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١٠ . لـ م ن و ه ز ح ط

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Diary Day 3 - Highgate Fair

I hope you are managing to use your shorthand for real life things. It makes all the difference between thinking of it as a study that will be useful one day when you reach a zillion words a minute, and actually doing something real with it right now, such as telephone message, shopping list, reminder note or diary. The main point is that you are thinking primarily about the activity or message and then the shorthand becomes a mundane, ordinary, everyday tool to write your note. You should be able to read it back another day with ease, because you already know what it is about, and it is a real treat to know that you have used it successfully, without any fanfare, for something other than a dry exercise. It loses its revered and lofty position of almost unattainable expertise for the privileged few, and is put in its rightful place of obedient, compliant and deferential servant that obeys your every command, and which just needs some extra training and practice to make it more efficient and easier.

Here is another one of my diary days. The day started sunny and bright but quickly became cloudier and breezy. We took the bus to the railway station and then a train to Charing Cross Station in central London. From there we took the tube train to Archway Station in the north of the city. The tube is generally very crowded but we always go to the end of the platform and often find that the last carriage has more space. From Archway we took a bus to Highgate, which is one of the highest points in London, as its name suggests.

We came to see the Highgate Fair in the Square, an annual village event. The first thing we saw was the barrel organ playing wonderful music, controlled by a long punched card strip that feeds

through automatically at the back. Pond Square is a roughly triangular area of trees and paving, and it was full of colourful stalls selling street food, artisan bread and cakes, ornaments, plants, toys, clothing and household items. Local societies and clubs also had stalls, with all their goods, leaflets and information available on the tables. In the centre of the square were lots of tables and chairs, and a mini stage with a brass band playing. Everyone in Highgate seemed to have turned out for their community fun day.

Further along, past more stalls, we came to the church at the end of the road, where there was a sheep show in a large mobile trailer. We saw the sheep demonstration last year so we did not stay for that, but we certainly smelled them at a certain point when passing close to the trailer! The church was open for visitors, with a tour of the church tower available. There were trampolines for the children, bouncing up very high in harnesses on elastic ropes. I think this is something to do before they have their ice creams and cupcakes, and not after!

We left the fair and took a bus to Muswell Hill where we looked in the shops. Then we walked further along to Alexandra Palace. As we approached through the park and trees, we could hear music coming from that direction. When we got into the open and came up the wide flight of steps towards the Palm Court entrance, we found that there was a large indoor sporting event happening inside and the grounds were full of food stalls, with all sorts of delicious smells coming from every direction. It was very crowded, with people standing around and sitting at the tables and on the low walls, eating, drinking, and enjoying the lively music and the happy atmosphere.

Diary Day 3 - Highgate Fair

We walked through the crowds, then along the side of the building and headed towards the park at the rear. The elevated location means there are wide and distant views over London and its suburbs, and we could see the tall buildings of the city centre off in the misty distance. As the building is so large, by the time we rounded the back of it we could hear nothing of the hubbub happening at the far side. We walked through the car park and found a seat by the lake. We had our sandwiches and watched the geese, ducks and pigeons. There were people going round the lake in pedalo boats, in the shape of a swan, dragon or flamingo. There was a very brief shower of thin misty rain but it soon blew over.

As it was now somewhat cloudy, we did not walk round the lake and park but decided to go home. As usual, as we left the seat the pigeons came wandering in to see if we had dropped any crumbs underneath. As we made for the bus-stop a little way down the hill, our bus was pulling away but it was quite a short wait for the next one. It had become cooler with more gusty wind blowing up the hill. The bus took us to Finsbury Park Station, where we got on the train to Victoria Station without having to wait for it. At Victoria we were also able to board our train immediately, delivering us back to our home in the quiet and green suburbs. (890 words)