

2173 Tryon Rd, North Saanich, BC, V8L 5H6, Canada
December 2010

Dear Family and Friends,

Shaking off our usual inertia about foreign travel, Gillian and I, joined by Tina, went to Spain in April to look at the famous sights of Moorish Spain in Córdoba and Granada. I had visited the Alhambra in 1950 when stationed in Gibraltar during my military service and could compare the photos I had taken then with the buildings as they look now - on the whole not much changed except for the huge throngs of people. We also went to Madīnat al-Zahrâ the palace city built by the Umayyad Caliphs of Córdoba in the 10th century. Heading east we stayed two nights with Alan and Kate Cartwright in their beautiful home in the Sierra Cabrera. Alan made a memorable *osso bucco* for supper.



Kate, Alan, Gillian, Tina and George at Cortijo Cabrera

Dropping off the car in Alicante we took the train to Perpignan (complicated by SNCF strike), got another car and went via Carcassonne to Vielleville a lovely little place on the R. Lot, just north of Conques. The visit to see the treasures of Conques was a highlight of our

trip. Thence, heading southwest, we crossed the magnificent bridge at Millau and drove down to Cabriès where Rachel and her family live, guided through the tricky bits by mobile phone instructions from Rachel.

Tina was a terrific help through all this and saved our bacon on numerous occasions, but she had to get back to the UK after we got to Cabriès to arrange a show of her work in Berlin. As if the SNCF strike were not enough, flights out of Aix-Marseille and Nice were cancelled owing to the clouds of volcanic ash from Iceland that engulfed much of Europe and in the end we decided to keep our rental car and drive up to Roscoff and take the ferry to Plymouth. Tina managed to make bookings despite chaos on the internet. Countless other travelers were stuck in this mess including our friend John Hutchings who whiled away a week stuck in Munich by writing a novel - good thinking John, and good luck with finding a publisher!



Alice at home in Cabriès

It was great to see Rachel, Olivier and Alice and to admire the many

improvements they are making to their house and we also made a day trip to visit Andrew and Susanna at La Garde Freinet and were able to see a show of Susanna's beautiful paintings. (Roast quails for lunch, another highlight).

We expected the ferry to be jam packed but it was half empty, probably because people couldn't get through to make online bookings. We were soon in Plymouth staying with Quentin and Susan Bone, while Tina dashed off up to London. (Despite the disruption to air traffic, the show in Berlin went ahead and the work she made for it was bought by a collector.) We had a delightful visit with Q & S, then rented a Vauxhall and went to see Kat, Kevin and Jack in Swansea, Chris Court in Totnes, and Bob and Bonnie Meech in Bristol. While at the Meeches we made a day trip to Camberley to attend a big family gathering of the Elwes clan organized by Selina and Majorie. It was a great pleasure to meet them all after the excitement of discovering this branch of the family last year. I wrote something about this in our 2009 Christmas letter and am putting together a proper account of it which will go on my web page some day.



With Bonnie Meech in Bristol

We ended our trip by visiting Frank and Pauline Panton at their beautiful old Tudor house near Sittingbourne. Tina (back from Berlin) and Chris were there too which made it even better. Finally, we had a brief but very nice stay with my cousin Elizabeth Clifford in Ringmer, Sussex, and thence to Gatwick airport, now (mercifully) fully operational again.

Lots of nice memories from this trip, all the more cherished because of the inevitable question – how many more times can we hope to do this sort of thing. Well, maybe we have a couple more left in us. We also had a good trip to Friday Harbor in September and October, joined for part of it by Bob Meech. Together Bob and I got more good evidence of inhibitory post-synaptic potentials from the swimming motor neurons of *Polyorchis* and should now be able to put a paper together. This is something well worth having done which we would both have felt pleased about at any stage in our careers. I am scheduled to present it at a meeting in Ottawa next May.

Its not all upbeat all the time here, people have been sick, had disappointments, old friends have died. Our youngest and much loved grandchild Claire was found to have a brain tumour in early November and was flown to Vancouver to the BC Children's Hospital. The tumour was successfully removed and she is now receiving chemotherapy. It looks like it was caught early and removed completely and there is no sign of residual malignancy, and absolutely none of mental impairment. Quentin and Cathy devote all their time to her and she has a devoted support group, and is still very much herself, a happy little girl who has just completed her first chemo cycle with flying colours.

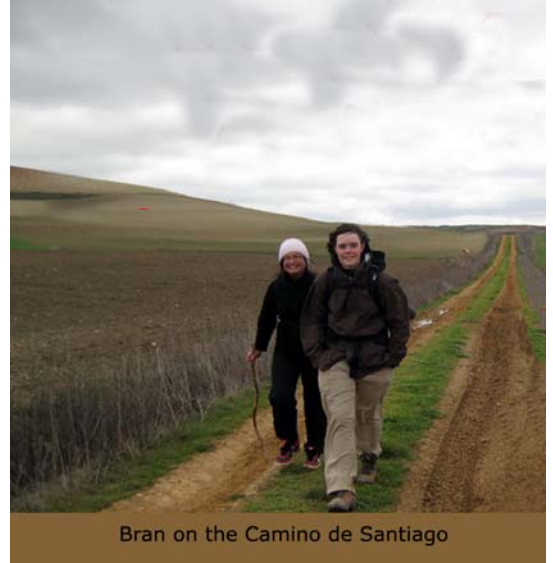


Our youngest grandchild Claire

We learned in March that Richard and Cathy were splitting up and. Richard has since moved to Vancouver. This has been accomplished without undue acrimony but has been tough on Juliet and the boys. Richard manages to come over regularly and also has the kids visit him in Vancouver, which eases the situation. On the brighter side Alexander and Kjerstin celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in July. While we were in Spain in April, Kjerstin and Bran were in the middle of hiking the Camino de Santiago. Al sent regular emails with Google maps tracking their daily progress.

Here at Tryon Road we struggle gamely on, making pots, making quilts, making ourselves go for walks to get exercise, chatting endlessly on Skype, keeping up with our emails and facebook. Right now, Gillian is writing a book review for The Catholic Historical Review, making lemon curd and mince tarts.

With love from us both
Gillian & George



Bran on the Camino de Santiago



Quilting at Friday Harbor



Quilt by Gill and Kj for wedding anniversary



Zurbarán pots by George