

2011 - SCOTLAND

19 May 2011



Spey River Valley

RUTHVEN BARRACKS

Our mission today was to drive around the Cairngorm National Park. This meant we had to retrace some of yesterday's steps and sweep north before finally turning south. We took the B road on the other side of the Spey River and enjoyed the much slower pace. There were lots of walkers with heavy back packs out on the road and with the sun shining for longer periods, our mood was upbeat. The temperature was supposed to be a "hot" 12 degrees. We saw the Ruthven Barracks well before we reached them, perched dramatically on an glacial hillock, so we hopped out and walked around them. These imposing barracks were last occupied by what remained of the Jacobite army after the Battle of Culloden. They eventually destroyed the place and dispersed.

THE INSH MARSHES

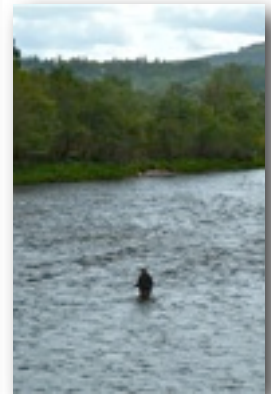
Then it was time to step in to a special world at Insh Marshes. There were wonderful views from two hides and we were fascinated watching roe deer eating grass close by, lapwings nesting on little islands and other water birds going about their daily lives. There were also many nature tracks to explore but we had to move on. Towns such as Kingussie and Newtonmore look gracious with their stone cottages and narrow streets. We spent time eating lunch, sitting by the river and watching the water race by.



Ruthven Barracks



Pine trees with moss and lichen beneath - lovely colors when the sun comes out.



Fly fishing on the Spey

FISHING

The River Spey and the River Don, where we are camped for the night, are renowned for their fly fishing. We stopped to watch an angler in tweed cap and high green wellingtons skillfully flick his fly over the water as we crossed a

bridge nearby - a great sight. We were surprised that the water level was only up to his knees.

QUAIL, GROUSE, PARTRIDGE OR PHEASANT?

We could not believe how many pheasants we saw in one stretch of the road today - or at least we

thought they were pheasants. There were hundreds, usually in pairs, feeding in green grassy river flats. We believe, after doing some quick research on the internet, that the difference between them is that the pheasant is the more colorful bird and has a longer tail (in high demand as quill pens in earlier days). Evidently the plain colored grouse tend to call out in more of a Scottish accent than the grey brown partridge which is mostly found in the warmer parts of England especially in pear trees around Christmas.

ALFORD

We were able to have a decent bike ride when we stopped at Alford for the night and look forward to more rides as the weather forecast is looking good for Perthshire for the coming days. We leave Scotland next Tuesday.



