

THE ELSEGOOD Christmas Newsletter 2019



February Daffodils

Donna and Linda at the Pheasant Inn



Caradoc Cottage



Another year gone.... and I can't say it wasn't busy.

Linda's Mouth Problems

Early in the year Linda went for her dental checkup and cleaning. During this visit the dental technician spotted an irregularity in the jaw. An impacted wisdom tooth. They referred her to a company in Asheville called Rockcliff who did an exam and found another problem. Not only was it an impacted wisdom tooth but also a cyst which was eating her jaw. Linda had the biopsy before we left but we waited until we returned before the major surgery was done.

UK Trip

Donna came up from West Monroe a few days before our flight to Manchester. After a good nights sleep at the Asheville Airport Hotel we caught our flight through Atlanta to Manchester. A little bit concerning as we sat on the Manchester flight for an hour or so before the Captain said they might have a problem with the #4 engine. Anyway we finally took off. We had paid extra to get better seats on this Virgin flight and the service was great. We landed at Manchester and the fun began... there is now a bus service to get your car and it seemed like all the world wanted to be on that bus... but we made it. They didn't have the car I asked for so I had to go out and select one of three. Which I did, after all the paperwork and signed my life away. I backed the car out to load

the luggage. Once loaded we set off for the Pheasant Inn in Cheshire. All was going well, had lunch, sat outside looking at the view with a drink.... all was well. Started checking in. Started taking luggage out of back of car..... whoops.... doom and gloom hit. Lindas small carry on case was not there. I was in the doghouse. Somehow I didn't see that one case had been left just behind our car at Manchester Airport. So panic stations.... couldn't get the Rental Company at the Airport as they don't answer the phone til 8pm. Called head office left messages. So at 8pm I called and got through to Car Rental..... yes they had the luggage. Panic slightly better. Following morning after breakfast we loaded up... making sure we had everything and set off back to Manchester Airport. We had lost a day already and some sightseeing and it impacted the start to the trip. We picked up luggage and I thanked the staff and anyone else I could find. Loaded case.... checked around the car and we set off again for Cardington. We got lost several times in Shrewsbury and it seemed that the UK had dug up every road and also added so many roundabout that weren't needed. The cottage at Cardington was just perfect. Wendy greeted us. There was a bottle of wine and a cake awaiting us. The fire was lit and it was very cozy. She had left us with brochures and flowers out of her wonderful garden. The cottage was down one laned high hedged roads with a passing area every half mile.

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Donna and Linda at Powis Castle



Stokesy Castle



Ludlow Castle



Andrea, Alan, Donna and Linda at Llanfair....
the longest named place in the world



We settled in and began to replan. We needed a day just to unwind. I had planned on seeing friends in Shrewsbury but the loss in time meant we couldn't go back. Another problem I hadn't anticipated was my battery on my laptop was failing and needed recharging most of the time. Also I had only emergency emails and numbers on there and we had no phone as we are on the USA system which doesn't work in the UK. We packed in as many Castles, Trains and Villages that we could during our time. Powis and Stokesy Castle were close by, also Ironbridge which is where the Iron Revolution took place. Powis Castle is huge. I walked around the 5 miles of gardens whilst Linda and Donna had cakes and coffee or tea in the courtyard then we toured the Castle inside. No photos allowed. Next a day in Ludlow with the Market in full swing and a visit to the Castle. Linda and I had been there once before but Donna had not. I of course (even though I have a real fear of heights) climbed every tower to take pictures. We found a nice pub to sample the local ale and bought cheeses and sweets in the market and a print for Wendy and Adrian back at Caradoc Cottage. After a few days at the cottage (although we had it booked for two

weeks) we moved on to Caernafon to a small guest house. On the way through wonderful scenic mountain around Snowdon we stopped for a coffee in Betsy Coed. We also stopped at Conwy Castle before reaching Caernafon. The B&B had wonderful full English Breakfast which set us up for the day. We set off to Beaumarris Castle to see my brother Alan and his wife Andrea. We crossed over to Anglesea and the rain arrived. It was good to see them as I haven't seen them since they had come to see us in North Carolina. We toured the Castle in the rain and then visited the railway station with the longest name Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysilio gogogoch (*see picture*). The station also had a restaurant and an amazing shop. It was a squeeze to get into the car park. We left there and visited where Alan and Andrea were staying,



Gloucester & Warwickshire Steam Railway

(cottages around what looked like a stately home) had a coffee and arranged to see them the following day to visit the castle in Caernarfon. We had a good day in the town. Alan and I climbed every tower and went in every available nook and cranny. Linda, Donna and Andrea were more sensible. We visited the famous Black Bouy (Black Boy) pub and walked around the town. The following day we visited Criceith Castle and town, again on the coast. The Castle had an amazing view. We met a couple from London. We got back to the Caradoc cottage and there was plenty of laundry to do. We drove over the hill and tried



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the local pub and walked the village of Cardington.

A trip to the Severn Valley Railway was our next visit. Britain still keeps up these steam trains all volunteer which run on a daily basis.

The following day it was on to Montgomery Castle, whilst derelict it had a real charm. We were the only people around and the views were stunning. We had lunch in the village at a small tea shop. Absolutely the best food, well seasoned and a glass of the local brew. With no days of rest it was off to Ironbridge, home of the iron revolution. The Bridge which is what the town is named for is now only for foot traffic. We walked the town and the shops, visited the museum which also had a small theatre to watch a film. Linda and Donna sat on a seat overlooking the bridge whilst I went on a tour to get more photos.

The following morning it was off to Harlech Castle. One of the two most photogenic. We had a meal at the entrance cafe and toured the extensive castle. Views from the top level were fantastic. One thing that amazed us was the presentations inside all the castle, videos and artwork, thing for kids to explore. Just the organization put into each property. Then the long drive back across



Tea Shop at Montgomery Village

the Snowdon range to the cottage. Last day at the cottage. Packing, cleaning, washing and resting. I did take a walk of about 5 miles to get

more photos.

We thanked Wendy and Adrian for their hospitality before leaving on our way to Chepstow. Trying to avoid motorways.

On our way to Chepstow we visited Raglan Castle. Now this was the most decorated Castle and a photographers dream. Plenty of towers to climb and a picturesque moat. After that, needing a rest we found a small teashop near the castle. This gave us the strength to move on to Chepstow.

Chepstow is a compact town and our accommodation was easy to find. Although it didn't have parking there was a pay carpark across the road. The Woodfield Arms was just across the road from the Castle and ideally located to get in and out of the town.

We went for a day out to Caerphilly Castle a very picturesque Castle with a moat surround and swans and ducks. There were reanactors

and also a wedding about to take place the day we went.

The following day it was time for another train ride. This time it was on the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway. The train started at Cheltenham Racecourse and went to Broadway and returned. We saw fields of red poppies, the largest boot sale in a field we had ever seen and also a huge

fair near the Cheltenham Racecourse Station. A very nice journey. We had a refreshment of a very deserved beer for Donna and myself and a soft



Ironbridge



Raglan Castle



Woodfield Arms, Chepstow



Caerphilly Castle

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Bruce and John at Chepstow Castle



Chepstow Castle and River from turret.



Town of Chepstow

drink for Linda. I think that was the day they were having a Beerfest up and down the line.

Tiny (Bruce Robinson) arrived to see us for a couple of days coming up from London and staying at the same Pub. It was great to catch up and also introduce him to Donna. Linda had already met Tiny on early visits to London where I do a reunion whenever we go. Usually staying with our good friend Anji in Kingston. We toured the Castle, the local museum. Had a really nice meal at a restaurant in the park and a walk around the town. Tiny is coming over to visit us next year so we can show him the sites.

Our last morning after breakfast we said goodbye to Tiny and departed for Manchester Airport staying overnight at one of the hotels before our flight out the following morning.

It was a really enjoyable trip (except for the few problems) and some great memories. Who knows the next one could be 2021 if we last that long.

Maine Trip to see Rusty

On August the 12th we set off to Maine to see Rusty who was living in a nursing home in Augusta. We stayed overnight at the Clarion Hotel (we always stay at Asheville Airport) as we had an early flight to Portland, Maine. We arrived and picked our car at the airport and

started our drive to Augusta which was only a couple of hours away. Settled into our hotel and had an early night as we knew we had a hard week ahead, emptying the house and cleaning before putting it on the market. Linda had done her homework and found an estate agent who was extremely nice, helpful and extremely good at his job. Mike helped us through the whole episode of selling a house. Linda and I became Powers of Attornies. He took photos of the house once we had the house cleaned up. The house had not been occupied for 2 years and the fridge was still full. Luckily the electricity was still on. We got rid of 32 black bags of garbage and paid someone to take it away. The neighbors, Diana and Chuck helped us by letting us use their outside tap for water as Rusty had his water turned off, so cleaning was a challenge. Chuck found us an Antique Dealer/Auctioneer who came over and took most of the items like furniture, a collection of hats, stereo and all sorts of odds and ends that we never thought would be of interest. We also took 4 car



Rusty's house in Gardiner, Maine

loads of items to Goodwill. Because of working all hours and seeing Rusty for 2 hours a day at the home we ate badly and infrequently which took a toll on us. Rusty decided he didn't want life support and that hospice would give him extra assistance and Linda signed off on his request. That gave him three extra visits a



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week and extra care. We dropped the car off and paid way over the odds for the trip. They even caught us for a license for being out of state. It was a total zoo on the airlines coming back with overbooking, delayed flights and mayhem due to the lack of control by the staff on the desk. We arrived back in Asheville after midnight due to storms which we went through from Portland to Atlanta and again from Atlanta to Asheville. After catching the shuttle bus we arrive at the Clarion for the night and a great nights rest. We did our grocery shopping in Asheville on the way back to the cabin. We were so glad to be back.

Mike called us a few days later to say the house had an offer and we OK'd the price with Rusty. He was finally out of debt.

OTFF

We were up at 5am on the morning of the Old Timey Fall Festival to make sure we got to the Town Square before any of the vendors. As always Linda took one side of the square and me the other. We had extra help this year but still had some wrinkles. Everyone was set up for the opening at 10am and the festivities began with Dean Gates singing the National Anthem and the Tractor Parade. We had a few rain showers but it didn't seem to bother the crowd who enjoyed the music, dance, vendors, antique cars and tractors. The kids ride in oil barrels pulled by a tractor was especially busy. By 2pm we were exhausted so we escaped for lunch and returned home. I had taken a couple of hundred photographs so I could work on next years publicity and other graphics.

When we got home there was a call from Maine General to tell us Rusty had passed. He had gone to the emergency room and died the following morning. Linda called his only relative Bill who lives in Raleigh to inform him of the news.

Linda had called Rusty only two days before and he was in good spirits knowing he had the house sold and money in his account. He offered to pay us back for the visit and said he would contact the bank that day. The bank on that day said there was no-one to make the check out but call back on Friday to get that done. Unfortunately on that Friday he was having his operation and never recovered.

Linda coordinated with the funeral home to arrange the funeral as per Rusty's wishes. Unfortunately we could not return to Maine for this but some mutual friends went on our behalf.

The strangest events happened that Saturday morning. Linda's watch stopped, the truck clock time changed by 5 hours, my watch stopped as did the living room clock. All the batteries had died.

Blue Ridge Relay

Our yearly event in this area took place on the first Saturday in September. 194 teams of up to 12 runners started in Virginia and ran to Asheville in the relay. 208 miles in total. Linda and I are in charge of the changeover station at Toodies Creek. We arrived at about 3:45am to get ready for the first runners. We had put the tent up the day before and all our signage.

The first runners came through at 4:15am and the last runners at 11am. 184 teams came through our



Song and Dance from the Stage

Antique Cars



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station with a few teams had pulled out because of the hurricane that was effecting the North and South Carolina Coastlines. Mike and Carol who normally work the changeover station with us were in the hurricane belt so could not assist us as they had to stay in South Carolina and batten down the hatches. The two churches serving breakfasts to the runners and crews did over a thousand breakfasts. The money goes into a kitty to help the needy in this area, and for the first time two scolaships to Mayland College.

Riverlife Reborn & Christmas in October

Years ago we started Christmas in October down at the Wilson store on the 197S and Cattail.

It was a success for two years until Judy left to live in Tennessee with her daughter.

This year with the Riverlife store up and running and Danny, Nina and Red have the place packed with an amazing collection of Antiques, Bric a Bract, Collectibles, local Baked goods, Honey and a variety of goods that you would expect at a local village shop.

We approached Danny (the owner), and Nina (a craftsperson and local talent) about resurecting the event. The answer was a resounding Yes, so we started the preparations. We drew out the area and spaces we could fit in and I prepared flyers and articles for the local paper and distribution.

With the help of Mike and Carol we marked all of the area with numbers for vendors. Danny had got us music and a magician to appear on stage and with close to 40 vendors on the day we picked up a good crowd. Unfortunately we had high gusts which played havok with the tents. Although rain clouds were all around the rain kept off.

Everyone who came enjoyed the day and want to repeat the event next year and even talked about a Spring Fair. We sold quite a bit of our Bric a Brac..... but spent money on delicious cakes and goods. We will be looking at expanding the event next year.

John's Bells Palsy

A few weeks after we returned from Maine I started getting sharp pains in my right ear. Then a full mouth of ulcers, a weeping eye that made it hard to drive and felt bad, so we booked an emergency visit to our Doctors clinic in Asheville on the Friday. Result stress said the doctor. So left with no real help.

Monday Morning I woke to find my right side of my face had drooped. And I had no movement in that side of my face. Oh No! I thought no no not a stroke, so off we go to Spruce Pine Emergency Center. First thing the doctor said was Bells Palsy!



Our Event "Riverlife Revisited" and "Christmas in October"

Autumn colors along the Blue Ridge Parkway





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The emergency facility was first class and they did a thorough job including Cat scans, bloodwork and EKG. He prescribed something for my mouth and steroid and said I would see the difference in 6 weeks. Took the anti inflammatories but not the steroids. Linda worked on me with Thyme oil and various herbs and within 2 weeks I started to improve. Also with a made up mouth wash and tablets my mouth slowly improved. At the time we didn't realize that not only had I Bells Palsy I had Shingles! Now over six weeks and mouth clear, face 95% and shingles breakout being controlled by a touch of Thyme and Clove oil. So on the mend.

Days Out

With all that has been going on this year we haven't managed many days out. Had a day at Grandfather mountain going along the Blue Ridge with the fall colors this year,

although it was a Monday the traffic was busy and Grandfather Mountain was packed. Even when we left after a good lunch at the restaurant there was a line up of vehicles coming in. We have made a few trips to Asheville usually seeing our friend Betsy Stiles for a hearty lunch and shopping at Aldis and Trader Joes.

Yearly Visit from Ron and Laura

Our yearly visit from Ron and Laura during the spring took us to the top of Mount Mitchell. This time

with a twist. Ron decided to ride up Mount Mitchell. We dropped him and his bike off on the Blue Ridge Parkway at the 80S intersection which left him with a good ride. We went on to the top and awaited him. Unfortunately the Snack Bar was not open but a display of antique Porches were lined around the car park. We waited for Ron at the top and finally I asked a car coming

up if they had passed any cyclists. When they said no we hopped back in the truck and started down only to see him with another cyclist coming up. We were very proud of his achievement. A fantastic day

with clear visibility at the top. We had a day out playing miniture golf and I believe Linda won. The course is challenging and very scenic. On the same day we visited the Vance Museum between Barnardsville and Asheville. Such well kept ground and great exhibits. Another sunny day out was Elk River Falls which was exceptionally busy for off season with families actually bathing in the cool water under the falls.



Autumn view from the top of Grandfather Mountain



Ron at the top of Mount Mitchell

Laura and Ron at Elk River Falls



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Mountain Heritage Awards

Our local Mens Club which meets once a month to have Breakfast and discuss the community. We help with anyone who is in need, whether it is fuel, health needs or even funeral expenses. With money we make

from the Blue Ridge Relay this year we have managed to give two scholarships to students to attend a further college education. One male and one female student received \$500 each toward helping their education. I is hoped that we can do this each year and perhaps increase the number. I would have loved to give each of the student who applied something.

Christmas Parade

The towns Christmas Parade is on the 7th of December and we have our usual task of organizing floats in order to join the parade. The parade usually consists of about 60 floats, horses and Yancey SPCA walking their dogs. Its a nice day especially if it snows. Once we have done our job we sneak out the back way to avoid the traffic.

Early Snow but forecast is for more

We went from summer to winter within a matter of days this year. First snowfall of a couple of inches in early November. The forecast is for a snowy winter. Already winterized the mowers and weed eaters, brought up our kerosene heater to the front porch and topped up our fuel oil and repainted the tank. The truck goes in next week for a check up and then we are ready. Bought secondhand jigsaws for the days we are snowed in

or are too cold to go out. Bring it on!

Work

I have done some small jobs this year but nothing like the projects last year. Many projects are Non for Profit like Old Timey Fall Festival. Some web projects, a Large Format Poster, some banners and then more of my Reindeers and Flower pot people that seem to be selling well at the Riverside store. I believe Linda will be doing a few of her Sasaffras Santa this winter but no painting as the shingles a few years ago left her with a shaky hand (but it is improving over time).

We wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope you enjoyed our newsletter.

John and Linda



Two inches of snow in our meadow and on our front porch

