

The Disabled Rambler

The Newsletter of the Disabled Ramblers

April 2005

A charitable company : Registered Charity No. 1103508

Mike receives his MBE from the Queen



Photograph by courtesy of BCA Films Ltd

‘On Wednesday 9th February, Mike Bruton went to Buckingham Palace to receive his MBE from the Queen. It was a wonderful day, albeit it all seemed a little unreal! Recipients were allowed to park in the Palace’s Inner Courtyard, before being ushered inside the main Grand Ballroom section of the original 18th Century structure. This meant negotiating a few ramps, and a wheelchair platform lift, followed by a rather ancient service lift to go right up to the Picture Gallery adjacent to the Ballroom. Approximately 100 awards were given out, and each recipient was spoken to in turn by the Queen, who asked about the Disabled Ramblers and also about my time with the Disabled Drivers’ Association. Afterwards with my small family group we pushed the boat out a very long way with a superb lunch at the Savoy Hotel! Still, this was a once in a life-time event!’

Is this your copy of ‘Disabled Rambler’ ?

If not, why not join the Disabled Ramblers for an annual subscription of only £8, and receive your own quarterly newsletter, together with all the other benefits of membership.

Existing members - why not try to introduce a friend as a new member ?

From Our Roving Reporter (The intrepid Rosie Norris)

Once it had been agreed that John and I would accompany two of our friends to Seville for a 5-day city break in October 2004, the travel agent faxed our preferred hotel, Las Casas de la Juderia, with an A4 list of requirements (as you do) - level access to hotel, ditto to bedroom, dining room, swimming pool, gardens etc, etc. After a short delay – request had to be translated first – all was fine, the ground floor disabled room was booked and we were off! Well no, actually, first there was an hour and a half delay (the ONLY one that morning) at Gatwick North Terminal. We find this Terminal infinitely superior to the South in its help for disabled passengers (and better for shopping lay-out and other facilities etc), loading us first (with very sympathetic staff), getting wheelchair in the hold, collecting from plane on return and so on. (We still haven’t quite cracked getting from car park to airport check-in and from customs back to car park, but that’s another story).

When the taxi driver stopped in the square nearest to our hotel it was nowhere to be seen (could he possibly have got it wrong ?) The roads in the old quarter of Seville are so narrow they are nearly all one-way and there are very few parking spaces. Drivers just have to stop in the road and hold up the traffic whilst passengers get out, and despite waiting for me, John, wheelchair and luggage the waiting cars were remarkably sanguine – no hooting at all ! Our hotel was discovered hidden away at the end of a passageway leading off the square and although remarkably central the hotel was never noisy. The Reception staff were brilliant and they even have a ground floor loo there which is big enough to take a manual wheelchair (and shut the door as well). There is one step down to Reception. The hotel comprises 7 houses which used to belong to Jewish families; it is possible to walk through the connecting passageways between these buildings with the manual wheelchair and eventually you end up on another passageway which leads out to the main concourse.



(Continued on Page 7)

Letter from Mike Bruton, Chairman of the Disabled Ramblers

Dear Friends,

By now, all our members will have received an invitation to renew their membership for the current year. In addition they will have received details of our finalised plan of organised rambles for the coming season (April to September). We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible on one or more of these rambles.

This year sees yet another innovation. We have long recognised the need for loan scooters to be available for members without their own, and we also acknowledge difficulties finding adequate toilet facilities at the rambles, particularly for ladies. A very innovative project, spearheaded by our Vice-Chairman, Robin Helby, and 50% funded by the Countryside Agency, will serve to ameliorate both these problems for the coming rambling season. Beamer Ltd, the manufacturer of the 'Tramper' scooter have kindly given us a donation towards the purchase of two of these buggies from new, and we have acquired a covered trailer which will carry both machines to rambles together with an onboard 'porta-potti' toilet. This has kindly been donated by Thetfords UK Ltd. Robin Helby can provide personal delivery to site for many rambles, but we need other volunteers with large cars or MPV's also able to tow this trailer ensemble when required. Any volunteers please?

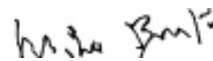
In addition to providing information and organising rambles, we remain a campaigning organisation. Currently, the issue of providing guidance on countryside access is not adequately covered when taken from existing sources. We are awaiting new guidelines on disabled access due to be published this Spring by the Countryside Agency. This should inform Land Managers, Rights of Way Officers and path users what is reasonable to expect and help clarify the present very varied and woolly thinking on this important subject! However, our Executive Committee felt we should put forward our own recommendations to inform the debate on Standards and Guidelines. An article in this current Newsletter sets out our position and aspirations. Do tell us your views.

Lastly, our AGM is fixed for April 27th in Maidenhead,

from 12noon until 3pm. Our guest speaker is Jos Joslin who will talk about her work both managing national trails and in access consultancy. Do come if you can!

Please email to: mike@thebrute.freeserve.co.uk, or write to: The Disabled Ramblers, 14 Belmont Park Road, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 6HT on any subject. You can also phone Mike Bruton on: 01628 621414.

Signed



Mike Bruton
Chairman,
The Disabled Ramblers
Charity no: 1103508
Web-site: www.disabledramblers.co.uk

Request from a Lancashire Lass

As the 2005 season gets under way and we dust off our wheels are there any local folk who would be interested in a day ramble, somewhere in the Lancashire hills? I am a veteran of the Ramblers and miss all that wind and rain in my face and long for the buzz I got from hill walking. A brief foray on to Rivington Pike this weekend makes me think it would be an excellent meet for fledging Disabled Ramblers. Rivington Barn has a teashop and the usual requirements – ample parking and disabled loos. I also have one or two venues up my sleeve that might provide other interesting and refreshing days out but as a new comer to the Disabled Rambling scene I welcome any advice from old hands. The new programme looks both exciting and a little bit daunting for me living North of the Thelwall Viaduct. (The river Mersey to those not so familiar with the M6). I would be interested in discussing the logistics of getting to these meets, life has got a lot more complicated since I have needed to bring my scooter along. Anyone interested in forming a Lancashire group or just having a meet can get in touch with me by email :- etomlinson@madasafish.com

A Lancashire Lass

Holiday in Dentdale

In August I went to Cumbria with my Trampler for a much-needed holiday. I originally had in mind the idea of looking at several long-distance trails that pass through Dentdale, where I was staying. I had enjoyed my trip along the South Downs Way last September with Robin so much that I thought it might be fun to investigate some Northern equivalents.

I did actually do a sponsored ride along part of the Pennine Bridleway (and raised £800 for the MS Society) but other than that the trip was not as I expected. Rather than moving on each night to different (and sadly often inaccessible) accommodation, as I would have done on a trail, I discovered how enjoyable and relaxing it was to be based in one place and to venture out from there.

Dentdale is a remote and rather beautiful backwater of the Yorkshire Dales. There was no shortage of exciting steep tracks and quiet country lanes to explore, and I averaged about 18 miles a day. (Apart from two days of torrential rain, when I explored second-hand bookshops and the like instead.)

Where, you may wonder, did I stay? Believe it or not, in a youth hostel! Hostels are starting to get their act together around disabled facilities, and Dentdale Youth Hostel is a fine example of this, despite being a listed building. I had a wheelchair accessible bedroom to myself, plus no problems using the kitchen, bathroom and other ground floor rooms. And all for £11 per night!



Sue Watson on her trek across the Yorkshire Dales

The only thing I needed help with was driving my Trampler along a bumpy track to an out building for re-charging overnight, and then getting myself back again, minus Trampler. But Carrick, a big kid of a Youth Hostel warden, was more than happy to help with this!

If you have never been to Dentdale, I would definitely recommend a visit!

Ever thought of a 3-wheeled wheelchair ?

I have always enjoyed the countryside, regardless of the weather. Although I must admit that if it is cold or wet then it is good to come back to a warm house and a hot cup of tea. That was life as I knew it. 10 years ago everything changed following a rapid descent on to solid rock.

Getting back into the countryside was not my first thought when I came round ! However when I did venture back into the big wide world with a different mode of transport, wheels instead of legs, I discovered there was nowhere to go. I had realised that mountains were unlikely, but that was not the end of it. Even gentle rambles seemed impossible.

Then I discovered The Disabled Ramblers. Not only could I go out rambling again but the group is also very active in increasing the number of routes that are open to those who use wheels instead of feet. I use a manual wheelchair and by definition, "I am self propelled". It can be a challenge pushing my chair over grass. I make the going easier by attaching a third wheel to the front of the wheel chair. This has the advantage of making the chair easier to push over rough ground, as the two small wheels at the front are no longer in contact with the earth. It also makes the chair more stable and gives me some braking power, apart from using my hands.

The downside is that the total weight to be pushed is increased by about 10 kilograms. As I enjoy rambling on my own, as well as in company, it helps that the third wheel has been designed so that it can be attached by the wheelchair user. It is possible for a battery to be added to the arrangement. Whilst this increases power it is not an ideal solution because as there is no weight over the front wheel, it does not grip as well as would be hoped.

It depends upon the path surface likely to be encountered on the ramble as to whether I attach the extra wheel or not. Whatever I choose, I can thoroughly recommend getting out into the country - it certainly gets me noticed. It would seem that the sight of an adult travelling in a tricycle is a bit of a novelty. If nothing else it amuses my grandchildren!

Maria Davies

Disabled Ramblers Website

Due to lack of use - and some abuse by non-members, the Forum feature of the Disabled Ramblers website will be discontinued with immediate effect. Please contact the editor if there are other features that you would like to see introduced on the new website.

BETTER COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS: STRUGGLES LIE AHEAD ?

Ever since our emergence as a special interest section of the Disabled Drivers' Association early in the 1990's and our rapid subsequent evolution into the Disabled Ramblers, the now fully independent Charity of today, we have been aware of the many problems facing disabled visitors to the Countryside. Away from the roads, we have found obstacles of many kinds barring our use of most of the national network of footpaths and trails.

The barriers have been, and still are:

Man-made barriers, including:

1. the much loved stile, very common indeed, and totally blocking further progress;
2. 'kissing' gates, gradually becoming more popular, but generally impassable to wheeled mobility vehicles, including scooters and buggies;
3. steps and stairs, less common as deliberate constructions, but often arising due to erosion.

Surface features, often caused by poor maintenance:

1. paths that are too narrow, often worn into a single rut, by walkers;
2. paths that are too wet, with very soft sections caused by poor water drainage;
3. very stony or rocky in nature;
4. tracks badly rutted by vehicle use, sometimes agricultural vehicles or 4 x 4 cars.

Lack of Information:

1. disabled visitors are often put off by lack of any knowledge of what is accessible and where
2. published guidebooks and pamphlets generally ignore the needs of disabled visitors

Over the past 10 years, these problems have gradually become more and more recognised, and thought has been given to the issue of guidance to land managers and even the establishment of path standards. An early attempt was made by the Countryside Commission which issued a guidance paper as early as 1994.

Soon after this work, BT sponsored a large scale project, called BT Countryside for All, containing recommended standards and guidance for managers and users. This was based upon careful analysis of most factors along paths and trails affecting disabled users of widely differing abilities. The latest version of this guidance, with some new sections added can be obtained at a cost on DVD from the Fieldfare Trust, based in Sheffield.

Unfortunately, experience gained by Disabled Ramblers like ourselves, who rely on mobility vehicles, is that both the Countryside Commission and the BT sponsored work referred to above, are inadequate and make little or no allowance for our needs, and, indeed, design work based narrowly on either document can produce results that actually make our access even more limited than before !

Problems not addressed realistically include the following:

1. design of so-called accessible barriers make no allowance for mobility vehicles (except wheelchairs) - this is worrying as it may give false comfort to managers fitting new 'kissing' gates (CC 1994 doc);
2. the BT guidance sets too high standards, achievable only at high costs;
3. the BT guidance does not allow realistically for hills, gradient over 1 in 20;
4. the BT guidance specifies very high quality surfaces, wide and totally free from cross-slopes.

In summary, we are concerned over excessively high specifications at high costs, inadequate thoughts on gates and, finally, no addressing of basic information needs. The effect, in reality, focuses land managers towards making only tiny provision, often involving just a few hundred metres at most, of level going, surfaced to a very high standard, and no allowance for any wider, more basic access for the better equipped.

More recently, the Countryside Agency (successor to the Countryside Commission) has come up with promising new documented guidance, extending the BT work to less developed sites, potentially involving miles of trail and path adequate for our needs. They have produced the following reports:

1. 'Sense and Accessibility', which introduces a Zone concept, recognising less developed places;
2. 'Paths without Prejudice', which suggests a way to describe routes and provide better information.

Both these documents can be obtained from the Countryside Agency, at their publications department, Wetherby, Yorkshire. These documents offer a way forward, but need further development.

Finally, with the advent of the CROW Act, 2000, which addresses access to open countryside and a new requirement for Rights of Way Improvement Plans to take into account the needs of visually and mobility impaired people, the Countryside Agency prepared new draft guidelines which took into account the two previous reports issued by them. Unfortunately this guidance proved controversial, and although being fully championed by the Disabled Ramblers was not acceptable to a number of bodies, particularly those close to the BT Standards, and the Disability Rights Commission.

A fresh look has been taken at this thorny issue, and the Countryside Agency is committed to produce a revised document this coming Spring. This is expected to be less prescriptive than the previous, unpublished version.

In these circumstances, the Disabled Ramblers have decided to state their own position. We are recommending an approach evolved from all the work so far done. We favour adding up to 2 new zones to complement and extend the BT Guidance. These zones recognise the wider needs of Disabled Ramblers (specially mobility disabled people who rely on wheelchairs, scooters etc) and if followed could open substantial lengths of path and trail for our use.

Our views are summarised in the table.

	ZONE A	ZONE B	ZONE C
Type of Ramble:	‘Easy’	‘Moderate’	‘Challenging’
Barriers	Max step 15mm No impassable obstructions allowed	Max step 40mm No impassable obstructions allowed	Max step 100mm No impassable obstructions allowed
Surfaces	Hard/firm no stones > 10mm	Possibly modified no stones >40mm occasional roots, potholes, short ruts (<10m) up to 40mm	Possibly modified no stones >100mm occasional roots, potholes, short ruts (<10m) up to 100mm
Widths	Min 1000mm	Min 815mm unless rough/grass then min 1-1.2m	Min 815mm unless rough/grass then min 1m
Width restrictions	Min 815mm up to 300mm length, and 915mm to 1600mm	Must be accessible by all buggies (inc corners)	Must be accessible by all buggies (inc corners)
Surface Breaks	No more than 12mm across line of path	No more than 40mm across line of path	No more than 100mm across line of path
Gradients	Max 1:10	Max 1:8 (if steeper, hard surface needed - distance < 50m)	Max 1:6 (if steeper, hard surface needed - distance < 100m)
Height rise (Between level landings)	Max 950mm	No limit - accept natural hills	No limit - accept natural hills
Cross slopes	Max 1:35	Max 1:25 where possible - if steeper, hard surface needed	Max 1:15 where possible - if steeper, hard surface needed
Clear tunnel	Min 1000mm wide, 2100mm high	Min 1000mm wide, 2100mm high	Min 1000mm wide, 2100mm high
Passing places	Min every 150m	Not formalised, but passing opportunities every 150m	Not formalised, but passing opportunities every 150m
Rest areas (seats/perches)	Min 300m	At least one per 1000m	Not formalised

Experience has shown the Disabled Ramblers that the types of countryside experience desired by disabled people vary a great deal, exactly as with members of the able bodied community. We see ourselves as sharing very much in common with the Ramblers Association members, who like us prefer reasonable walks along country paths, rather than just visiting attractions in the countryside. This means that our access needs differ from those whose main need is just to get to the attractions: we feel we need to point to these differences and make sure our needs are understood and as far as possible catered for!

We are convinced that the Zone concept described above represents our needs very well, with the conditions corresponding to Zone A corresponding broadly to our 'easy' rambles, Zone B corresponding to our 'moderate' category and Zone C closely following our 'challenging' category.

We need to promote an approach based on these Zone principles... are you, readers, in agreement with this and willing to promote these ideas in your area?

Mike Bruton

5 March 2005



'Easy' Path on the Severn Estuary at Caldicot



'Moderate' Path at Carsington Reservoir. Path gradient 1:10



'Challenging' Route in the Brecon Beacons

2005 Photo Competition

The Disabled Ramblers are offering prizes for the best photographs taken by members (or their partners/carers) during the 2005 summer programme of rambles.

All photographs must include at least one Disabled Rambler and their buggy or wheelchair, and winners must agree to the publication of their photograph in future editions of the newsletter and on the Disabled Ramblers website.

A 1st and a runner-up prize will be offered in each of the following categories:

- Most Amusing
- Best landscape shot
- Best shot of an individual

Photographs can be submitted either as a digital image, a photo slide or a printed photograph. Please provide a short description of where the photograph was taken with all entries

Accommodation for the New Forest Ramble

Accessible accommodation can sometimes be difficult to find. Here is some helpful information from Mary Lewis, one of our members living in the New Forest.

"I see in this year's programme that a ramble is being held in the New Forest. Well, just book up and come and have a taste of this beautiful area I live in. If you need somewhere to stay or camp visit this web site www.newforest.demon.co.uk where everything you want to know can be found, or even come and stay at one of my accessible cottages on www.ourbench.co.uk and I will help you plan your visit if you would like me to."

If members feel that they can recommend accessible accommodation that they have personally used, please pass on a brief account to committee member Kate Wass, who is compiling a list that we hope to make available on the Disabled Ramblers website in the near future. Kate can be contacted at kate@upec.co.uk

Disabled Ramblers Contact Details

Chairman:	Mike Bruton	chairman@disabledramblers.co.uk	Tel: 01628 621414
Secretary:	Rosie Norris	secretary@disabledramblers.co.uk	Tel: 01372 272536
Treasurer:	Maria Davies	treasurer@disabledramblers.co.uk	Tel: 0121 3087057
Membership Secretary:	Robin Helby	membership@disabledramblers.co.uk	Tel: 01483 893159
Newsletter Editor:	Alan Edwards	editor@disabledramblers.co.uk	Tel: 01886 880145

(Continued from Page 1)

Everything in the hotel is attractive, interior and exterior courtyards in every nook and cranny, designed in the Moorish style with fountains, a central outdoor dining courtyard filled with cannas, geraniums, palms, hibiscus and a (new) lift accessing the roof swimming pool (empty in October). It's possible to negotiate the paths on the roof with a manual wheelchair and the roof is an ideal place to sunbathe and look at the superb views across to the Cathedral.

The view from our room overlooked one of the hotel's connecting passageways – pretty, but slightly lacking in privacy – however, no chance to change room as all were occupied (so our friends had to stay in another hotel nearby) and anyway these rooms generally had access problems. As accommodation was quite limited for disabled people we comprehensively completed the hotel questionnaire on our room – but who's to say it was translated, let alone read? The bathroom came up trumps with a level shower area and stool, plus good lighting: on the down side there was no proper make-up area (yes, I know, not a problem for some!) and the hair dryer was placed on the wall directly above the loo! The beds were comfortable, but so high off the ground as to be ideal for a pole vaulter – strange choice for a disabled room – but happily neither of us fell out during our stay.



Rosie enjoying the sunshine in the Hotel Courtyard, Seville

The first night we met our friends and walked to the square; a few beers and a couple of glasses of sherry later we strolled to a nearby restaurant and dined, as

they say, under the stars. Aside from our second night when we inadvertently made a duff choice, the lunches and cakes etc at tea time were terrific as were the dinners, two at our hotel and one at The Rio Grande, overlooking the Guadalquivir River (which runs through Seville) and the spot-lit Golden Tower. Breakfasts at the hotel were amazing. The breakfast room was reached via a most beautiful courtyard with fountain: the room itself was a delight to the eye, being a perfect cube with all the walls covered in paintings of orange trees (just like the ones in the courtyard of the Cathedral). A generous selection of hot and cold food was laid out in an adjoining room, with constant Buck's Fizz, smoked salmon and scrambled eggs... The only problem was accessing this heaven - the entrance was via two huge wooden ornamented doors, the lower part of which was covered in brass. One of these doors had a small in-set door for pedestrians, through which no wheelchair will go! Opening these doors was a bit like a short play, involving anything from one to four actors – first an ancient sounding bolt was drawn back, then the key had to be found, once retrieved and unlocked, another bolt, wooden this time, was released by a stalwart waiter and hallelujah, the doors silently opened. By the end of the fifth day we were all getting into the swing of things – as the doors looked about 400 years old it was a testament to the original carpenter's skill that nothing broke down – but can't help but feel the waiters must have cheered when we went home!!

Our first port of call the next day was our friends' hotel, the Dona Maria, right by the Cathedral. A lovely position, but no good for wheelchairs, five steps to front door and the public loo, although accessible by lift, had too narrow a doorway for a manual wheelchair (the width of mine is 24 inches). And a passing managerial type member of staff said (guess what) the hotel was a listed building and so they couldn't knock a few inches off the door threshold....

Over the next few days we took a drive in a horse drawn carriage (wonderful), visited the Cathedral (largest Gothic church in Europe apparently – and it was big as well as beautiful) and its Bell Tower, saw Pontius Pilate's House, the Alcazar and its gardens, the Bull Ring, the Museum of Fine Art and walked everywhere we could in the Old Quarter and by the river (and towards Seville's Expo '92). Access to all these sights is possible: we did have to walk right round the Cathedral to find a level entrance (and that took some time given it's the largest Gothic...etc) and it is also just about possible to take an electric chair up the Bell Tower. Inside there is a gentle ramp which continues to the top, giving several small views of the outside on the way up: however at the very end to reach the

viewpoint there are 15 – 20 steps: so probably better to avoid that one and let someone else take a photo of the view and look at that afterwards instead ! At Pilate's House there is level access to the ground floor and the gardens (the house in particular is superb but the gardens are pretty good too). The first floor is only accessed by a staircase. We couldn't find a disabled loo there (but it was raining and no-one was hanging around for us to ask them); the ladies' loo has two steps down and one up. The Alcazar and gardens are magnificent. There are steps but it is possible to walk around them and find some level access elsewhere. The Alcazar has (at least) two disabled loos, but we found the Spanish were quite secretive about them ! There weren't any obvious signs on walls etc and asking was slightly problematic given our lack of Spanish. When, undeterred, we found the right person to ask, they invariably gave me a most quizzical look, as though I was quite able to jump out of the chair, but was being lazy that day ! There was quite a bit of searching for more of those keys (nb must find out word for key in Spanish before next time – or take dictionary). The Museum of Fine Art took the biscuit though. I first tried the ladies' loo and discovered if I went in no-one else could get in, and, worse, those unfortunate enough to already be inside the loo before I entered, couldn't get out until I left. Reception at the entrance, where we were next sent, said, "Go to Room No 10 and ask the warden there for (guess what) that (blessed) key"! The warden in Room 10 tried to do a runner, but then said he was going to find someone else who knew the way (and, yes, had a key)! Eventually another warden did turn up, happily with key, and we followed him on fast route march before Geronimo!, we found the appropriate door and the key ceremony was enacted. Needless to say all these loos were in perfect condition, hardly having been touched by human hand, as it were – not that I'm complaining!

Access in the Museum is good, with a lift to all floors, and the beautiful Moorish style gardens are also level. The Bull Ring has one step to get in, but after that is level. The tour starts by showing the Bull Ring in all its glory – the others climbed several steps to view this, so another occasion to view photo later. Everything else was level, the stables, the chapel for the bull-fighters, the operating room and the Museum – a very interesting experience, especially as I was let in for nothing.

Generally speaking Seville is only just waking up to disability access: individual restaurants, bars etc we visited did not have disabled loos, dropped kerbs are few and far between and are usually for cars to drive over to their garages. Pavement widths varied from (say) two foot wide to nothing at all, with kerb height anything

from four to eight inches (and usually the latter). Negotiating them can take some time, not wonderful, especially when it's tipping down with rain. Under those circumstances we just ran down the road (which at least stopped the cars from splashing us (as they were behind us), but did nothing to prevent wet clothes and underwear (yes, just like disabled rambling)!



The Gardens of the Alcazar

Seville is however reasonably level, although it does have cobbled streets, especially in the Old Quarter, which had to be traversed when pavements disappeared. We didn't clap eyes on another person in a wheelchair during our entire visit and I certainly never saw a scooter or buggy. A local centre (Ortopedia Buhaira, Avenida Buhaira 25), hires out a range of electric wheelchairs with a rate of 100 euros as deposit and then 50 euros per day. I did try out one of their chairs but felt extremely insecure. As I also could not see it successfully scaling those kerbs, we decided against it. Essentially a manual wheelchair plus a strong pusher gets to most places, but it's not much of a holiday for the pusher (frequent stops for beers were, we found, the best solution). Despite difficulties, we both loved Seville and would like to return to see more of those elegant buildings and glorious gardens.

At the check-in for our return flight we chose the wrong queue (how do we do it ?) and out of what seemed like 100 people we were the last to be seen. By this time only single seats dotted around the plane were available – John requested an upgrade and lo! and behold we flew home first class!! A fitting end for a great holiday!