

Summer Outings

VISIT TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM

◆ ◆ ◆ Report by Lesley Gordon ◆ ◆ ◆

ON 25TH AUGUST 2005, as our party set off by coach for its trip to London, it occurred to me with some embarrassment, that I had managed to reach my advanced years (including 3 spent in London) without once setting foot in that august establishment, The British Museum. Soundings taken during the day revealed that I was not alone. No problem, we were about to put matters right and attempt to fill this yawning gap in our education.

On arrival a small difficulty delayed our start. The second entrance by the coach park at the back of the museum was closed, due to recent terrorist activities, necessitating a swift trek to the main entrance at the front (it's a large building!) There, we were treated to a view of the African garden created in the courtyard by the ground force team.



*The Seven Doors to
Heaven*



The African Garden

Inside, and at leisure to wander at will, those of us new to the building were spoilt for choice. So much to see, so little time, it was, after all, only a morning visit. We were too early for the new exhibition of Persian Treasures and other things, like the Sutton Hoo medieval burial finds, will have to wait another day. Time enough though, to view the Elgin Marbles, the Rosetta stone, the famous Round Reading Room and the recently covered Central Court, the latter a miracle of modern engineering and superb use of space. It now houses refreshment areas and museum shops, whilst preserving the feeling of great space and giving easy access to the rest of the

*Cow and Herdsman from the south frieze of the Parthenon.
The Elgin collection*



museum. The Elgin Marbles, housed in a huge rectangular room, had attracted a large number of foreign visitors, many of them young Greek women with children and grandparents, there to see their lost heritage, presumably. Many of the beautifully carved stones removed from the Parthenon, in part for their own safety, were quite badly damaged.

Above: Horsemen, below: part of the east Frieze of the Parthenon. The Elgin Collection



The Rosetta stone, carved (in ancient Egypt) with the same priestly decree in three different languages, including hieroglyphics, then not understood, and a Greek administrative language which had led, after 14 centuries, to the gradual deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics. The stone was found by Napoleon's army in 1799, passed to the English by way of treaty, and was eventually given to the museum by George III.

After lunch the coach moved to the West End, where some chose to visit the Theatre Museum at Covent Garden, with others continuing to Apsley House, No.1 London, the home of the Duke of Wellington.

The Theatre Museum was, as might have been expected, dim and crowded (with exhibits rather than visitors). It is a rambling site with long subterranean corridors showing the history of every type of theatre and performance. The advent of film and video means that modern stars and theatrical dynasties fare better than those of yesteryear, who only have programmes or reviews to recall their dramatic achievements.

Then it was outside into Covent Garden and its dependable offering of retail therapy, refreshments and live performance. A contented group made its way home singing, as usual, the praises of our organiser, Joan Liggett.

SAINT OMER WITH (ST) JOAN

◆ ◆ ◆ Report by Jack Woolford ◆ ◆ ◆

SATURDAY SEPT 24TH SEPTEMBER added yet another to Social Secretary Joan Liggett's sequence of triumphal trips. The magic began when, instead of driving into the centre of St Omer, we zigzagged round endless narrow country lanes to end up at what looked like a rural dead-end. In fact,

the restaurant/pub and parked coaches concealed a narrow stretch of water lined with rowing boats equipped with both oars and outboard engines. As it was by now raining heavily, our prospective boat trip looked dangerous as well as grim: but shortly, after enquiries at the

restaurant/pub, Joan led us along a long narrow path to the strangest ever pleasure cruiser. It was long and thin with only one seat on each side of the gangway, but it was roofed with canvas and went out, backwards.... into a paradise of watered greenery. The recorded commentary explained that the area had been a massive marshy swamp, which medieval generations of monks and 17th

