

Southmead Hospital

At the end of May 2014, I had to take Robert (my “step-father”) to hospital in Bristol for a major operation.

Southmead is a new high-tech, futuristic hospital, 75% of the rooms are single en-suite. The biggest wards are of 4 beds. Unlike most hospitals it is light, spacious and airy.



First impressions were of awe, but as time went by, amazement and

gratitude. Yes, there was all the technology a hospital could desire, but the staff were absolutely fantastic; from the welcome by the admissions staff nurse in the pre-op department, to the consultant, registrar, and anaesthetists and the Intensive care staff nurses



Like most hospitals parking is a big issue. The staff allow 1 hour before shift just to find somewhere to park. I was ok over the weekend, but during the week I had enormous problems as I was in the motor home. Park and rides were tried, as was parking at shopping centres.

My first camp site was at Colliton Farm. This was a quiet site not far from Bristol airport, and half an hour drive from Long Ashton Park & Ride. The site had a bar and with prior booking would cook breakfast. They also took in B&B guests and had secure airport parking.



The Park & Ride was convenient, and, while we were using it, cheap. The ticket machine was broken so cash fares were free! The buses however were old and noisy, and one of the drivers wasn't happy in his job and was cursing and slamming on his brakes with unnecessary frequency. Bus 501 took us straight to the hospital but it took $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour each way, depending on traffic.



Parking at Cribbs Causeway was limited to 3 hours. The bus took a good ½ hour each way, so was not really viable. Bus 17 took us to within ½ mile of the hospital. However, I did manage to get my eyes tested, and collect my new glasses from the shopping centre.

During the day, Mel and I went off shopping or to visit National trust properties.

The first was Tyntesfield. Once the home of the Gibbs family who built their fortune on the trade of guano, a fertiliser made from South American sea bird droppings. William Gibbs' monopoly on this trade turned him from a successful merchant into a very wealthy man.



After buying Tyntes Place for his growing family in 1843, William Gibbs went about making it his own. He remodelled the exterior of the simple

regency house into a Gothic extravaganza.



Four generations of family life, a love of beautiful things and the accumulation of useful bits and bobs made Tyntesfield a treasure trove of objects. From ornate furnishings to ice skates and picnic sets, over 50,000 objects have been catalogued.



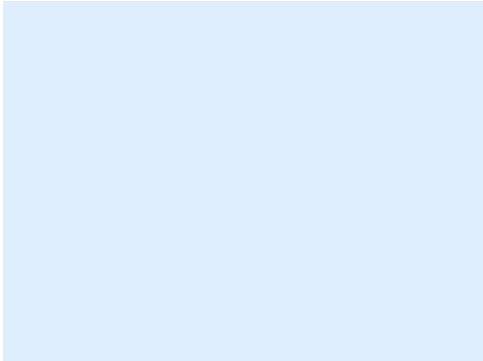


Then we went to Dyrham Park. The name Dyrham derives from the Saxon 'Deor hamm', meaning 'deer enclosure', and yes we saw some Roe deer.

North of the deer park lies Hinton Hill Fort. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Saxons won an important battle here in 577AD against three British

kings, gaining control of Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath.

William Blathwayt (1649-1717) was responsible for transforming Dyrham Park into one of the wonders of the age. Hard-working civil servant, linguist, traveller, lover of art, architecture and books, MP for Bath, family man and careful spender, his administrative talents brought him many lucrative offices of state (notably for war and the colonies) under successive monarchs.



The house and estate were enormous and afforded fabulous views over the countryside.

My 2nd campsite was a Caravan Club Site, and much better positioned for hospital visiting. It was 20 minutes away, so we could drive there over the weekend.



From here we visited Newark Park, a new addition to the National Trust portfolio. Newark Park stands proud on top of the Cotswold escarpment, looking down into the Ozleworth valley to the Mendips beyond. This remote corner of south Gloucestershire is a secret and unspoilt place, with barely a sign of modern life visible in any direction. A place of architectural intrigue, quaint gardens and sprawling

parkland of 725 acres. It is accessed by narrow lanes with passing spaces. If travelling with a large vehicle, as I did, it is advisable to time your visit with the average arrival and departure times, to avoid difficulties.





The original Tudor Hunting Lodge was founded in 1550 by Sir Nicholas Poyntz, an influential English courtier to Henry VIII; in 1600-1790 various new owners enlarged the house and the house and estate went from boom to bust, to its dramatic rescue by Robert Parsons, a Texan, trained in architecture, who came to Britain during the Second World War. He fell in love with England and its ancient

buildings. After the war he returned to Britain and, in 1970, was introduced to Newark Park. He saw its potential and took on the tenancy. Newark has an incredible story to tell.

