

# NAOMI 'S LAKE COMO DIARY

Spiritual Holiday with Tony Stockwell

Lake Como

I taly

July 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

Before you start reading please remember this is a diary, so it's only a record of the way I saw the Spiritual Holiday to Lake Como. Also, before you start reading, you'd better know that it's very, very long. Trying to make it more interesting, I've included pictures as well as details. Most of the pictures are mine but several were taken by others. If I'm introducing you to someone I've included their names with any pictures. The only other times there will be chat attached to a picture is if it was taken by someone else and I want to give them the credit for their work.

Hopefully all my chat won't be too boring. Most of it is written as if I'm talking to my daughter Barbi. Texties (text messages to the uninitiated) went backwards and forwards whilst I was away, so I've included them too. You'll probably realise what they are as you get to them, but just in case you don't, they're in brown. My texties to her are on the left of the page. Her replies are on the right. Whilst I was getting this saga together I thought of loads of other stuff I wanted to say, both to you, my reader, and to Barbi, so I've coloured that blue. Both extra chat and texties are in *italics* to make both of the above stand out more and in case this gets printed on a printer without coloured ink.

A lot of this was written from memory after I got home to England so I'm not sure if I've got the dates right for everything. Looking back now, there was so much packed into those 7 days that it's a bit like a dream and I find it hard to believe it all happened. But I know it did.

When finished writing, I emailed everyone on the course whose e-address I've got, to ask if they'd like to read it. I also sent it to the group's Facebook page. If you are one of the friends I made in that group please remember that it's all my point of view and my (very bad) memory. In the first version I said I'd welcome comments and corrections and this is still true. One of people I met on the course has been kind enough to remind me of stuff I'd forgotten about and add a few comments of her own. I've added these (in *italics* again) into the text at the point where (I hope) they make the most sense. To identify that they're not my chat and to give credit to the person who sent them, I've put that person's name in front of their comments and coloured the paragraph red.

My fellow students have only been mentioned when they interacted with me in some way. I've asked all of them if they're ok being included both by name and with their pictures. A few didn't want to be mentioned at all. Obviously I have respected their wishes. I've removed all pictures of them but for the sake of continuity, have changed their names so that I didn't have to omit parts of what happened to me.

If, after all the above, you still want to carry on reading this, you may not know some or all of the people I'll be talking about, for example members of my family other than Barbi, friends and others. So on the next page there's a list of who they are and how I know them if it's not explained in the text. (Obviously Barbi's not on this list 'cos I've just told you who she is and what you'll be reading is my chat to her.)

#### PEOPLE MENTIONED AT DIFFERENT PLACES IN MY DIARIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ME

When I was a kid, from babyhood through to my teens, I lived in London. All the Victorian houses in the street were divided into several flats with different families living on each floor. Our house was number 81 in the street. I'm only telling you that in case you wonder how come so many different people in the list below lived in the same house. When the houses on our side of the road were pulled down, we were all rehoused in different blocks of flats on the council estate which replaced the houses.

##### Living relatives & friends

- Mara - my elder daughter
- Katherine - Barbi's elder daughter
- Becki - Katherine's younger sister
- Nigel - my husband
- Jenny - my friend of over 40 years
- James - Mara's husband
- Richie - Barbi's husband

##### Dead relatives, friends & acquaintances

- Booba (Yiddish for grandmother) - my mum
- Zaida (Yiddish for grandfather) - my dad
- Loraine - 14 months older than me. Lived with her parents and younger sister Susan on the ground floor of number 81
- Mrs Halker - Lived at number 81 on the floor above me and my parents
- Mr and Mrs Lynch - Lived in the basement flat next door to number 81
- Miss Ewart - My anti-Semitic head-mistress at Carlyle Grammar School (CGS)
- Mrs. Cox - The English teacher at (CGS)
- Oscar (Grandad to my daughters) - my ex-husband's father
- Tilly - (Grandma to my daughters) my ex-husband's mother
- Caroline - a close friend who I met in 1982

## NAOMI 'S LAKE COMO DIARY

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Leaving Nigel at Berko station I felt tearful. Whether it was because I remembered that horrible time years ago when Nigel and I first got together, (Do you remember when I had to go to Newcastle for work and he refused to come onto the platform with me? I ended up in the wrong Newcastle at midnight and had to catch the milk train the next morning to get back down the country to where I was supposed to be teaching) or whether it was trepidation at making such a long journey on my own, coupled with excitement 'cos I don't know what'll happen on the Spiritual Development course I'm about to go on. Maybe it's a combination of both. I don't know.



Nigel hoiked my heavy but beautiful, new, vibrantly colourful case onto the train for me, saying he knew I wouldn't be scared to ask for help with it as I got on and off the trains. It was just as well he did 'cos that gave me the extra confidence I needed to ask for help at Clapham Junction from a guy who was also getting off the train.

On the platform I saw other travellers going up several flights of stairs. Aaah. The moment of panic must've shown on my face 'cos someone kindly pointed to a sign for a lift. There was a girl with a large case already in the lift. I found out she was also going to Gatwick and was even on the same flight. Before we got to the upper level we'd decided to combine forces to help each other find the right platform and the right train. A guy also in the lift heard us talking. He knew where we needed to go and showed us where to get the lift to take us down to the right platform.

When our train arrived, my friend from the lift had her own case to worry about. So I asked a man standing near to the edge of the platform if he'd be kind enough to help me with mine. (It always pays to ask nicely.) After lifting my case onto the train, he parked it in the luggage rack, then sat in the window side of the double seat opposite it. So I sat beside him.

At Gatwick Airport station, the guy got up and helped me off the train. I assumed he was getting off too but no. I was wrong. He was just a really nice guy and after he'd put my case on the platform, he went back to his seat. [Not many of those to the pound.](#)

11.50 am - Gatwick Airport

Been trying 2 phone u from the airport but got no answer.  
My departure gate opens at 12.15 & I'll b going through asap  
so if you get this msg b4 then & want 2 chat b4 I have 2  
turn my phone off, call me. XXX Mummy XXX

7.50 pm

Tried to phone but must have already switched phone off.  
Just wanted to make sure u arrived ok. Have a lovely time.

Love u xxxxx

1.05pm - On the plane waiting to take off from Gatwick Airport

When I arrived at the airport I 'phoned Nigel and Mara, then tried to call you, Katherine and Becki. Getting no answer from any of you I sent texts. I managed to speak to Jenny, which was just as well as she'd forgotten that I was going to Italy today and had been planning to 'phone me in the afternoon.

My departure gate was scheduled to open at quarter past twelve and I planned to go through asap but it didn't work out that way. It was nearly that time when I realised I hadn't put on my flight socks. But Sod's Law, I couldn't find them in my bag. Panicked that I forgot to pack them so had mad dash to Boots. Managed to find socks, had frantic bolt to the Ladies to put them on, then a fast scoot to the gate. Of course by then there was a huge queue as EasyJet is a first come first seated airline. I had to wait ages to get on the plane then just take whatever seat was left.

I looked round for the girl I'd met at Clapham Junction, but there was no chance to identify anyone in the scrum to get on the plane.

2.06pm - Somewhere between England and Italy

I'm on Easyjet flight EZY 5293 bound for Milan Malpensa. Our scheduled departure time was 1.05 pm but we didn't actually take off till about 20 past one. I'd brought some food with me and although I'd munched my way through some of it whilst waiting at Gatwick, I'd saved some to eat on the way.

8.58pm (Italian time - one hour ahead of UK)

Not much happened on the flight, but when we landed in Italy I was again at the end of a huge queue, this time to get through customs. At the luggage claiming area it wasn't a problem identifying my lovely new colourful suitcase on the carousel. The biggest problem was hoiking it off!

A Shearings rep was waiting in the main lobby. I was the first of her group to come through. She ticked me off her list, gave me a letter from the hotel and asked me to stand on one side till the others in her party arrived. Whilst waiting I overheard another woman on her own talking to a couple of other travellers. When she said she was on Tony Stockwell's course I piped up that I was on it too. She's Maggie and is from Edinburgh. We chatted whilst waiting for the others and of course sat together on the coach to the hotel.



Maggie

One of the reasons I was nervous about the trip was because I didn't know what to expect when I got to Italy. I hadn't been told what we'd be doing, who to see when we got to the hotel or what to expect on the course. So I was surprised when Maggie showed me a letter she'd received with her flight tickets. It was from Tony's assistant Vivienne and had obviously been sent to people who'd booked onto the course. In the letter Vivienne introduced herself and said she'd be at the hotel to meet us all. She also said that if we wanted a reading with Tony whilst on the course, we should contact the office asap. Maggie had. Obviously I hadn't 'cos I hadn't got the letter. I hoped I'd be able to book one anyway.

Little did I know it but that was just the leading edge of a nightmare. It gathered force when the coach from the airport waited outside the hotel for ages before we could get off. Not used to the heat, it was stifling. We were told not to worry about our cases they'd be brought into the reception area for us so we joined the queue to check in to the hotel. After I'd been told my room number and given my key, I looked around for my case. It's not as if it would have been difficult to spot. No, it wasn't there. It was still on the pavement outside at the coach drop off point so I had to go back outside again to get it.

The entrance to the hotel was up a few steps and as I've already said, my case was really heavy. A lift to the side of the steps gave me hope. I don't really like this type of lift as other than a small rectangular peep-hole window in the door, there's no view of the outside world once the doors have closed. But needs must and all that. Guess what. This lift didn't go up. It only went down to the basement level. Looking out as the door opened, I saw even more steps than the outside ones leading up to the lobby, so I went back up to my start point.

With no-one to ask for help, I lugged my case up the steps. At least once it was on the flat I could use the wizzy wheels to pull it past the reception desk and along the corridor further inside the hotel to which I'd been directed when I was first given my room key.

My room was on the third floor and thank heaven there was another lift beside the wide, carpeted stairs. This lift was one of those elderly looking, glass sided ones with a warning that no more than four people should travel in it at the same time. It did occur to me that unless they were really small people, you'd have had a job to fit more than four in, especially if they all had suitcases. There was only me and my case, but I'd have used the lift anyway rather than struggle with stairs again.

When I finally got up to my room I was horrified to see its size, or rather lack of it. Considering I'd paid an extra £100 Single Person's Supplement, I'd at least expected a room large enough to justify the extra cost. After all, isn't that supplement to make up for the fact that otherwise the hotel would have been able to house two people in the same room?

My case is the sort that opens into two halves. Now I had to find where I could put it so that I'd be able to get it open. The whole exercise was made more difficult as the floor space was so small. I knew that once the case was open I'd need a space double its size to get to the contents. Other than the bed, I couldn't see anywhere large enough. But I didn't want to put the case there as I'd want to sleep on that later and the case was too heavy to keep lifting up and down.

Looking round the room I saw to the left of the door, a spindly legged table against the wall with some space below it. I put the case halfway under the table then crouched down in the tiny space. After unsuccessfully trying several positions, I ended up lying on my back with my legs scrunched up, to try open the combination lock that had come with my suitcase. Nigel had set this to 911 as I wouldn't forget my birthday on the 9<sup>th</sup> November. But would you believe, it - yes, given the luck I'd been having you probably would - to add insult to injury, it wouldn't open. I moved it off the numbers then tried 911 again but the lock still wouldn't open. I tried 119, then thinking that perhaps it had been set upside down I tried 116 and 611 but still had no joy.

When I realised I wouldn't be able to open my case, I forgot about the horror of the room size and was more concerned with being able to get to my clothes. The only thing I could think of was that the lock would have to be cut off. So down I went to reception to ask if someone could come up to my room with cutters to do the deed. In spite of having waited for ages to be signed in, I'd been near the front of the queue so had been one of the first people on the coach to be allocated a room. Standing at the far end of the desk was a guy who didn't seem to be doing anything. Assuming he was probably a hotel porter, I asked if he could help me with the lock. He told me he had to help the receptionists sign in the other guests from our coach and that I should go back to my room and that he'd be there in five or ten minutes.

There was absolutely no point in my sitting on my own to wait in that confined space they called a room. There was nothing I could do there. I couldn't unpack could I?! So I opted to wait beside the reception desk. Whilst standing there I couldn't help overhearing conversations between the hotel staff and guests. Many had returned to complain about the rooms they'd been given. One lady in particular, who I found out later was on the same course as me, had paid extra for a luxury room as this trip was for a special birthday present for her mother, with whom she was sharing.

Apparently the room they'd been given was nowhere near as nice as the one she'd been promised when she'd booked. Her mother needed two walking sticks so she'd also asked for a room near a lift, but she hadn't got this either. Eventually, after a lot of distress and heated discussion and being told several times that there were no other rooms available, the hotel staff finally managed to magic a suitable room out of thin air for her and her mother. (Although I wasn't aware of it just then, I found out that others weren't so lucky as the hotel had overbooked. But more about that later.)



After I'd been waiting for about half an hour I was getting a bit impatient. A different Shearings rep came so in so I asked her if she could help with my suitcase lock problem. She couldn't but chatted to me for a while. When I said I had no idea of what I was supposed to be doing afterwards, she pointed out Tony's assistant Vivienne who was with a group of women on the other side of the desk.

Vivienne

Sod's Law came into force at that moment. As I went over to Vivienne to introduce myself, the porter who said he'd break the lock on my suitcase, said he'd found some cutters and to meet him at my room. I couldn't miss the chance to meet Vivienne, so I went and said hello to her first, found out where we were meeting for dinner, then went up to my room. Naturally the porter first tried to undo the lock using my combination (after all, I am but a silly female - at least that's how he made me feel) but when he wasn't successful either, he used the cutters he'd brought up and broke the lock for me.

By then I was starving. Worried I'd miss dinner on my first night, I went down to eat. Vivienne had told me we'd be in a side room off the main dining area. To the right of the entrance to the long main dining area is a wall of glass panels, the other side of which is our reserved room. The buffet-style food area is at the other end of the main dining room. After walking past the glass wall then up a step, an immediate turn right then right again leads to the entrance to our room. At first glance the inside of this side room looks opulent. The glass panels

make up the right hand wall whilst the remainder are turquoise with huge ornate gold framed mirrors. (On close inspection these are a bit shabby, but the overall effect's ok.)

All the tables were set for four. Several were occupied when I walked in, so I went and sat at one with a lady on her own who introduced herself as Janine. She only turned out to be the mother of the lady I'd heard complaining about the lack of the promised de-luxe room. Janine was waiting for her daughter Suzie before going to get her food. The remaining seat at our table was soon taken by another woman, Mandy, who was as hungry as me, so the two of us went together to get our meals.

On a couple of walls at the back and side of the room are drinks machines, where guests can help themselves to squash, water, tea or coffee. There are several different counters in the buffet-style food area. I saw fish being served at one counter, salads of different types laid out in another, whilst various deserts are on offer close to the entrance. In the centre of the room are counters around which guests can walk. Sunk into the tops of these counters are various large metal dishes containing potatoes, vegetables and a variety of meats or fish.

This was when another problem reared its ugly head. As you know I don't like shellfish and the arthritis friendly diet I try to follow means I can't eat certain meats and try to avoid anything with tomatoes or citrous fruit. When eating in hotels similar to this one I've been able to identify foods by labels against each of the items. But here none of the meats or fish on offer is labelled so I don't have a clue what's there. My only choice is to decide which one of the really busy serving staff I should ask about what's in each food container. [This was a pattern which had to be repeated every day for every lunch and dinner eaten at the hotel. Unfortunately for me, not all of the staff were aware of what was being offered and several times I had conflicting opinions from different people.](#)

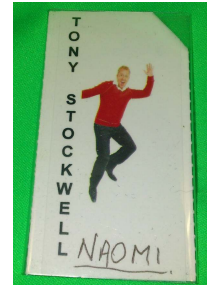
I finally managed to find something that was ok and turned with my plate of food to return to my table in the side room. But as I left the serving area a waiter knocked a hot tureen of soup against my arm. Luckily I wasn't burned, but wasn't really happy to have had the shock on top of everything else.

I drink lots water with my meals, so I picked up one of the jugs of it near the drinks machine to take back with me. I imagine my surprise when a waiter took it from me telling me we're not allowed jugs of water on the table. Instead I had to wait until he brought two jugs over to us and filled all our glasses with our choice of still or fizzy water. But all the tables have jugs of wine. Problem is that the white on offer tastes vinegary and I don't like red. Luckily Mandy found out we

could have Prosecco instead (that's a fizzy white wine) which was quite nice. [So for the rest of my holiday, if I wanted wine at mealtimes I asked for that.](#)

Janine's daughter Suzie had arrived by the time I got back to our table. That's when I realised she was the lady who'd been complaining about her room whilst I was waiting in the reception area for the porter.

Before we finished eating, Vivienne told us that with the exception of breakfast and lunch tomorrow, all our meals would be in this same room. Each place setting had a badge beside it on which Vivienne asked us to write our names, either above, below or to the side of the picture of Tony Stockwell, to make communicating easier for both him and us. Having come on this holiday alone, I was glad of both the badges and the same dining room as they meant it would be easy to know who else was on the course. I do like having someone to chat to.



As tomorrow's breakfast wasn't going to be in this side room, Vivienne asked whoever was down first for breakfast the next day to try to grab one of the long tables in the main dining area. That way we could eat together then afterwards be in a group to go to listen to the Shearings rep new arrivals talk. After that she, Vivienne, could take us to the room which we'd be using for our classes as it wasn't that easy to find just by description.

We'd been told earlier that Tony wasn't due to arrive at the hotel till half past nine that evening, which was why he wasn't with us now for our meal. Vivienne told us that she'd heard that his flight wasn't now arriving till much later so she doubted he'd have time to say hello to us all. So rather than staying up on the off-chance, after I'd finished eating I decided to go to bed. As it turned out, those of the group who went down to the bar after the meal did get to meet Tony when he finally arrived.

When I got back to my room and opened the door, my heart dropped again. The only way I can describe it is that it's a bit like a luxurious prison cell. I sat on the narrow bed and composed a long text listing my complaints so far and ending with 'Not a good start. Hope it'll b better 2moro.'

[As I've just written in detail about what happened, I've not included that long text which didn't get through to you or Nigel anyway. I tried sending it through an on-line app on my smart 'phone to Mara, Katherine and Becki, but as there was no reception in my room, that didn't work either. I found out later that the only place in the hotel from which emails could be sent was in the lobby beside the reception area.](#)

2.07pm Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Today's been loads better.

I woke early this morning and had time for a shower (in the titchy witchy shower cubicle - it was a job not to bash my elbows) before going down for my first breakfast in Italy. Not seeing any of the others who'd been in our side room the night before, I sat at one of the long tables in the regular dining room, wearing my badge, duly labelled with my name in the hope that others would see it and join me. Of course that didn't take into account the fact that I wouldn't be sitting there whilst I went up to the serving area to get my food. [Duh. Silly me.](#)

At the food end of the room, the meat and fish of yesterday evening had been replaced by selections of cereals, croissants, meats, cheese, fruit and yogurt. Whilst walking towards these I saw a young man who'd been sitting in our dining area at supper. After we said hello I told him where I'd left my bags so we could sit together. But he wasn't there when I came back with my bowl of muesli and tinned peaches and I couldn't see where he was sitting, so I took out my smart 'phone to read a bit more of Fifty Shades of Grey.

A couple of women came in who I thought I recognised from the meal last night, but as I wasn't sure I didn't say anything to them and carried on reading. I'd hardly started when Maggie came in. Having got to know each other during our conversations from the airport and on the coach to the hotel, she put her bags down opposite me and went to get her food. Then someone on his own at a table in front of me turned round and I saw it was the young man I'd seen earlier. I called him over to join us. He's Kees (pronounced Kase), 27 years old, and has come over from his homeland in Holland just for this course.



The letter we'd been given when we'd first arrived at the airport told of the meeting that Vivienne mentioned at dinner yesterday. It's at half ten this morning and the Shearings rep will be telling us about the surroundings and optional excursions. When that's over we'll have for our first lesson with Tony.

After breakfast Maggie, Kees and I joined the other newbies and went downstairs to hear the Shearings rep's talk. Our group sat together in a long narrow room which had tables on one side and a passageway on the other. The Shearings rep stood at the far end to deliver her spiel.



Irene

Sitting through the Shearing rep's chat was a bit boring as none of our group knew if we'd get a chance to join in with any events. I sat between Irene and Gary so chatted to them both. If nothing else, the meeting did give us a chance to get to know some of the others in our group.



Gary

In the wall at the far end of where we'd been sitting, is a door which I found out later led to a dark flight of stairs. To the right of the door is a lift. A hot drink vending machine backs on to the end of the long main bar of the hotel, facing inwards to make it easy for guests to collect their drinks and carry them straight into the lift. [The only problem I found out later, is that the lift door doesn't stay open that long, so if you hesitate too long before carrying the drinks in, you end up being bashed on the arm by the closing door and getting coffee or tea all over the lift floor. Well, at least that's what happened to me some time later in the week.](#) The passageway turns to the right in front of the bar of the hotel and carries on between the bar on your left and a large pub-style room on the right.

After the meeting Vivienne led us to the small lift. We found out this goes up to the sun terrace where guests can sit and soak up rays or socialise whenever they want. Our classroom for the week is a conference room one floor below the sun terrace. [We found out later that we could use the stairs behind the door to walk up, and I did sometimes, but mostly we took it in turns to go up in the lift and get out on the floor below.](#)



Tony

In the L shaped conference room, jugs of water and drinking glasses were waiting for us on a small table in the corner on our right. Halfway down the side of the room, where the L of the room bent to the left, a small step up led to a few more tables. Tony and Vivienne were standing on this stage-like area as we trooped in. [Later, when my bladder informed me that it needed emptying, I found out that one of two doors at the very back of this part of the room was for the loo. I did try the other door to see if it was another loo, it but it was locked so I've no idea what was behind it.](#)

Once we'd all sat at one or other of the small tables in the main part of the conference room, and before any class started, Vivienne told us about some of the things they'd arranged for the week: a 'getting to know you' social at the lido this evening, an outing on Saturday to take the ferry to a nearby market and a

proposed night vigil. I got this a bit wrong as the ferry trip wasn't to the market, but there was a market outing. Also the night vigil didn't happen. Not sure why.

Vivienne told us that she and Tony were going on the trip to St. Moritz the next day. If any of us wanted to go too, we'd have to book with the Shearings rep who would be downstairs till lunchtime.

The two Scottish sisters, Sandra and Roberta, who were sitting at my table, both wanted to go. So after the lesson we went down together and booked onto it.



Roberta & Sandra

We've got to leave at eight in the morning. I take long enough to get ready as it is, but know I take longer when I'm tired, so I must try to get to bed early tonight. But I don't want to miss meet up with the others later so I'll have to watch the time. I've managed to have a word with Vivienne about a one-to-one reading with Tony and she said she'll add my name to the list.

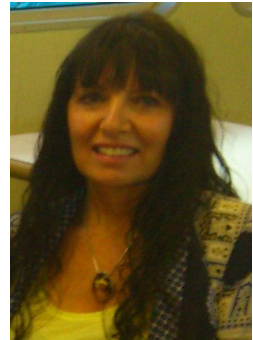
Then Tony took over and started the first class. I absolutely loved the start of it when he instructed us to hug as many people in the room as we could. You know what I'm like for hugging! I tried not to leave anyone out. When I hugged Tony, I told him this first exercise might well be my favourite of the whole course! I was in my element. It did break the ice between us all as only a few of my classmates are with someone they know. Most are here on their own like me.

Tony started with a bit of chat during which he said what I already believe - and what TJ Higgs had said when you, Richie and I saw her at the Elgiva in Chesham - that all Mediums are psychic but not all Psychics are Mediums. He expanded on it though. Psychic links are different from mediumistic ones, as the former tune into the live person, whilst the latter communicate with the spirit world.

For the first exercise we were split into twos to try to link psychically to each other. Roberta moved to a different table and Sandra and I tried, but both of us felt completely out of our depth. We did our best but neither of us thought we were 'getting it'. Tony had described Tarot cards and things like them as props, but I needed my prop to help me. So in spite of what he'd said, I asked if it was ok for me to use them. He said I could, but just this once.

When I took my cards out and asked Sandra to choose 3 (1 each for Past, Present and Future) it was as if a light was turned on. Not only was I able to pick up stuff about her, but in spite of her never having used cards before, she was able to use them in the same way to pick up about me. We got on really well and ended up chatting, telling each other about ourselves.

For the next exercise we had to be in groups of 3, with the third person being someone who already knew they could tune into Spirit. Lorraine, slim with long, black hair, joined me and Sandra. The plan was for the experienced medium to tune into one of us newbies with a message, then let the other novice pick up and follow through as much as possible, before taking over again to give more help.



Lorraine

This was when I had my first magical moment. Almost immediately Lorraine picked up on Booba who said how grateful she was for what I did for her. [Booba lived with me and Nigel for the last 10 years of her life, from her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday till a few months after her 100<sup>th</sup>](#) Booba thanked me, telling me how much she appreciated what I'd done, emphasising that throughout her time with me, I always considered her needs before my own. She was proud of me for the care I took of her. As you can imagine, I felt very emotional. Sandra wasn't really able to contribute anything because I'd already told Sandra most of what Lorraine told me. Just before Tony asked us to swap over, Lorraine picked up Zaida but we had to leave him. [He's come through since, at a reading I had with one of Tracy Higgs' students at the opening evening of her new centre. I'll tell you about that another time.](#)

Then it was Sandra's turn to pick up something about Lorraine, but again doubting herself, she got flustered. Lorraine suggested I had a go, perhaps using the cards to give me a focus. (Come to think of it now, they were Tony's words when I asked about using them when Sandra and I were working together earlier.) Lorraine told me she had someone in mind. Usually when I'm doing a Tarot reading, my client chooses the cards. This time though, I turned each one over and said whatever came to my mind. Not only was choosing them vastly different, I even interpreted them differently, but in doing so was able to describe Lorraine's mother correctly. Wow, what a boost that was.

After these exercises, Tony described soul to soul communication which helps to identify blocks which may be stopping us moving forward. After the lesson finished, Tony asked if any of us wanted to carry on working. Always the 'goody, goody,' I was one of about 6 of us who did, so Tony set us an exercise to work in pairs trying to extend what we'd been doing psychically and communicate soul to soul with each other.



Glynis

This time I teamed up with Glynis, who's from Dublin. We got on really well and I felt very much in tune with her. She went first and told me stuff which made a lot of sense at the time, but I'd taken in so much already that sadly I can't remember what it was.

When it was my turn to read for her, I again needed my cards. (OK, I know they're a crutch.) I can't remember all the cards I pulled out (notice it's me choosing the cards again, not the person for whom I'm doing the reading) but I do remember getting the card which I interpret as doing something to make your home your own. [In other words, making your home surroundings such that they would make you happy.](#) Glynis told me that she keeps surrounding herself with flowers. Bearing in mind that this was a soul to soul reading (and as I wrote before, was to try to identify blocks stopping us moving forward) I suggested that she do some research on-line to try to identify which flowers and plants would have beneficial influences on her. [I've forgotten what she answered - so if you're reading this Glynis, do you remember?](#)

Glynis: My reading connected to your background (mother in particular). Her insistence you learn the Jewish traditions and cooking etc., her expectations - quite deep really. I felt something was happening to link you back to your background.

5.50pm - from Italy

Today was a lot better than yesterday. Am going for dinner now. Love u loads. XXX Mummy XXX

5.52 pm

Enjoy ur dinner. Love u too xxxxx

9.19pm

We'd been told to order a packed lunch for tomorrow, so after dinner I went to the reception desk to order mine. Someone had told me that the packed lunches are usually made up of white rolls with ham in them. Neither fit my diet, so I asked if I could have brown rolls with cheese instead.

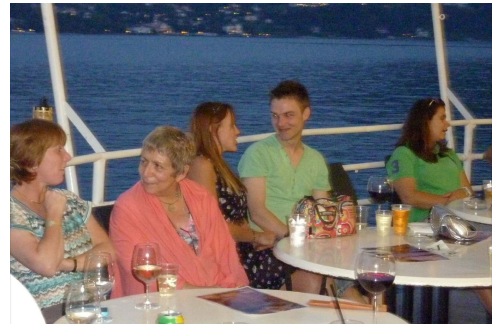
[The next bit was actually written a couple of days later. At first I couldn't remember what we did this evening. So I'd written, Hang on a minute. then Oh yes. as it all came back to me. It was our first group social where we started getting to know each other.](#)

Our hotel overlooks Lake Como but doesn't have its own swimming pool. So they have use of a lido which is beside the lake about 200 yards away from the hotel. This was where we all met up. As our holiday is All Inclusive, when we checked in to the hotel we were all given gold wrist bands that show bar staff we're entitled to free drinks. The arrangement is that these work at the lido too.

Now comes the catch. The organizers have used a recent incident (two women got rat-arsed and tried to swim to the other side of the lake and had to be rescued) to stop the inclusion of spirits with the free drinks. The only alcoholic drinks that are available free at the lido are the same wine as in the hotel (the

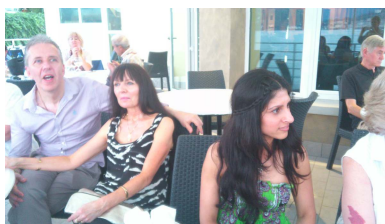
vinegary white, not the prosecco), I don't like red (which I heard was just as bad) or beer, which I also don't like. There are no low calorie soft drinks. Regular Coke has caffeine in it so keeps me awake, so rather than lay out money for spirits (brandy is the only one I'd want and I wasn't that bothered about not drinking alcohol) I decided to stick to water.

It was a warm, balmy night, but worried about getting mozzie bites, [they find me too tasty for my liking](#), I used the salmon coloured insect repellent wrap I'd brought with me as a stole round my shoulders. It was the perfect thing to wear as I sat with my back to the lake and the wrap sheltered me from the slight breeze.



Me in salmon coloured wrap chatting to Tony's sister Lorraine, with Rachel, Kees and Connie on my left

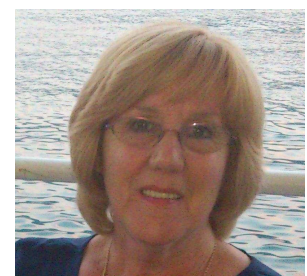
Several tables had been pulled together so we could sit in a large group and get to know each other a bit more. On my right sat Tony's sister, another Lorraine, who with his mum Pat had come to Lake Como for the holiday. Rachel, a young girl from Yorkshire (should I have said a lass?) was on my left. Beside her was Kees who'd sat with me and Maggie at breakfast. Connie was on the other side of Kees, but I didn't manage to chat to her.



Garry, Lorraine & Sukh

Sukh, who looks as if she has Indian or Pakistani roots, sat opposite. On the other side of her were Lorraine, who'd done that fantastic reading for me about Booba, and her husband, another Garry, who wasn't doing the course but had just come along for the holiday. [I've no idea if Lorraine's husband spells his name with two r's but I think the Gary on the course spells his name with one r. So I'm typing them that way to try to make the difference a little more obvious. Apologies to either or both of them if I'm spelling their names wrong.](#)

Tony's mum Pat, on the other side of his sister, was like me hemmed in by tables so it wasn't so easy to move around as others did. But that didn't stop me managing to talk more with Mandy, Janine and Suzie, the ladies I'd sat with at supper earlier. I also got to know Angela, a Kiwi and several others by sight.



Tony's mum Pat

Vivienne was chatting to the owner of the lido, who she knows quite well as both have sons at the same school. Afterwards she told us all that he'd invited all of our group to a meal at the lido tomorrow evening.

Not having had any alcohol or caffeine to keep me awake, by about half past nine I was tired. Knowing we had to be up early for the St. Moritz trip the next day, I decided that if no-one had left by 10 o'clock, I'd go back to the hotel on my own. Fortunately Lorraine and her husband Garry got up at about quarter to ten so I walked back with them.

10.19pm

Back in my room now & getting ready for bed as have an early start tomoro. Night night XXX Mummy XXX

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012

6.27am

Morning mummy. Hope I not texting too early. Did u sleep well? Is it nice and hot? Have a lovely day. Miss speaking to u and love u loads. xxxxxxxxxxxx

6.29am

Miss speaking to u 2. In a rush as going on a trip & need to have breakfast first. Will txt later. XXX Mummy XXX

7.53am

Now in coach on our way to St. Moritz in Switzerland. No idea what to expect. Been told the scenery is spectacular. Am sitting on my own & learning to enjoy my own company. I usually hate being on my own. We'll b transferring onto a train soon but not bothered whether I sit alone again or not. Will txt more later. XXX Mummy XXX

8.23am

That will be nice then. Make sure u take some pictures. Did everyone else come with someone? I would have come with u if I had the money. Never mind. I'm sure u will enjoy it anyway xxxxx

9.21am

There are several lone travellers but they'd sat with someone else this time. I wish u could've come too. Let's save up to come to the next one together. XXX Mummy XXX

9.22am

Just sent u a huge spiritual hug. XXX Mummy XXX

The next entries are notes I wrote in a mini pad whilst on the coach. I really felt as if the people mentioned communicated with me on that journey and my notes reflect this. If you can't remember who they are, look at the list in the introduction.

Unlike all my other scribbles further down, I decided that as these entries all follow the same theme, it would make more sense to leave them together. So they're OUT of chronological order. (You may not have noticed if I hadn't told you, but if you look at the times, the last couple of texts were sent to you after I wrote the first entry but before the others.)

9.10am - en route to St. Moritz

Booba just cuddled my inner child and apologised for not showing me affection as a child and for leaving me at Dicker House. Dicker House is the boarding school I was sent to at 3 years old with Loraine and Susan and where I was left alone and friendless when they both were taken home without me. She reminded me that Zaida had worried that dads get left out so she pushed me to him even though she wanted to hug me herself. Consequently she never cuddled me leading me to think she didn't love me. She also didn't know how to tell me she loved me. She'd not had a childhood herself as after her youngest brother was born when she was 5, her mother became ill. So Booba was her mother's carer and by the age of 8 had total responsibility for looking after her mother, father and 4 brothers.

Glynis: Your link to family members on the bus may have led from the reading I did for you the day before.

Then Loraine came and apologised for making my childhood life a misery. She said she was jealous of me as I could chat to everyone whilst she was shy with adults. I've probably told you about some of the things she did but they will be included with my writing about everything else in my childhood when I get my memory notes sorted out.

Mrs Lynch came and said sorry for blaming me for the fire. It was so traumatic that she had to blame someone but couldn't accept her child had actually 'done the deed.' This incident, which explains why I'm so scared of fire, will eventually be written up too.

Mrs Halker has said how much she enjoyed my company when I went up to see her during the day. Mrs. Lynch said she used to too before the fire and secretly missed me afterwards. Mr. Lynch said he tried to persuade her to let me into their home again, but she felt she couldn't back down.

9.35am

Miss Ewart thought I was too full of myself. [I was a chatty child and had lots of friends at school. I have to admit to being bossy though and as I look back now realise that many of my friends regarded me as the leader of our gang.](#) I annoyed her that I was always so polite [to her](#) and she relished the times I got sent to her for talking too much. Mrs. Cox tried to get her to lay off me but Miss Ewart disliked Jews, feeling they were infiltrating her pure society. I was the ideal target for her as I didn't even pay for my schooling having passed my 11+ to get into her Grammar School.

I wonder if she was as antagonistic to Ruth Bacon, the Jewish biology teacher who started just before I left.

9.54am

Oscar just tried to apologise to me for what he did to you Barbi. I've told him he needs to find a way to ask for your forgiveness. Tilly feels the same and had told him so.

Just thought about Harry (Evros Elephtheriu) who made me pregnant when I was 17, then arranged an abortion for me in the hope that I'd be so grateful to him I'd work for him as a prostitute. I believe Harry's old now and in a wheelchair suffering from gout and other painful conditions as his payback for what he did to me and others, including Angela, the girl for whom he'd procured an abortion before me, who did take up his offer out of gratitude. [That's what had given him the idea to try it with me. He even showed me the room he'd arranged for me to 'work' from.](#)

Not only do I get the feeling that he's still alive somewhere, I also think a guy who raped me around the same time, is too. I was so frightened to tell my mother that I was pregnant that I was willing to try anything. A friend heard of this man who said he could help. He told me he had a pessary to make me abort but it could only work properly if it was pushed right up my vagina. The best thing to do that with was a penis. Innocent, desperate and in my friend's house, I believed him. He raped me on the stairs.

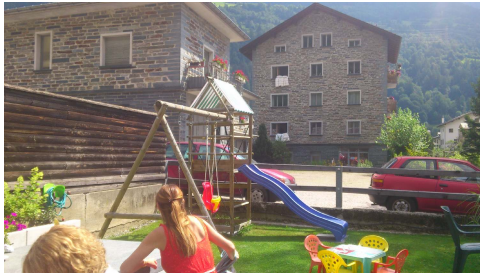
10.30am

Back to the journey. We're entering Switzerland.

There are three sections of the journey to St. Moritz. The first was the coach from our hotel to a station beside which was a cafe/bar. After a short break we join the Rhaetian railway. Whilst we're on the train, the driver of our coach carries on along the road, meeting us again at another station for the third and final stage, to St, Moritz.

This is what happened on the journey.

We'd been travelling for some time when we got to the station so were all happy to stop for a pee break. The queue to the loos was almost as long as that for food and drinks.



The view from the table

Once we were comfortable, those of us who'd brought packed lunches, sat and ate our food at a huge table in the garden overlooking a

play area with a slide and mini table for kids, with beautiful scenery in the distance.



Irina's pic of the garden

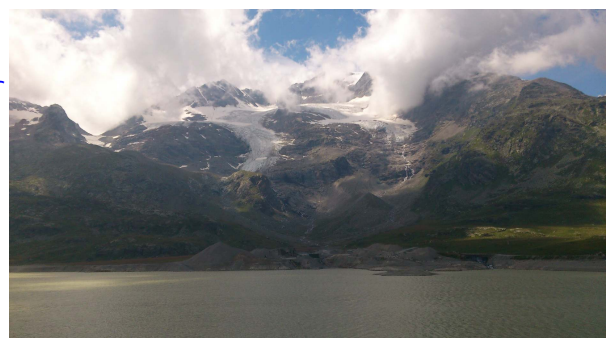
There are no platforms as we know them at this station. To get from one side of the tracks to the other, you just have to check that nothing's coming and walk across. Whilst waiting for the train, Vivienne wanted us all to keep together to make sure we all got into the same carriages. That way it would be simple for her to let us know when to get off again.

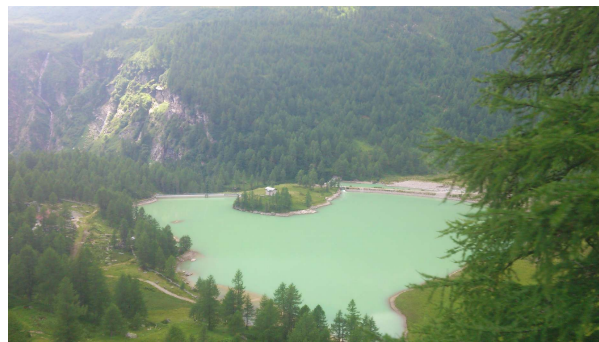
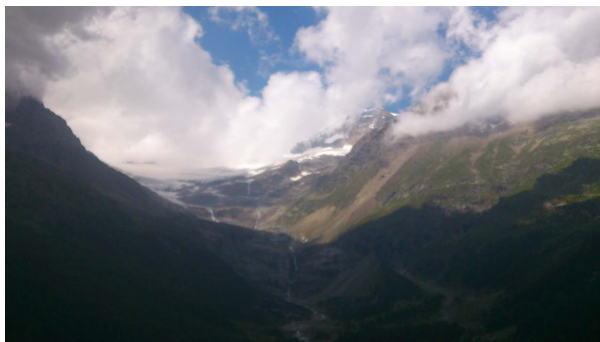


Irina's pic of the train, taken from the train.

The reason the middle part of the journey was on this train is that the views from its windows are reputed to be absolutely spectacular. True to promise they were. Apparently the tracks have been laid so that it doesn't matter whether you sit on the left or right side of the carriage. Every view becomes visible from either side as the journey progresses. In spite of this, lots of us were running and jumping from one side of the carriage to the other prompted by squeals, oohs and aahs from people looking out of windows at yet another picture postcard scene.

Didn't bother bringing a regular camera as the one on my 'phone is brilliant. As per your instruction, I took lots of pics - far too many to include them all but here are a few. I've included a couple of a picturesque station along the route.





As we got off the train at the end of this middle part of the journey, a group of hunky males who looked dressed to go mountaineering or something similar, were

on the platform. Maggie did more than just look. She ran over to one of them and asked if she could have her picture taken with him. Then Glynis took a turn and [as you can see from the pic](#) I was asked to join the group too.



Me & Glynis with hunky mountaineers

Soon everyone was laughing and taking pictures of everyone else, but eventually we all managed to get back on the coach for the third and last part of our journey. [The pic on the right is one that Kees took whilst the train was still in the station.](#)



When we finally got off the coach at St. Moritz, we were given a choice of turning left and going down to the lake, or turning right to the shops. I went with those who aimed for the stores in this famous place. After walking through an enormous car park we reached an extremely long up escalator, which led to another, and another. (If memory serves me correctly, there were three of these, one after the other and we went up and up and up and .....) It seemed to take ages before we surfaced at street level but we did get there eventually.



One of Irina's pics

Now, as you know, I'm not into designer clothes so don't know many designer names, but even I recognised some of those above the shops in the Via Dal Bagn (the name of this road): Dolce & Gabbana, Gianni Versace, Cartier and Gucci to name but a few. Luckily for us, most of them were closed otherwise we might have been tempted to pop in and buy a few souvenirs to take home. (LOL)

Maggie, Glynis and I window shopped together. We actually went into a souvenir shop but a combination of the big numbers on the price tickets together with lack of knowledge of the exchange rate between Swiss Francs and Euros or Sterling, meant that we didn't

actually buy anything.

The three of us carried on walking and eventually left the shops behind us. The buildings now were houses and office blocks. We hoped there'd be a way through to the lake so we could get back to our coach from the other side. But we had no real idea where we were going, nor how long this road would be or how far down it we'd have to walk before finding a way through. Glimpses of water to our left made us hopeful we'd get there.



Another of Irina's pics

The street was fairly empty. Just as we were beginning to worry we were lost, we saw a woman and two men, probably business types from their clothing, walking towards us. Fortunately they spoke a little English and directed us further down the road where they said a bus shelter marked where a path led down to the lake.

Spotting the landmark with a grassy area behind it, we checked with people sitting on benches that this was the right way before turning off the road. Wow, was that path steep! Glynis and Maggie walked in front of me holding arms to keep themselves balanced. Now you know what I'm like with heights. [Remember me telling you about Katherine holding my hand along a towpath when she was about 5 years old because I was frightened of walking too close to the edge.](#) So looking at where I had to walk down on my own I was sh\*\*ing myself. But then the most wonderful thing happened. I 'felt' Booba holding my hand. She led me all the way down, then carried on holding my hand even when I'd caught up with the other two and whilst we walked along the side of the lake.

As you know, my sense of direction isn't wonderful. Sadly, Maggie and Glynis both suffer the same problem. Although we chatted as we walked, we were all aware we had to be back to catch the coach at a certain time (I'm not sure if I'm right but I think it was quarter to three. For the sake of making it easier for me to carry on with my chat, we'll assume it was.) After checking our watches, we realised we'd been walking alongside the lake for almost as long as it'd taken us to walk from the shops to where we'd turned off onto the path down to the lake.

We passed a train station. But it wasn't the train station we wanted. We weren't sure but all thought that a bus station had been mentioned. We all felt a bit panicky 'cos we didn't have a clue how to get back to our group's meeting place from this side. As we hoped and prayed, Glynis recognised a building. Then we saw a bar so I went in with Maggie to ask for directions. The barman told us about an underpass we had to go through, like a little tunnel in the side of a mountain, which we'd never have found on our own.

At half past two we came out of the tunnel and lo and behold, there was the bus station. But we still weren't sure where we were supposed to be meeting the others. We remembered the car park and very long escalators so decided to look for them, then work our way back from there. As we walked in what we hoped was the right direction, we saw a bus drive into the coach station which looked identical to the one on which we'd arrived. Running back to it we asked the driver if he was going to Lake Como. Our hearts dropped when, after struggling to make ourselves understood, he said "No." But then he added that another bus would be along at quarter to three. Waahaay. We were in the right place. There was even time to use the loo in the station and to buy a couple of bottles of water.

The journey back was entirely by coach with a stop-off point which we thought was just to allow us to stretch our legs. It turned out to be a bit more than that. If we wanted we could've wandered around on our own, but most of us opted to go with Tony when he suggested a detour to visit a monastery. I'd love to be able to make a note of where we were but I wasn't efficient enough to write it down. Since getting home I've spoken to Angela who checked a map of the area and found a church called Madonna del Ghisallo. Whether that's this one or another one close by, I've no idea.

Maggie and Glynis and I followed Tony and the others. Thinking I'd got a stone in my shoe, I stopped to remove it. Oh dear - it wasn't a stone. It was a blister. On my foot, not in my shoe. Oh, I suppose it is in my shoe by virtue of the fact that my foot is in my shoe. Note to self: Enough babble woman, get on with the story. By this time everyone else was way ahead of me so rather than lose sight of them I put my shoe back on and limped after them as fast as I could. Fortunately it wasn't too far to the monastery where I checked my purse for a plaster to put on my foot. Would you believe it, for the first time for ages my girl guide training had let me down and I didn't have one. Luckily Glynis did have one which she gave me. With that in place I could walk comfortably again.

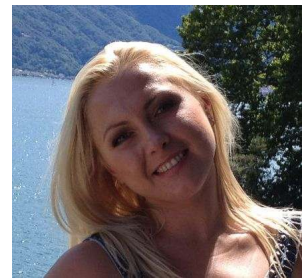
At the monastery, Tony suggested we wander around to see if we could pick anything up. He told us that something dramatic had happened there but didn't want to tell us what it was until we were ready to leave. He pointed out that as the place was very old, anything which we picked up could also be accurate, but he wanted us to identify this particular event. Without my cards I felt lost so took them out and chose a few, one at a time, trying to imagine a scenario that they could represent.

The first one I chose was the Page of Pentacles, upside down, which I identified as a small boy. This was followed by the Knight of Swords, then the Death card. Unlike my usual interpretation of the knight, I felt it signified murder and the Death card corroborated that, so I thought the event was that a small boy was murdered and pictured him hiding under one of the various benches in the building. I chose a few more cards which made me think of soldiers following the orders of a king.

Like everyone else in our group, I was wrong. However, when I found out what the event was, I realised the first 3 cards could have been accurate and only my interpretation of the first card was wrong. What actually happened was that 2 schoolgirls murdered a nun. I recognise a page as one or more children. Pentacles can indicate knowledge and as they were at school, this card could have signified them. The second and third cards would keep the same meanings. I don't remember what the other cards were so can't say whether they linked to anything else about that event.

Before we went back to the bus we had time to wander round the rest of the town. Both Glynis and I love fruit but neither of us had seen much on offer in the dining room at the hotel, so when we saw a grocery shop selling strawberries, plums, nectarines, greengages and more, we had to stop to buy some. Most things seemed to be on offer in large tubs. Rather than getting a tub of one type of fruit, which would have been a bit of overkill of one at the expense of everything else, we asked if we could just buy a couple of different things. We did get a whole punnet of strawberries to share, but just had a couple each of nectarines, plums and greengages.

Just outside the store was a café where we each chose an ice cream and sat in the sunshine at one of the al fresco tables to enjoy it. A few others in our group wandered by, then another girl on the course came over and joined us. She's Irina, who's from the Ukraine, I'd thought she was with Kees as she'd been sitting at the table with him the night before, but no, she's on her own here like us.



Irina

On the way back to the bus, Glynis began to feel unwell. We wondered if she had a touch of heatstroke. Luckily it wasn't far to the bus. Once there she could sit and doze off till we got back to the hotel. Most of us were quiet on that return trip, having agreed it was a pity the invitation for dinner at the lido was for the same evening after such a busy day.

Travelling back gave us a chance to relax though and when we reached the hotel Glynis felt better. She, Maggie and I agreed to meet up in the lobby later and go to the lido meal together. Remembering the embargo on spirits at the lido and not fancying another teetotal evening, I devised a sneaky way round the problem. I had several little bottles in my room which had been packed in my suitcase filled with tonic water. [I need tonic water at night as the quinine in it helps ward off cramps. I bring my own in case I can't get any wherever I'm going and even if I can, I like to make sure it's the type I like.](#)

Slightly earlier than arranged, with an empty little bottle in my handbag, I went down to the lobby. Glynis was already there. I explained my plan and she came with me to the bar where I ordered a couple of brandies, one for her and one for me, then a third one for Maggie who we'd be meeting very soon. The barman measured the spirit out in the same way as they do in Spain ... glug, glug, glug. Glynis and I took our glasses round the corner where the tables were out of sight of the bar and I poured the precious golden liquid into my plastic bottle. With the screw lid tightly in place, we went back upstairs to meet Maggie.

After waiting well past the arranged time, we wondered whether Maggie had fallen asleep after our strenuous day, so asked at the reception desk for her room number. The 'phone to call her was in my hand when she stepped out of the lift. As we walked from the hotel, the sky was a bit overcast but it was still warm and after all, we were in Italy, so the weather was bound to be good.

On the decking outside the lido clubhouse several small tables had been laid with white tablecloths. Each table had a menu, a bottle of house wine and 4 place settings and wine glasses. Maggie and I went to the bar where she ordered a glass of wine and I got myself and Glynis tonic water. After joining Glynis at an otherwise empty table, she and I poured our tonic water from the clear plastic cups I'd been given into our wine glasses then added brandy from my little bottle. It was a surprisingly nice drink.

But my heart sank when I looked at the menu. It was a set meal with Calamari for starter and Sea Bass with pasta in tomato sauce for the main course. Oh no, I don't like any sort of shellfish and can't eat tomatoes because of my arthritis-friendly diet. During our walk along the lake we'd discovered that Glynis' diet is similar to mine, although with her it's preference rather than instruction or advice. Efforts to talk to the owner, who was taking orders from other tables, were hopeless as he told us in no uncertain terms that we couldn't order until there were four people at our table. Well that told us! We wondered what we'd do if no-one else came to sit with us. We were ok though. Vivienne took the empty seat as there was no room for her at Tony's table.

No sooner had Vivienne sat down, than the owner came to our table, full of smiles. (I wonder if he fancies her?) I told him my problem with the food. Having heard him offer melon and Parma ham as an alternative starter to someone at the next table, Glynis and I asked for just melon. The main was slightly more difficult as first of all he offered me a steak. No, the arthritis friendly diet excludes beef too and Glynis doesn't eat it either. Finally we were offered grilled swordfish with vegetables which was fine for both of us.

We'd just started eating when a few drops of rain pattered down. It was very slight and when we asked the owner about moving to tables inside the clubhouse, he reassured us it was only drizzle which would stop very soon. The food was tasty and after a couple more tonic waters with their magic ingredient, I started to relax and enjoy myself.

Just as we finished our meals, the heavens opened. To say it poured would be an understatement. It bucketed down. Ok, maybe the drizzle had stopped, but proper rain had taken its place. Luckily we were sitting close to the entrance to

the clubhouse and we dived under cover. It didn't take long before we were all settled round a couple of tables inside. It was now gone 11 and they'd finished giving out free drinks altogether. Suzie [starting as she intended to carry on for the rest of the week](#) had brought a couple of bottles of wine and topped up the glasses of anyone who wanted any. Glynis hadn't been so keen on the brandy and tonic water as I was, so only had one splash from my little bottle. I'd nearly finished the rest so was getting a bit tired, ok sorry, I'll be honest, I meant tiddly. I decided to go onto water rather than mixing my drinks.

Most of the others still seemed to be in full flow when Maggie and I had both had enough. When we'd got lost in St. Moritz earlier we'd discovered that Glynis sometimes wandered off without saying where she was going, so when we couldn't find her, we assumed she'd already gone back to the hotel. The rain was still pouring down in sheets and showed no sign of easing off, so we decided to leg it back. We said our goodbyes and ran the 100 or so yards. Even then, by the time we reached the hotel we were both soaked to the skin. I had to strip off and towel myself dry before I could get into bed. I can only assume that Maggie had to do the same.

[Whilst writing this at home I've contacted some of the friends I'd made at Lake Como. I found out that Glynis hadn't left at all, but must've been in the loo. Apparently the owner of the lido eventually got so fed up with the group saying they couldn't leave till the rain stopped, that he gave them all black dustbin bags to them to make raincoats from. I'm sure I remember seeing a picture of her wearing her's but can't find it now. She says she thinks she remembers Tony taking it. If anyone reading this has got a similar one, please send me a .jpg of it to include with this paragraph.](#)

### Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2012

7.49am

This is the first chance I've had to put finger to screen & I keep getting interrupted by 'helpful' waiting staff offering me t or coffee. As u know I only like my own herbal t. Yesterday ws good, trip followed by meal out with group. Bucketed down with rain on way back to hotel. 2 late 2 txt. Now waiting for others to go to market. Will txt again soon. XXX Mummy XXX

8.48am

U must be really busy to not have time to text! Apart from the rain how's the weather been? Enjoy the market. Love u

xxxx

The following entry was actually written at 6.30 in the evening but for the sake of chronology, (wow that's a good word for this time of day) I'm going to write about our visit to Como Market.

I was wrong about the ferry to Como Market as we went there today by bus. Busses aren't like those at home where we get on then buy our tickets. In Italy, you have to get your ticket from a shop and show it to the bus driver as you get on. Fortunately the shop was close to the hotel and the bus stop was halfway between both.

Some of our group caught the 8.32am bus, but others, me included, thought that was too early, so we opted for the next one just over an hour later. I was in the queue with Maggie, Sandra and Roberta when Irina caught up with us. She hadn't known about the ticket in advance bit but managed to get to the shop and back before the bus came.

There was a moment's panic when it finally arrived as the queue was so long we didn't know if we'd all get on. But we managed even though it was a squeeze. I even got a seat next to Sandra when someone else got off. We'd thought the market was close, but it was over an hour away.

An English lady who lived in Italy overheard Maggie, Sandra and Roberta and me wondering about where to get off. She reassured us that we couldn't go too far as the bus terminated at the market stop. When we got off she not only pointed out how to find the market, but also the bus stop for our return journey. We agreed to wander round the stalls on our own and arranged a time to meet up so we could catch the right bus back to get us to the hotel in time for lunch.



With the memory of getting lost in St. Moritz still vivid in our minds, Maggie and I swapped mobile numbers. Maggie walked off with some of the others but Sandra, Roberta and I needed to use the loo before we set off for the serious business of shopping, so we made use of the public toilet. Oh dear - we were expecting more than a ceramic hole in the ground, even if it did have a flush system for after you'd peed.

I asked Sandra and Roberta to wait for me after they'd been as I didn't want to risk getting lost on my own whilst trying to find the market. When all three of us had relieved ourselves we

set off in the direction we'd seen the others take. We seemed to walk for miles, asking several people along the way, some of whom spoke English, others didn't, when obviously we were no wiser. Eventually we turned a corner and saw stalls, lots of them. So as agreed, I left Sandra and Roberta and went off on my own.

One of the first things I wanted was a new handbag. Why, you might ask, as I have loads at home. Well, as I was leaving the house on Wednesday to catch the train to take me to Clapham Junction, I picked up the really colourful one I'd bought in Spain with Nigel. However, when I tried to do it up I realised the zip had lost its pull which meant I couldn't keep it closed. I remember finding the pullie thing a while back and had put it on the green marble table beside my armchair in the living room. But I hadn't got round to fixing it back onto the bag.



There wasn't time to look for the zip puller, let alone try to fix it otherwise I'd have been late getting to the station to catch my train. Nor did I have time to transfer my stuff to another bag. So I did the next best thing - got a couple of bulldog clips and used them to hold the top of the bag closed. Everyone on the course remarked on how attractive they made the bag look! (LOL) Tony even suggested they might become the next fashion statement. After all, safety pins had taken off some time ago, hadn't they.

Anyway, I wanted a bag that fastened properly so I walked up and down the rows of stalls in Como Market, looking for one which sold handbags. The first stall I saw didn't have anything which caught my eye. The next one though, had the most beautiful orange bag right at the back of the display. You know what I'm like about orange, especially really bright orange, so I asked the stall holder if I could look at it more closely. I was so tempted to buy it, but then I spotted a denim shoulder bag hanging from the front of the stall. Common sense won out and I handed back the impractical orange wishful thinking and bought the trendy denim one. This new bag was so big that the bulldog-clipped one fitted inside it.

The necessary acquisition made, I looked round for anything else I wanted. After the lectures both you and Mara had given me about not buying presents for everyone, I'd made up my mind to only look for things for me. Passing a stall selling purses and the like, I remembered that I needed to replace the falling apart black wallet I'd left at home. Of course the first stall didn't have one I liked, but on the next one I found a scarlet red wallet which although perhaps not as big as my tatty one, was exactly right. So endeth purchase number two.

Next came the first of my impulse buys. At the far end of the market was a stall selling handmade jewellery. On a painted backdrop behind the stall two men were making fabulous creations in a workshop. On display were some of the pieces they'd been making. One of the men in the painting was serving on the stall together with a young girl, who could well have been his daughter.



What caught my eye was a display of necklaces and earrings, which looked as if they'd been made with brightly coloured strands of tagliatelle, bent into shapes and entwined with pearls and silver baubles. There were white ones, turquoise ones, black ones and brown ones, but those which really grabbed me were the red ones. I looked round the stall at all the other amazing works of genius, but couldn't resist that red 'pasta' and pearls. (The pearls simply look like white beads in this picture, so it doesn't really do the set justice.)

One of the things I like about buying stuff in many Italian outlets is that they package things so nicely. My necklace & earrings were all placed into a white box, then the whole box was put inside a dainty net bag, which was fastened at the top with ribbon. Nice enough for a present for myself don't you think.

I did treat myself to one more thing. Further round the market I bumped into Sandra who was admiring blouses. I had to agree with her that the white one she held up was really nice and looked to see if they had it in my size. The largest one fitted me perfectly. Unfortunately they didn't have one in Sandra's size, so I did have a tiny twinge of guilt that I'd bought the one she'd chosen. (Sorry Sandra, but the guilt didn't last very long.)

Not wanting to keep anyone waiting or miss the bus, remember it had taken ages to walk from the bus to the market, I wanted to allow plenty of time to get back so was ready to leave. Sandra said that she and Roberta might stay longer and rather than having lunch at the hotel, they'd find somewhere else to eat and catch the next bus. So off I trotted on my own in the direction of the bus stop.

Passing a stall selling postcards and fridge magnets near the start of the market (or rather the end of it in the direction I was going) I remembered Jenny had asked me to bring her back a postcard, so stopped to have a look. Seeing the fridge magnets made me think of Caroline. I always brought one back from holiday for her when she was alive. It dawned on me that fridge magnets were small enough for me to take back as presents for you, Mara, Katherine and Becki. Yay - I'd thought of something none of you could tell me off about.

Being so preoccupied with my cleverness I'd lost track of time till my mobile started singing to tell me I had a call. It was Maggie who thought she was near to the bus stop, but wasn't really sure. Looking at my watch and realising the time, I put back everything I'd been looking at, left the stall and hurried to meet Maggie. She was about 100 yards from where I was - nowhere near to the bus stop and hopelessly lost. It's easier to be lost when you have company than when you're on your own, so slightly reassured, we carried on walking in the direction we thought we should be going. It was almost a case of the blind leading the blind, but we did eventually find somewhere we recognised.

Further along the road we saw a group of people, one or two of whom looked familiar. As we caught up with them we recognised Pat and Lorraine, Tony's mother and sister. Tony was walking in front of them with others of the group who'd come to the market on the early bus. Maggie and I stopped worrying about being late. After all, now we were all in the same boat, or rather, we hoped to all be on the same bus.



Cheryl

Soon we saw the bus stop and all congregated around it waiting for the bus (we'd been told we'd need the C10 to Menagio) to get us to the hotel in time for lunch. On the journey back I sat next to Cheryl who I hadn't spoken to much before. She's on the course with a friend, Karina, who I also hadn't had a chance to meet properly.

Cheryl told me about a web site she was really keen on, [www.mediumystics.com](http://www.mediumystics.com), where she was learning a lot about spiritual matters. Apparently they offer healing to regulars when needed as well as tuition.

Had a chance to read the text you sent me before nine o'clock this morning with your cheeky comments, and I quote: U must be really busy to not have time to text! Fancy casting aspersions on my texting habits! Sent reply:

1.18pm

Most of the time I'm with others so it wd b rude to txt. The weather's fine now. Only bought stuff for me in the market. Following orders & not buying pressies. Still missing u tho.  
XXX Mummy XXX

2.30pm

Again for the sake of chronology, (I do like that word) the following is a record of the afternoon class. It was originally written as MJs (Memory Joggers) then expanded later.

After we'd all found a table to sit by, Tony told us about auras. Then he set an exercise to do auric reading and drawings. Again we had to work with a partner, and again, it had to be someone with whom we'd not already worked. As I'd got to know Cheryl on the bus back from the market earlier, we agreed to work together.

Tony asked us all to use one of the pieces of paper and pencils provided, then using a saucer as a guide, draw a circle on the paper. We then had to try to pick up information from our partner's aura, drawing pictures or writing words inside the circle. We were advised to unfocus our eyes and start by looking to the bottom left of our partner to pick up their past. Working our way to above the head should give us the here and now, then over and down the other side to move to the future. Wherever we picked something up we should position drawings or text inside the circle corresponding to the place we felt it around our partner's body (e.g. on the left of the circle for things picked up to the left of our partner, at the top for things above our partner's head, etc.)

The only thing I remember about my reading with Cheryl was that I started by visualising green on her left side and she said she grew up running free in the country. As with other exercises, we both surprised ourselves about how much we managed to pick up about each other.

Swapping again for the next exercise I partnered up with Karina, who was the lady who'd come on the course with my last partner Cheryl. Still working with auras, this time numbers, we each had to ask the other's age. Using this information we had to draw numbers in a circle starting at one and finishing with our partner's age. We then worked our way round the numbers, stopping at whatever one we felt was relevant and describe what we sensed might have happened when they were that age. Karina picked up several major points in my life as I did in her's. I'm sure it was the same for others on the course but I got such a buzz each time I got more right than I believed I would.



Karina

Tony finished the afternoon session talking about Trance work. Obviously this is something which can only be done by a Medium who knows what they're doing, so no exercise could be set for it.

5.20pm

Just got out of class. Fantastic stuff. 2 much 2 write in txts. Am not going to this evening's event as v tired. I t's gospel singing which doesn't start til 9pm. Will try 2 write diary of what's happened so far so u'll be able 2 read that. Now going 4 dinner. XXX Mummy XXX

7.12pm

Back in my room now. Am going 2 have a shower then go 2 bed & do some writing. Love & miss u loads. XXX Mummy XXX

7.15pm

Did you have a good day? Sounds lovely to me, peace and quiet for a while to do ur writing. Have a nice chill out. Love u  
xxxxx

10.22pm

I'd intended to have a good scribble tonight before I went to sleep but the shower and my night time ablutions have taken too long. So I started to expand on the MJs a bit.

I've taken what I wrote here and moved it into its chronological (yes there's that word again) place. So you've read it already. However the entry finished with:

I've got to stop writing now as I'm falling asleep. Night night XXX

2.10 pm Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2012

(The date and time was inserted automatically by my PC, as I'm in the conference room of the Britannia Hotel in Italy, typing this in directly. So the time is UK time. According to my watch and 'phone the time here is an hour later.)

Before I get into any regular chat, I'll just mention this morning's class.

I can't remember much about the first part, so I think it was discussion rather than an exercise. I asked Karina by email when I was writing all this up if she could remember anything about it. According to her, it was a talk about healing. I do remember doing an exercise on picking up something about someone by looking

at their palm. This isn't the same as Palmistry where the different lines have individual significances. What we had to do was to get information psychically about our partner's past, present and future. This time I worked with Kees and we both managed to pick up knowledge to which the other could relate.

As my hotel room's so small, my eyes lit up when, at the end of the class, Tony said that any of us could come up here to the conference room during the afternoon as no-one will be using it. So here I am with my computer set up ready to write.

I don't think I've given you much of a description of the diddy widdy room I'm living in this week. It does have a tiny balcony on which is a table and one chair. To the left of the French door leading to the balcony is a tiny fridge. There's just enough space for me to stand sideways between the fridge and the wardrobe opposite, to the right of the balcony door. But - if the wardrobe door is open, you can't get to the balcony door.

Moving further into the room, the length of the bed is along the wardrobe wall. The end of the bed's level with the wardrobe door. So again, the door causes problems depending which side of it I'm on. When I'm looking in the wardrobe and the door is open, I can't get to the bed. If I'm on the bed side and the wardrobe door is open, I have to shut it before I move to beside the window. Then I can open the wardrobe door again to see inside. I'm now blocked in by the open door on one side and the window on the other. There's no room behind me 'cos that's where the fridge is. When I've decided what I want to wear, I have to either get all my clothes out together and hold them whilst I close the door again, quite difficult with arms full of clothes, or else repeat the procedure for each and every item. The hotel provides a free safe in each room for guests, but as my one's on the wardrobe floor, it's obviously difficult to use. (More folding myself up into difficult positions. Thank heavens I've kept up with my yoga so I'm not all stiff.)

There's no such luxury as a bedside cabinet in here. (Probably because there isn't room for one.) The head of the bed is in a sort of alcove. When I'm lying in bed I can see a small corner turning forward about 6 inches from my nose. This is the back of the alcove. The side of it carries on for a few inches, then turns again to become the wall of the room. It looks as if there may once have been a fireplace along this sticky-out bit of wall. Against it, about 18 inches from the bed, is a tiny table with skinny, stilt-like legs, on which is a reading lamp, plugged into a single electricity socket above it. The switches for the room lights are beside the socket. There's so little space between them and the bed, I can reach them when I'm lying down.

Needing more space on the table to put my 'phone (music helps me drift off to sleep) and other bits and pieces I have by my bed at night, I moved the reading lamp onto the floor under the table. Reading or doing codeword puzzles also helps the zzzzs arrive but there's not enough room for my magazine and pens on the table so I tuck them into the alcove corner. The space the other side of the table (two foot at the most) is bare 'cos it's hidden when the bathroom door's open.

On the wall opposite the little table, is a slightly bigger table. Unlike its smaller brother, this has - wait for it - a drawer. Ok, so it's only about 3 inches deep and I didn't bother to use it for anything, but it's there. (I have to mention the bonus points as well don't I?) This is the table I told you about when I first went into the room, under which I had to fold myself up to get to the lock on my suitcase. You probably gathered from what I said earlier that under this table is the only place in the room that I can leave my suit-case. When I pull the case out to get something out of it, it takes up all the floor space in the middle of the room.

There's not much point in describing the shower cubicle, sink and toilet. They're bog standard but small. I keep hitting my elbows on the walls or shower door as I shower. Also, it was just as well that I'd brought my own stuff to wash with. There were two sachets of shower gel in my room when I arrived, but these are obviously rationed to last the whole week as unlike other hotels I've stayed in, after I'd used them they weren't replaced.

Although my room isn't big enough for me to be able to lie down on the floor to do my yoga exercises, the bed is quite comfortable and a maid has tidied the bed each day [although on my last day at the hotel I overheard the receptionist telling another guest that sheets were changed every other day. Mine weren't changed all week.](#) I don't usually leave the sink and shower room messy so I don't know if they get wiped or not.

**Glynis: My room was similar to yours accept the bathroom/shower was big and I had no balcony. I hung all of my clothes up in the wardrobe and put case under table. My bed was changed regularly. Shower gel etc. never replaced.**

Believe it or not, my experiences haven't been nearly as bad as those of a couple of others of our group. I mentioned earlier that I heard that the hotel had overbooked. Vivienne and I rina were the two people who really copped out over that. Vivienne didn't stay in our hotel at all but was given a room in another one nearby. I rina, who'd sat with us after the monastery trip, still doesn't have a room of her own. So far she's been sent to different hotels for one night each. The day before yesterday someone in our group offered to let I rina stay in her room. Sadly the lady's kind gesture backfire. There were unexplained noises in her room at night but as she was a deep sleeper she didn't notice them. I rina wasn't and the noises kept her awake. So at three in the morning, after trying

unsuccessfully to sleep, I rina was given a room but told it would only be for that night. I haven't asked her what happened but she said she was going to refuse to move out if they asked her to. I'll let you know when I find out.

I've set my 'phone alarm for five o'clock to start packing my stuff when it goes off 'cos we're meeting for dinner at half past six before getting the ferry to Bellagio where we're supposed to be going round an old church.

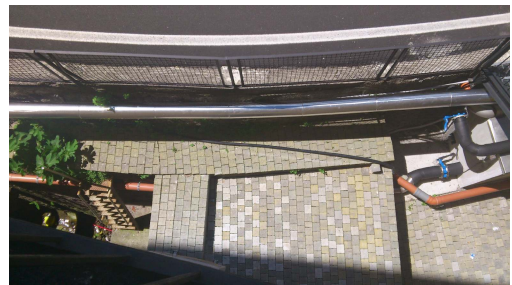
Oh dear. I've got to pack up now. Tony forgot he'd said anyone could use the room whilst it was empty and he's just come in here to do a reading for Roberta.

5.15pm

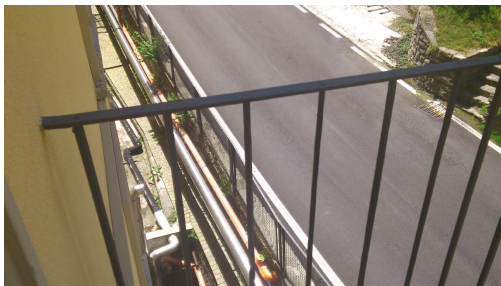
Back in my room, on the balcony with the wonderful view. As long as I look upwards - not too bad, but looking down I can see the very attractive pipework which runs from under one side of my room to the other. I've taken pics of both. I'm sure you'll agree, the view looking down leaves a lot to be desired. I've also included views looking down to the left and to the right.



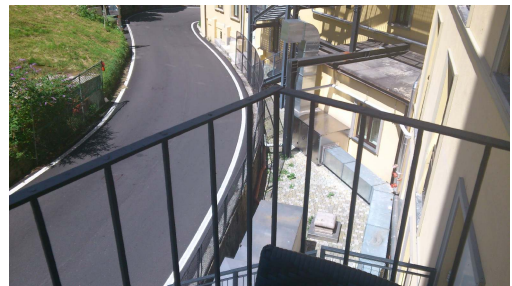
Looking up



Looking down

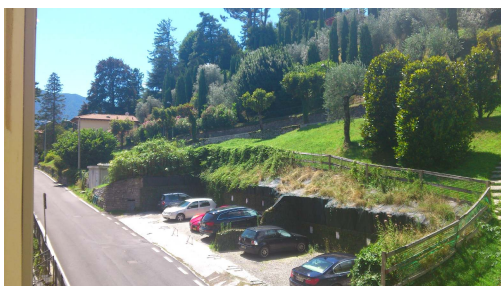


Eyes down to the left

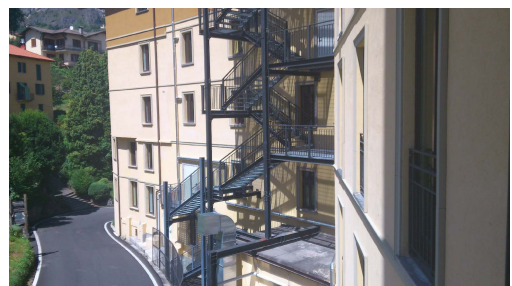


Eyes down to the right

Just to finish this great pictorial diary of my room with a view, here's a couple more pictures: the car park looking down further to the left and the decorative metal fire escape stairs on the side of the building as I look to the right.



The car park



The 'decorative' fire escape

OK, back to my regular chat. I can't remember exactly where I was in my writing when Tony and Roberta came into the conference room. Tony was really apologetic about interrupting me, so I said he could make it up to me by giving me a one-to-one reading before we leave Italy. I do hope he keeps his word. I'll just have to wait and see.

(BTW, the night vigil didn't happen.)

I've missed out a bit of what I wrote here as it was stuff to fill in gaps in what I wanted to tell you. Since then I've moved it and put it in, yes, you've guessed it, chronological order. So now, back to my description of what else I wrote once I got back to my palatial suite - I don't think - in this hotel.

Wanting to carry on writing directly onto my computer, I actually succeeded in setting up my laptop on the balcony table. Luckily I brought an extension plug socket and the PC's mains lead is quite long so I can get power from the single socket above the little table by my bed by draping the cable over the bed, under the wardrobe door, then out through the window. But when I tried to sit out on the balcony and type, the sun was shining onto the screen which made it difficult to see.

Ok you might think, as I did, that it would be a simple task to move the chair to the other side of the table and turn the laptop round to face the other way. In practice it wasn't so easy. The balcony is so small that the only way I can move the chair is to stand inside my room then pull the chair in behind me. Once inside the room I can move the table to the other end of the balcony before putting the chair back on the other side. Needless to say, by the time I've accomplished this feat, I've really lost the incentive to write, which is just as well as it isn't any easier to see the screen that way round and my alarm's just gone off again so I'm going to wind this entry up. TTFN XXX

Sometime later Sunday evening

This bit is being written from memory, so I've no idea what time to put down. But for the sake of my precious chronology, it's got to go here.

On the other side of the road not far from the hotel is a ferry port. From here ferries run regularly to Bellagio, a town on the other side of the lake. None of our group outings is compulsory, but most of us wanted to go on the ferry this evening. Tony had told us that there was an old church in Bellagio which was worth a visit, so after supper we all met up at the ferry port.

On the trip over, Gary (the one on the course) was having a heated discussion with someone about an Elvis Presley song. So I found the track on my smart 'phone and turned the volume up full. Gary was impressed as the sound was much louder than he can get on his iPhone. With us all singing along to Elvis, the journey went really quickly.

Once in Bellagio on the other side of the lake, Tony planned to stop at one of the many bars for a drink then walk to the church which was some distance away. He chose a bar close to the ferry port so people like Janine or Irene, who weren't that mobile, or those who just didn't like walking much, could wait there till we got back. At first the staff at this bar seemed less than happy with us as they were just about to close the alfresco area Tony aimed for. But they changed their minds when they saw how many of us there were and even helped us move tables so we could sit together.

I played safe with my drink by choosing brandy and tonic water, but Sandra and Roberta decided to go for one of the exotic sounding cocktails each. Both their drinks looked amazing. Roberta loved her's, but Sandra disliked her one so much she left it.

Drinks downed, those of us walking to the church followed Tony. At first he led us along a flat street but then we turned off onto narrow, cobbled steps which led up and up and up. I only ever wear flat shoes so had no problem walking. But Irina was wearing beautiful shoes with extremely high heels and although she managed for quite a lot of the way, eventually she gave in and went barefoot to avoid breaking an ankle or worse. It felt like ages before we reached the church. But would you believe it, it was closed to the public when we finally got there. So we all trooped back down again.



Back at the bar, we met up with the others who'd stayed behind. I don't know whose idea it was, but someone suggested we have a group photo taken. So we posed together near to the ferry port. Several passers by stopped to look. One young lad was so interested in what we were doing that he kept coming over and chatting, so another picture was taken which included him. [This picture's also on-line in Tony's magazine on his website and on the group's Facebook time line page.](#)

By now it was getting late and some of our group wanted to get the next ferry back, but others wanted to stay longer. That led to some confusion about tickets. Obviously we'd all bought returns. After all, our hotel was paid for and we wanted a bed for the night. But we discovered that if two people had bought tickets together, they were treated as being on the same one so couldn't be separated for the journey back.

Vivienne, Tony, his mum Pat and his sister Lorraine, who were all planning to catch the second ferry, were ok 'cos they'd organised their tickets together. But Suzie had booked a double ticket with her mum and although Janine wanted to go back, Suzie wanted to stay in Bellagio a bit longer. I'd bought a single ticket and wasn't bothered which ferry I caught, so I gave her my single ticket and went back on the first ferry on her part of a double one.

Back at the hotel someone suggested we all have a nightcap on the sun terrace (a bit like a roof garden.) I still had some brandy in the bottle I'd taken to the lido (you know I hate waste) so I nipped up to my room, put the bottle in my bag, then joined the others down at the bar. (I've definitely learned to appreciate brandy and tonic water.) Groups of 3 or 4 of us took it in turns to go up to the sun terrace in the small lift at the end of the bar.

Once on the sun terrace we gravitated to a cluster of tables and seats at the far end where there was loads of seating. Benches and chairs stretched alongside the wall of the hotel. At the far end were a couple more benches set against a barrier which blocked off the V shape at the very end of the seating area. A second row of seats worked back down the widening end of the V, facing those by the wall. A few small tables were placed between these two rows.

A couple of seats were occupied when we arrived, but whether it was because we were so noisy, or simply because the couple wanted to go to their beds, these outsiders soon got up and left us. I got a chance to chat to and get to know more about several people on the course.

When Tony and the others who'd caught the later ferry arrived we had a few more drinks before I got tired and went to my room, leaving the others still drinking and chatting.

### 6.30pm Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2012

I went down to breakfast about quarter to nine and finished eating an hour later so had plenty of time before the morning class at ten. [See, I can be on time when](#)

it's just me on my own. Tony started the lesson by discussing the importance of meditation. Then he put on some gentle, restful music for us to practice. I enjoy meditating so found it quite easy to drift off.

I don't know if you've ever meditated, but sometimes when you do, you can see things but not actually see them, if you know what I mean. Things appear in what's known as your mind's eye. Just before Tony roused us, I clearly 'saw' brickwork. like that in very old buildings, all around me. Then I 'saw' a rabbit. Both these visions were so clear that they really stuck in my mind.

The next exercise, table levitation, was mind blowing. If I hadn't been there and not only seen and felt it myself, but did it with others in the group, I'd seriously doubt it could happen. Tony had described the phenomenon and said our combined energies could contact Spirit who often see it as a game to make a table move. Following his instructions, we arranged ourselves in groups of three or four standing around one of the tables. Placing hands flat on the table in front of them, members of each group visualised combining energies and invited Spirit to come and play and move the table.

I can't remember who was with me at my table, but it wasn't long before I was wondering if I could really feel tiny vibrations under my hands or if I was imagining it. Tony worked his way round the room feeling each group's table as he went. When he got to ours he said that it was moving more than any of the others and for us to continue as we were doing. Then he added his energy to ours by putting both his hands on our table and wow ..... it tipped up one way, then another; it jumped around and moved in circles! Another group round a nearby table weren't having much success, so Tony asked them to join with us to increase our group energy before leaving to add his powerful force to those at a different table. When he took his hands off our table, it stopped acting like a bucking bronco but still continued to vibrate and move a bit. Eventually though, everyone's tables calmed down and we stopped for a tea or coffee break.

Glynis: I was at the table that moved also. I felt my energy go into the table and it was a fantastic experience alright. Whoever else shared our table, no doubt will also remember. Worth mentioning about the table turning in a circle. Amazing what energy can do. I was amazed it did not fall over as it was at an angle when it would have normally. You're right, that angle was physically impossible.

When we started the class again, the next exercise was to try to 'see' and describe a spirit for a partner. This time I worked with Rachel. Tony had told me not to use my cards any more and as before, I felt very unsure of myself without them. However, I did get facts and descriptions pop into my head which seemed

to match Rachel's grandma. When we swapped over, she started to describe someone who sounded like Nigel's dad Guy. The clincher for me was Rachel saying she could see him holding an eye in his hand. That's what convinced me: to my mind the eye must've represented a microscope. Before he retired, Guy was a research scientist in micro-photography.

With the morning session and lunch over, we all met up at the ferry port. Vivienne had chartered a boat to take us all further up the lake to the Abbazia di Piona, a Cistercian abbey, described by Lonely Planet as 'a pocket of peace'.



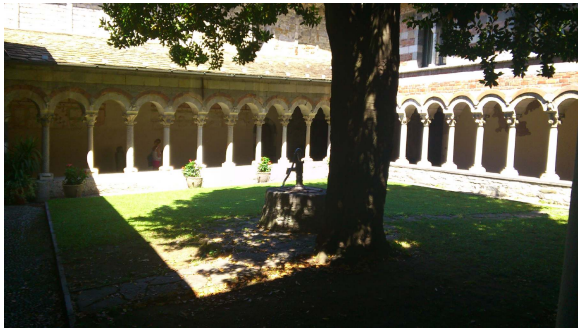
By now we all knew each other quite well so the boat trip felt like a holiday. It was a long journey and the weather was glorious. Sun tan oil was liberally spread on all bodies, especially those who'd dressed in clothes designed to expose as much flesh as possible to the rays. I have to admit to being a bit envious of the great

figures of some of our party, especially Sukh, Rachel, Irina, Sheena and her daughter Connie. I made myself useful as several of our group had mozzie bites and my trusty zapper [a piezo quartz thingie like the sort that's used in lighters, which is designed for the purpose and gives a tiny electric shock which works wonders](#) was able to stop them itching.

When the boat finally moored at a jetty, we all clambered out, then followed Tony up a twisty, twiny path. (As we climbed upwards, someone coming down the path was holding a baby which couldn't have been more than a few weeks old. In spite of the strong sun, the baby's head wasn't covered in any way - something several of us remarked on.) Irene suffers with Fibromyalgia or Polymyalgia (not sure which) which means she has great trouble walking. She'd brought her mobility scooter with her on the holiday but obviously it couldn't be brought on the boat, nor would she have been able to use it on the track we were now going up, so Tony slowed the pace to make sure she was ok.



At the top of the path was the purpose of our visit, an old monastery. As with the last one, Tony suggested we wander around picking up the vibes of the place. But this time there was no known grizzly story for us to pick up.



Once through the main doors, covered walk-ways, with ornate columns marking their left side boundaries, surrounded a grassy area, in the centre of which was a tree and an old water pump.

Inside the monastery the first things we saw were brilliantly coloured pictures along the right hand walls. Other older paintings were ranged above them.

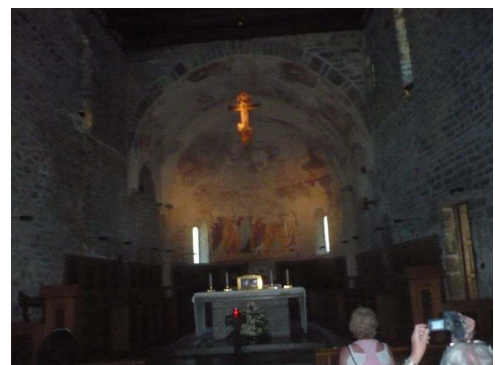


One of Karina's pics

There were several closed doors along the corridor but a few steps up, still with these colourful pictures on the walls, were some open doorways.

Through one of these I could see what looked

like an altar in a church. I walked further round and found a different entrance into the same area and realised that this was in fact an old church. Some of our group were already in there sitting in pews. I sat down fairly near the back and closed my eyes to try to absorb the atmosphere. When I finally opened them and looked around me I was absolutely gobsmacked. All the walls were made of the old bricks I'd 'seen' during the morning's meditation. My next thought was, where's the rabbit? Remember I'd seen one just after I 'saw' the old brick walls in the morning.



Another of Karina's pics

Leaving the church I walked back down the corridor. Through another open doorway was a large room where almost everything was wood. All around the walls were panels, some of which depicted people or scenes in what must have been

marquetry, others just looked like they showed the wood grain.

Wooden planks divided by carved separating arms to make individual seats spanned both side walls. I sat on one and was surprised that it wasn't uncomfortable. More benches are against the walls either side of the door.



There was one throne-like seat in the centre of the wall opposite the door. [The pic shows Gary sitting on it.](#) This throne was flanked by ornate windows, on the other side of which were equally embellished benches.

Light in the ceiling radiated from behind a carving of a bird in a sun-like circle effect. This was directly above a lectern and chair, which was in the centre of the floor facing the throne. One of our group suggested that this place could have been used to as a type of courthouse and the throne



could have been where the judge sat whilst the prosecution or defence stood at the lectern giving their evidence. [The pic shows the lectern with Gary standing beside the throne and Glynis sitting in the background on one of the side wall seats.](#)

Whilst sitting on one of the seats on the wall opposite to the ones Glynis is sitting on in the pic above, I was joined by Irene, the lady who needs the mobility scooter. We chatted for a while and I told her about my experience with the brick walls in the church. When Glynis came in I was still full of the revelation about the walls and told her too about it. Believe it or not, she said she'd 'seen' the walls too. She hadn't 'seen' the rabbit though but pointed out that the monastery is in countryside so there may be rabbits around so may yet see one.



One of Irina's pics

Glynis and I were the last of our group to leave the monastery building. Looking back, the outside walls were made of



Another of Irina's pics

similar brickwork to that in the church. Underneath a window a was similar shape picture of Mary holding the baby Jesus. On the door were huge engravings depicting people.

On our way to the gardens, a sign for refreshments gave us a clue where the others were, so we made our way towards it. En-route we saw what appeared to be a shop and hoping to buy souvenirs, went inside. This wasn't like any shop I'd seen before. It was a long, single storey building and other than a desk near the entrance, the floor was completely empty. But along the entire lengths of the walls on both sides, and along the back wall, were several rows of paintings, mostly scenic. As Glynis and I walked to the far end looking at the exhibits, my first thought was that although they were good, they weren't as excellent as the painting that was done of Booba for her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday present from everyone. [That too was an event which has been written up separately.](#)

We walked round the building looking at the work. We'd seen all the paintings on the right hand and back walls and had just started back down looking at those on the wall leading back to the entrance. One of them caught my eye. It was of two pheasants lying prone on a table and lying on top of them was - yes, you've guessed it - a rabbit! I was over the moon! I kept saying first to myself, then to anyone who would listen to me, "I've found my rabbit." "I've found my rabbit." When we finally caught up with the others in our group I had to talk about it. Vivienne told me she'd also seen a rabbit as part of an emblem on the boat on which we'd travelled over there. I didn't get to see that one.

On the way back to the boat we passed a real souvenir shop. I joined the others in looking round. The only things I was interested in looked like they were herbal mixtures. But they all had lengthy Italian descriptions of how to use them. Not speaking the lingo and being my usual cautious self, I didn't dare risk buying any.

By this time in the holiday several people had their pictures taken with Tony, so as he was standing outside the shop when I came out, I finally got one of him with me. The view across the lake was exquisite so after gazing all round at it, I videoed it to show you when I got home. [I'm sure you didn't only want me to take pictures of St. Moritz. It's a pity I can't include video here though.](#)



A loo visit was necessary by now for several of us. Unfortunately the public one



Lesley

we saw on the way back was the same type as the one at Como market. Not being used to balancing over holes in floors and avoiding getting clothes wet whilst doing so, took me and the others longer than usual to do the necessary. I was with Glynis and Maggie again, but another girl from the course, Lesley who I'd chatted to several times at meals, was with us. We were the last four of our group to leave the monastery. None of the others were in sight so with no-one to follow we had to find our own way back to the boat.

When Glynis, Maggie and I had got lost in St. Moritz, we'd thought it would be a one off. We were wrong. Although Lesley was with us this time, her sense of direction was not much better than ours'. The four of us walked and walked, thinking we'd soon catch up with the others. But none of us saw anything about the road which we remembered.

After we'd been trudging up a steep hill for some time, we saw a woman walking down the hill towards us. We weren't surprised when in response to our question she said she hadn't passed a large group of people. She'd only passed cars. But she knew the jetty was back the way we'd come and offered to show us the way.

We'd all been told to bring a towel as swimming and paddling in this part of the lake was allowed. In my backpack was one of the heavy hotel bath towels as the small towels I'd been given, which weren't much bigger or stronger than handkerchiefs wouldn't have been any use to dry my feet should I decide to join in. [See Endnote 1 for more about this.](#) I was slowing down because of the extra backpack weight but the others were too because the lady leading us was walking so fast. It wasn't long before we had difficulty keeping sight of her in the distance. The last we saw of her was of her making her way down a steep, unmade track which probably did lead to the jetty, but which none of us fancied trying to use.

We carried on walking in the same direction then, yaaay, we saw a turning on our left which we recognised as the one we'd walked up on our way to the monastery. Going back down slowly (it was very steep) we finally we saw the rest of our group splashing about in the lake. (Look how clear the water is!) After our trek, it was tempting to join in but we arrived just in time to hear Vivienne calling out to all the water-babies that it was time to get out and dry. Sod's Law or what!



I didn't manage to get a pic of this so this one is Irina's

On the boat on the way back Irina told me about her life and I told her about 3 year old me in regression. [That was such a vivid recollection of being killed by accident by my brother to bring my then parents back together again, that I'm in the process of writing it up as a book.](#) I found out that she still didn't have a hotel room and so far hadn't had a chance to even unpack her suitcase. I had to admire her though 'cos she was still upbeat about it.

#### Texts sent & received some time later

Please let me know what tobacco you want me to bring back for you and how much it costs so that I can work out if it'll be cheaper for you for me to buy it here. XXX Mummy XXX

Hello mummy. Hope you having a good day. My tobacco is cutters choice and I pay about £13.50 for a 50g pouch. Love u  
xxx

Do you know what the exchange rate is so I can work out how many euros your sterling values r? XXX Mummy XXX

I t's roughly 1.2 I think xxx

Thanks. I'll work it out then go 4 a wander 2 the shop. XXX  
Mummy XXX

#### Lunch time

As we finished our meals I asked if anyone knew where the tobacconist was as I wanted to go there this afternoon. I was told that the local tobacconist doesn't stock the brand of baccy you want Barbi. I 'phoned you to find out if any other brand would do, but you didn't want an alternative. Lorraine and Garry, who were sitting at the same table as me, planned to go to a larger town the next day so offered to try to get it for me there. I offered to pay them in advance, but they refused in case they couldn't get it.

Vivienne and Tony had found out that some operatic singers were doing their stuff at a nearby hotel this evening. Several of our group are going but I don't particularly want to. (One of the great things about this holiday is that none of the events are mandatory.) The singing's due to finish about ten so we're going to meet afterwards on the sun terrace at half past ten. Vivienne nipped up there earlier and put reserved signs on the tables where we sat yesterday to make sure that this time none of the seats get taken so we can all sit together.

#### After lunch

Even though I couldn't get your baccy, I went to the tobacconist to get what Katherine and James wanted. I really enjoyed the walk. It only took about ten minutes but it was sunny and warm as it has been for most of our holiday. When I got to the shop I discovered that they didn't stock the JPS Silver ciggies Katherine wanted. I 'phoned her (What did we do before mobiles?) and found out that a different colour JPS would do. At least I managed to get the right baccy for James so I got one out of three right.



Walking back I looked in the windows of one of the souvenir shops where I saw this beautiful coloured Venetian glass bell and was lost. I justified going in to buy it for myself but looking round at all the lovely stuff on offer, my good intentions flew out of the window and I just had to buy pressies for all of you at home. I was on my own anyway so spent a happy half hour or so going round choosing stuff. [I know I wasn't supposed to but old habits die hard.](#) Wanting to save what cash I had left to pay Lorraine and Garry for your baccy if they'd managed to get it, I offered my credit card as payment. When the shop-keeper said he couldn't take it I wasn't too bothered as I knew there was an ATM next door to the hotel so I paid him with the cash I had left. I imagine how I felt after walking back nearly all the way to the hotel only to find that the cash machine didn't work.

Feeling a bit panicky about not having Euros to cover the cost of your baccy, I asked at the hotel if they could do cash-back on my card. After firmly telling me 'No,' the receptionist said that although the next door machine was out of order, there was another one back down the same road. Her directions were for me to retrace my steps to where I'd just come from, then carry on walking for about the same distance again. I passed the tobacconist, then felt like I'd walked for ages more but still couldn't see an ATM. On the other side of the road Angela and Sukh were walking towards me so I crossed over and asked them if they remembered passing a cash machine. They weren't sure but thought it might be further on. They said that further down the road, after the very last block of souvenir shops, there was a big hotel. If I hadn't found the cash machine by the time I got there, at least there'd be somewhere to go in and ask.

Needless to say I reached the hotel without finding what I was looking for. The hotel receptionist told me I'd passed the machine. I couldn't understand how. She directed me back to the souvenir shops I'd just walked past and said I'd have to turn left to get to the machine. I assumed, as you would, that she meant down a side street, but as I walked back the way I'd come, I could only see shops, no turnings.

Getting worried, I asked a lady standing outside the last of the souvenir shops. Duh. Smack forehead with palm of hand time. I didn't recognise that a door beside her shop was that of a bank. Beside the door was a panel with a button on it which the lady pressed. The door opened and lo and behold, I could see the ATM. As I entered, a disembodied voice spoke to me in Italian. I've no idea what was said, but the front door clicked as if it was locked closed behind me. How good is that - it's impossible to be mugged. [What a good idea. It made me feel much safer taking cash out.](#) Once I had my cash safely in my wallet, I saw a push button the inside of the door which I guessed would open it again. Pressing that released the door lock and I was free again.

Happy in the knowledge that I now had cash to pay Lorraine and Garry, I wandered back towards the hotel. Remembering how much Nigel loves maps, I decided to go to the supermarket before going back to the hotel to see if they had one I could get for him. I also remembered I needed a new padlock for my case to replace the one that had to be broken at the start of the week. The supermarket's owned by an English lady so I had no problem explaining what I wanted. But no joy. She couldn't help with either.

So I asked at the hotel. The receptionist suggested I go into the tourist office next door. Irina was outside and we chatted briefly but neither of us could see a tourist office. So instead I went into a nearby souvenir shop. Rachel was in there buying something. We chatted whilst she finished her shopping, after which I asked for what I wanted. Hurray, they had both a map and a padlock. Now I'm going to dinner. TTFN XXX

#### After dinner

I went to my room where I managed to write a lot of MJs.

#### 10.30pm (ish)

We all met up on the roof terrace. Cheryl hadn't joined us last night but she came today although she didn't stay long. We were again all sitting on the seats at the far end. Vivienne had brought several handouts with her. The first ones she gave out were words to songs. By the time we got them most of us had lubricated our vocal chords and inhibitions so joined in with gusto (whoever he or she may be.) When the singing was well and truly over and we all quietening down a bit, the next handout was questions for a quiz about old TV ads. My performance in that wasn't too bad, but wasn't that marvellous either so no more comments are necessary. By this time I'd managed to get quite tiddly and ended up getting the giggles. I can't remember what about though.

[Glynis: You got the giggles on the terrace because I deliberately sang the songs](#)

in a funny voice. I sat beside you that night. You talked about when you were younger and boyfriends – very atmospheric and reminiscent of the 60s vibe.

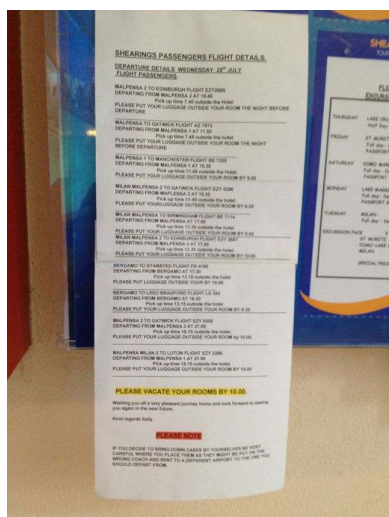
Along with others I changed my seat a few times, ending up in a chair which was one of those nearest to the lift. Lesley was in one of the two chairs on my left whilst on my right was a gap allowing others in the group to go in and out. Two more seats were on the other side of the gap before the bank of benches leading up to the far end of the roof terrace.

Karina sat on the other side of the gap with Irene beside her. A very drunk man pulled another chair up beside Irene and kept asking her about what our group was doing in Italy. She was having trouble in getting out of this one-way discussion so Karina and I joined in to see if we could help. It was well-nigh impossible to persuade him we were trying to have a social evening. None of us wanted to explain to him the whole ethos of the course. Tony backed us up when we suggested he look on Tony's website. After what seemed ages, the guy finally took the hint and went away.

Some time later someone, I don't know who, started a sing-song. It was great fun and everyone joined in. But eventually we ran out of songs which we all knew or wanted to sing. Although several of the others were still happy to stay and chat, by this time I was really tired and had to chicken out and go to my room. Even so, I didn't get to bed till 2am.

9.50am Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012

After breakfast this morning I went up to my room and jotted down a few MJs about yesterday evening after dinner on sun terrace. These have since been expanded into what you've just read about, so I didn't bother to include them. If you've read this far you now obviously know what happened. After the MJs I finished the entry off with: Now going to 10am class. TTFN XXX Then I added: PS Had 'phone chat with Nigel on Sunday evening and with you Barbi yesterday when I got your text of tobacco needs.



This pic's another of I rina's

6.45pm (Italian time)

After the class I spotted a notice board near to the steps leading up from the bar which gives details of all the departure and arrival airports for our journeys home tomorrow. For each one there's information

about pick up times. Luckily the one I'm on isn't a crack of dawn job. A stern, highlighted note at the bottom states our rooms should be vacated by 10am the next day. There's another note saying that if we leave our cases outside our doors the night before, they'll be taken down by their staff. I know I'll need some last minute things for the morning, so checked with the receptionist what would happen if I didn't leave my case out the night before. I was told that if it was outside my room before 9am they'd still take it downstairs.

But there was still our final class this morning. It started with an interesting in-depth discussion about Mediumship. Then we had student demos where Lesley and Kees volunteered to do stage work. Both successfully contacted Spirit for other class members.

Whilst I was sitting watching the demos, my right eye started weeping for some unknown reason. I mentioned it to Irene when I saw her later at lunch and she sent me healing. I can't remember who suggested I also take an antihistamine, but I did and felt better. By the afternoon session it had cleared up.

Not all students joined the last class this afternoon at half past two. Pairing off as usual with one being the reader, the other the client, Tony suggested that instead of working as we've done before without any prompting, this time each client gives the reader a name and relationship. I worked with Angela who asked to speak to her father John. However, from the information I 'felt', Angela said it was her grandfather who actually came through. I surprised myself with how many things I got right and how few I got wrong.

When we swapped over I asked for Caroline. Caroline was one of those people who can't sit still. Abrupt in life but with a heart of gold, she was always busy. Although Angela struggled as Caroline got impatient with her, she did manage to give me the message that I should complete the story [I know exactly which story she's talking about. As you've probably gathered from the length of this diary, I like writing. I used to be a freelance computer trainer and when Caroline was alive she worked as my PA, keeping track of my assignments, dealing with training companies and typing up invoices. When she had no other jobs, she'd type up my diaries or stories as I was writing them. One story in particular she'd really got into, but I'd been too busy with other stuff to carry on with it. Caroline was forever nagging me to finish writing it so she'd find out what happened next.](#)

At this point Tony came round to see how we were doing. When Angela explained her difficulty with Caroline, he suggested I choose someone else. He added that this time we should work without making any eye contact during the reading (which both Angela and I had been doing) as that brings you back to here and now. This time I thought of Nigel's mum, Pauline. Angela did a lot better with her and although she didn't mention Pauline's leg being amputated, when I told her

about it afterwards, she told me she'd thought it but didn't like to say anything that drastic. She did, however, accurately describe the problems leading up to it.

As the class finished I asked Tony again about a reading. He said he's got one to do this afternoon but would try to fit one in for me tomorrow before the coach comes to take us to the airport.

When the lesson finished, Irina asked if anyone had any antihistamines to spare as Gary (the student, not Lorraine's husband) has problems with insect bites. I got a couple from my room and took them up to the sun terrace where he and Irina were waiting.

### Final Evening

Back in my room after dinner, I started a combination of packing and undressing. (It was a bit of a performance as I kept having to pull the case out from under the table to open it to put stuff into it. Then I had to close it again before pushing it back under the table to get from one side of the room to the other.) After showering and getting dressed again, I reached the stage where all that was left to go into my case was what I needed for that evening and the next day. By then it was half past ten, time to meet the others on the sun terrace but having my priorities right, I got myself a drink from the bar downstairs first. Nearly everyone had arrived by the time I got there but I managed to find an empty seat in the same place I'd ended up the night before.

Vivienne had brought another batch of handouts, some of which she gave to Tony. It wasn't long before we all found out what they were. These were certificates and the first one was awarded to Sheena, together with a small prize, for having the best 'rack' which I assumed referred to her boobs. (Don't know if everyone else there thought so too but people to whom I've mentioned this award have agreed. Some of them thought it was out of order but my humour works on similar lines to both Sheena's and Tony's so as she laughed, so did I and several of the others.)

Another certificate and present was awarded to Gary for his support to all the women on the course. I couldn't understand this one as he'd done no more than Kees. In fact, he'd had several women fussing round him because of his problems with insect bites, rather than the other way round.

A third certificate and prize were given to Angela for having been very cheerful or something similar. (Sorry Angela, I can't remember exactly what your accolade was for.) This turned out to be the final award by Tony who then put the remaining certificates on one of the small tables between the two rows of seats,

saying that we should award them to each other for any reason we fancied. This really surprised me as in my opinion, if certificates are being given out to members of a course, each student should get one, otherwise none should be offered. I wasn't the only one who felt this was out of order and those certificates led to a bit of consternation. (I'll explain in a sec. That's a good word though isn't it?)

Glynis: You forgot my award – a blue beaded bracelet with a heart – I was called beautiful arse or something along those lines ha ha and given a cert from Rachael saying I sang like a cat, not really, and I was a lovely lass.

The other lot of printed pages were course appraisal forms. From my own teaching assignments I know how valuable these are, so once these were passed round I filled mine in straight away and handed it back. Lesley, sitting on my left, asked if I'd fill her's in for her. (I think she was concerned about her handwriting.) Obviously it wasn't a problem for me so we went through each of the questions and she dictated her answers.

The consternation mentioned above was how Lesley felt about the certificates. She was really upset, feeling that she was just as entitled to receive one as the others and wanted to make her feelings known on her appraisal form. Although, as I mentioned before, I'd initially felt the same way, not liking to make a fuss and realising that these certificates were given tongue in cheek, I hadn't made any mention of them on my form. But I could see Lesley's point.

After I'd got home I had to speak to Vivienne on the 'phone about something else (see Endnote 2) and mentioned this. As I'd thought, they'd intended the certificates to be a bit of fun, but she took the point that they should either have been given to everyone or not at all.



Although no more certificates were offered, Vivienne did give everyone else with a small present. Mine was a little angel wearing a long blue dress with a heart near the skirt on which was written 'Special gran.' Considering I'd made quite a point of talking about both my great grandchildren over the course of the week, this was quite appropriate.

It was about half past one in the morning when I'd finally had enough and left for my bed. Suzie as usual had extra bottles of booze with her. She'd just opened yet another one as I was leaving, so I'm sure she and lots of others stayed on much later.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Our last morning in Italy. Although we'd be travelling over lunch time, we'd been told that we couldn't order a packed lunch to take with us. So most of us took extra rolls, butter and cheese at breakfast. To pack it in I'd brought down one of the food containers I'd used for my lunch on the way to Italy, but rolls didn't fit easily into it. However, Lesley had been thoughtful enough to have brought a roll of tinfoil into the dining room which she kindly let us all use to wrap our food making it easy to take it with us.

Also at breakfast, Lorraine and Garry told me they'd found out that your baccy isn't available anywhere in Italy so they'd bought a different sort in the hope it might have been ok. But back at the hotel they realised it was pipe tobacco. (They refused to accept payment for it, insisting they knew someone they could give it to if you didn't want it so I didn't feel too bad about it.) I 'phoned you on the off chance to double check, but it really wasn't any good for you. But you did ask if I could get you some of the baccy which James smoked as that would be better than nothing. Thankfully I was nearly sorted with clearing my room so knew I'd have time to pop back to the tobacconist shop before the coach arrived to take us to the airport.

After breakfast I went back up to my room and packed the last of my belongings. Worried I'd missed the curfew set by the hotel for their staff to take my cases down, and after their non-efficiency in bringing my case up from the coach when we arrived, I decided not to trust them and take my stuff down myself.

I found the right place to leave my case, but still had to carry my hand luggage backpack and the warmer coat I'd need when we arrived back in England. The coach to take us to the airport wasn't due till the afternoon so I asked at reception if there was anywhere we could leave our things so that we didn't have to carry them around. I was given the number of a room which had been set aside for this. Lorraine and Garry, who were sitting with their bags in the lobby, overheard and offered to look after my stuff for me as they'd planned to stay there till the coach arrived.

By now I knew the route to the tobacconist by heart, so set off in the sunshine. Being worried about luggage weight restrictions and not wanting to have to pay any excess baggage cost, I'd packed my lightweight sandals. So I was wearing 'proper' shoes and walking wasn't nearly such a pleasure as last time.

It didn't take long to get to the shop and back. But back at the hotel, the carton wouldn't fit into my backpack. The only way I could get the baccy in was to separate the pouches and tuck them into any spaces I could find. By the time I'd finished, the coach had arrived to take us to the airport.

On the coach

Sitting next to Irina, the journey passed quickly as she's very friendly and chatty. With the exception of one 'phone call, which I'll tell you about in a sec. in the next paragraph, we nattered the whole way. [I've spoken to Irina since I got home and found that she didn't have a room of her own for the entire holiday. But she did get her money refunded.](#)

We'd been discussing her problems with her lack of hotel room, when I realised that I'd left my hokkle bokkle [hot water bottle to the uninitiated](#) in the shower cubicle in my room. [In spite of the heat of Italy, I have to use a hot water bottle at night in case I get night cramps. The heat from the bottle eases them.](#) I knew Vivienne, Tony and his mum and sister were getting a later plane so would still be at the resort. Getting lost on not only one, but two outings had worried me, so in case it happened again I'd taken Vivienne's mobile number. Now I 'phoned her to ask if she would be kind enough to check with the hotel reception to see if my hokkle bokkle had been handed in. Vivienne said she'd ask and if they had it she'd bring it back to England with her and post it to me when she got back. [This leads to another extra bit of chat which I've put as Endnote 2.](#)

5pm - Airborne en-route from Italy to Gatwick

Because I'm with a group, I'm much more relaxed on this journey than the outward one. As we were all catching the same plane to Gatwick we stayed together as we queued, went through check-in and sat waiting for our flight to be called. Gary had a priority seat which meant he didn't have to queue with the rest of us plebs. He did sit with us as we ate our packed lunches, then off he went to the front of the queue to get on the plane whilst the rest of us waited our turns.

I'd mentioned to Angela that I was worried about my suitcase being too heavy. She knew her's was nowhere near the limit and said I could transfer something from my case to her's if necessary. Fortunately that didn't happen, but it meant that we stayed close so we got on the plane together. I'm now on the aisle end of a bank of 3 seats. Angela's in the window seat and there's an empty one between us. Being able to chat all the way is so much better than the lone journey I made on the way to Lake Como. Mind you I think we'll all part company at Gatwick Airport station as we all probably go in different directions.

I must tell you about the panic I had before I got on the plane though. As you know, when you're going through security they ask you to take stuff out of your bags and put it into their special trays so they can check it in their x-ray machines. As usual my metal hip joints set their machines off as I went through their metal check, so had to wait till I'd been frisked to get my belongings. When I finally collected them, I was in a hurry to catch up with the others.

Whilst I transferred my laptop and other bits back from their trays into my backpack, I put my passport and boarding card down. I only realised I hadn't picked them up again when I was in the duty-free shop and needed my boarding card to buy the liqueurs I chose for Nigel. Heart in mouth, I raced back to security where one of the guards recognised me, probably from my passport photo. Thankfully they'd spotted my documents and kept them for me. The horror of that experience was definitely lessened by having someone to share it with.

The flight home was uneventful. Angela and I read our respective books (I was still working through Fifty Shades of Grey on my smart 'phone), we did a couple of puzzles in my magazine and chatted. At the baggage carousel, where once again I found my case really easily, we met up with Karina and Cheryl who were travelling together, Sheena and her daughter Connie. (I presume the others on the flight had to rush to get their trains.)

Gasping for a drink of water I tried to find somewhere to fill the empty plastic bottle I'd brought with me. We all needed to pay visits to the loo so I'd thought there'd be a drinking water fountain nearby as there was on the way out. I couldn't find one so had to buy a new bottle of water. Being back in England I now needed Sterling to pay but forgetting I'd put an emergency £5 note in my leather 'phone case, I thought I didn't have any English money. Not realising what a rip-off the shop's exchange rate would be I paid in Euros. I ended up paying about £4 for a £1.50 bottle of water!

After I'd got my water and the others had bought whatever bits they wanted, we made our way to the train station. Sheena and Connie had to rush to get their train as did Karina and Cheryl. Angela and I realised we could catch the same train. Already having my return ticket, I waited for Angela whilst she bought her's.

Again it was great having company for the journey and this time I had the added bonus of not having to ask strangers for help with my case as Angela kindly helped me lug it on and off. We finally had to part company when I had to change trains, but not before we'd swapped mobile 'phone numbers and made arrangements to keep in touch.

It was only once I was on my own that I checked my text messages and found:

Hello. U have been landed for 14 minutes. U not texted yet!!  
Xxxxxx

So I 'phoned you, Mara and Nigel to let you all know I was back and to let Nigel know what time train I was on.

#### BACK IN BERKHAMSTED

Nigel was waiting for me at Berkhamsted station and helped me off the train with my case.

I'm sure the boring stuff like popping into Waitrose for a few bits of shopping, isn't worth writing about so that's it. If you were with me on the course and have made it this far, please get in touch if you want to add or change anything. Otherwise I look forward to meeting up with you again some time.

## EPI LOGUE

On my return I wrote a letter to Shearings Holidays and a similar one to the Hotel Britannia. At the time of writing this it's nine months later and in spite of sending email reminders, I still haven't had a reply from the hotel. I had to send an email reminder to Shearings too but finally got a response from them disclaiming all responsibility. I haven't bothered to take it any further as in this sort of thing it's often brick-wall head-banging stuff - i.e. a waste of time and effort.

## ENDNOTE No. 1.

On my arrival in my room there was a bath towel, a hand towel and a thin cotton mat which reminded me of a thin tea-towel. From a previous holiday in Spain I assumed the latter to be a bath-mat to step out on to after using the shower.

When all the original towels were taken by the cleaning staff, a bath towel and a proper bath-mat were left in their place together with one of the thin cotton mats. I mentioned this to the receptionist who assured me a hand towel would be left for me the next day. The next morning, when there was still no hand towel, I happened to see the chambermaid so asked her if she would be leaving me a hand towel. She told me she had done so and went back to my room with me. Pointing to the thin piece of cotton she said that this was, in fact, a hand towel, not a bath mat.

Using this as a hand towel obviously made it very wet, so the next morning I left it on the floor so that it would be replaced with a fresh one when the room was cleaned. When I got back that evening, I found that the dirty 'hand towel' had simply been picked up from the floor and laid over the edge of the shower cubicle.

**Glynis: I did notice hand towel on the floor (thought it was shower mat).**

Obviously I reported this to the receptionist. Another guest was already there asking how frequently the bed sheets were changed. She was told every 3 or 4 days and that if her's hadn't yet been changed they would be done the next day. I pointed out that the bedding in my room hadn't been changed since I'd arrived nearly a week before. (There was no point in asking for mine to be changed as I was going home the next day.)

The hotel seems to have a shortage of hand towels as when I returned to my room later that day, there was still no hand towel of either type, but there were two clean bath towels on my bed.

## ENDNOTE No. 2

The sad story of the abandoned hot water bottle. Included in my letter to the Hotel Britannia was the following:

I unfortunately left a silicone hot water bottle in the shower cubicle of room 347. These are difficult to obtain, so I really didn't want to lose it. (I admit that I was careless in not checking everywhere before I vacated my room.) It was not immediately obvious as it was hanging from a blue peg hooked over the back of the shower fitting against the wall.

Here I describe the bottle and its cover and mention about asking Vivienne to check with the hotel. I didn't start writing my letter until after phoning Vivienne to find out if she'd managed to get the hokkle bokkle back. Whilst talking to her, I also mentioned how I'd felt and how Lesley had bristled about the certificates. She realised that perhaps their idea of fun had misfired.

Now back to the letter.

Not wanting to hassle Vivienne immediately after her return to the UK, I waited a couple of days before phoning her to find out if she'd retrieved my property. She said she was unable to trace it, but assumed that the chambermaid who'd cleaned my room might not have returned from her duties so may not yet have had a chance to hand it in. Vivienne couldn't wait to find out as she needed to catch the coach taking her to the airport for her flight.

So I telephoned your hotel and, due to the language difference, was passed to Jeanette (a Scottish lady receptionist) to whom I explained the situation. She said she would check Lost Property and asked me to call back the next day. When I made my second call, Jeanette told me my property hadn't been found or handed in. I tried to explain that the place in which I'd left it wasn't immediately obvious but she cut me short saying that the chambermaids cleaned the room thoroughly and besides, other guests had used the room since I left.

I see the following options:

1. The person who cleaned room 347 after I'd vacated it wasn't completely honest and kept the hot water bottle. (I doubt this as I'm sure your management vet all staff before employing them.)
2. The room wasn't cleaned as thoroughly as Jeanette obviously believes. If it had been, the hot water bottle would have been seen.

Guests are not vetted for honesty so if my property was still in the same place when the next person moved into the room, they could easily have packed it with their items when they left. Alternatively the next guest could have moved the hot water bottle into the wardrobe and either the room wasn't checked again after my phone call or if it was, the search wasn't as thorough as I was assured it had been.

I would like to make a formal complaint about the cleaning staff as whichever of the above options is correct, they would have been at fault, either for not handing the item in or for not cleaning the shower cubicle thoroughly enough to see it before any other guests arrived.

If you can get your staff to recheck the wardrobe in room 347 and the item is found, I would be most grateful if it could be returned to me.

As I said earlier, I've not had any response from the hotel.

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## THE VERY LAST WORD ON THE SUBJECT

So how do I feel now about the course?

All I can say is that it was fantastic. In spite of the problems with the room, I can honestly say that I enjoyed the week. Everyone on the course, from Tony and Vivienne to my fellow students and even Tony's family, were all so friendly. I didn't once regret having gone to Italy on my own.

Apart from the problems with the hotel, the location was idyllic. Lake Como is a beautiful place and the visits to monasteries, etc. with Tony are experiences I wouldn't have had if I'd not been with the group and are memories to treasure.

But what about the course itself. All I can say is WOW! It was sooooo informative. Tony was so right in not letting me use my cards as otherwise I wouldn't have had such brilliant feedback that I can link without a prop. I have to admit that I still use my cards rather than work without them as I don't have enough self confidence - yet. Who knows, maybe I'll go on another of Tony's courses and learn a bit more.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My life now seems to be in twos. I have two daughters, two granddaughters and two great grandchildren and I live in Hertfordshire with my second husband.

But before the twos, for as long as I can remember, I've wanted to get my writing published. It didn't happen. In spite of keeping diaries for donkey's years and writing dozens of short stories and starting several longer books, the only things I've ever had printed for the outside world to read were a few letters to magazines and some articles for technical publications.

Getting my words down on paper was always the driving force. Once written there was always a reason why I didn't do anything more: too much work earning money; too busy caring for my elderly mother; etc. I've finally accepted the fact that it boils down to a bad experience as a child which I have allowed to rule my life. But if I don't do something soon, it'll be too late.

So this diary is hopefully, the first of many things I'm offering to the big wide world. If you have any constructive criticism I'd love to hear it.

Naomi

Naomi

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