

Maundy Thursday



We are now travelling north with the northern stretches of Peru to the east but not in sight. Tonight is another formal night and Captain's cocktail party so we enjoyed a Bucks fizz for breakfast. Most of Tuesday having been devoted to farewells, we went off to Miraflores yesterday. It certainly seems to be a 20th Century city – we spent the first hour downloading, uploading and checking *Facebook*, in a Starbucks, to catch up with how things are at home. Then we spent some time shopping, all too aware that home beckons and there are no worries about luggage, weight-wise. I am already regretting not getting Alpaca jumpers – they are apparently so warm and so durable but none of the designs in the Indian Market appealed. But, there is so much wonderfully coloured weaving to admire.

It is fascinating travelling along the beach road into the city with dramatic contoured rocky outcrops to the east, where back in the sixties the sea beat against the rocks. For the last 40 years or more, a beach with a road is taking shape, as tons of soil and hardcore are deposited along a six/eight mile stretch. It is still, very much a project underway, but impressive for all that. In the evening we had local dancers and musicians aboard, demonstrating an elegant dance from Lima, a dance from the tropical rain forests (similarities there to N American Indians with feather head dress) and finally, a dragon dance - elaborate costume and head dresses, good for tourists, but not much dance content.



Then our evening meal, and the 'disappointment' in meeting our new fellow diners. Just two people from Swindon who talked non-stop about their world travels with various anecdotes, but failed to engage with us. Briet, a charming Norwegian lady travelling on her own, at an adjoining table, caught my glazed eyes and smiled sympathetically. We had been so spoilt on the first leg by the company we enjoyed. We have been invited to join some other fellow travellers on another table but at the same time, don't want to appear rude. Watch this space!

The life boat drill, which had us all trailing up to the life boat in life-jackets and hanging on to each other, took much longer than previously. The delightful small elderly gentleman who is seen escorting his wife around, had to trail behind her and I held her hand but she was very slow. In a real emergency she would need to be hoisted over a guy's shoulder!

Then . . . the sail away at some time past 11.00pm; band already partying on the stern. Nick likes to see things from high up on the bow but missed the action. I'll explain – Black Watch did have very little manoeuvring space as there were cargo boats moored fore and aft. First the stern came gently away from the quay and then the bow started to move out. Naturally, (even for an 'umble narrowboater like myself) I have learned that as the front comes out, the back moves in, and somewhere on the stern, around about DECK 6 we scrunched/cracked into a huge structure on the quay. Screams and scrambles away from the impact ... the music stopped ... for a while until the damage was assessed; the powers that be (captain/pilot/ whoever) decided that it would be better to attempt the manoeuvre in a more sensible direction and the party resumed, though with less fervour. By midnight we had managed to find our way out of the harbour, safely between the red and green lights! Apparently, whoever was advising the bridge of waterline distance of stern-to - quayside had overlooked the fact that the rear deck substantially overhung, and it was this which, in the captain's words "kissed the quayside off-loading structure". Nick reckons that David put the mockers on it all, because, for a day or two before he and Margaret left the ship, he had been frequently commenting on the dubious position in the harbour of the Black Watch.

Good (or *Long*, as the Scandinavians call it) Friday

..... at sea, with church service aboard and a lovely calm day. We are enjoying totally calm waters in the pools and a glorious sunset. Also enjoyed talk by Prof Herbert Kerrigan QC (prosecutes in UK, and defends in Scotland) on the theme "Does Crime Pay?", his first PowerPoint talk, with info (lots, well, he is a lawyer) and anecdotes, and humour. Apparently, it pays only for lawyers, bankers, and politicians.

Easter Sunday: 0° 56' north of equator; 80° 43' west



Yesterday was a port day in Ecuador. We watched a party of cruise folk depart in trucks with musicians sitting above on the roofs playing – shame about the 'high vis' jackets which should have had flowers rather than the regulation yellow cross. We then proceeded to port gate where a clamour of taxi drivers vied for our business. It was a 30-minute drive from Manta, a port specialising in tuna fishing and canning, one or two of the fishing boats are high tech – one even having a small helicopter aboard.. We passed Murcielago Beach, where half the city appeared to be enjoying their Easter Saturday and arrived in Montecristi, one of the main centres of production for the Panama hat, favoured by the workers on the Panama Canal for its protection from the sun and also rain. We watched them being made and noted the time and special skills of the makers, who work with

special straw from the carludovica palm. Just like the taxi drivers, a number of shops and stalls were vying for business and claiming that their hats were the best quality and the finest! The weather was dull, though very hot and humid and after a really early morning, I'm afraid we crashed out for an hour or more in the afternoon before enjoying some late afternoon sun, swim (me), gym (him), and a lovely sunset as the ship turned slowly around in the bay while the compass was calibrated. Two

entertainers on board are attractive young ladies, who play violins and add a touch of movement and glamour to their

concerts. We have discovered that one of them has been living on a narrowboat on the K&A, in Bath. How does Nick i) manage to connect with these two beauties (on a boat where the average age of the cruisers is 75!!!) and ii) learn about the narrow boat and iii) start to advise about technical issues? I know not!



We actually passed over the equator at about midnight last night and awoke to a wet Easter morning. I did my final brisk two laps of the deck in quite steady rain. Consequently, the crossing of the equator party out by the pool this morning was abandoned (fortunately for all those who had offended mighty Neptune and were sprayed with seawater instead of being thrown in the pool!) It was actually quite fun, with our rotund Cruise Director, Ashley, reading out the offences. Naturally the captain didn't get away with *anything* – like outdoing the comics, charming the ladies with his gym-honed body andcrumpling his vessel!!!

