

## THE JERSEY EXPERIENCE 1983

### Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August

After what was considered a serious heart operation in London (a triple bypass) the previous year, my father embraced early retirement from HM Dockyard in Plymouth when he was 59, with what can only be described as happiness. From the resultant payout, he booked a family holiday for us all in Jersey. Thus at around midday, a Dash 7 took off from Roborough Airport at Plymouth, carrying Dad, Mum, Alan, 7-year-old Daniel, 2-year-old Rachel and me.

There had been an amusing moment when our hand luggage had been checked, as I was carrying a yellow potty for the newly toilet-trained Rachel. Her motto (or more truthfully mine) was therefore at the time: *Have potty, will travel*. The lady who delved into the bag to check remarked that it was very interesting...

It was my fifth flight, but I was no less nervous than I had been on my first one and somehow ended up sitting at the front next to Dad. I didn't know whether to be comforted or embarrassed when my normally rather reserved father held my hand during take-off. I hadn't realised my fear had been that obvious! However, I relaxed a little as we were served coffee and biscuits and then about half an hour after take-off, we began our descent to Jersey.

I hadn't been able to make up my mind if a smaller plane was better than a bigger one, but I almost inevitably became fearful again as we started to bank over green fields far below us. However, I was minimally comforted when the landing wheels descended and after a bit of a bump-bump situation, we landed on Jersey soil and I was able to look forward to the next ten days.

A minibus drove us to Falles Garage to collect the pre-booked hire car, where Alan discovered he'd forgotten his driving licence. Fortunately, Dad had just taken some refresher driving lessons to ensure he was capable of driving again – he always took driving very seriously. We then, after only one wrong turning and a few heated words between Alan and Dad, drove safely to our guest house named *Gros Puits*, translated according to my schoolgirl French as *Big Wells*.

We were revived by a warm welcome and a cup of tea, before walking into St Helier, where Alan immediately visited the AA office to sort out an international driving licence. While he and Dad were thus engaged, Mum and I took the children for a walk along the nearby promenade above a beach. We decided to enjoy an ice cream while we waited, as it was quite hot and sunny. Many people were enjoying the beach and as I watched the scene below, I was pretty sure I saw a topless sunbather – female, that is.

Later back at *Gros Puits*, dinner was vegetable soup, pork and fruit salad. It was rather filling, so we decided to go for an evening stroll to Howard Davis Park, which we had wandered through in the afternoon. We attempted a shortcut (which seemed to turn into a long cut) but when we finally arrived, a school band was playing, creating an upbeat holiday atmosphere in the warm evening.

Daniel was very excited – quite high, really – but Alan was worried about some milk we'd ordered for Rachel at 21:00, so we didn't stay long. I think it's safe to say that everyone went to bed quite happy on our first night at Jersey.



**Colourful Jersey flowers**

### **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August**

Rachel greeted the day at 06:45 and therefore so did we, but on the whole this was surprisingly good and very welcome. After a morning cup of tea at 08:00, there followed an enormous breakfast at 08:45, consisting of fruit juice, cereal, cooked breakfast and toast. If we're not careful, we shall all put on vast amounts of weight, but at least it means we won't have to eat much at lunchtimes.

As it was our first morning, we walked into St Helier for a recce and to buy a few necessary items (as well as a few unnecessary items). We also had mid-morning coffee in a rather posh but pleasant shop, before depositing a sleeping Rachel on her bed in *Gros Puits*. After having a short rest ourselves, we took to the hire car for an afternoon's excursion to Strawberry Farm.

This offered several various and seemingly quite random attractions. Firstly, we looked around some Jersey-type model buildings:



**Jersey in miniature**

and had our picture taken in an old car:



**Daniel test drives an old jalopy**

After that, we looked inside a German bunker and viewed a glass-blowing area. The gift shop was perused and we indulged in some strawberries and cream, but Rachel became extremely wriggly and noisy, so we made a hasty departure.

Dad suggested a calming drive around, but it was horrendous in the back seat with Rachel, as she simply wouldn't keep still. This, of course, was before the law about child safety seats in cars. We stopped briefly at a sloping, pebbly beach, drove through Gorey and then back to *Gros Puits*.

Dinner was chicken vol-au-vent, ham salad and lemon meringue and it was very filling again. Alan started talking to our neighbours in the dining room, who are Irish and seem to enjoy a drink or several. When we started our evening walk to Howard Davis Park, they bumped into us and talked all the way.

Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen were playing in the park, enlivening the evening, but Mum, Daniel and I sought quieter surroundings and went to see a rose garden and war graves. Some of the graves simply read: *A Naval Rating, Known to God*. We looked briefly inside St Luke's Church, then found Alan, Dad and Rachel, minus the Irish couple – Daniel refers to the man as Herman Munster.

We strolled back to *Gros Puits* for our second night in Jersey. I wish mainly that Rachel would sleep well at night and also that we had an en suite bedroom, as I keep thinking I'll bump into someone in the corridor on my way to the bathroom while carrying the famous yellow potty...

### **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August**

I was the first one awake at just before 07:00 and took the opportunity to go and wash my hair. The others soon surfaced, although Daniel seemed a bit tired. We had baked beans on toast for breakfast, plus fruit juice and cereal if wanted. Rachel was misbehaving at the table, so Alan took her outside and thereby went without his cup of tea. The terrible twos, personified in our little Rachel!



**Outside Gros Puits**

As it was another sunny day, we drove to the lovely sandy beach at Gorey and all of us except Mum (who was having trouble with a sore throat) went in the sea. It was shallow for a long way out and the children had a great deal of fun splashing around. Dad also enjoyed his swim and I managed my first few strokes for several years, despite feeling slightly out of condition.

Alan built a sandcastle for Daniel, who was crabby because Mum and Dad had gone to *The Secret Garden* café for a cup of coffee – this is because Daniel and Rachel are nuts about Grandma! After they returned, the four of us went to *The Secret Garden* (not so secret after all) for a drink and some sandwiches. We then went in search of a fruit shop, to subsidise our intake of vitamin C.

After buying rather a lot of fruit, we decided that we might as well visit Jersey Potteries, which was not far up the road. It was a big place, where the public could view the different processes of making pottery, from throwing the clay to the final paint decorating. It was very interesting and we were tempted into making some pottery-type purchases before we left.

We then went in search of a Pure Jersey Ice Cream, which in the end turned out to be much too large and Rachel had one of her funny turns while eating it. Children are so easy to cope with! However, we had espied a most intriguing looking castle in the near distance, so we naturally went to investigate.

It was hot, the castle was further away than we thought and there were lots of steps up to the top, but we finally made it. Alan had to carry a sleeping Rachel up the steps, whereupon she woke and wanted a wee, so he had to carry her all the way down again – and then carried her all the way up again afterwards.

Once we were inside the very difficult to pronounce Mont Orgeuil castle, there were waxwork models and running commentaries that depicted various historical happenings. This helped a lot to bring everything to life and gave it some context, but I must admit that I found it impossible to take in all at once. I do like a nice castle, though – those stone walls could tell such a tale.



**Resting our legs after all those steps**

We returned to the car with aching feet and after arriving back at *Gros Puits*, bathed the children and had a drink before dinner. This evening it was melon, lamb cutlets and fresh fruit salad. Dad wanted to go to the 'bank' afterwards, so Alan went with him, taking Rachel in the pushchair. They returned at 21:15, so the 'bank' had late opening hours! In the meantime, Mum had been playing ball and then cards with Daniel, while I caught up on various jobs. Bonne nuit.

### **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August**

Rachel was restless in the night and I was awake for an hour, but amazingly we all slept on until nearly 08:00. Mum's sore throat was still bothering her, so she made a doctor's appointment for 12:00. Therefore, we just spent the morning at *Gros Puits* in the sun. We had coffee, Dad and Daniel played with golf balls and putting sticks and I took the opportunity to do some washing.

At 11:30, Alan drove Mum and Dad to the doctor's surgery and we all waited for them in the park (after driving around for at least ten minutes looking for a parking space). It was hot in the noonday sun, so we sat in the cool shade of the bandstand watching Kenny Ball sign autographs. Had he been there all night?

Mum and Dad returned, having had to pay £8 for the consultation and £4 for a prescription. We then drove by mistake to the German Underground Military Hospital, the mistake being that we'd been trying to find St Matthew's Glass Church. After staying outside to have a drink and to eat fruit and a Cornetto, we ventured inside the hospital, which had been built by prisoners of war during the German Occupation of the Channel Islands in World War II.

It could be described in one word – chilling. I found it morbidly interesting to see first-hand where the Germans and prisoners had been, rather than merely to read about it, or see television programmes. For some reason the hospital ward, operating theatre, officers' mess and an unfinished tunnel particularly interested me. We took time to read all the information and looked with a certain amount of horror at the exhibits. What peculiar and malicious madness it all must have been, although for us it had been a worthwhile visit.

We thankfully re-entered the normal world of sunshine and drove to a Butterfly Farm. Rachel was being her 2-year-old best (otherwise known as worst) on the journey there, but to be fair she had been quiet in the underground hospital. She scrambled and flung herself around and finally went into a rage of crying. It was all I could do to stop her flinging herself into the front seat with Daddy. The later introduction of child seats was definitely a good move!



**Reflective at the Butterfly Farm**

Only Mum, Daniel and I decided to go inside to see the butterflies, which were mostly big and pretty. Some seemed like miniature bats flying around and I felt rather weird when they flew close to me. We saw a pair chasing each other and then a pair mating, which was fascinating. After rejoining Dad, Alan and Rachel outside, we had a drink and a biscuit, but by then it was gone 16:00, so we decided to drive back to *Gros Puits*. Daniel and Rachel spent a little while with Mum and Dad and then we all met up again in the Lounge Bar.

Dinner was vegetable soup, fish and chips and cheesecake. The only trouble was that Rachel hadn't slept all day and she started to cry during the first course. Alan took her upstairs and she promptly went to sleep. I relieved him after quickly eating my main course and he later brought me some cheesecake.

Meanwhile, Daniel went to play outside but fell down, grazing his knee. Jim, our Irish drinking table neighbour aka Herman Munster, picked him up – as Mum relayed to us when she later appeared carrying a stricken Daniel to our room. It seemed to be one of those evenings! Alan and I read until about 21:30 and then prepared for our fourth night in Jersey. Rachel was sleeping soundly, so all the activity of the last few days must have caught up with her at last.

### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August**

Rachel slept for 13 hours last night! I couldn't face a cooked breakfast this morning, but everyone else did. Today's choice of visit was Jersey Zoo, founded by Gerald Durrell, where we arrived at about 10:30. As I had read and enjoyed several books by Gerald Durrell about his experiences looking for endangered species in various countries, I was intrigued to see some of the animals in the flesh, particularly Colobus monkeys described in *Catch Me a Colobus*.

I also recognised tamarins and pink pigeons, not to forget spectacled bears and orang-utans. In fact, we saw a great number of animals, birds and reptiles and sadly, most of them had a dodo symbol on their enclosures, denoting that they were endangered species – "The final emptiness of extinction."



**The iconic dodo symbol**

After a sandwich, an ice cream and a look around the gift shop, we left in mid-afternoon, uplifted that so much was being done to save such amazing animals.



**A species endangered only by ice cream**

As we still had some spare day time left, we went to look for St Matthew's Glass Church and actually managed to find it this time – but it was closed because it was Saturday. There was a children's playing park nearby, so we just went in there for an hour to keep Daniel and Rachel amused. Mum/Grandma became worn out with all the exercise, although Alan and I helped as well.

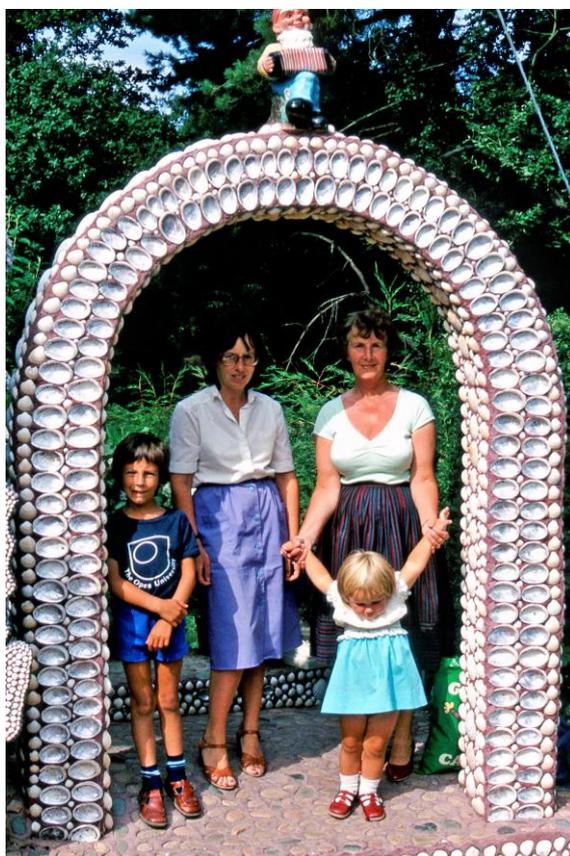
We returned to *Gros Puits* and dressed in more presentable clothes for dinner, then went in the garden to while away the time. There were two little boys who threw a couple of the golf balls over the wall, much to Daniel's annoyance.

After dinner we went for a walk into St Helier, which was full of people. It was becoming late and dark by 20:45, so Alan said we ought to take the children home. Dad wanted to carry on, so we left him striding out and returned to *Gros Puits* for a bedtime drink and our fifth night here. Daniel and Rachel are in bunk beds, with Daniel on the top. When Rachel hears him moving around, she says, "Keep still Da-da!" (which is her name for him).

### **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August**

Another restless night with our beloved 2-year-old, but we arrived at breakfast in fair working order to consume cereal, egg and toast. Afterwards, we drove to a Shell House (by the bend of a busy road and rather dicey to park the car).

However, the entrance fee was only 20p and the shells were very pretty and must have taken absolutely ages to do. They were packed in some sort of red coloured cement in all manner of intricate shapes, sizes and models. Daniel, Rachel and Mum seemed intrigued, anyway.



**Shell shot**

We then drove on to St Brelades Bay, which was another lovely, sandy beach, but we hadn't come prepared and so didn't venture forth onto the sand. Instead, we had a rather decent cup of coffee and then walked along the front until we came to a shop where we all bought a Jersey t-shirt each and Daniel and Rachel bought a Jersey cow (a miniature furry one, that is).

It was then time to drive back to *Gros Puits* for Sunday lunch, which consisted of tomato soup, roast beef with Yorkshire pudding and various desserts. We had stopped in the Lounge Bar for a drink beforehand and Dad had ordered a bottle of wine with lunch, so afterwards we relaxed in the garden for a while.

The afternoon was still relatively young, so we decided on a drive to St Ouen, where there was a museum containing some of the past floats from Jersey's famous Battle of Flowers. They were very cleverly made out of dried marram grass and horsetails and were really impressive. Lots of them were made in animal shapes and were quite lifelike.

As there was a putting green nearby, we decided to have a game. It was a flat course that was well looked after and we all enjoyed it – Daniel did very well indeed for a 7-year-old. It was near the airport and were able to see all the incoming planes (not that I enjoyed being reminded of our future flight home). After a King Cone, we drove back to St Helier for a teatime snack.

Alan parked the car and we walked around searching for a suitable café, but seemed overcome with indecision. We went into one place that advertised sandwiches, but they were only serving hot meals, so we walked out again. It had been quite cramped, with no likely looking toilet (for Rachel plus the yellow potty) and I began to worry a little. This led to a disagreement between Alan and me, so we walked back to the car and returned to *Gros Puits*.

Later on and feeling somewhat less indecisive, Alan and Dad walked to a pub to buy crisps and nuts for Daniel, who was hungry. I washed my hair and so the evening passed – it had been a decidedly a strange evening!

### **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August**

I was first awake at 07:15, although I felt more tired than usual. Daniel seems to have gone off having cooked breakfast, but Rachel on the other hand ate loads of toast, so maybe she was stocking up on energy for the day ahead.

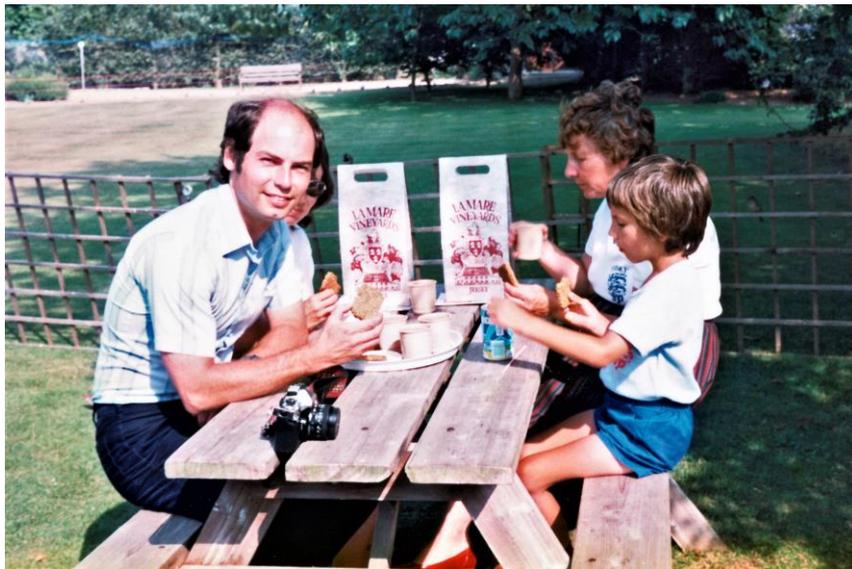
When we were all ready, we drove to St Matthew's Glass Church at Millbrook and were finally able to look around inside at the glass crucifix, font and many other parts of the building. It seemed an original idea and since I'm very partial to glasswork, I found it pretty and most unusual. Also, it was a box ticked for Mum.

After buying some postcards, Dad and Alan rightly thought that it would be good exercise to go for a walk, so Alan parked the car amongst green pastures and off we set down a likely looking country lane. It was very pleasant for the first half hour or so, but then we appeared to be rather lost.

Alan asked the way from a man in a tractor and we set off again for a while, but seemed to be heading nowhere. It was hotter and we had no drink with us, so Alan walked back to the car while the rest of us waited for him on a grass verge.

It was quite a relief when he returned at 12:30 and drove us to the nearest pub, where we bought sandwiches, crisps and drinks, which went down very well. We then drove to St Ouen and played a round of crazy golf. It had become windy, but Daniel had a really good laugh and Alan played with Rachel, so it was successful. Also successful was the daily ice cream, a King Cone again – but I noticed that Alan sat away from Rachel to avoid getting messy.

Our next visit was to La Mare Vineyards in St Mary, run by the Blayney family. Sadly there were no samples, but it was interesting to see the grapes growing, to read about the processes involved and to see the cider press. Alan and Dad bought some cider and we sat on a wooden bench under a tree for tea and home-made flapjack, enjoying the relaxing ambience.



**Tea? Cider? Flapjack?**

As it was around 16:00, we headed back to *Gros Puits*, stopping only for some stamps to post our postcards and one of Rachel's yellow potty interludes. We convened in the Lounge Bar for a pre-dinner drink and then went into the dining room for prawn cocktail, pork chops and cheesecake. Rachel had to be taken quickly from the room at least four times, she had clearly had too much to drink!

Afterwards, we walked to Howard David Park and found that a bugle and drum band from Holland was performing at 20:15. We stayed to watch for a while and they were very good indeed, with little side steps and hops in their marching. It was an unusual but genuinely uplifting finale to the day.

### **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August**

We had a rather disturbed night, as some thoughtless people woke me just as I was dropping off (not the bed) by saying goodnight to one another right outside our door. However, we all slept late, with me being first awake at 07:55, no less. Breakfast was as usual, but I couldn't cope with a cooked one.

We packed for the beach and drove to Gorey (after Mum had nipped out to have her hair done at the local hairdresser's shop called *Laraine*). It was much windier than our first visit and the resultant waves put most of us off swimming. We sat down and played with the sand at first, then Alan made a big sandcastle:



**An improvised flag**

Later on, Rachel started her running away to the water act. I went to the water's edge with her and Daniel and then Dad took a turn, but he came back worn out, saying he couldn't control or catch Rachel. Alan then went with them for a long time and they came back wet and satisfied. The tide had been steadily going out all this time, it looked as if it had gone out for miles.

After playing with the sand for a little while longer, we started to pack our sandy things away at around 13:00, put them in the car and then walked to the nearby Jersey Potteries. The plan was to go into the restaurant for some lunch, but there was such a slow-moving queue that it was gone 14:00 before we had our food. By that time, Rachel had become so tired that she had one of her crying sessions about drinking her own full to the brim orange drink. In a certain amount of desperation, Alan and I ate our rolls quickly and walked her around in her pushchair until she mercifully fell asleep.

There was then a slight contretemps when Alan asked for a pair of matching candle holders for me and the girl brought loads of them out onto the counter in order to find a match. None of them were identical, of course, as they're all hand painted. I wanted very badly to run away...

After spending a surprising amount of money between us in the Potteries, we returned to the car and ate some fruit. Alan then drove us along a coastal road, stopping at La Rocque, which was appropriately named, because the beach there was nothing but bleak, desolate rocks that seemed to stretch for miles on end. We drove on to Le Hocq, where we stopped for an ice cream and for Alan to take some scenic photos. It was still very rugged there and I thought it somewhat resembled the surface of the moon.

We were unpleasantly caught up in the rush hour driving back to *Gros Puits*, but made it in time for Daniel and Rachel to have a bath to wash away all the sand and also for a pre-dinner drink in the Lounge Bar. Dinner was vegetable soup, roast chicken and finally raspberry flan, all very good. It started to rain while we were eating, although it was just a drizzle.

The rain stopped, so we walked again to Howard Davis Park, where yesterday's band (from Etten-Leur) was playing once again. Unfortunately, Rachel seemed overtired, so Alan took her back to *Gros Puits*. When I got back at 21:00, she was still very tired and unfortunately did a wee on the carpet in our room. I sponged it out very well, though, so nobody would ever know...

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> August**

A disturbed night, as I got up twice to sneak down the corridor to the toilet, had a nightmare about a car accident and then woke up early. However, it was a thumbs-up for the cooked breakfast. It had been raining in the night and was cloudy, so we decided to walk to Fort Regent, an indoor entertainment place. I'm not normally one for such attractions but we had Daniel and Rachel to consider.

Fort Regent, as the name suggests, is actually a castle built at the time when Jersey thought Napoleon would invade. He never did, of course, although the castle was used during the German Occupation. We had walked all the way up to the castle, as opposed to taking a cable car and my first impression of Fort Regent as an entertainment place was that it was very modern and noisy.

It was mid-morning and Mum bought us coffee and orange (but not together). However, as soon as she sat down with us at the table, a band began to play and it was so loud that we could hardly bear it. I had to take Rachel to the toilet and when we came back, everyone had left the table, even though Rachel and I hadn't finished our drinks. I was beginning not to rate Fort Regent...

Keeping positive, we wandered around and looked at an aquarium and a shell museum, where Alan bought me a fossil. I love fossils, for the simple reason that they're so old. Then Dad, Alan, Daniel and I went on a simulated trip inside a bathysphere. I couldn't help thinking how contrived it was and it was very hot cooped up inside with all the other bodies, so I was glad when it was over.

At lunch time we went in search of the advertised snack bar, which consisted only of three grotty machines, one of which was out of order. My opinion of Fort Regent was sliding further and further down the scale, even when we managed to extricate crisps, Mars bars and drinks from the so-called 'snack-bar'.

After consuming these less than healthy options, we went to see a film called *The Jersey Experience* in a small cinema. It lasted for half an hour or so and was excellent, depicting the history of Jersey interlaced with modern Jersey. The presentation, narration and sound effects were very good indeed. Rachel was also good, sitting on me for most of the time and reaching over to Alan and Mum on either side to play with their ears. My Fort Regent opinion rose slightly.

After that, we went to peruse the Charles Dickens Waxworks, featuring scenes from his most well-known books. Alan was annoyed that he didn't have his flashgun, but he still enjoyed looking at everything, or do I mean everyone?

We then went outside to a kind of fairground, with a Big Wheel and some imaginative roundabouts. Daniel didn't want a ride on anything and Alan told me later when it was too late that he would have liked to go on the Big Wheel. From there, we wandered into a rose garden and looked at the views down below, before our ice cream of the day, some quite expensive Cornettos at 40p each.

At 16:00, Mum and Dad took Daniel to see an hour-long production of *Peter Pan*, but Alan and I didn't fancy trying to keep Rachel still for an hour. We walked around with her outside on the ramparts for a while, then inside a souvenir shop and postal exhibition, before watching the final part of *Peter Pan* from the gallery. It seemed to be a really good, professional production. Mum, Dad and Daniel certainly enjoyed it and Mum bought Daniel a *Peter Pan* book.

It was unfortunately rush hour again as we headed back amongst all the traffic. We had to stop for a short rest in Howard Davis Park, because poor Daniel was exhausted, although Dad went on to *Gros Puits*. The rest of us managed to get back in time for a pre-dinner drink – Alan had brandy for a change.

Dinner was chicken vol-au-vent, ham salad and lemon meringue, the same as last Wednesday. Rachel is now familiar with the place and therefore more inclined to be her 2-year-old self, which is lovely much of the time, but sometimes a bit of a noisy nuisance. Daniel, on the other hand, seems to enjoy stacking up our dirty dishes for Debbie the waitress, who he appears to like.

Alan has been counting the remains of our money and wondering how we'll survive to the end of the month. As we always do, of course, although we'll be broke but happy because of the holiday. Dad, Alan and Rachel went into St Helier by car this evening to buy what they wanted for duty-free goods. Alan bought three bottles of wine for us, plus some tobacco and cigarettes for people at work. I understand that Dad bought rather more bottle-wise...

#### **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August**

Daniel was rather endearingly awake at 07:30, reading his *Peter Pan* book. The weather seemed less windy today as we ate the usual enormous breakfast. We then walked into St Helier to do a little shopping. Although we were in Jersey, Mum and I ended up buying Guernsey jumpers, Alan a Breton jumper and Dad a tie. When Alan tried on his red and dark blue striped jumper, the lady who was serving us said all he needed was a beret and a bag of onions!

It was nearing 12 noon and the day of the famous Battle of Flowers parade, which Mum had a hankering to see. Lots of people seemed to be heading towards the area where the parade would be taking place, so we joined them, stopping en route at a hotel for coffee and sandwiches.

On rejoining the throng, we decided to look for a place to stand or sit to watch the procession. As we hadn't booked or paid for a seat, we had to take what we could find, which wasn't a great deal. However, we did manage to find a place high up on a steep, grassy bank and sat down to wait. It was 13:00 and the first event was Majorettes at 13:45 with the main procession starting at 14:30.

We ate some fruit we'd brought with us to pass the time and a short while later managed to buy some ice creams from a passing salesman. Understandably, Rachel had become tired and therefore very crabby, so Alan kindly took her for a walk in her pushchair. Several more people started to arrive where we were and gradually some of them began to stand on the path in front of the grassy slope, so lots of us already there were unable to see. A couple of men where we were kept shouting at the people in front to sit down so that we could all see, but it was unfortunately a losing battle (of flowers or otherwise).

The pushchair ploy had worked and Alan returned with a sleeping Rachel, soon after which the floats at last began to appear. This was rather a pity for Rachel, because I'm sure she would have loved to see the Mr Men float. In fact, all the floats looked really colourful and intricately constructed from what we could ascertain from a distance, but it was most frustrating trying to see over people's heads and becoming stiff and numb from sitting down so long.



**Without people's heads in the way**



**Mr Men**

At about 15:30, an hour after the main procession had started, Alan said he was going to go because there was a huge crush of people on the path and he didn't want to get caught up in it when they all dispersed. I was getting desperate for a toilet, so I went along with him and Dad accompanied us also.

That left only Mum and Daniel sitting on the slope, trying their hardest to see it all. It really was such a shame that Mum hadn't booked seats for her, Dad and Daniel, as she was the one who'd really wanted to see it all. We live and learn.

Unsurprisingly, St Helier was strangely quiet as we walked back to *Gros Puits*. Mum and Daniel returned not all that long after us, sooner than I'd expected. It was quite a relief, as I'd been worried about them finding their way back.

Later on, when we were having what would be our last pre-dinner drink in the Lounge Bar, people were saying how wonderful the Battle of Flowers floats had been. Had they had the foresight to book their seats, I wonder? We found out that the winning floats would be on show on the sea front for the evening, so it seemed opportune to go and have a closer look.

Our final dinner at *Big Wells* was pâté (yuck) with salad and toast, lamb and then raspberry flan, washed down with a bottle of sparkling wine that Dad had ordered. It seemed that he was determined to make this almost celebratory holiday for him one to remember, which I understood completely.

Just before 20:00, Alan drove us into St Helier and eventually managed to find a parking space not too far from the action. We walked along to where the floats were on display and although there were still crowds of people, we could see the floats close up at last. Some consisted of paper flowers, some were part real flowers and paper flowers and some were all real flowers or grasses. Daniel liked the one of ET best, but I liked the butterfly ones (there were two).

Rachel wanted to use the potty in amongst all the crowd, which was somewhat embarrassing, but thankfully it had become dark by then as we were walking along. Suddenly a firework lit the sky and we realised there was going to be a firework display. Some of the fireworks were the best I've ever seen, they lit up the sky with many different colours. Some of them were very loud and Rachel became so alarmed that we had to take her out of her pushchair and cuddle her.

The display only lasted for about 15 minutes, so we made our way back to the car through the madding crowd – and some of the crowd did seem to be a bit mad. It was mayhem crossing the road and we became separated from Mum, Dad and Daniel, but managed to make it safely back. It was 22:30 by the time Daniel and Rachel had settled down, but it had been an exciting evening that lessened the disappointment of the day. Our final night in Jersey!

### ***Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August***

We all seemed to sleep fairly well and assembled in the dining room for our last big Jersey breakfast. Dad gave Rachel £5 to give to Debbie the waitress, which she did (poor Daniel was too shy, just like his mother). After that, we finished packing and left our cases in the Lounge Bar until later in the day.

Alan drove us to St Helier and we did some final shopping. We were able to buy photos of the Battle of Flowers (which pleased Mum) and Daniel had his last fling in a book shop. At midday we had sandwiches and coffee in a corner café before catching the ferry to Elizabeth Island. There is a causeway, but it was covered with sea water when we crossed. All the pathways were covered with a sandy, shingle mixture that kept finding its way into my sandals.

We looked around at some of the places the Germans had used during the Occupation, then walked across to the Hermitage. This was a small room built around a cave high on a rock where St Helier had lived for 15 years as a hermit:



**The Hermitage**

Rachel was running around on the rocks, so we walked back to the main castle and climbed a lot of steps to see a tableau of historic figures with a commentary. There was a fair bit to see outside as well, as we walked around in warm Jersey air. Daniel and Rachel seemed particularly to enjoy sitting on the cannons:



**A little lady's cannon...**



**...and a stonking big boy's cannon**

My legs were too worn out to climb more steps to see the Governor's Residence, but Alan went armed with his camera. After he'd finished, we found the café, only to discover there was no ice cream left – horrors! Mum, Dad, Daniel and Rachel consoled themselves with some enormous sticky buns that Alan and I helped to finish off, we had a drink and then we walked slowly back through the grounds and out along the now sea-clear causeway.

It was time to return to *Gros Puits* for the final time to collect our cases. Rachel was asleep, which was most fortunate, as we could hardly move in the car for luggage. We drove down Fountain Lane for the last time along the familiar road. Mum and Daniel were saying goodbye to everything, it was quite sad!

We arrived at the airport, where Rachel promptly woke up. After checking in our cases, Alan and Dad took the hire car back to Falles Garage, while the rest of us sat in the departure lounge. We unfortunately had rather a lot of waiting to do, as it was only 17:00 and our flight was 19:00. My adrenaline was rising...

The time was taken up by eating an ice cream, several visits to the toilet, eating crisps and walking around. Mum bought us some mints for the flight, as on the flight out here our ears had felt uncomfortable. It was very hot sitting where we were, but our flight was finally announced at 18:35 and we went to have our bags checked. This time a man checked the bag I was carrying containing the yellow potty – but he was a very nice man, especially to Daniel.

It was a slight surprise walking to Gate 10 and seeing the size of the aircraft. Inside, there was just one pilot, no toilet and only 21 seats. Help! Fortunately, before my fears aptly took off, the plane itself took off and flew at a height of 2,000 feet to Guernsey, which took about ten minutes. I noticed there were lots of greenhouses there, presumably for Guernsey tomatoes?

One person got off the plane and a few people boarded. Rachel had been sitting in an empty seat and although a man boarding at Guernsey should have sat in it, the stewardess let her stay there and put the man in the seat beside the pilot!

We took off again at 19:15 and although the mints helped a little, I still hated every minute in the air. Rachel, on the other hand, seemed to be enjoying the experience, until she bit her tongue and cried loudly. The stewardess came along with a bowl and wet wipes, presumably thinking Rachel must have been sick.

We approached the coast and despite the sudden bumpiness, it was fascinating to look down and see the contours of the land. It was still a much better feeling descending the steps from the plane after landing at Roborough Airport, though. We only had to wait a few minutes for our luggage before walking through Customs. We weren't searched, but Rachel's pushchair broke as Alan opened it – how fortunate that it broke at the end of the holiday and not the beginning!

The air felt cooler on the mainland, as we left the airport and drove home. I did enjoy our holiday in Jersey so much, with its lovely beaches and more rugged landscapes, its parks and flowers, its visitor attractions and its fascinating history – it seems amazing that only 40 years ago, the island had been occupied territory. There's obviously so much more of Jersey that we never saw at all, so hopefully one day we'll be able to explore the island further.

