

Sent to Coventry

Thursday March 20th

On an absolutely glorious day, we set off for our two destinations: Warwick and the Transport Museum at Coventry. Moira and I chose to be dropped off at Warwick to explore the town plus the magnificent Warwick Castle, which was only a 10 minute walk from there. Basking in the wonderful balmy weather, we made our way first to the Castle.

The entrance fee is not cheap-£29 concession, cheaper if you book online in advance-but we spent several hours there and were not disappointed. It was built in 1068 by order of William the Conqueror, and it was great to see an archer demonstrating the skills that caused poor Harold's downfall in the grounds outside. It was of great strategic importance and remains one of the most magnificent mediaeval castles in the country. It has been the seat of many famous families, including the Beauchamps and Grevilles. During the Wars of the Roses, the 16th Earl was called "Warwick the Kingmaker" because of his military and political power. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Castle was modernised and became famous as the go-to party venue, and Edward VII had a dalliance with Daisy, the hostess of the time. So famous was she that the song "Daisy, Daisy," is believed to be about her. Their Powder Ball achieved notoriety for its scandalous goings on, especially when the hostess appeared as Marie Antionette.

There was so much to do. We climbed the 520 steps of Guy's Tower, the castle's tallest tower, and were rewarded with magnificent views of the surrounding countryside. (No wonder there was a defibrillator at the top!) The old gaol was creepy but we avoided the dungeons (extra charge) to explore the waxwork figures which vividly illustrated life in a castle of that time. The most dangerous place to be was the armoury, with live powder next to a live fire. The State Rooms and Great Hall took your breath away with their range of mediaeval weaponry and the formidable, fully armoured war horses, trained to kill with their hooves and the spike on their heads. Then on to the decadent rooms of the later centuries, where luxury was the order of the day. There was a full scale model of Henry VIII with his six wives, as the Tudors were visitors there. It was all really fascinating, but we did want to see the town itself.

The town sprang up around the Castle and was full of narrow streets, Tudor facades and quirky shops. We found a wonderful, old style tearoom called Wylie's, which was located down a narrow alleyway and full of quaint bric-a-brac. The highlight was the magnificent St Mary's Church, dating back to the 12th century. The most magnificent area was the Beauchamp (pronounced Beecham) Chapel, which houses the ornate tombs of the Beauchamp Earls and the tomb of Sir Robert Dudley, Lizzie 1's squeeze of the time. There is a magnificent Doom fresco above the doorway, adding a glow of colour to the austere surroundings..

But enough of our meanderings in the sun. Over to Petrol-head Purkis for an account of the Transport Museum. Often seen driving his muscle car round Hykeham and doing wheelies in Ruston's car park, over to our very own Jeremy Clarkson- Brian!

Us blokes were then dropped off at the Transport Museum, a large set of buildings filled with cars both ancient and modern. It showed the history of British car manufacturing, cars built both with style and, in some respects, not so stylish.

The variety of models on show was very impressive. We had the vintage cars that could only muster a top speed of 20 m.p.h. to cars that just blew that away. I took a photo of two Jaguar cars that were on display in a dedicated Jaguar building. One was manufactured in 1904, the other in 2012. I remember thinking to myself 'what a difference a century makes in technology of cars alone', not unlike the development of modern aircraft.

On display were cars that we all could relate to through our motoring lives. The Austin and Morris 1100's, the Ford Anglia and A35 and A40's, Triumph Vitesse, Rover cars of all types, and not forgetting the good old Mini. The sports cars of the day, MGB GT's, Triumph Stag, to name but a few.

We had the 'Goldfinger' car, the Aston Martin DB5, a beautiful car. The other end of the scale we had Del Boys two motors, the good old 3 wheeled van and his 'Pratmobile' as Rodney called it, The lime green Ford Capri Ghia. The dedicated Jaguar building was filled with Jaguar models from all ages. The mark tens, the XJ's, the famous 'E' type, even the old racing 'D' type. All beautiful cars that at the time of manufacturing, showed that we could turn out some lovely cars. What a shame that nowadays all the known British car makers are mostly now in the hands of foreign companies.

It turned out to be a very interesting and memorable day out. I've placed a number of photos on the photo page that I took of some of the cars that were on display.

Many thanks to Jane and Chris for organising, also to Stewart for driving us safely there and back.