

DEAR JILL

Annemarie Rawson, Gold

Dear Jill

Spring has sprung in Richmond. How I wish you were here. You would just love it.

Early each morning we are out walking and everywhere you look nature is blossoming and blooming. Not just flowers, fruit and trees but birdsong, the birth of ducklings, cygnets and goslings and other wildlife.

Walking in Bushy Park there's no need to be plugged into music as we have nature's live orchestra directly overhead. The birdsong is incredible right now, interspersed with a woodpecker tapping out a drum roll. It is surreal to have majestic deer cross in front of us in as the early morning mist starts to lift. I do wish you were here.

Today, crossing the lock bridge, the sun was creating sparkling diamonds on the water while local watercraft bobbed up and down on their moorings. We weaved our way through the empty walkways and streets and came out onto Ham Common. A swan was nesting on the tiny island in the middle of the pond. She was still fast asleep with her head deeply buried under her snowy wing. Lucky girl. On we walked to Ham Gate, which leads into Richmond Park.

Our only companions are a few other walkers, several dogs, deer, rabbits, squirrels and here too, there is a duck nesting on the pond. Peace and tranquillity envelop us. I do wish you were here.

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Cutting through the road to Petersham Nurseries we came across a field where Belted Galloway cattle are grazing. They are a monochrome photograph in a lush - green setting - a very pastoral and bucolic scene.

Accompanying us on the last leg of our walk along the Thames Path was yet more birdsong and a cacophony of ducks quacking and geese honking, as they fast-paddled, flapping their wings hard to gain lift off. Swans are graceful ballerinas as they glide with the current. I do wish you were here.

Yesterday, we were in our High Street and the beautiful, purple wisteria suspended from the vine outside Peg Woffington's cottage hang like mini chandeliers. Walking underneath, the fragrance was intense and heady. In a side street, one cottage has a fence line of huge, creamy-green hydrangeas. Their woody stems strain under the weight of the big, blousy heads. I do wish you were here.

In the park next door and from our window we can see baby squirrels scampering across the grass and disappearing up trees. The crows and parrots are in abundance right now and their calls and squawks are loud enough to wake us each morning. Welcome to spring! I do wish you were here to embrace it all with us.

What a privilege to be alive and to live in such a beautiful place.

Your loving sister
Annemarie