

Edinburgh Snapshots

It is the last weekend in January 2018. We are in Edinburgh to celebrate Margaret's big birthday. Our base is a comfortable room in the Principal hotel on Charlotte Square, across from Bute House, the Residence of the First Minister, next door to the Georgian House. Disappointingly, this interesting NTS property is closed until Easter. Conveniently, we travelled car free from Bearsden to Haymarket station on the direct train which plays its route, somewhat erratically, from Milngavie to Edinburgh. Happily, our train is on time and does not appear to 'skip through stations without stopping', a recent, frequent and highly disruptive tactic used by Abellio Scotrail to compensate for tighter operating schedules. It is 'formed of three carriages' which surprises me although, to be fair, it is not busy and we change sides several times to escape the bright sunshine before settling to our iPad and smartphone, just like most around us. What did we do with ourselves BC - before connectivity?

An aside: Since Abellio took charge several years ago we have been plagued by poor service: delayed, cancelled and 'stop-skipping' trains galore. The Milngavie station is reported to be the worst served in Scotland which is untrue as trains often run in delay from Milngavie and skip past us irate fist-wavers at Hillfoot and Bearsden stations. In recent days I was told by a ticket collector (an Abellio employee), the problem lies with Transport Scotland and Network Rail. These two silent and faceless bodies have 'forced' Abellio to run 28 trains per hour through Partick Junction rather than the previous 24 at peak times. Already almost impossible to achieve, it is the *slowness of passengers embarking/d disembarking* (!!!) which causes delays and disrupts this new very tight schedule.

This seems to be a 'catch 28' situation in which more trains satisfy less people.

Of course, as my ticket collector friend emphasises with passion, Abellio being Dutch, is a convenient scapegoat but the terms of their contract with Transport Scotland means they cannot explain this dire situation to the public in general. Abellio has been gagged!

Naw! Naw! It wisnae us! A big Transport Scotland guy done it and ran away!

From Haymarket we elect to walk to Charlotte Square: our hotel room may not be free until 3.00 pm. Google Maps predict 8 minutes on foot. Try 15 minutes, Dr Google! On our way we pass the headquarters of The People's Postcode Lottery (TPPL) and are surprised and incensed to find it located in on Charlotte Square, (one of Edinburgh's most expensive office location), in a very posh building directly across the square from Bute House. Why not locate this admin centre in a much cheaper-to-run out-of-town business park? But don't worry TPPL is not alone in this. I soon find out on Google that Friends of the Earth (FOTE) Scotland are major beneficiaries of the TPPL. And hey, guess what? FOTE Scotland are based only a two-minute walk from TPPL in nearby Rose Street, also an expensive office location. So, be careful where you give your charity donations, folks.

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At just before 1.00 pm we find *The Principal on Charlotte Square*. From the rather ordinary entrance, no grander than Bute House and certainly not as flashy as TPPL, it looks like a small boutique hotel but it has been cleverly and tastefully extended to the rear to provide 199 rooms. We booked our pre-paid two-night package online and at reception we are initially 'missing from the system'. Surprisingly, when 'retrieved' from the ether, we now must provide all our details from scratch, such is the apparent anonymity of the online booking app we used.

Our room is perfect, as it should be. This is an expensive place to stay, chosen for its location. **We are here to eat**, with two meals booked at nice restaurants nearby for tonight and tomorrow.

To tide us over until our evening meal we are hoping for a simple (nibble-ly) snack. Margaret is irritated by a lack of information about the in-house Garden Room where breakfast and all-day dining is on offer. The operation of the in-room TV info system defeats us. A card in our room offers an all-inclusive breakfast for (only) £14.95 per person available from 7.00 to 10.30 am. No bacon butties here.

After debate, we decide to explore other options. It is cool, breezy but dry. On George Street we find a Costa coffee shop and enjoy a familiar self-service snack, rather predictable and boring. Perhaps we should have risked the expense and excitement of the Garden Room, we muse, questioning our judgement after the event, as we frequently do, ever doubting our previous choices were the best.

As we daunter along George Street, Margaret pops into various ladies' clothing shops and I watch a crowd of protesters complaining about Turkey's elections and its prime minister. Their rabble-rousing leader with his rather pathetic hand-held megaphone and accented English makes it hard to know what the protest is about but I glean from the amateurish placards the new regime in Turkey is no better than its previous incumbent. This rings a familiar bell.

While this is happening and directly outside Costa, a middle-aged chubby man falls to the ground having what seems like an epileptic fit. At once he is surrounded by about ten policemen and women, the protesters forgotten. I wonder briefly, cynically, if this is a ruse, a diversion to distract the police and allow the protesters to do something drastic, spectacular. My imagination here was too vivid. The protestors carry on chanting as before, seemingly unaware they are now only lightly supervised.

With shopping behind us and no purchases made, we wander down to the Scottish National Gallery at The Mound, off Princes Street. This is a favourite haunt, where we check out the *Turner in Winter* exhibition. Simply put, Joseph Mallord William Turner was a genius! I see many people with smartphones taking pictures and expect them to be

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admonished but no, they are ignored by gallery staff. I am tempted to take a photo of *Lake Como looking to Lecco* for my neighbour Elaine, who has a holiday flat in Lecco.

We spend the next hour or so trailing through various galleries admiring and criticising the works on display. Entry is free but, perhaps perversely, I decided to withhold the suggested donation of £5 per person per visit and resolve instead to give our £10 to the Art Gallery and Museums Service in Glasgow. In Edinburgh most art galleries and museums are centrally funded by the Scottish Government while in Glasgow no such subsidies exist and yet Glasgow Council continues to provide free entry to all such establishments for which they are responsible.

Back in the breeze, we wander along Princes Street and dip in and out of shops. Like Glasgow, there are many homeless people begging, often directly outside the most expensive shops. As always, Edinburgh is busy with tourists and among those who throng the pavements, I note with disgust the high proportion of both young and old who are street-smoking and vaping. If their object in so doing is to keep themselves thin, most have failed. Thank goodness nowadays we can escape them indoors!

By late afternoon we are heading back to our hotel room to prepare for our evening extravaganza. As we pass through the Garden Room to the lift, we see it is full to near capacity. We sneak a look at the menu and mutter, aghast at the high prices. However, it is an attractive space and from their attire we assume the diners and drinkers are guests, perhaps a captive market new arrivees who may be unwilling to forage in the many all-day-dining bar-restaurants only a few minutes away on George Street.

Our online booking at *The Honours* by Martin Wishart is for 6.45 pm. We no longer like to eat later if we have the choice. Described as 'modern Scottish bistro', *The Honours* is **not** Martin's Michelin-starred restaurant. We eat and drink well, the service is excellent and our fellow diners provide adequate interest and talking points to entertain us through our slow, two-hour culinary odyssey.

We return through a stiff breeze hurling spits of rain. Everywhere we look, eateries and bars are stuffed to the gunnels with happy revellers. **Ah!** It dawns on me, this is the end-of-the-month **payday** Friday coupled with the end of January's fasting/slimming purgatory - time for a blow-out! In retirement these are notions which fade into the dim recesses.

Comfy in our king-sized twin beds, we settle to read our books and I am soon fast asleep.

Margaret suffers a restless night eventually alleviated by a Gaviscon tablet.

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Next morning I am up early, my tummy grumbling as it has been for several days and eventually I seek relief ensconced upon a throne of china. Margaret dozes on over the next few hours I tap away at a story on my iPad, a first version of a ditty called *The Song Contest*, a story for our grandsons: Matthew (7), Ethan (4) and Drew (2). Check the website, it should be up soon.

When Margaret floats up from the arms of *Hypnos* (Greek god of sleep, Roman counterpart *Somnus* - from which we have 'somnambulant'), we think about breakfast. Neither of us want a full breakfast, just something simple, light. After debate I call reception, explain what we want to be advised we have two options: a tea/coffee and pastry or the full breakfast at £14.95. We balk at this and venture forth outdoors. It is 8.45 am. Five-minutes-walk away, the menu outside *Brown's* restaurant seems to offer what we want but although we can see staff moving around, it is still closed. The gusty wind carries the threat of rain and, unwilling to look further, we scurry across to the *Alexander Graham Bell*, a Wetherspoon pub-eatery which we can see has a mere handful of customers already 'doing breakfast'.

We place our order and pay at the bar: for me, scrambled egg on toast: for Margaret, MOMA porridge (sort of posh way to serve a healthy-eating, sugar-free serving of oats) with plus a round of toast with marmalade. With two mugs of tea this costs £7.50. We get quick service from a cheery if over-tired young girl with a local accent. The food is a very acceptable in quality and quantity. Perhaps I should record here: most waiters, waitresses and those we encountered serving in shops, etc, are not actually local although were always offered a version of English. I think many were Spanish with a significant sprinkling of Irish voices in the mix.

Near to us in Wetherspoons, perched alone on a high stool at a raised table was a small, thin man with a moustache, wearing spectacles in thick, horn-rimmed frames. Around sixty years old, he gave the impression of being ex-military. He was gutting a pile of tabloid newspapers (unread?) to extract the racing sections. At this stage of his breakfast experience he had a mug of tea or coffee but soon his full Scottish breakfast arrived. Checking the menu this is priced at £3.79 with the option of adding two slices of (heart-attack) black pudding for an extra 75 pence. Brown sauce was duly added and as he ate, he studied form, carefully folding the racing columns, placing them adjacent to each other to compare betting odds and tipsters' predictions.

As we left, I saw his plate had been cleared away and he had a pint to hand, half drunk. It looked like lager. It was 9.35 am. I thought Scottish Law prevented the sale of alcohol prior to 10.00 am but perhaps it can be supplied if one orders food?

(FYI: From a friend who works for a Wetherspoons' *Esquire House* in Glasgow, I later learn she is not permitted to serve alcohol prior to 11.00 am on any day. However, she

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has been told certain city-centre pub eateries (in Glasgow) have a special license to serve alcohol earlier.)

Back in our hotel room we are toileted, tooth-brushed and ready for the fray. After some debate, we decided to visit the *Mary King's Close Experience*. This tour has been on our list for years. We look to book online but this is only available for Sunday onwards and we decided to risk it - today is the day! So off we go! Yippee! It is spitting rain and on George Street we hail a cab to get us up the steep hill to High Street and the Royal Mile. Our driver is a local man, mid-thirties and amid his stream-of-consciousness outpouring was the gem:

"Ah've been daein' this fur years 'n it stull surprsizzes me hoo busy the toon is wi tourists, eh? Ah mean, it's aa' year roond, like, eh?"

And, as we looked out, we see the pavements bustling with peoples from many lands. Edinburgh seems to be thriving as a result of THE BREXIT EFFECT which has reduced the value of our pounds against a host of other currencies. The British are now the poor people of Europe, it seems, a fact obvious when we travel to The Canaries for our winter break or to anywhere else outside Britain. Even here in Scotland and other UK locations, prices for the things we like to do have crept up steadily over the last few years, far ahead of inflation which is anchored by low interest rates keeping mortgage costs low, the same low interest rates which are eroding our savings. Moan, moan, moan.

We enter the booking office for the *Mary King's Close Experience* just before eleven o'clock but the earliest we can get a tour is 1.00 pm. Now booked, we set off for a walk. It is gusty but dry and cold. Every other shop is selling 'cashmere': scarves, jumpers, hats, mitts, gloves, you name it. Can this 'cashmere' be the real thing? Why cashmere, which is surely not a Scottish product produced at these volumes?

From the lower esplanade of Edinburgh Castle, we are looking down on a scene of a minor urban drama. A red Astra is about to be uplifted and impounded for parking in the wrong place at the wrong time or for outstaying its pre-paid welcome. A small, slim Parking Warden parks his scooter and takes final photos of the car, back and front and both sides (in case of claims for bumps and scratches, I wonder), then a wider-angle view of the car in location and finally a shot of the parking rules notice on the adjacent lighting standard. Only then does the pick-up lorry swing into action. The process is slow, deliberate, careful and takes about ten minutes. Later, Google advises the charge will be £180 to reclaim the car. Be warned, Edinburgh is at war with cars.

As we watch I am asked in broken English to take a smartphone photo of a cheery group of tourists - are they Spanish, Dutch or Belgian? With a quick smile we are forgotten as they chatter off up the esplanade to visit the Castle. We return to our vigil and are distracted by the jumble of buildings below us. We pick out the Grassmarket, a

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favourite place of ours but decide we do not have the time or energy to trek down there and back again. We are struck anew by how hilly Edinburgh is! And, for the first time I notice how *dreadful* the once-lauded, award-winning 'modern' edifices from the 1960s to 1980s now seem, jarring against the more sedate and interesting, older, sooty structures of Auld Reekie, buildings with their crowfoot gables and myriad chimney pots.

As we wander slowly back down the Royal Mile past the Camera Obscura, we skirt the obligatory piper in full highland dress with plaid and busby. He is plying his trade on a repeat loop, a short repertoire of old favourites - *O Flower of Scotland* and its ilk. His collecting box well filled. Nearby a homeless man blocks the pavement, forcing pedestrians onto the road. Smoking, he is supping from a take-away coffee while sitting on a heap of clothing including a newish sleeping bag. By his side he has his double-sided cardboard notice proclaiming his plight in both directions. This tells us he is not a junky nor is he an alcoholic. He is just down on his luck, unable to work for health reasons. Like the piper, homeless man also has a prime pitch and is showered with coins and notes, swiftly and furtively removed to leave his well-worn coffee cup empty. I watch from afar: most of his donors are young, well-dressed women in their thirties, almost certainly tourists, I judge. What impression will they take home with them? Will they remember the homeless man ahead of the piper?

Britain, we are told repeatedly in newscasts, is the fifth-largest economy in the world; in recent months the UK has recorded the least number seeking employment since 2003 while there are record numbers of homeless people on our streets. Meanwhile our politicians find best sport in attacking each other.

We head slowly back towards Mary King's Close and find the tiniest imaginable Café Nero where we enjoy our standard fare of two flat whites and a shared *pain aux raisin*, already holding back on food intake to be sure we enjoy our meal later.

We arrive early for our tour. As we wait and watch, the 12.45 pm group depart. From their voices they are all tourists, no British accents. We also learn there are 56 downward and 38 upward steps to negotiate. It is our tour now and our guide Adam bedecked in what purports to be the outfit of a middle-class Edinburgh man from the 1600s. Like the other two guides on duty, Adam is English. Perhaps a local true Edinburgh dialect of our earlier cabbie "widnae git ower the message, like, eh?"

We descend into the subterranean world of what was at one time a higgledy-piggledy assortment of tenements which contained hundreds of families. The history of the area stretches back into the mists of time. As Edinburgh grew over the last five hundred years, so did the sprawl of tenements divided by narrow streets ('closes') rising steeply from Market Street adjacent Waverley Rail Station to High Street on the Royal Mile. These tenements towered to a height of 5 storeys above High Street, some making 11 storeys in total. In the 1800s the top five stories were removed and what is now the City

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Chambers was constructed above the remaining tenements which were used as foundations. Google says there were over 80 such closes leading off the Royal Mile but I seem to remember our guide Adam tell us there were 128.

Here endeth the lesson on the *Mary King's Close Experience*. Our verdict- excellent! Either go and see it for yourself (highly recommended) or try Dr Google for a better description than my dim recall affords.

From the exit we descend by Warriston's Close to Market Street and then, by stages, make our way to another favourite haunt - The National Portrait Gallery on Queen Street. Here we first visit the café for 'two teas, please' (no food) then visit the BP Portrait Award Winners Exhibition and marvel at the variety and talent of the painters. As I meander the displays I spot *My Father Studying Form*, almost a replica of the scene in the *Alexander Graham Bell* of the elderly chap sitting at a kitchen table with his newspaper open at the tipsters' columns, plotting his big win. Life is imitating Art!

This year's winner is called *Breech!* which depicts an ordinary woman (in her forties?) sitting on a kitchen chair, partially covered by a grubby dressing gown, a child feeding at her enormous breasts. Later, I go online to look at past winners and discover nakedness in its various guises is a recurring theme. However, what persists from this visit is the number of near-photographic images which were displayed in this final selection. It wells up so I must ask, why would you wish to create a "photo-painting"? Surely it is better to interpret one's subject rather than slavishly try to reproduce what a camera and photoshop can usually do better? Clearly from what we saw I am a lone voice crying from my wilderness. What do I know of painting? I know what I like and Turner hits the bulls-eye every time.

Outside, with another £10 banked for Glasgow Art Galleries and Museums, we are off again, along Queen Street through the violent gusts, heading for the sanctuary of our hotel room. On approaching the entrance to *The Principal on Charlotte Square*, we negotiate our way through a wedding party glammed and kilted. They are outside on the street smoking and talking on their mobile phones. The Garden Room is full to overflowing. We retreat upstairs into our oasis of calm and silence to prepare for round two of our foodie weekend.

Our abstinence over the day is quite commendable.

We set out in good time for *Fishers in the City* on Thistle Street, a fifteen-minute walk away, we think. We have dined at the original Fishers' in Leith and are confident we will find a menu we will enjoy. On that famous occasion with our friends Alan and Jean, we were joined at an adjacent table by another party of four which included HRH Princess Anne. She is smaller and thinner than I had imagined and she spoke very quietly, spoiling our fun. Being very nose-y, we would have loved to know what she was saying! Her lady

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companion was a bit OTT and exploded with glee to learn from the waiter it was possible to 'order specials from the chalkboard', not just from the written menu! Make of that what you will.

Perhaps Google Maps is wrong (again), perhaps we were very hungry and walked quicker, perhaps the wind was at our backs? We arrive early and are immediately led to a small table set for two. The restaurant is newer, fancier than its sister in Leith but the menu is excellent and the staff friendly and helpful. As we are certainly eating fish, we will drink white wine and Margaret chooses an excellent Stellenbosch Sauvignon Blanc at a mere £25.

This meal experience is not so languid and as we approach the temptation course (dessert) Margaret is feeling 'rushed'. We linger, watching those nearby, as we like to do. The mixture seems more 'local' than at *The Honours* with fewer couples and mixed parties and more groups of two and three women in their late thirties and above. As dessert arrives we are joined at the adjacent table by two glammed women (in their mid-forties?).

The 'seater/greeter', who delivers them to us is a young man of handsome appearance in his early thirties (a modern-day Robbie Burns, look-alike). He is also the barman and probably the assistant manager. He is a local and quips his way around the room adding a light-hearted vibe. A square peg in a square hole. Although there are at least three other 'tables for two' available, our new companions are seated beside a thin column which restricts the nearest lady's movement - her left shoulder is almost touching it. Although I cannot fully see her face, her body language and grating tone of her voice tell me she is tense, unhappy. The other lady is smiling and trying her best to be jolly but I sense recent friction between them. The smiling lady moves her smartphone and knocks over a table lamp which crashes to the ground. The lamp bulb expires. Ms Tense tuts and the Ms Smiley, reddens with embarrassment. Two waitresses fuss and the jolly barman comes back and offers a mock scolding as he fits a replacement bulb. The ladies have brought drinks from the bar with them and now order further drinks. Soon they have three glasses each, a bottle of wine in a cooler, a bottle of fizzy water, a table lamp and a full set of condiments (dispensers for salt and pepper and bottles for olive oil, balsamic and vinegar). There is almost no space left for food. It is then I see that *their* two-person table is much smaller than ours. I check the other two-person tables and conclude our nearby ladies have been given what would normally be a table for a single diner. Were they 'walk-ins' who had not booked ahead?

After a while the food order waitress arrives to take their order and a lengthy cross-table chat begins between the Ms Tense and Ms Smiley. Ms Tense simply cannot make up her mind and as the waitress answers a slow dribble of queries, I see her throw her eyes upwards in despair and catch a hint of disdain flash across her previously genuinely pleasant face. Eventually, decisions are made and in quick order food arrives

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but where to put it on the crowded table? Why does the waitress not ameliorate the problem by removing the unnecessary table lamp and providing a bucket-stand or 'hinger-on' clip to attach to the table to carry the white wine bottle, as used at other tables? Then a worm of explanation takes hold in my mind: Ms Tense is being punished, probably for a previous misdemeanour. Maybe she is a disliked regular? Maybe she gives miserable tips? Maybe she will complain about the food, cause a scene?

We will never know. After three courses, Margaret is "Stuffit Foo", she says, adding in her defence, "At least I didn't eat too much of the lovely bread. I'm sure that's what did for me last night". Although we have yet 45 minutes to linger until our table occupancy 'expires' at 8.45 pm, it is time to pay and leave. As we do so, I see the room is now nearly full.

May I note for the record our meal at Fishers' was just over half the cost of our meal at dear Martin's place, Fisher's is definitely more my kind of place - they do a great haddock and chips!

Back on the streets at just after eight o'clock, the revellers swirl around us. As we glimpse into the restaurant and bars on Thistle Street we see they are full. This is peak eating time. Around us taxis stop and drop or whisk away those too under-dressed to thole the wind chill of January's snell blast on foot. For them the night is young: for us, a quiet and comfy bedroom beckons.

As we past the George Street eateries they too are busy, entrances blocked with security staff and doorway smokers sharing their nicotine addiction and idle gossip in equal measure. From their phones the internet is abuzz with their cacophony. Back at *The Principal*, we must again run the gauntlet of a phalanx of smokers from the wedding party. Several are 'rolling their own' and the air is redolent with a burnt grass smell which I assume is marijuana. I have read estimates which suggest that up to 30% of the adult population in the UK are regular users but this surely cannot be true!

Safely indoors, the Garden Room is in full swing, with kids in high numbers scattered amongst the customers. Tattoos abound. This is a party in progress. We travel up in the lift with an older man, a perfect gentleman who insists we must exit ahead of him. Like us he too seems amazed by what he has just witnessed. May I repeat, this is an expensive hotel. May I repeat, tattoos abounded.

I enjoy a quiet, peaceful night and again rise before seven o'clock to shower then visit my iPad to tap again. M sleeps on until after nine o'clock then informs she was awake several times during the night but Gaviscon was not required. So, now we know: eating too much nice bread is the root cause of her acid reflux problem. Glancing out from our rain-speckled window over the chimneyed roofs of adjacent Rose Street, we spy a tiny

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fragment of the west end of Edinburgh Castle. There, you see, we have a Castle-view room to boast about!

After a very short debate, we decided we will try the Garden Room for breakfast. After all we had a 'cheap' night at Fishers' and can afford to treat ourselves! In deference to my still grumbly tummy I resolve to opt only for a coffee, no food.

At the 'control desk' we wait in a short queue, explain to the young Spaniard we are guests but are 'not breakfast inclusive'. Minutes later we are seated at a table for two on a 'pay as you go' basis. Immediately we are attended by a tiny, round pixy of a girl with a cheery smile and very definitely Embra accent. Margaret opts for two friend eggs and bacon with toast and tea and I re-state, "a coffee only, please, no food". My mind over matter behaviour is so unusual I find myself wondering if I actually spoke these words.

Margaret visits the open buffet and returns with a small plate of water melon. The cooked food arrives quickly together with the tea and coffee. Everything is beautifully cooked, well presented and skilfully served. This is a slick, well-run operation and as soon as satisfied diners leave, tables are cleared and recycled.

As the clock passes ten, another wave of customers descend on the Garden Room before the end of breakfast service. Some, bizarrely dressed in Bermuda shorts and tees seem to be dressed for a beach holiday on Ibiza or in Benidorm. Tattoos abound, now more obviously revealed. Some are loud, cheerful, calling across to each other in knowing, post-wedding party banter. Hugs and handshakes are shared and a few sloppy kisses deposited on kids playing with iPads and smartphones. One man in his forties pulls down the neck of his tee-shirt to more fully reveal his multi-coloured design to his table companions. In my deafness, the conversations cannot be captured but I do glimpse images flashed on phones and tablets which are from the previous evening, I assume. The party, I guess, is not yet over but we are replenished and it is time for us to go.

We move to pay and discover the bill is £18.45 or £20 cash with tip. To be fair, the food was good, ambiance enjoyable and the entertainment from people watching excellent. I glance back at our table, already recycled, freshly laid cutlery and napkins.

Booted and Spurred we head for home at 10.30 am. We are not inclined to wander wet and windy streets when most of the shops and attractions are closed. At reception I thank the v. v. tall young lady with the v. short dress and beautiful long legs for a lovely room and a delightful stay at the Principal on Charlotte Square. She smiles benignly, indulgently, while thinking, he could do with losing a few kilos. Is she Dutch or German? She orders a cab which appears at once, as if by magic. Perhaps the cabbie is hoping for a sight of those fine long legs?

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At Haymarket, (nice refurb Scotrail/Network Rail!), we decided to let the 11.0am train heading to Queen Street whiz past in favour of the 11.14am to Helensburgh. This train we discover is also 'formed of three carriages' and is almost full. At Partick we dismount and the train immediately following is for Milngavie. We are home by 1.30pm and shopping at Tesco in Milngavie ten minutes later. Normality has been reclaimed.

In summary: we have greatly enjoyed a successful celebratory weekend. We love Edinburgh as a place to visit and recommend it to all our overseas visitors. A word of warning - do not ever try to take your car into Edinburgh. Remember what happened to the red Astra! This could be you. If you must drive, use the Park and Ride at Ingliston near Edinburgh Airport and either take a bus or, better still, take the tram to the centre of Edinburgh.