

February half term 2015; An overdue escape to Oxfordshire

Monday

Bluebell the motorhome is parked up on a lovely little certified location (5 van Caravan Club site) just on the outskirts of Oxford, at Kidlington.

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/search/+the+moors,+kidlington/@51.8307518,-1.2983899,17z>

We arrived after a rather uneventful but a bit

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longer than anticipated journey west. We hit several batches of roadworks on our way and the weather was horrific!

The certified location was easy to find, and is in quite a residential area. There are 5 well spaced out pitches surrounded, surprising given its location, by fields. There are electric points on each pitch and a water point and El-san point and we feel it's excellent value at just £11 pn. There is even a handy coop store almost opposite the site!

Given the terrible weather we decided to abandon our planned bike ride, instead deciding to take advantage of a short rest bite from the rain and found the Oxford canal tow path, which is just a few hundred yards way

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from the site, for a little wander.



Soon the rain came back, so we hot footed it back to the warmth and dryness of Bluebell, where we enjoyed a relax and an early night!

Tuesday

We woke up this morning to a totally different weather front- blue skies and sunshine, so we were up bright and early to take full advantage! We'd planned to catch the bus into Oxford (bus stop at end of road) but given

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we were unable to do our planned tow path bike ride yesterday, decided to incorporate this with our day trip into Oxford, taking advantage of the Oxford Canal towpath from The Plough Inn at Wovercote into the city centre. We used the excellent cycle network to navigate our way mainly off road from Kidlington to the Plough where we then picked up the towpath for 4 miles into the city centre.



^this last picture shows a section of the canal path that runs between two different ca-

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*nals- the Oxford canal to the left of the tow-
path and the Thames canal to the right! ^*

Oxford is extremely bike friendly and so we easily found a safe place to park up the bikes for the day, whilst we explored the city by foot. The weather was fabulous, picture perfect blue skies with a slight chill in the air- a perfect day to explore the city. First stop was the Tourist information centre, where we were able to get a map of the city which included a suggested self guided walking tour to take in the sights. It was an excellent way to see the city- and at £1.50 for the brochure worked out much cheaper than the guided tour (£9 pp)



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It's thirsty work this cycling and walking malarkey, and it wasn't too long into our exhibition that Keith sniffed out one of his favourite types of establishments- a historical public house! **The Turf Tavern** is found close to the Bridge of Sighs, and is really very cool. It's built right into the city walls, with 13th Century foundations and has a very impressive list of previous drinkers (see

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picture below)



After a swift pint, it was time carry on our whistlestop tour, and next up was The University Quarter. We both found the architecture absolutely wonderful, and the lack of graffiti was really good to see- apparently Rome is terrible for this.



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We were keen to check out The Eagle and Child pub, as allegedly it was where Tolkien and CS Lewis used to frequent to discuss their literature.



It was a cosy kinda place, with lots of character, but sadly they wouldn't let us in with the pooch, so it won't be finding its way on my list of dog friendly pubs which I'm intending on writing at some point, and so after a quick nose in, we went on our merry way in search for somewhere we could go with the dog. □



^ *Jazz couldn't have been made to feel more welcome in the **Kings Arms, Oxford**, where we enjoyed a burger and he got spoilt with*

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plenty of fuss, dog biscuits and a big bowl of water.^

By this point, time was ticking on, so we decided to pick up our bikes and head back to the campsite- but first of all we nipped to see Oxford Castle, where we experienced a splendid marriage between old and new. The main tower is partly ruined from the Norman period, and the moat is still visible as is the motte. The Bailey courtyard was turned into a prison in the 14th century and only closed in 1996, when it, along with the courtyard, was redeveloped into a hotel and “Castle Quarters” containing fancy restaurants and such.



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We decided to use the sustains cycle network to get us back to the campsite, and were very impressed with the cycle network signs and route even though by the time we got back to the campsite we had clocked up 18 miles on the bikes, and 5.5 miles on foot-leaving us both feeling like this:



Wednesday

The nice weather was set to continue for

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another day, so we had an early start and drove to Uffington White Horse, where we had a wonderful 9.5 mile walk that took in the White Horse, Uffington Castle, The Ridgeway, Wayland Smithy, and The Ashdown Estate. The views round the entire walk were truly spectacular!



^standing above the White horse looking down^



^Uffington Castle site- on the summit of White Horse Hill and the site of a large Iron Age fort^

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^ a large section of the walk was on the Ridgeway- an ancient route between Dorset and The Wash, described as one of the oldest road in Europe^



^Wayland's Smithy- a Neolithic chambered long barrow, believed to have been the home of Saxon smith-God Wayland^



^Ashdown House Estate^

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^Red Kites flying overhead on Weathercock Hill and the view from Weathercock hill to the house^

After an exhausting but completely fabulous walk, we headed the 20 mins or so to our next campsite, one just outside of Wantage, another CC CL - not as nice as the first one, but still for £12 pn with electric and water, we didn't care- we soon settled in and even managed to pick up a BT Fon hotspot.

Thursday

Bluebell the motorhome is parked up back at home - sadly we had to return a day early

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due to having some work business to sort out, but also the weather gods turned against us, so it wasn't a difficult decision to make. We did however get chance to cycle the 16 miles of the Phoenix trail, a disused railway line turned cycle path running between Thame and Princes Risborough. We made a very early start in an attempt to avoid the bad weather heading our way, and got 3/4 of the way before it kicked in. The wind picked up so much it nearly blew me off my bike, and the rain started lashing down, but still, we continued and enjoyed the ride nonetheless.

There are some interesting sculptures along the way, and lots of red kites flying above.

There is a beautiful railway house/station conversion half way along, and the last section

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before Princes Risborough offers some lovely views across the fields. Sadly, the weather deteriorated so I didn't get as many pictures as I'd have liked, but here are those I did get...



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As you can probably make out – I was fairly chuffed to be back at the van – modelling my best drowned rat impression!

So there we have it, another trip done, and a long overdue one at that. We are sad to have had to come back a day early, but the weather looked terrible for this evening and tomorrow, and we've had a couple of work issues to come back home to. The joys of being self employed! Still, we've had a marvellous break and enjoyed some brill weather.

We travelled 350 miles in the motorhome from home to home again, and that's used exactly 1 tank of fuel at £65. We've cycled 36 miles, walked 15 miles and watched an entire series of X Files! We spent £36 on site

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fees and had a lovely meal out in Oxford. We've spend less than £150, and thats been for a 4 day break, so we are pretty happy with that!

Our next task is to start planning our Easter break, as we leave in 6 weeks time!

Sorry its been a lengthy post - until next time

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