

# WEEK 4

## 11-06-07 ~ NOTTINGHAM, SHERWOOD FOREST and all things ROBIN!!:



**Nottingham Castle original facade**

The surprise was how 'far' Sherwood Forest is from Nottingham Castle, some thirty miles, certainly not the quick run into the woods achieved by Richard Greene in the Robin Hood TV Series.

Sherwood Forest and the Major Oak Tree, were magnificent, the Major Oak has many supports to secure it, still alive and not looking too bad for a tree assessed as some 800 years old!!!

I freely admit walking endlessly around Sherwood Forest, its many trails, signs depicting flower, tree and animal types to be found and enjoying a beautiful snack at the Entry Building.



**The Major Oak Tree**

I have a great interest in the Tales of Robin Hood and to have actually been in Sherwood Forest is a treasured memory.



With the highs of a visit to Sherwood Forest in my mind, I had another one of those inspirational thoughts, drive all the way to London, stay at Heathrow and travel into London to tour on the 'Big Red Bus', or similar, on subsequent days.

Well, it was a good idea, the distance wasn't the problem. There appeared to be a huge surge in Conferences in the Heathrow area, fully booked out. I ended up driving back out of London to the Watford area and found a reasonable Hotel at the rear of a McDonalds/Pub Combo. The Hotel being effectively 'concealed' from view, I don't get it. Anyhow a good sleep and actually a clean place, and a McDonalds within a stone's throw, yippee.

The Reception 'on booked' me to an identical Chain Hotel at Heathrow for the remaining three nights in the UK, at least then I knew a room was waiting as I again approached Heathrow.

## 12-06-07 ~ Heathrow, then to BROOKLANDS:

I went straight from Watford into Heathrow and eventually found the Hotel in Heathrow, crikey it was almost on the Runway, luckily the windows were double, maybe triple glazed. The TomTom GPS got lost, maybe it's the Heathrow thing again.... Anyhow, the uplink finally worked and I reset TomTom to understand the address to be temporarily HOME!!!!



Surviving Section of Brooklands Banking with MGB GT

I then set TomTom to head south, to the Brooklands Museum (Barnes Wallis work site and huge British Aircraft and Motor Sport research and Speed Centre of old), sadly I did not know that on the 16 and 17 June 2007 'they' were celebrating their 100 years Centenary, I missed it by days.



Tall Boy Bomb of Barnes Wallis design

The highlights for me were definitely walking into the Old Building that Barnes Wallis worked in and standing (illegally) high up on the surviving section of Brooklands Concrete Speed Bowl, which is still intact, amazing. Whilst 'illegal' I was delighted when one of the Curators was relocating an MGB GT and just happened to run it on the banking during my photography, it gave some idea of the extent of the track, both the angle and width, the track is huge.....



Atmospheric Chamber – by Barnes Wallis



P1127, prototype of the Harrier

After Brooklands I continued on to Brighton, to just have a look, well yuk!! I took a couple of shots from the car, incredibly busy, nowhere to park and not terribly inviting to say the least. I returned to Heathrow and booked in/confirmed for the remaining three nights in the UK, crikey, TomTom actually worked, Oh and the charges are pretty horrendous! Eight pounds a night to park the car for starters, never mind using their lousy Computers and slow Web/Email service, good grief!!!!

### 13-06-07 ~ CENTRAL LONDON, NEARLY:

I tried to leave the car parked and go into Central London for a 'Big Red Bus' Tour or similar, not much help from Reception for this, my problem was personal, being on my own' I was not prepared to risk multiple Bus links, then Tube Trains and then maybe wave down the 'Big Red Bus' and then do it all again in reverse to get back to Heathrow, looks like I'm on my own again.



**Buckingham Palace**

Well, I gave it a go, found a London Street Car Park space, 2 pounds 40p per hour, ouch, and a 100 pound fine if one goes over time, which I made sure I did not do!!

Oh, also there was the 8 pound 'Congestion Charge' due to my daring to enter the glorious London Central Area road system, bless them!!! I will NOT be back using a private car.

Notwithstanding the above I did get to see Buckingham Palace, a little bit of Hyde Park adjacent etc., that was about it. I did ensure I walked along the Princess Diana Memorial Walk.

Oh, I couldn't help but notice that if one wished to take a break in grassed areas along the road near Buckingham Palace, that is sit in one of their lousy Deck Chairs, (cheap fold out things with blue white striped canvas backs), well Sir that will be 2 pounds for four hours thankyou very much, no thanks, what a lousy rip off of the general public. Spoke to some English guys, they certainly offered the 'rip off capital of the world' type comments freely. Oh, and don't forget you are being watched by so many CCTV Cameras, 'we are all Movie Stars'.

I then decided to drive to Thyne, near Dover, to visit my Aunt, TomTom found the place easily, only problem was she had recently been placed in a Nursing Home, (location unknown to me, after all who am I), sadly the House was For Sale and the many neighbours I spoke to, whilst very polite, were unable to assist me further. *This is so terribly sad, as her husband died some years ago, she is now in a Nursing Home and clearly the property is unoccupied, unkempt and, just..... say no more.* I proceeded on to Dover only to be met by terribly misty weather, basically photography and viewing anything was almost impossible.



## 14-06-07 ~ BIGGIN HILL, FARNBOROUGH and WINDSOR CASTLE:

I gave up trying to organise a Day Trip to London, through Hotel Reception, very very disappointing. So I relied on my own options, I chose to visit Biggin Hill Airfield, Farnborough Airport and Windsor Castle, all generally close to one another to conserve fuel, here goes....

### *BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT:*

Biggin Hill was a terribly busy Airfield during the Second World War, my recollection is that Douglas Bader was involved there for some time. What I found 'today' was very disappointing, local Staff of the Biggin Hill Flying Club confirming many attempts had been made to professionally commemorate the Second World War history, to no avail.

Notwithstanding there is the St George Memorial Church which has a Spitfire and a Hurricane out the front on Stands, of course there was no-one to talk to and absolutely NO ENTRY please, all locked up, thankyou very much.



I am a huge fan of RAF endeavours throughout World War 2, in particular the achievements of Douglas Bader, Robert Stanford Tuck, Johnny Johnson, Guy Gibson and of course Barnes Wallis. To arrive at Biggin Hill and see the lack of memorials was quite distressing to me, maybe one day something official will be erected.

### *FARNBOROUGH:*

Worse than Biggin Hill, certainly a thriving high tech place for all things Aviation, but all closed to the public, or to be specific there is a Museum, but it is only open on Saturdays during specific hours. One would not want to be an Aviation Enthusiast here!! A very lonely Lightning Interceptor is located on a Stand outside.

### *WINDSOR CASTLE:*



Considerable improvement, beautiful old huge Castle, Grounds and a proliferation of Specialist Shops.

To my utter amazement, and disappointment, directly opposite the Castle is McDonalds, Pizza Hut etc, gawd....



The most attractive area to me was the lack of modern development on the river, beautiful wildlife, rowing teams, picnic areas, etc. Just wonderful and not a Deck Chair Clerk in sight!!!

The Specialist Shops in the Castle precinct were wonderful, beautiful clothes, shoes, ornaments, tourist memorabilia, all very impressive

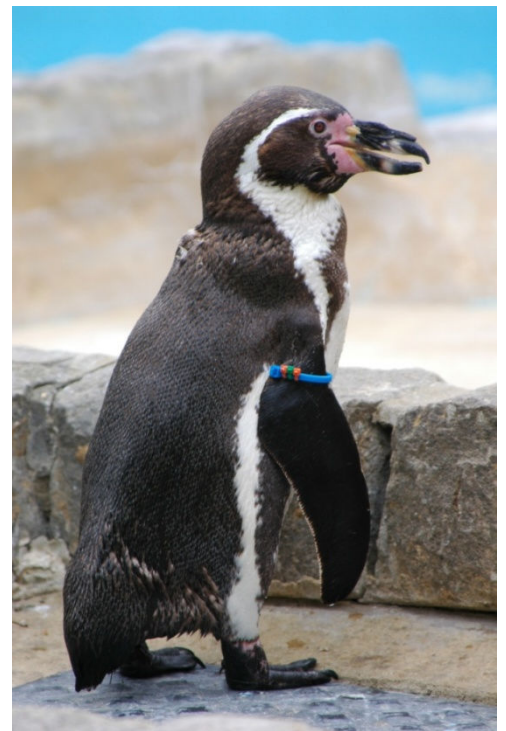
### 15-06-07 ~ My Last Day in the UK:

I decided to go to the Bird Sanctuary and just hang out, checking my baggage and ensuring I knew the way back to Heathrow and the location of the Europcar Despatch area, they did not offer returns at the actual Airport Terminal, so I knew I was up for another 'free' Shuttle Bus trip to the Airport Terminal.

#### *BIRD SANCTUARY:*



The Bird Sanctuary was great, away from the crowds, with a wide variety of exhibits with Birds, Farm animals and displays. I particularly liked the manicured gardens with hedges shaped in the form of Bicycles, Motorcycles, Scissors, etc., very well done.



### 16-06-07 ~ The Return Flight to Brisbane:

Surprisingly the return flight was somewhat uneventful, certainly the in flight entertainment helped, the way Qantas closely monitored day and night simulation to my internal body clock was great, keeping the Window Blinds down as the flight neared Australia, all to mimic the day and night cycles of Australia.

The only problem I really struck was once again at Singapore (Changi) Airport. Incredibly going through Security to board the final leg of my journey, the Security Detectors were set off by my 'Passport'. Yes, my Passport is one of those Ultra Modern Passports with an embedded Microchip, (for Security purposes)!! Close examination of the Passport ensued and after some minutes Changi Security Staff allowed me and my Passport to proceed to the Aircraft. The Security Staff did not appear to be aware of such a Passport, I was totally amazed at their lack of knowledge!!

Wonderful that my friend picked me up at the Airport, with my Bags and all the mementos, I was so tired, I did not realise just how much a 'holiday' could take out of me. Crikey, I need a holiday to recover, maybe next year!!!!

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