

2011 - SCOTLAND

24-25 May 2011

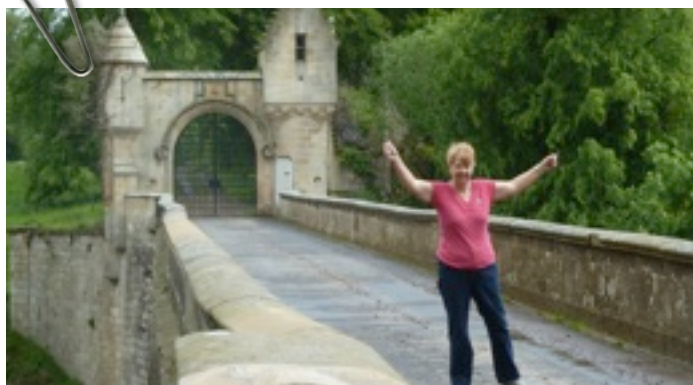
Dumfries and Galloway

WHERE TO NEXT?

We have seen a lot of Scotland - some areas we did not originally plan to see but did due to circumstances beyond our control, and some we have seen more than once. After surviving the day from hell we decided to abandon our trip to Iceland (should read Iceland abandoned us) and to book a ferry to Ireland. The owners of the motorhome, Nick and Linda, suggested we drive down to Stranraer, which is very close to their home, so we could drop the van off and then catch the ferry. They even offered us accommodation and an evening meal. We jumped at a wonderful opportunity to have a relaxed chat to like minded travelers.

LANARKSHIRE

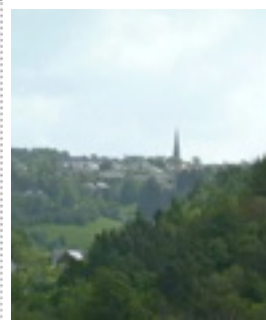
Our caravan park in Motherwell was not far from Hamilton, where Heather's great great grandparents (on her father's side) were married. Robert Lamb was born in Kirkfieldbank, so we decided to head back down to this place on our way to Stranraer. We'd been here earlier but welcomed some more time in the area. A short distance from Kirkfieldbank is New Lanark - a world heritage town. Lanark was the largest cloth manufacturing facility in Britain and New Lanark was set up as a the model village by its benevolent owner. Unfortunately, as often happens with waning industries, the village declined. The town was recently totally upgraded to its former glory and is now a major attraction. Heather surmised that this place may have been where her ancestor worked and lived.



Amazing entrance over a bridge to an estate



New Lanark



Kirkfieldbank



The scots and the weather reports continue to be positive. Every day we wake and imagine what the day would be like if we had sunshine.



Our hosts - Nick and Linda



Heather nearly wet her pants

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

It would have been easy to take the major highways to Stranraer but we wanted to take the opportunity to see some of this part of the country. We thus headed off on an overland route. We were not disappointed. But we did become a little stressed. Firstly the time was slipping away (and we had to have the van safely delivered by 5pm) and secondly Heather was desperate to find a toilet (we did not want to use our van's clean toilet). A cemetery with good covering headstones and lots of bushes looked somewhat inviting but when she alighted from the van the sign was enough to scare her inside again. The next town was more enlightened as it had a public toilet. Heather rushed out but returned rather quickly telling me to "lets get out of here" in an urgent voice. It was only when we got down the road did she tell me the issue she created. The public toilet with its disabled part looked just right. Once inside Heather realised it was very dark so she located and pulled what she thought was the pull down light switch. That's when all hell broke loose as it is apt to do when anyone pulls the panic alarm. Heather's rapid exit ensured that she would be "eliminated" as a public nuisance suspect.

The trip over the mountains reminded us of other similar crossings further north. The glistening rain-soaked road surface and fences going off far into the distance, the swirling mist, the raging streams meandering down the valleys, the rivulets of water cascading over the mountain sides, the dark heather against the lighter mottled green grass, the wind-swept rain buffeting our van and the admiration of the Nowaks enjoying the very essence of the Scottish countryside. We will remember this for the rest of our lives.

We booked our tickets at Stranraer for Belfast and, after carefully following Nick's instructions, finally found the Robertson's gorgeous white farmhouse. A tour of the place and a home cooked meal topped off a bonza day. Nick even enlightened us about whisky - a passion we do not share. Nevertheless we now know more about what we are missing - peat or no peat.

I am writing this while on the ferry to Belfast. We have booked a car and intend do B&B's each night. Heather agreed to lash out and give me an experience I might enjoy -- when else will I get to drive a Mercedes!



Its a pity to leave Scotland. The weather has been as tempestuous as its history. We wonder what Ireland will be like.





View from our bedroom

