

2011 - SCOTLAND

21 May 2011

West Perthshire

The cold and rain have not dampened our spirits but they have limited our bike riding.

DON'T FENCE ME IN

During our trip around UK 30 years ago I was very impressed with the stone fences (and stone buildings too), particularly in the Lakes District. But after traveling all over Scotland and southern England I now realise that stone fences feature all over Britain.

I continue to be enthralled by the skill and patience of the stone wall and fence builders. The various styles and types of stones used are many and varied - random arrays of stone of varying sizes; long straight rows of more regular sized rock; flat rock laid diagonally or straight up and down, clever use of flat slate to stop water seepage or allow water to drain away or the incorporation of rounded river/glacial stones either as the main rock used or used sparingly with great effect. Very artistic. In some remote places I paused to marvel how long these fences would have taken to build and how far some of the rock would have been carted. Some of the fences even went almost vertically up very steep sided hills.

Two of the most intriguing stone fences were ones I noticed yesterday. One had hedges growing on the top and the other had spiked rock on top - maybe an early version of razor wire! It is rather a pity that large numbers of these fences have not been maintained. It's obviously much cheaper to put up a strained wire fence but the countryside looks the worse for it.



A beautiful stone fence weaving its way up the hill



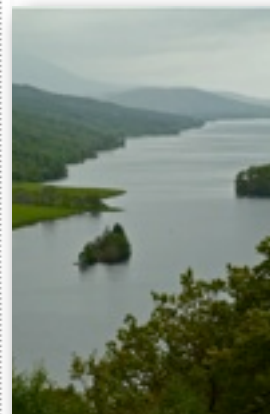
Fixing this would be difficult



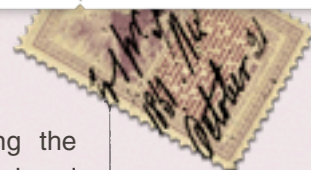
Our mobile home has been positively wonderful particularly when the weather is inclement. We wonder how things will be in a hire car and B&B in Iceland, especially if it keeps raining day after day.



Stone bridges everywhere across fast flowing rivers



Pretty lochs dammed to generate hydro power



PITLOCHRY

A lovely sunny morning with crisp sharp air, Tay River flowing by our van site in one of the best caravan parks we have been in. We actually believe the Nowaks camped here in Pitlochry 30 years ago. Definitely an opportunity for a bike ride. Off we went and followed the nearby quiet rural road. Just a short distance and we happened by chance to come across the Dunfallandy Stone - a beautifully preserved carved upright stone that was over 1000 years old. Scotland is like that - historic sites in so many modest unpretentious places.

We then rode around this popular tourist town. It services the northern snow fields and as it was the start of summer the many outdoor clothing shops had some amazing sales. Knowing that we were about to enter dangerous weather (Iceland) Heather decided she needed a more sturdy rain proof coat (very cheap at \$30). On a roll she then took me into the Heather Gems jewelry shop and I capitulated to her demands for a colorful anniversary broach - made of lovely heather for a equally lovely Heather.

ABERFELDY

We then steered the van along the banks of the nearby Loch Tummel and admired the scenery from the Queen's View (not surprisingly named after Queen Victoria's visit). Then it was on through Aberfeldy on the River Tay, a town popular for white water rafting and canoeing. There were a number of tourist buses around offloading energetic younger people who were about to add some water based excitement to their lives.

We drove over the mountain range and down to Loch Tay. Unfortunately the weather turned sour - again - but it was still quite satisfying driving leisurely along a quiet road with delightful scenery passing by while remaining warm and self satisfied looking out and stopping for a hot cuppa when we wanted. After lunch at Killin we turned east and up the other side of the loch back towards Stirling. We camped in the Crieff caravan park. The rain actually increased but the showers were hot and we had TV reception so I could watch Celtic win the Scottish Cup.

We are impressed by the number of people, old people, we see hiking all over Scotland and England. With their heavy with backpacks and walking sticks, we see them on walking tracks near the roads or actually on the roads themselves. They put us to shame.

