

2011 - SCOTLAND

10 May 2011

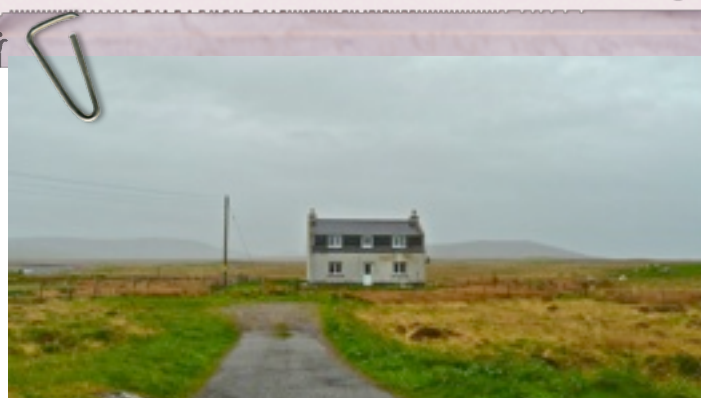
Uist (Outer Hebrides)

Looking for a water view? Uist is drowning in small lakes and inlets. They are absolutely everywhere you look.

THE WEATHER SETS IN

We woke up and opened the blinds to see 8 deer run past our van. They scared the sheep witless - frightened lambs and bouncing woolen blankets scampered in all directions and finally disappearing over the brow of the hill. Uist is very different and very remote. Individual croft houses dot a landscape that is devoid of trees or bushes. The area we stayed in overnight was called Carinish Village. However we could not see any village as such. We parked in the grounds of the community hall. It was really just a bitumen car park. We had to free camp because we could not find a caravan park in the fading light after we got off the ferry. Overnight the van was buffeted by very high winds and, in the morning, rain was hitting the windows at right angles. Heather tried to throw the dregs of our porridge out of the door. Not only did she have to fight to push the door open, but when she finally did toss it outside, the whole lot decided the van was warmer and flew back in. Welcome to the Western Isles.

We planned to spend a full day discovering Uist and then catch the ferry to Harris Island Wednesday morning. "Touring" was the operative word because the van was warm and dry inside. Heather had marked out a ranger-guided nature walk at 10am. I wasn't so sure. I reckoned



Most houses on Uist are the same - no trees - not sure why?



Letter boxes (& phone boxes) - everywhere



Peat harvesting



We are mystified why people don't grow more trees around their houses. The place looks barren without them. Even a few bushes would improve the look and feel of this place.



A land of lakes and inlets



that even the wild life would stay at home. We arrived at the location and promptly turned around and kept driving. The heavy rain and strong wind were unrelenting and I was concerned that we would get soaked through and have to deal with soaked clothes in the van.

TOURING

Sitting in a nice warm van does have advantages but we had to find a caravan park early so we could wash some clothes and get

organised for our next ferry crossing (read charge the camera battery, dump our toilet and load up some water). For some reason camping parks in Uist play hide and seek with their potential clients. It was only by accident that we finally happened upon one. We booked a site and then set about discovering the unseen. Uist is a long and very skinny island. In fact there are three islands joined by causeways. Traveling any distance takes time. There were few hills but the wind was horrific. The brochure advises bike riders

to go from south to north because traveling in the opposite direction against the wind could mean never getting to your destination - and it is windy for 90% of the year.

We stopped to have lunch and admired an old ruined stone church. We then ventured into a museum before turning back and settling down for the night. Few campers were strolling around - most were inside their vans writing newsletters, reading Cross Stitch or responding to emails. We leave Uist tomorrow 10.30am.

Remote and barren



