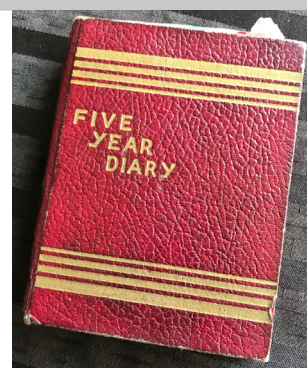


EIGHT

AFTER COLOURFUL CORONATION, A GREY LIST OF SIGHTS SEEN IN OLD LONDON



June 20, 1953

Toured the city of London & saw: The Coronation decorations, Buckingham Palace, the Mall, Marlborough House, Once Queen Mary's home, Clarence House, home of Queen Mother Elizabeth & Princess Margaret, Scotland Yard, London bridge, All Hallows Tower & church, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Tower of London & the fabulous Crown Jewels, they are dazzling; & of course Big Ben.

Her diary entries about London are detailed, if largely lacking in the joy and personal exclamations that marked her writing about New York, the long ocean voyage to Europe, the stops in Italian coastal cities and Paris, and of course her time with her brother Cesco in their family's hometown.

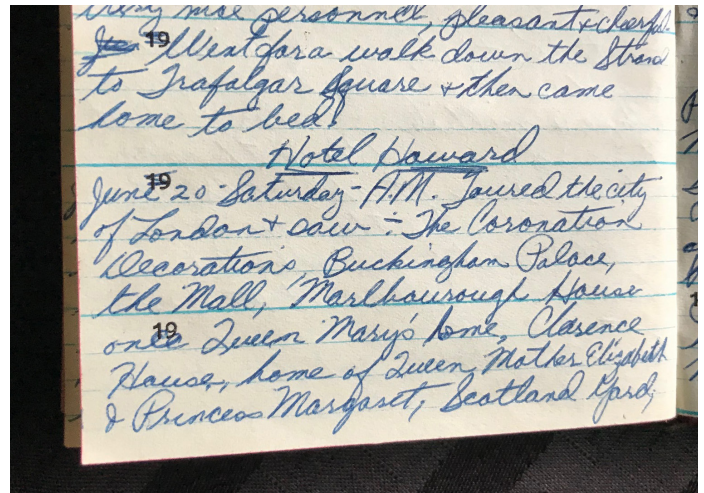
They are, mostly, lists of sights seen, must-see tourist spots checked off a list. Even decades later, these are sites visitors to London will flock to.

The National Gallery. Canada House. Trafalgar Square. Piccadilly Circus. Regent Street. Harrods. And, of course, Buckingham Palace — twice — for the changing of the guard.

Is it because London — even still colourfully and extravagantly decked out from the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II just a few weeks earlier — doesn't catch her fancy the way those other cities did?

Is it because the touring and drinking and dancing and long nights in Paris have worn her out?

Irene is not immune to charms of one of the world's great cities. She remarks on the novelty of her first subway and doubledecker



bus rides. She revels in the pomp at the palace. She rises early to take a tour in “Shakespeare's country.”

Maybe she and her friends are trying to pack so much into their four days there that there's little time to find the romance in London Town while committing every stop and detail to the page in blue ink.

And it's not their final destination, not by a long shot. Still to come: Brussels, Amsterdam and Switzerland.

And, later, a longer visit with her brother, who is no longer a stranger, and a family that was little more than an idea at the start of this journey but now embraces her, giving her something she never had in Canada. *

(* A reminder: Cesco was sick as a child and his family was not immediately allowed to take him when they emigrated, so they left him with relatives to possibly join them later in Canada. That never happened but, two decades after his sister's trip, he visited her in Vancouver. Her family also visited him in later years.)