



Our Global Village

February/March 2017



Our tour of the Kings Cross redevelopment

London Calling! Get-Together 5-13 November 2016

What a fantastic week we all had, organised so proficiently by Hilda. A week certainly at a pace to pack in as much as possible in and around our wonderful capital of London. I think most of us needed to put our feet up to recover, when we got home!! Also notable was that these were a really great group of friendly ladies who were enthusiastic, energetic and certainly up for everything that Hilda had in store for us. Every single day was a highlight and had a 'wow' factor. Hilda managed to find things that even the London members had never visited.

Our first day based on the Thames was certainly a great team building day, as we all met at Deptford Creek to do a bit of mud larking (digging around in the low tide mud for treasures) and an interesting walk up this tributary to the Thames whilst learning about the history and conservation of this area. We even did a bit of fishing and caught small fish, leeches and shrimps. All this whilst wearing waders in the creek on a freezing cold November day. I found it fascinating that where we were standing would be under 12 feet of water in another 12 hours!! From walking in the Thames, we went to investigate the Thames Barrier and then went high over the river on the Emirates cable car at dusk, where we could see the city lights coming on and the first of the Guy Fawkes Night fireworks around the city – a magical experience. Our first day concluded with catching a clipper back into the City with Hilda giving us a very interesting and knowledgeable commentary about what we were passing.

Every single day was a highlight. We visited Bletchley Park where we learned all about the code breakers during the war. Chislehurst Caves – a labyrinth of tunnels with history going back to pre-Romans. The Kings Cross development and St



Ready with their poles to go into Deptford Creek -

Pancras coroner's court and graveyard, where we had a fascinating tour of the new and the old. A guided tour of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, followed by going into Dulwich College where we could view Shackleton's boat, the James Caird, which left us all in awe and feeling so privileged to have been able to view such an artefact. Our guided tour of Highgate Cemetery was a fascinating insight into Victorian cemeteries and how it is now being kept up. A guided tour of the graffiti of Brixton was another day of learning about something new.

We visited two very interesting and atmospheric theatres (Pentameter and Wilson's Music Hall) for some top class evening entertainment. The week ended for me with the Lord Mayor's Parade, evensong at St Pauls and fireworks over the Thames and finally the service of Remembrance on Whitehall. We ended our week together after much laughter, adventures, learning and fun, a tired but wholly happy group and more than grateful to Hilda for her ingenuity, organisation and passion in organising this amazing week. It could not have been better!!

Hazel, UK



In Venice, Daniella showed us around and gave us a wonderful insight into the history of the area

A 5W Experience!

What a wonderful northern summer Christine and I enjoyed. It started for me when I joined the gathering in Chester and once again met new 5W ladies. It is so easy to accept and be accepted when attending the gatherings as they are so inclusive. Everyone is so friendly and have interesting stories and tales to tell, you come away with a lot of friendships newly formed or others strengthened and always hope that you will meet up again somewhere in the world.

Our first accommodation after Chester needed to be quickly sorted as our plans were suddenly changed. Krystyna promptly offered to host us. She had visited me a couple of years previously so I was very pleased to meet up with her again. We spent the days walking by the water and the evenings listening to music in the quaint old English pubs.

Leaving Krystyna, we headed for Italy, our first stop being Rome. It was lovely to meet day hostess Margherita and see Rome through the eyes of a resident. We spent a good few hours being shown places that tourists are unaware of. In Venice, Daniella greeted us warmly and showed us interesting areas of her city. On to Florence, which we both enjoyed, but I am sure our visit would have been enhanced had there been a member in the city.



Dressed in one of Rêka's traditional costumes

More on Marina 's travels on page 2

Letter from 5W Chair Agneta Ronnback on Page 2, Details of next Meeting of the Board of Trustees see Page 5, Upcoming Get-Togethers, Gatherings & Tours on Page 7, Local Groups on Page 8, 'Travel With Me' notices and Noticeboards attached.



Christine 'hanging out' at Bran Castle near Brasov

Continued Transylvania was very new to both of us, so we were extra pleased to be able to meet 5W members. We were lucky to stay with Rêka and her family in Gilau and experience country life in a small village. Rêka had chickens, a horse and goats and grew and preserved most of the family's food. We had a go at milking the goats then drank the still warm milk, walked the horse with Rebecca, Rêka's daughter, out to the field each morning and back to the stable at night. We played in the fields with the children, trying to teach the technique of throwing the boomerangs I had taken as gifts and tasting the local potent drink with Rêka and her husband, as well as dressing in the National costume and learning a traditional dance.

In Brasov we met day hostesses Chrystal and Christina, (mother and daughter), who took us to visit Teleki-Bolyai, the legendary library and to the beautiful art nouveau building of the Cultural centre, enjoyed a dinner together and next day a lunch before saying our farewells.

From the cities we stayed in we did side trips to places like Sighisoara and Medias, two medieval villages, and Castles like Bran. We did all of this on public transport using local trains, buses and Mini buses and Bla Bla Car. This is an international organisation whereby you put in a request to go from one place to another and if any member is driving that route and has seats to spare in the car then you can book a seat, usually for the price of the bus fare. We tried it once as we needed to get to Cluj to meet Neleda early in the morning. We both thought it was a great way of getting about. She and her husband

Christian were excellent hosts. We saw a different part of their lovely city than we had seen on our arrival when we stayed in Cluj at the start of our Transylvanian adventure. Christian showed us the city through the eyes of his student days and

treated us to a typical meal at the restaurant where he had eaten as a student. He was also kind enough to drive us to the salt mines before heading off to work. We enjoyed the company of Nelida and Christian and their daughter and we were all sad to say goodbye.



A random 5W meeting in Barcelona with Sue and Holloway from Auckland, New Zealand



Picking figs on our walk with Gill

Leaving Transylvania, we headed for Barcelona for just two nights. While in Barcelona we started talking to two New Zealand travellers who, like us, had been travelling for three months and sounded likely candidates for membership of 5W. So, as I usually do, I introduced the topic of 5W but we were quickly told that they already knew all about us.

Our next port of call was Cesseroas in Southern France, my little bolt hole in Europe. While in Cesseroas, Gill a 5W member from Bristol, joined us for five days. We did quite a few walks out in the garigue with the reward being lunch at small family run restaurants in one or other of the villages we happened to pass at lunch time. After ten days in the South of France we headed home but not before we arranged to visit each other in the near future. Christine and I met for the first time in Lapland just over a year ago. We got on well and continued to Norway, with Mary joining us. Since then we have travelled to Japan together as well as this trip.

We live many hours drive apart so all our arrangements and bookings are done over the Internet, each of us taking a particular section of the trip. All of this came about because we joined 5W, another example of the benefits of being a member of

such an excellent organisation. Each country and city we visited had wonderful places to see, history to learn and art to appreciate, as well as countryside and seascapes, but it would take far too long to list all of our adventures and we can hardly wait to do it again. **Marina, Australia**



We met some very nice ladies in Los Angeles.

Maya let us stay two nights in her apartment. She was not at home, so sent the keys to Sweden - is this not fantastic? 5W is so good, we trust each other. The photo shows Joan, who drove us to the airport.

Marianne, Sweden

My amazing Trans-Siberian train adventure

I would say that this came about quite by chance. The only knowledge I had about Siberia was what I had seen in Dr. Zhivago's film...a romantic dream and later inspired by Joanna Lumley's trans-Siberian adventure. However, this was about to change, as I had volunteered to do a stint at the Rainbow Summer Camp in Krasnodar. Since I had been to Russia before, and as they say 'done' the iconic cities of Moscow, and St. Petersburg - I hasten to add, that by no means had I seen everything - but this time I wanted to do something different!



Magical moment with Genghis Khan!

Research on media proved difficult and sparse, but I was saved by our wonderful, well-travelled 5W members who were able to give me valuable information. So a big thank

you Odette, Martine, Catrina, Vera, Moira. As I said earlier, this trip came about quite by chance, had not Ekaterina advertised for Volunteers, I would not be writing this!

I had an amazing time at Rainbow Camp, the children were so interesting, and interested, I learnt a lot from them about their culture and customs. I did a presentation on India and even if 7 children out of 77 remember a couple of things, I will be very happy. And, here I would like to take the opportunity to say a Big Thank you to Katerina who within her very busy schedule took time to organise invitation letters, airport pickups, and arranged excursions for volunteers. Thank you also Christine and Jan for your information from Rainbow camp, it certainly helped in what to expect, especially the vegetarian diet!

I left Rainbow camp for Socci, accompanied by Olga, one of the leaders. Looking around the Olympic village was a real treat. Three days later I set off on my five day Trans-Siberian adventure. Not knowing what to expect, and with minimal Russian, it was quite scary. I was wondering how I was going to get through the five days, especially being a veggie! Thankfully it worked out well. I shared a cabin with three people. Alina, a school girl aged 14 who spoke English, another lady similar age as mine, and a young man who had the top bunk.

During these 5 days I tried to improve my Russian and to my amazement, Nina was quietly listening and also making an effort to learn English and a couple of days later surprised us by saying 'Thank you'. Although we didn't have a common language to communicate, we became great friends by using sign language! People were leaving the train and new people joining us. And the younger ones were keen to practise their English so, by the time I got to Irkutsk, I could hardly speak! I then missed the train to Mongolia, due to time difference and ended up spending the night in the rest room at the station. Egor, one of the train office staff spoke little English, and tried to help get a refund for my ticket. We couldn't, so had to buy another ticket for £100. Spent a lovely day with Egor, then caught the

later train to Ulaanbaatar. This meant that my visa had expired - had no idea, as visa was taken out in June. I was interrogated by the police for an hour and a half and fined three thousand roubles!

I arrived at Ulaanbaatar in early hours of the morning without a voice, and not a word of Mongolian! I was surprised by the modern high-rise buildings, had it not been for the people, I could have been in any modern city of the World!

This trip for me from beginning to end has been about people, of course I enjoyed beautiful scenery along the way by train, the monuments like the great metal Statue of Genghis Khan and architecture of the cities, and the exotic natural beauty of the Gobi, but this was secondary. I was really lucky, I met some lovely people, young and old, and from what is going on in our world today, it was so nice to meet up with people who just cared about people no matter who you were, or where you came from.....

There were quite a few moments when I felt scared and alone, and wondered why I was putting myself through this at the age of 75 plus. However, I am glad I did it, and will always treasure the wonderful memories I made on this, what now seems a magical adventure. I am also sure that having travelled with 5W added to my confidence and enabled me to attempt this journey! **Kumud, UK**



Children at the Rainbow Summer Camp listening to Kumud's talk on India



*With the children I met on my train journey
- eager to learn English!*



Sharing a beer in a heatwave with Ilona, outside the salt mines

Romanian Rhapsody, June 2016 - completing my memorable 5W Year!

It began in **Cluj Napoca** with **Nelida** (forever in my heart-memory as my 'Mother in Romania'). We shared many lively conversations, I went (as Nelida's guest) to the Opera, and did a walking tour of the city's churches (with one of Nelida's staff as my guide).

With **Ilona** I visited the Salt Mines in **Turda**. "Breathe deeply," Ilona advised (the saline atmosphere is good for the lungs). The magical mines sparkled with stalagmites and stalactites, but I pitied the horses, blinded by their long days underground.

In **Gilau** I met **Réka**. Her rural lifestyle was a breath of fresh air and Réka dressed up in her traditional Hungarian costume to pose for a picture.

My next stop was **Targu Mures** where my hostess was a Couchsurfer (I'm still working on her to join 5W!). There we met up with **Christa** and **Krisztina** and Krisztina gave me the beautiful gift of a set of her father's woodcuts.

I spent a memorable day in the Hungarian-speaking village of **Nyáradszereda** with a group of very poor women; organised by a Franciscan nun to teach basic skills of affordable self-care (how to make soap from olive oil, sugar and lemons); homemaking and cooking. Each was given a large



Réka

pot to take home.

In **Brasov**, Transylvania's southernmost jewel, I spent some time with **Maria**; walking round Tampa Mountain, visiting a Greek Orthodox cemetery, sampling Maria's favourite café and attending a celebratory Mass. I also visited the stunning mediaeval town of **Sighisoara**, where I saw the colourful pleated Roma-style skirts being made.

Back in England, I went to High Wycombe for my second visit to the birthplace of 5W. There I was warmly hosted by Norma, who arranged an evening out at a local Italian restaurant and for me to meet up with Pat, Kathy and Elizabeth. Then, in September Valerie arrived at my home by bike, on her first ever 5W experience. She came bearing a gift book of her poetry and a beautiful hand painted card. What an intrepid lady, in the morning she took off again on her bike! Then, as if it hadn't been enough 5W for one year, Caroline at the 5W Office emailed to say I had won a year's free membership as a prize for generating the most new members this year!

Caroline, Cheltenham, UK



Italian meal with the Wycombe girls!

5W German Christmas Market trip

Christel met me at the train station in Leipzig (even though she wasn't exactly sure of my arrival time due to problems with my UK mobile!!) It was so nice to know that I was being met in this strange city, especially not being able to speak the language!! We spent two days in Leipzig and then took the train to Dresden for the day. It was wonderful to have my own tour guide. We ate in a traditional partly underground restaurant, saw various Christmas markets and many of the sights of both cities. Because Christel was from Frankfurt she arranged a wonderful apartment condo accommodation for both of us. Having my own space was great, even though she was just down the hall!! And within walking distance of most of historic Leipzig!

After Leipzig and Dresden I went by train to Braunschweig and was met by Katherine. We had been invited to an ESL Christmas party by another 5W member. She teaches English to a group of German seniors. I was invited to help with their short skits, and loved playing the part of the Little Red Hen. I felt like I was back in my library at school. After that party, I attended another Christmas event with Katherine's English speaking friends. We sang Christmas carols, ate delicious food, and enjoyed the company. I even met some fellow Canadians, one who even knew where I lived in Canada! Katherine toured me through the Christmas Market in Braunschweig, and the next day we went to Wolfsburg for another market and also to this amazing old library. From Braunschweig it was onto Berlin.



Dale with Renate in Berlin on St Nicholas Day!

Renate very kindly met me at the Berlin main train station.

That night we met Gaby and one other 5W member in downtown Berlin for dinner, braving the transit system! The next day we went on a city bus and toured through the Christmas Market, (unfortunately the same market that had the terrible violence the following week) went for coffee at the famous Barn (a circular coffee shop which is on the second floor so you can have a lovely view) had lunch at the famous KaDeWe department store, and then it was onto Brighton again.

Georgie from Seaford took me to the famous Seven Sisters. I had met up with Georgie before leaving for Germany and we had tea with two other 5W members in Brighton. Upon my return to Brighton days later, I arranged to meet her in Seaford, taking the city bus from Brighton.

We spent the day with Sheila (another 5W member) and toured the Downs, having lunch at a lovely English pub. That evening Georgie put on a wonderful French meal for myself, my son and his fiancé (they are in Brighton) as the next day we went to Paris for the weekend. We stayed one night with a 5W member in Paris but due to my son's allergies had to move to a hotel near to the Louvre.

Then we all took the Eurostar back to Gatwick and I flew home, having had a wonderful trip and meeting some lovely 5W members. I do hope some will venture out to visit me one day!!

Dale, British Columbia, Canada



With Georgie from Seaford at the Seven Sisters