



Gulliver's Travels

By Jane Revell

On 23 September last year, Lawrie Chivers went to visit his son, Lawrence, in Japan. He took off on a Nippon Airways flight from Heathrow to Osaka and then on to Kita-Kyushu (the capital of the island, Kyushu, about four hundred miles south of Tokyo).



Lawrie (centre) with son Lawrence and his wife and family in Japan

Lawrence first went to Japan ten years ago and loved it. He came back home, decided to learn Japanese, and did a degree in Japanese and Business Studies at Cardiff University - spending one of the four years in Kita-Kyushu. (There have apparently been links between Cardiff and Kita-Kyushu since before the first world war, when the Welsh taught the Japanese how to produce steel and sold them the coal to do it.) When Lawrence had finished his studies, he went back out again, fell in love with a Japanese girl called Myumi and married her. He is teaching English out there now, and has just been offered a lecture post at the university.

Futon on the floor

For the two weeks Lawrie was there, he stayed with Lawrence and Myumi in their tiny flat near the railway line. About 80% of Japan is mountain, and as arable farming has priority on what little flat land is left, space is at a premium. Probably no more than about 24 feet by 24 feet in total, the flat contains a bathroom, toilet, kitchen, living-room and bedroom, separated by removable, sliding walls. Lawrie slept on a futon in the living-room ('Very

comfortable', he said), rolling it up each morning to put it away in a cupboard. 'That's why it's important to take your shoes off in a Japanese house.', he said, 'The bedding is on the floor.'

So what did he particularly like about Japan? 'So clean. People don't throw their litter away like they do here.' He described the vending machines on street corners which always had receptacles for cans etc next to them. 'So well-organised too. If a train is due to arrive at 4.21, then it arrives at 4.21! And as it arrives, all the possible onward bus and train connections are announced over the intercom.'

Nip on a bike

He said he felt healthier living there as well. 'I cycled a lot ... and lost quite a bit of weight!' The Japanese are keen cyclists apparently: outside the local station there were 2000 cycle spaces and they tended to be pretty well used.

What about the people? Very friendly once you got to know them, he said, and though older people could be quite formal, the younger ones were very relaxed. Touching people could be an issue though, and a gesture of warmth provoked on

occasion a somewhat startled reaction! Basically people seemed to have a lot of respect for one another. On the roads, for example, motorists were very tolerant of cyclists, and cyclists in turn were careful with pedestrians and so on.

How did he get on with the language? 'I was lucky to have my son interpret for me most of the time, but I did learn about four words, things like hello and thank you. You can get by if you don't mind making an ass of yourself!'

High rice

Food. How was it? 'Very varied' he said, 'but expensive. Going out to a restaurant could cost about £100 a head. Lots of raw seafood and some strange things like raw sea urchins and sea slugs. I wasn't really sure about those but it seemed a bit rude not to eat them - especially at that price!'

Did he ever have to eat on the floor? 'Not in restaurants, but at home, always - knocked my knees out something rotten - it's alright until you want to get up!'

So what was the strangest thing about it all? 'I am a very big person - 6 foot 7 in fact, and my son is 6 foot 6. Everything there seems to be designed for small people. I had trouble in restaurants with the low tables, and when I got up I was always clouting my head! I felt like Gulliver!'

East Finchley - home of the famous

By David Smith

What a cavalcade passed along the High Road when it was the main road to York and Scotland! The retinues of kings and queens, statesmen, politicians, merchants, defending armies, invading throngs, cattle drovers and the occasional highwayman: they have all passed by.

But a few settled here, attracted by East Finchley's country setting and its situation high above the stench and smoke and bustle of London and yet near enough to travel in for business.

Past glories

The life of Richard Cromwell (1626-1712) has already featured in the columns of *The Archer*. He lived in a house opposite The Five Bells in East End Road. The house was demolished only in 1958. As son of the deposed Oliver Cromwell he had to lie low after the restoration of Charles II but felt safe to return here and live incognito for twenty years.

Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) the great Victorian architect lived at Elm House, later Elmhurst, from 1833 until 1857. He had moved out of London for his wife's better health but was still able to catch a coach to his clients' estates in the north of England.

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) co-founder of The National Trust, a keen advocate of improved housing for the poor and a promoter of open spaces for recreation, lived at Brownsells Cottages - the site of which is now covered by the slip road running from the High Road onto the westbound North Circular Road. She spent some of her most formative years in this rural paradise.

George Sanger (1827-1911) lived at Park Farm in East End Road where he kept his circus in winter quarters. He was the most famous circus proprietor of his day, appearing before Queen Victoria on more than one occasion. His autobiography is a delight to read.

Showbiz glitter

Dame Gracie Fields (1898-1979) lived for a time in The Bishop's Avenue. Percy Honri (1874-1953), the music hall entertainer and impresario, lived at Cromwell Hall in East End Road from 1915 to 1933. In those days it took him less than twenty minutes to drive to the London Palladium and to find a parking space. Oh, happy days!

The "showbiz" theme continued throughout the 20th century: in the 1950s it might have been possible to see Peter Sellers (1925-1980) in his flat opposite East Finchley library or Charlie Chester in Vivian Way (admit-

tedly this is more "East Finchley borders" as the estate agents might say). In the same area were Millicent Martin and Ronnie Carroll at the corner of Ossulton Way and Brim Hill; Monty Modlyn, the radio and TV host, in Gurney Drive and Noel Edmonds in Brookland Rise. In the 1970s Mick Jagger had a flat at the corner of the High Road and Huntingdon Road. Sir Denis Hamilton, who was the senior figure in Times Newspapers lived at "Dalkieth" in The Bishops Avenue. Incidentally, Field Marshall Montgomery was a frequent houseguest there when off-duty.

Creativity

East Finchley continues to be a powerhouse of creativity. Until quite recently Charles Dance, the actor, lived in Cherry Tree Road and Michelle Collins, the TV star, in Baronsmere Road. Fleur Adcock, the poet, lives in Lincoln Road and Fergal Sharkey, the musician, in Cromwell Close. Jonathan Adams, actor and artist, and Samantha Fox, former page 3 girl and pop singer, both live in Lankaster Gardens. Carolyn Pickles, the stage and TV actress, lives in Bedford Road and Lesley Chownen, formerly a dancer with "Second Generation" lives in Sylvester Road whilst Jane Cunliffe, TV actress and former Brookside, lives off Church Lane. Geoffrey Haydon, the film maker and biographer of John Tavener, and Susan Tully of "Eastenders" fame live in Durham Road. Ray and Dave Davis, founders of "The Kinks" rock band, live nearby.

From the ridiculous to the sublime

Aficionados of the cult "Goon Show" will recall that Spike Milligan, who lived in Woodside Park and who wrote the show's script, created for Peter Sellers a character called "Bluebottle", a puny boy scout who frequently told listeners he came from East Finchley.

In contrast, it is an inspiring thought that Lord Fenner Brockway (1888-1988), a tireless worker for international peace and racial equality, lived modestly in a cottage opposite what is now The Bobath Centre in the 1960s.

Perhaps it's not such a bad place after all...

Footnote: *The Archer* would like to know more about East Finchley's famous - and infamous - residents, both past and present. Are you famous? Is your neighbour? Write and tell us.

We should especially like to know a lot more about where and when Vincent van Gogh lived in East Finchley, for example. Now that would be a coup, wouldn't it?

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