

Diary 3 1915: a young couple's trip through the English countryside by bicycle

This diary runs from July 27th to August 23rd 1915, covering 80 pages. It is an account of a summer holiday taken by a young man and woman and was specifically taken to record and photograph their journey while visiting landmarks, including a number of ancient churches, along the way. Churches seem to be a special interest: when they visit one, they describe it in great detail, with records

of inscriptions from the walls, tombs and plaques. I quoted part of one of those below.

For English churches: http://www.churches-uk-ireland.org/placename_index.html

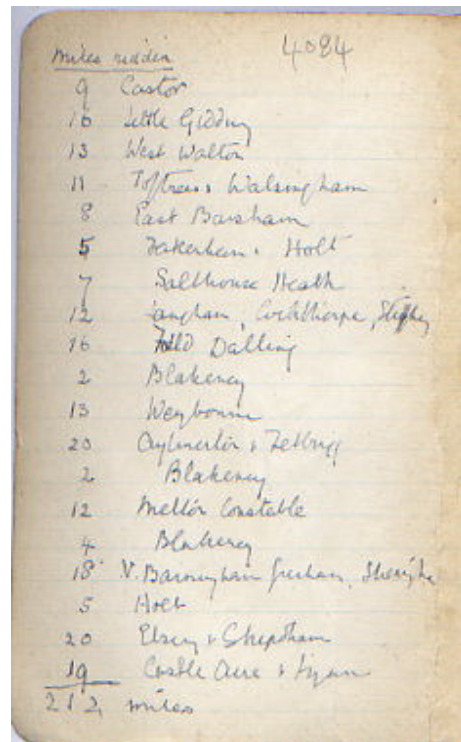
It also seems like they have taken this trip in the past because at different times in the diary they mention trips before this one and how things have changed.

One very notable thing about this diary is how the war (WW1) affects their travels through England, and it is noticeable in their entries, as it seems so many of the homes, churches and businesses are full of soldiers.

Identity: unknown ~ they go by the letters "A" and "D" and I really don't even know if they are a couple but I can tell you that both of them write in this journal, taking turns along the way. Wish I had the photos that they talk about taking but the entries are really wonderful and give the reader a marvelous "mental picture" of what life was like while viewing the English countryside from a bicycle, as you will see in the following excerpts.....

"July 28th

.....Stopped to see great Gidding Church (http://www.wellsprings.org.uk/wellspring_of_pilgrimage/litgidgal.htm) but it was locked. Fine spire work, a plate. Had very fizzy ginger beer at the town and rode on to Little Gidding. Walked through the gate and down what must have been the old approach to the Manor House and church. Found a nice farm and a very nice woman who stabled our bicycles and gave us water to drink with our lunch and the church key all to ourselves. We lunched under the trees by the pond close to the church... We will come stay with her sometime at Mrs. Loakes Manor House in Little Gidding...." See *Little Gidding*, a poem by T.S. Eliot, below ~



“July 29th

A day of Adventures! Sent off luggage to Wolsingham and sallied forth on our travels with the packs. Train 12:20 to ferry, meaning to cross the river by the ferry to W. Walton. Found the ferry no longer in existence. The steps were gone, the boat rotten and had to ride round by Wisbech, 6 miles instead....”

“July 30th

.....Lunched at the Crown, of bread and cheese, much against my will! In a nice little sitting room upstairs all to ourselves. Then reclaimed the bicycles, packed on the luggage and rode to Toft Trees. There both photographed the font from opposite corners. The weather looked threatening and having parted with our raincoats we got anxious and made up our minds to go by train but having reached the station it looked so much better we changed plans again and had a beautiful evening ride to Wolsingham (<http://www.wolsingham.net/wolsingham/gallerystencil.htm>). Found our reception at the Black Lion [see photo of the Black Lion at site above] all it should be, had a very welcome late tea and strolled up to the church afterward but couldn't get in as evening was just going to begin. Changed plates after dinner in a handsome dark room made out of a sort of Bluebeard's chamber in A's room. Very tired by bed time.”

“August 1st

.....Mr. Reeves came in shortly. After tea they took us round the garden where there were wounded soldiers lying on deck chairs. They have 4 in a house which acts as a sort of overflow to the hospital here. We left at ¼ to 6 and went for a walk finding



quite by chance on our way back a pageant of color in a gravel pit. It was absolutely full of poppies in bloom, both the round headed and the long headed kinds....”

“August 2nd

....We left the church but had not gone far when down came a shower and we had to shelter in a barn until it was over and we went on to E. Barsham (http://www.francisfrith.com/search/england/norfolk/east+barsham/photos/east+barsham_photos.htm) and soon caught sight of the beautiful decorated chimneys and pineapple pinnacle of the old Manor House. Lunch before photography had to be our order of the day so we got ginger beer at the Kings Head and walked rather coolly into the farm gate of the Manor having been told that the owners were accustomed to it and found the lone wall of an old bridge to set on and enjoy looking at those splendid chimneys while we lunched. A little girl came from the house and asked for a contribution to the County Hospital and then we could go where we liked and photograph what we liked. It is very sad to see how much

of it is dilapidated and over grown and the trees have been allowed almost to overpower the gate house....” (There is much more on this area).

“August 3rd

.....We reached the ____ house at 4:15 and had a warm welcome by Mrs. Allen and Bertha. Our rooms were waiting for us and we soon felt as if we had never been away. After tea out in the garden we walked through the village and back to the church. The place was full of soldiers, in almost every house as there are hardly any visitors.”

“August 6th

....We sat down on the crest of the hill and watched a scene of marvelous loveliness. A clear sky out to sea with the horizon faintly visible. In the west the sun was behind banks of clouds sending great moving rays of light down on to W_ [Weybourne?] and the long shallow valley between. The light falling on to each well known landmark in turn, both the great churches sharing in the gleam, only Blakeney’s tall stately tower remain dark against the light. (<http://www.churches-uk-ireland.org/images/norf/blakeney.jpg>) The cluster of red roofs which as they glowed redder for a moment beneath the wooded hill, guarding it as it were; all this beauty and all this peace and outside the bank lay at anchor seven torpedo boat destroyers. Lest we should wholly forget....”

“August 9th

.....We set out for Weybourne, (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weybourne>) meaning to photograph the Church and have tea at the same where we remembered having seen “teas” put up last year. We went by Salthouse and found Weybourne absolutely packed with soldiers. The women at the ____ where the tea was had vanished, said she used to give teas but now every room was full of soldiers and she had no place to put it. But she said a house called “The Rest” gave teas just round the corner. We found it on inquiring, found we could have tea and went to look at the church....”

“August 10th

.....We pushed our bicycles up a very long and very lively hill finding several new flowers by the way and a lovely view from the top and the sea. Then we plunged into glorious woods and soon came in sight of the Roman Camp Hotel and Aylmerton Church (<http://www.a2znorfolk.com/towns/123.html>) just below it. Got ginger beer and found a lovely place in pinewoods to picnic with nice red brown toadstools all round us and broken pine needles to sit on. Just beyond us was the “Lions Mouth” a steep forest road down into the valley...”

“August 26th

.....It was just 6 and we set off again and soon found we were both getting very tired. They were very long miles into Lynn where we arrived at last at the Globe Hotel at 20 past 7 to be greeted with the announcement that we must report ourselves at the Police station before bedtime! This made us feel rather queer but we begged for dinner first.....”

“August 23rd,

It did not take long to pack our slender provisions and we then rode our bicycles to the station to send them straight home. We found our big baggage lying there and got it ready to pick up in the afternoon. Then back to the hotel to fetch my camera for a last walk threw town.....”

Finally, an inscription from on a memorial plaque on the south side of the church in Chanel, it reads in part as follows:

**Heer lieth ye body of
John Palgrave gent
dessended fro ye
ayntient yertvds and
wor. Famely of Palgrave
of Palgrave. He married
Mary ye neese of Ivde
Mead and died ye 13 of
April 1610 at his age of
24 years.**



Little Gidding

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house-
The walls, the wainscot and the mouse,
The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air.

There are flood and drouth
Over the eyes and in the mouth,
Dead water and dead sand
Contending for the upper hand.
The parched eviscerate soil
Gapes at the vanity of toil,
Laughs without mirth.
This is the death of earth.

Water and fire succeed

The town, the pasture and the weed.
Water and fire deride
The sacrifice that we denied.
Water and fire shall rot
The marred foundations we forgot,
Of sanctuary and choir.
This is the death of water and fire.

In the uncertain hour before the morning
Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
Over the asphalt where no other sound was
Between three districts whence the smoke arose
I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable.
So I assumed a double part, and cried
And heard another's voice cry: "What! are you here?"
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself yet being someone other-
And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed
To compel the recognition they preceded.
And so, compliant to the common wind,
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,
In concord at this intersection time
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.
I said: "The wonder that I feel is easy,
Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:
I may not comprehend, may not remember."
And he: "I am not eager to rehearse
My thoughts and theory which you have forgotten.
These things have served their purpose: let them be.

So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
By others, as I pray you to forgive
Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.
But, as the passage now presents no hindrance
To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
Between two worlds become much like each other,
So I find words I never thought to speak
In streets I never thought I should revisit
When I left my body on a distant shore.
Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe
And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and sould begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer."
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street
He left me, with a kind of valediction,
And faded on the blowing of the horn.

~ T.S. Eliot

For more on T.S. Eliot and the importance of Little Gidding, see:
<http://www.cs.rice.edu/~ssiyer/minstrels/poems/532.html>