane to Middleton and then back via the park. We had dinner at Quinta.

Saturday January 14

We had breakfast at home and then went to York. It was a bright and sunny day but quite cold – a nice day for a drive. We spent about 2 hours in York and then drove home in time for me to take a short walk before staying home for the evening.

Sunday January 15

We went to church this morning and then drove to Skipton to meet Cat and Steven for a coffee. Cat is expecting their first child in early March and both of them are very excited – and well prepared – for its arrival. Cat was our barista at Caffè Nero for several years and we have kept in touch with her and her partner since she left Ilkley. It was a lovely two hours with them once again.

We drove from Skipton to Bradford where our local Ilkley vicar was being installed as one of four new area deacons. The hour-long service was very nice and quite interesting in its format. St Margaret's, where we attend in Ilkley, is very High Church and we were expecting something similar in the cathedral. However, most of the music was performed by a very loud contemporary group with keyboards, guitars and percussion. Most of the St Margaret's contingent were not overly impressed with this and, like us, preferred the more traditional organ and 25 voice choir. They were also not too keen on the arm waving and swaying that a number of the congregation "performed".

We got a chance after the service to chat briefly with the Bishop of Leeds who knows our priest Phyllis at St Anne in West Chester and he certainly remembered meeting her on a couple of occasions.

Tonight we ate at Piccolino.

Monday January 16

We had breakfast at Caffè Nero and later walked down into town together. Molly did a little shopping and got the bus home while I continued on a walk on the very muddy Dalesway towards Addingham. In all I covered almost seven miles – and rested when I got home. It had been damp and cloudy in the morning but the afternoon brought thick fog which obscured all views from Wells House.

Tonight we ate at Aagrah.

Tuesday January 17

We had breakfast at home and I went for a 4 mile walk before we drove to the station at 12:30 to pick up Robert who had just arrived from London. We had a coffee in town and then spent the afternoon in the flat before dining at La Casita.

Wednesday January 18

We ate at home and then drove to Sheffield and had lunch at Elizabeth's home before visiting Richard. He seemed in good

spirits and was his usual fun self. We left Sheffield soon after 3pm and Elizabeth came with us to spend a couple of days in Ilkley. The four of us ate at Monkman's on one of their jazz nights. The meal was good as usual but the jazz wasn't exactly our taste this time – the one in August had been great.

Thursday January 19

Today we went for a drive through the Dales, stopping in Skipton, Grassington and Pateley Bridge. It was overcast all day but dry and mild so we had some good views across this beautiful countryside. Tonight we ate at Emporio Italia.

Friday January 20,

We had breakfast at home again and at 11:15 drove down to the station to say goodbye to Elizabeth and Robert. We followed this with coffee and I then went for a short walk. We ate at Quinta.

Saturday January 21

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and then spent most of the day at home before meeting Susan and Stephen and Joanne and Robert at Steeton Hall for a very nice dinner and a long chat.

Sunday January 22

After breakfast at home we went to church and then to Caffe Nero. We then spent the rest of the day at home, most of the time on the computer making hotel reservations for our April trip to Australia.

Monday January 23

We had breakfast at home and then I walked over the moor to Crossflatts (via Dick Hudson's and Micklethwaite) where I got the train to Keighley. Molly, meantime, had taken the bus to Keighley where we met for coffee before taking the bus home. We stayed home for dinner.

Tuesday January 24

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and later in the morning we walked into town, Molly to do some shopping, me to walk across the river into (a very muddy) Middleton Woods. We had dinner at Quinta.

Wednesday January 25

It was a beautiful sunny morning as we drove to Harrogate via Blubberhouses to have breakfast and do a little M&S shopping. Molly found her jumper at last and I got two new sweaters. We drove back via The Crag and Otley. I went for a short walk in the afternoon and then we stayed home for the rest of the day and evening.

Thursday January 26

It was cold and damp and a bit foggy today but, after breakfast at home, Molly went to Ilkley and I did an eight mile walk to Addingham and back. We then stayed home until Joanne and Robert picked us up at 6:45 for our treat at the Burlington Room.

Once again it was excellent, with David outdoing himself – champagne to start, multiple cheese samples, no charge for cheese plates and a replacement bottle of wine. A wonderful evening out!

Friday January 27

We had breakfast at home and I went for a short walk in the late morning. We had coffee at Caffe Nero in the afternoon and went to Monkman's for dinner.

Saturday January 28

We had breakfast at Caffe Nero and then started some of the "clean-up" jobs in preparation for our departure tomorrow. I got in a short walk and we met Dorothy and David for dinner in Harrogate. We went to a seafood restaurant – the Drum and Monkey – and had an excellent meal and chat. It was almost 11pm by the time we got home.

Sunday January 29

We had breakfast at Caffè Nero while the first load of washing was in progress. On returning, we worked on additional clean up chores, went to church (with a birthday “party” for the Vicar) and then finished up our cleaning and packing. We left for the Hollins Hall Marriott around 2:30, stopping for a “final” coffee at Caffè Nero on the way. Tonight we drove to Harrogate and met Joelle and Mike at their flat before enjoying a very nice dinner with them at the Royal Baths Chinese restaurant.

Monday January 30.

We were up about 7 and checked out before returning the rental car at Leeds-Bradford airport. All flights were on time and we had pretty good connections in Amsterdam and Minneapolis. Nevertheless it was midnight before we arrived home after another good trip to England.

