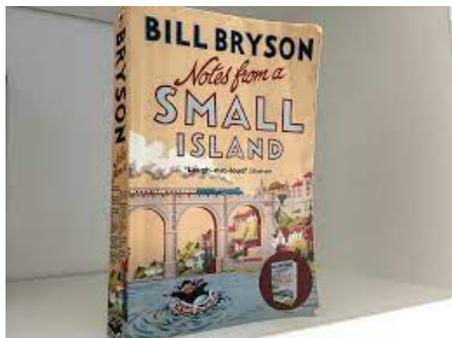


" Notes from a Small Island - Move over Bill Bryson "



by Gareth Milner,
Director of Osteopathic Solutions

The times I have walked into WH Smith or Waterstones and seen Bill Bryson's books, I have wondered what are they like to read. Well, I decided to buy his 'Notes from a Small Island' (published in 1995) which I read on my summer 2020 holiday to Turkey by the pool with my favourite cocktail there, a 'Cosmo', short for Cosmopolitan.



This short Blog post is a story about my trips around the UK since 2010, providing my business' services, written in a way that Bill Bryson, and his followers, I hope would appreciate.

Let's start with Weston Super Mare, where I travelled to for my work with Smurfit Kappa in 2011.

I remember my trips to UK sea side resorts as a child, including Great Yarmouth and Blackpool with my best friend Paul Riley and Broadstairs with my Mum. The arcades and the 2p machines (which now are 10p with inflation!); rock candy with the name of the place in its cross section; the roller coasters including the 'Big One' at Blackpool. Fond memories.

For me, Weston Super Mare is a strange place. After checking into my dingy, low cost B&B, I decided to take a walk and



investigate what this British sea side resort had to offer. Admittedly it was a cold, drab, early February evening, however walking along the promenade I observed that Weston didn't have much to offer, asides from the chip shops next to chip shops, opposite kebab shops, which as you guessed it, were situated next to kebab shops. Living outside the UK now, one of the biggest things I miss about our Great Country, is a succulent haddock and chips, accompanied by a juicy, large pickled onion and crunchy gherkin, washed down by an expertly engineered British craft beer. If you are from the South East, you will know Bishop's Finger. A beautiful malty, mouth watering, Kent masterpiece. All very yum.



For those of you who have run your own business, starting out, you keep costs down. The morning's awakening included bed bug bites from the £28 a night B&B's single bed. At then, 28 years old it felt like I was going back to my student days in cheap digs. Travelodge seemed 5 star in comparison.

Off to a Palace I go. Hampton Court, owned by Historic Royal Palaces, was the home of King Henry VIII.



Fond memories again for me going there as a young boy with my Mum; walking around the vast maze; having an ice cool 99 and flake; observing the immaculately kept gardens. Little did I know that in 20 years time I would be back here, a grown man, teaching the Grounds Team how to keep the gardens pristine (not in their potting plants skills) - helping to keep them at work that is, and not be at home with severe back pain from manual handling accidents. Between training courses, the then (very nice to work with) Health & Safety Advisor Mark Beaumont recalled the time he was delivering a course in the same training room we stood, and from the

next door room he and the attendees heard someone banging the door. He opened the door to find no one in the room. The door he opened was the only entrance into the room. Hampton Court is renowned for having spirits roaming the cloisters at night. I remember watching Richard & Judy years ago with story about a 'ghost' being caught on one of their CCTV cameras (shown below) and being fascinated if indeed it was the spirit of an inhabitant of the Palace, walking around amongst us mortals. Spooky stuff!



My July 2011 trip for Roxel took me to Kidderminster, which as google states, is a large market and historic minster town and civil parish in Worcestershire; not the sort of place you would think would be home to a company that made rockets that would ultimately be part of a missile that would kill a lot of people, many innocent. Walking into the reception, a feeling of 'I am being paid to do this work, with blood on my hands' as a missile was proudly displayed by the reception desk.

Walking around the site going from building to building with the Manual Handling Course attendees, I asked one of the Managers why the site was so big for only around 150 employees. He calmly replied 'So if it blows up, only a few people die'. Thanks for that I thought, wishing I hadn't asked him.



In January 2012, I took myself to Kendal for my work with South Lakeland Council. The Lake District has always been close to my heart, first going there as a 6 year boy with my family for Christmas, staying at the Langdale Hotel. **Great Britain**, is truly a beautiful place. It can be difficult to think this if you live in a



drab town like I used to. On a freezing cold January morning in 2012, I remember the picturesque river flowing, icy cold through Kendal, a place where the inhabitants still have pride in their town. It was a shame that my trip was only 2 days and that those days were spent in a training room and waste services depot. Check out the following websites:

<https://visit-kendal.co.uk/>
<https://www.langdale.co.uk/>



In early 2014, I was lucky to travel to Scotland for the first time providing training for Gordonstoun School (shown below). I recall the weather was amazing, 30 degrees of sunshine. Walking around the stunning grounds of the school, I thought how privileged the young students were to go to such a beautiful place to be educated. I myself was very lucky (Thank you Mum and Dad) to go to Dulwich College in London. Through my teens, not enjoying my time there, I sense there was only a smidgen of gratitude that I went to such a school. Gratitude is defined as 'the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness'. It is something that I try and practice more these days.



Whilst walking around Gordonstoun School, the fighter jets from RAF Lossiemouth went over at mach 1. This time I was lucky (due to the flight schedule from Inverness to Gatwick) to have some time to visit the Scottish localities and took myself to play golf at Moray Golf Club (pictured below).

For those of you who are not golfers, I allow you to skip this paragraph. 3 wood in my hand, on the 7th tee, I smashed the ball into the middle of the fairway, 230 yards. Nice. Walking along the fairway expecting a simple shot to the green, my ball has disappeared. The meaning of 'Perplexed', completely baffled; very puzzled. Looking around my ball was nicely homed in a bush. Welcome to links golf Gareth. The strong right to left wind, coupled with the angled terrain led my ball into the unplayable. Today I am writing this the



day after Phil Mickleson won the US PGA Championship at the seemingly impossible Kiawah Island. At 50 years 11 months, what an achievement and a golf lesson for all that watched in awe at such a performance. Tangent over.



Away from the idyllic Scottish coastline to the M25. Through 2007 to 2015, I had many a morning on this stretch of tarmac. I used to find it baffling how many people (like me) were on this motorway before 6am, basically putting their lives in the hands of the Gods, selling their time to an employer. If you travel every day on this death trap of a road, ask yourself if what you are travelling for is worth it. If it isn't, relocate your daily grind. You will be happier for it. I remember the stress of running late for clients even though I had given

enough time to get there (except for Henkel, lost client that time).



I took myself to Telford in 2012. Getting out of my car after another over 2 hour drive to work, I recall thinking how cold it was, in comparison to the south east where I lived. Telford describes itself as "The Birthplace of Industry". There are just some places across the UK that just sound crap towns. A few from Surrey include Croydon, Redhill and Crawley. For me Telford is one of those. Apologies if you live there. Check out the book **Crap Towns Returns: Back by Unpopular Demand**

Another one is Dartford, where I took myself to work for Colorcon. Wow, Dartford, what a sh#hole. Again apologies if you live there. I really do think Kent County Council should remove Dartford, and also places like Chatham and Gravesend from their classification. I was lucky to train to be an Osteopath in the 'Garden of England'. Not much garden about Dartford.



A Tottenham Hotspur fan I am; before you say, I have heard all the jokes before. I even have a tattoo on my leg that is Spurs' motto "Audere est Facere". When translated to English, the phrase simply means "to dare is to do". I believe in life, getting all deep here, that you have to take some chances. If you don't you will avoid living. Anyway in 2014 I took myself to White Hart Lane working for Haringey Council. On the internet if you type in 'Tottenham' it brings up the following:

Tottenham is one of the poorest areas in London and it is a failed area, plagued with crime, unemployment, welfare dependency, race hustlers, gang/gun/drug culture and degenerate broken single mothers (with 3 or more kids from multiple fathers).

Tottenham was unlucky enough to come third on the list of London's most dangerous areas. One person was so damning in their criticism of Tottenham they advised people never to visit it. They said: "I would honestly say Tottenham is by far the worst in London"

I shouldn't laugh but that 'with 3 or more kids from multiple fathers'. Frightening such deprivation in the place lots of us still call **Great** Britain. I remember the first time I walked through Haringey's streets (other than watching Spurs play in the 90s and early 00s - photo of me below with my brother Richard in 2001 at White Hart Lane), I was honestly quite scared, in the middle of the day. This was a universe away from the safe town of Banstead in Surrey where I had grown up. Walking through the streets from the tube station to the Haringey Council venue wasn't enjoyable with many a look over my shoulder. Let's hope the new Tottenham Hotspur Stadium will initiate better times for this impoverished London Borough. COYS. From this dreadful season, at least there wasn't a St Totteringham's day. Not much of an achievement Daniel Levy. Goodbye Harry Kane, it was a pleasure.





Tower Hamlets. Another place I recommend you should avoid like the plague. Google says...

Tower Hamlets is the most deprived borough in London on three of the five summary measures

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has one of the highest crime rates in the capital

I took myself there by train in 2014 providing Moving & Handling of People Training across the Borough's schools. Tower Hamlets, an area of London (well like most others), that has abundant richness, in a melange of despairing poverty. What must the Trader Boys in those skyscrapers think of the area they commute to every day?

Moving away from London now. Up north I drove early one January 2012 early morning to Dukinfield, east of Manchester, working for Tulip Foods. I recall an Abattoir that was crammed into the town.

Firstly if you are vegetarian, move onto the next page.

This is out of respect for people who choose not to eat meat, as I was one of these people for 13 years. I can't believe my school Chinthurst (where I attended between 1984 to 1994 - happy days) served me up spam for lunch. Really, spam? For those of you who went through school during the 80s, you will also recall corned beef. At Tulip's Dukinfield abattoir, it really was a wake up call to how meat got on my plate.



After completing Day 1 of the Manual Handling Instructor Course, walking into the 'Auschwitz' part of the site, the most disgusting smell I have ever had the luck to smell hit my nasal passages, circulating the factory air from the pigs' inners, expertly carved open by what looked like men from 1066 and the Battle of Hastings. To the hallway door I ran as fast as Usain Bolt, ready to expel my bacon sandwich I had a few hours prior. Thank God I got to the hallway in time, gasping for air. Trust me, the smell was that bad.

Back to my 'home' County, Surrey in February 2016, and the pleasant town of Guildford, visiting another abattoir, this time for ABP Food Group. Google says ...

Is Guildford a nice place to live? Yes, Guildford is a beautiful place to live and provides the perfect balance between rural and city life. Within easy reach of the capital via great rail and road connections, whilst also being surrounded by the countryside of Surrey, you really do get the best of both worlds.



For some reason I find placing abattoirs in the middle of towns a bit distasteful. Opposite ABP's site in Guildford resided pleasant semi detached homes and opposite these pleasant semi detached houses resided the chamber of horrors. After driving along, yes that M25 motorway, I got out my car fuelled with a service station attempt at coffee, to hear the tone of cows waiting for their death. It was unnerving. I had that Roxel type of feeling again, that I was being paid with blood on my hands. Experiences inside included ... 'Do you want to see the cows bolted in the head? My answer was 'no, I am ok thanks' and the operative snapping jaws off with his bare hands, with a long row of cow's heads in his daily routine. There was no need for him to do tricep extensions at the gym; and the cow (dead I must add) being chain sawed from top to bottom from an operative on an electric platform. As I drove out of ABP Guildford, I was glad to be surrounded by those pleasant semi detached houses.

In 2012 and 2013 I took myself south west to Exeter for Devon County Council.



Devon and Cornwall, my favourite counties of Great Britain. OK, Cumbria and Kent, you can squeeze in too. Exeter is a very nice place. Google says ...

There is no mistaking that both Exeter and Devon have been amongst the best places in the UK to live consistently over the last few years. Reports find that Exeter outscores other British cities in terms of mortality rates, cost of living, the amount of green space and crime rate.

After providing Moving & Handling Training at the South West MS Therapy Centre (some of that pure Oxygen lads would have been nice) I ventured back to my hotel. Due to my car breaking down, I decided to walk to what appeared to be a rather nice, stately place for food and slumber. After checking in at the gregorian reception, I ascended the long staircase looking forward to a nice rest before dinner. Walking along the creaking hallway floorboards, I reached my destination, limbs heavy and achy. Door open and boom. The rancid smell of human faeces. I stood in the door with the fear that I would have to sleep in a room that smelt of the local Exeter man after his lamb bhuna washed down by a keg of Kingfisher. My thinking (part of my) brain then stood on my shoulder and whispered into my other sense organ, 'Gareth, get some sense, you don't have to sleep in here, go and ask for another room!'. I took myself back to reception and with a Bill Bryson inspired complaint, I got a pleasant room that smelt more like potpourri. Phew.

In 2014 I took myself to the London Borough of Barnet for Jewish Care via Golders Green Tube Station. At 14-16 years old I studied Judaism in Religious Studies, and if I was a practising believer, to this day I think Judaism is a very nice religion, especially with the family being key to its practice. I can really see how some people think Great Britain has lost its Britain part. Walking along the streets it was something like Harrison Ford's Witness film in the 1980s (although they were Amish Christians). I feel very much that countries should embrace other nationalities and religions, however Golders Green was too much. For me I wasn't in Britain, just a place that once called itself this. I felt like an outsider in the city I was born in.



In January 2016 I took myself to East Riding of Yorkshire and Bridlington, the town where I understood the Milner family had originated from. Supposedly, Bridlington is the "Lobster Capital of Europe". What struck me about the town was the lack of new construction. Houses were old without renovation. In Surrey where I grew up, new constructions are everywhere, from new office blocks to new apartments to new housing developments. What has struck me about many of the towns in the north of the UK is this feeling of that they are

stuck in the past, desperately craving some much needed investment. I was providing Moving & Handling of People Training for the local Council staying overnight at a pleasant pub, the White Horse in Driffield, tasting some of the finest local craft beers the region had to offer. Walking to my car, I remember how cold it was.

I had emigrated to Spain, and within 5 months of living away from the UK the bitterness of winter was hard to take. So, so cold. After a day's labours, I took myself to Flamborough Head Golf Club, again sampling some local craft beer; smash some golf balls in the range and contemplate what it was to be a Milner in Bridlington.





In December 2017, I went back to one of my favourite places in the UK, Newquay in Cornwall, working for Cornwall Council. To the left is Fistral Beach. A stunning place to be on a hot summer's day. I first went there when I was 16 years old, fresh from completing my GCSEs, on holiday with 3 school friends. I don't know what I was thinking then, staying there 2 weeks, living in a big tent. The things you do when you are young. I remember the camp site vividly, Sunnyside Park. The on site disco. Buying my first bottles of alcohol, Bacardi Breezers, whoops, must have looked 18. The competition amongst us boys on the female front. Surfing on Fistral Beach.

As this was my first trip away from my family, I was starting to get homesick, putting my coins into the BT phone box to call my Mum.

During the coming years between 20-22 years old I returned to Newquay with my cousins and then by brother Richard, who rented a house for a year 2 minutes walk from Fistral Beach. This was the first time in my life that I felt free. Fond memories of the Newquay Walk-about, Sailors (pictured to the right) and Berties Nightclubs. These days many young people go to Magaluf (down the road from me now)



and other destinations in the European sun, but for me I kept these early holidays in the UK, Britain's 'Mediterranean'. On hot summer days, the view of the sea from Fistral Beach really does feel like you are in Greece. I look forward to the next time I go back to Newquay, yes a crap town, but beautiful British scenery.

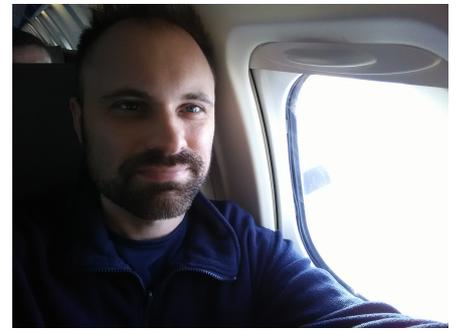


As I now live in Spain (if you are thinking of emigrating to Spain, please email me at garethmilner@osteopathicsolutions.co.uk and I am happy to tell you from my experiences the pros and cons, and to be honest it's mainly cons), my trips around the UK with my business have dwindled, but there is one last trip I want to tell you about, to the Shetland Isles, working for Bristolow Group. I won't go into it on this Blog post how this journey of flights came about but it did; Palma to Paris, Paris to Aberdeen, Aberdeen to Sumburgh, Sumburgh to Aberdeen, Aberdeen to Heathrow and finally Heathrow to Palma, in 2 days.

In 2017 I flew from Inverness to Sumburgh which was the most enjoyable flight I have ever had. The route from Inverness goes over the Orkney Islands. I very much recommend this flight, as on a sunny day the many islands are amazing to see from the sky. Like then, I flew in a prop plane from Aberdeen to Sumburgh. You would think that a jet would pick up better on take off, but these prop planes are amazing in the short distance they need to run along the runway and the way they just effortlessly pick up off the ground.



This journey was a chance to relax a bit with the in-flight magazine which I always enjoy reading. One of the first pages I came across was an advert of Highland Spring. I always find it a positive 'shot in the arm' when out and about I see clients of my business. My business Osteopathic Solutions has provided a Manual Handling & Ergonomic Risk Assessment and Instructor Programme for Highland Spring. Reading on I read this article on the Scottish Highlands.



Apart from the weather, I love Scotland. I visited Edinburgh in summer 2019 to see the Scottish Open at The Renaissance Golf Club. As Scotland is the 'Home of Golf' this region would soon be on my list to visit with my golf clubs, just hope it sun shines like it did that weekend.

An advert for one of my favourite real ale breweries St Austell Brewery. If you are travelling to Cornwall this summer, why not go on their brewery tour. Even if you aren't a real ale fan, this makes a great afternoon of it down in St Austell. Like St Austell Brewery's 'Proper Job', I was soon to provide 'a proper job' for Bristow at their Sumburgh airbase.



The last time I came to Shetland for Bristow in 2017 was a day after I completed the 'Rat Race Coast to Coast'. In 2019 I also competed in this great 2 (or 1 day) triathlon event. After this Blog why not read my Blog 'My Rat Race 2019 – A Celebration of us Sapiens' Musculoskeletal System' also on this Blog page www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/osteopathic-solutions-blogs

For more information view www.ratracecoasttocoast.co.uk

Landing at Sumburgh is special. The landscape is just so untouched by us humans. The sea water looks so clean when you approach to land. Again, as I was so close, it would have been nice to drive up to Lewick, but again this wasn't possible as I would be flying back to Aberdeen the same afternoon.



Near the Bristow base I swear it was the house of Father Ted. It isn't but I wish it was. For those of you who haven't watched Father Ted, it is an absolute brilliant comedy. A completely crazy spin on being a Priest in Ireland. The episodes that spring to mind are Mrs Doyle and the tea making machine; the bunny rabbit episode; and the milk man who visits the local housewives episode. If you fancy a laugh and a bit of escapism, Father Ted is a celebration of the quality of comedy that existed in the 1990s.

That wraps up my brief post on my experiences travelling around the UK with my business Osteopathic Solutions. If you liked this Blog you may also like to read my 2020 posts....

" Planes, Planes & more Planes "

and

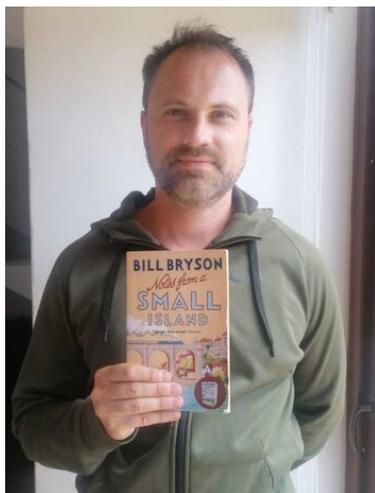
" 10 Years of Osteopathic Solutions - A Candid Account "

... all available via our website page www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/osteopathic-solutions-blogs

Email me with your thoughts about my Blogs and I will post you a free copy of our 2020 published Manual Handling Training DVD. For more information please view www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/manual-handling-dvd



Thanks for reading. If you love everything Britain, then I highly recommend Bill Bryson's book as shown by me below. I look forward to reading all this books.



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