

Soot.

Soot and dirt and a general sense of dissipation.

Much can be learnt about the state of a people, a place's psyche based upon the the state of cleanliness one experiences on the ride in from the airport. Here, London 2012, that sense is one of stress, weariness... exhaustion perhaps. Or was that us?

Fairly uneventful flight over. Hit a patch of turbulence over Greenland sufficient to awaken X from her fitful slumber. Sitting in our separate rows (bless half-full flights) we each completed the in-flight crossword puzzle whilst being buffeted about by the gods of flight and wind.

Pawn would like to think his accomplishment more complete, as pen was employed, but truth be told the challenge was minor at best.

Train into Paddington then taxi to Waterloo station where we left luggage at [Left Luggage](#) and then wandered the area of Leicester Square and Covent Garden. Crowds were simply *mad*! [Spring half-term break](#) is to blame, combined with Valentine's Day, to be sure. Swarms of kids and families awaited us in Covent Garden, which kept the buskers all well employed, and surely some pick pockets too. Leicester Square, in contrast, was all hustle and bustle mixed with [monumental public works](#). The [whole square](#) is currently [larded under](#) works, making navigation even more of a challenge, not to mention cutting off access to the most accessible (and actually fairly nice) public loos.

Not found in Covent Garden is the Cornish pasty booth which used to stand near the northeast corner. Oh well. To the Strand and Pret-A-Manger for a quick sandwich before descending to Waterloo and [our flat on Lower Marsh](#). Landlord is there to meet us, and after a quick tour of the upscale digs we begin to settle in. The flat is very nice. In contrast to many London and New York flats, this one has an abundance of space, wide hallways, wasted space. Two bedrooms, one en-suite. Fancy fittings, nice kitchen, Sky cable. Yikes! We may never need to leave!

Not much more for day one. A trip to Sainsbury Local around the corner to lay in some essential supplies (hm, pleasant enough Pinot Grigio, 2 for Â£10), sausage rolls from Greggs bakery downstairs and a tea pot and ice cube trays from housewares store across the street. Then up to our lair to munch and plan and surf the vast wasteland that is British telly.

Slumber comes on like a lumbering freight train in the switchyard, and **Pawn** is bedbound by 8:30. >Yawn<