

## An Excursion to London

*by Liz Gibbons*

Among my friends and acquaintances I was one of the few who had never traveled abroad. My husband never wanted to make that trip. In 2004 I learned of a workshop being held on the west coast of England that sounded interesting. At that time I had just turned 71 and decided if I was ever going to go abroad I better do so soon. I decided to go to England. I flew into Gatwick Airport and took an Express train to Victoria Station in London. I was enchanted by the countryside and struck by the density of row houses along the way. They were not very modern, being built many years ago. Arriving at Victoria Station I was confronted with long stairways. There were no escalators. I had traveled fairly light. A young woman offered to carry my suitcase down the stairway, which I gladly accepted. This happened over and over again. People carried my suitcase, and Underground Railway System station attendants were helpful in figuring out what train I needed to take to my destinations and guided me to the correct platform to catch the train. I could not believe how much help I received from strangers. This happened throughout my stay in London and confirmed that a higher power watches over us if we are open to receiving.

I spent five days on the west coast of England near the charming village of Tauton. I took a bus from London to Tauton and it passed near Stonehenge. I only had a view of it in the distance. The further away from London the narrower the roads became. Homes and buildings in villages were often right next to the road as the roads had once been paths. In the countryside were pastures with hedgerows as fences and many sheep. The workshop was interesting and went all day and into the evening. After lunch one day I walked from the inn where the workshop was held to the top of a nearby hill where I could see across the Bristol Channel to Wales.

Returning to London I stayed in a bed and breakfast located a block from Kensington Palace which was built in 1605 as a country home. It was converted into a palace by Christopher Wren in 1689 and had been the home of Princess Diana. I spent the next five days seeing the sights of London. The first day I took a double deck tour bus which allowed me to get on and off at the attractions I wanted to visit. There was a choice of four routes, and I could skip from one route to another. This gave me an overview of London. The first tour route had a live guide giving commentary on the sights we passed, and this was much more enjoyable than the recorded commentary on the other routes. So in addition to seeing the sights you also learned a lot of history along the way. It was a grand learning excursion. In Westminster Abbey I noticed that the stone door sills were worn down in the middle and was struck with the realization that thousands of people before me had passed through the Abbey over hundreds of years.

I am so glad I visited England when I did. I am heartbroken when I hear of the destruction and the disintegration that is going on in London now.