

# 2011 - SCOTLAND

11 May 2011

## The Isle of Harris

We were interested to see if Harris and Lewis islands were like Uist

### LEAVING UIST

The sky was almost clear when we woke. The wind had died down a little (only 25mph). It was time to leave Uist and the one hour drive to the ferry was through territory we had already travelled. The better weather made us very upbeat. We arrived at the terminal and started to unfold our bikes and go for a ride for the first time in 3 days. Unfortunately the rain and wind suddenly started up again so we put them back. The rainy cold weather got worse as the day wore on!! Don't get me wrong, we have enjoyed watching the countryside as it goes by, but not being able to venture out much, is a real pain. It has even made Heather question whether we should visit the Orkney islands. She now reckons the weather should dictate where we go because we only have a short time left in Scotland.

### PEAT

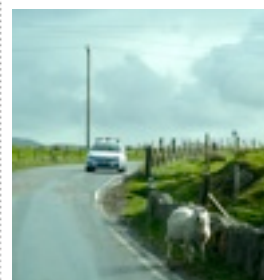
We are intrigued about peat and made a false assumption that it was something that would no longer be used. How wrong we were. Everywhere we go in the country we see long parallel lines where peat has been cut, and lots of dry and stacked peat ready for carting. Each piece of peat is the size of a flat house brick. We came across piles of the stuff outside houses not realising what it was. Peat continues as an alternative to firewood and is used in the smoking of fish (kippers). It takes a long time to burn but its aroma is very musty-like. Each peat brick when dry and ready for burning is extremely light.



*A typical one lane highway with passing lanes*



*Peat harvesting everywhere*



*Sheep everywhere*



The road toll in the Hebrides must be very low. Drivers cannot speed. They must be very vigilant. Most roads are generally only one lane. Another car or a sheep could be around the next corner.





One of the oldest churches still standing in the Outer Hebrides



Enjoying the view

HARRIS

Harris island has spectacular mountains, pristine sandy beaches and barren rocky landscapes - so different to Uist with its watery expanses of flat land. We landed at Leverburgh harbour and immediately turned right down a narrow road to find the 16th century St Clement's Church - still standing with some amazing original crypts.

At the Seallam Visitor Centre we read all about the famous island to the west of here - St Kilda. It was so steep parents had to tie their children by rope to stop them from falling over the cliffs. Fascinating photos and stories.

Harris is famous for Harris Tweed, a high quality woolen cloth still hand woven in islander's homes. The industry employs around 400 weavers. Heather was keen to buy an item of tweed so we drove out to a rural outlet (again on a winding narrow road) but unfortunately the shop was going through renovations. With only limited stock on the shelves Heather did not find anything appealing.

We then drove past some magnificent beaches and over barren mountains to Stornaway to camp.

