

SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

MAY 12 TO MAY 30, 2018

SATURDAY, MAY 12 TO SUNDAY, MAY 13

Both radio broadcasts and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT to them in the know) have been warning of closed interstate lanes, construction delays, and other impediments to our getting to the airport in reasonable time. Our flight to London is scheduled to depart Seattle at 1:20 this afternoon. My worrywart spouse wants to leave our apartment at 9:30 for what would ordinarily be a 45-minute drive. After some intense negotiation, we close our apartment door and head to the garage at 9:45.

One thing that WSDOT did not (and could not) anticipate is that our 2017 Honda Accord would behave *strangely* as we approached it. The door locks opened/closed/opened/closed ... as we approached the inanimate beast. Surely it wasn't expressing its dismay at our leaving it for nearly three weeks? The two remote keys seemed to be behaving normally, but Lee was worried that we might not be able to get our luggage out of the trunk when we reached the airport. So she put hers on the back seat, but I (bravely) used the trunk for mine. The other concern is that we might not be able to lock the car at the airport, but this turned out not to be an issue.

Well, we reached SEATAC's parking lot in 45 minutes (as I had predicted!) and entered the spiral ramps leading the various levels. On the electronic board, Level 5 was showing 300 spaces available to the left of the ramp. Since left is the direction we want to go (British Airways is near that end of the terminal), we turn in that direction and discover these "empty" spaces are occupied by cars, some 300 of them! We wind up/down the aisles and find nothing available. So we go to Level 6 where there is an ample supply of spaces from which to choose.

We reach the British Airways counter quickly, check our two suitcases, and head to Security. We go to the priority line (on accounta we're y'know like royalty) only to be told, "You have a check mark on your boarding passes. You can use the pre-check line and you don't have to remove anything from your carry-ons." Cool! Considering that I'm carrying liquids (that are benign, but in the hands of a chemist, who knows?), laptop, Kindle, etc. I'm relieved. We are also free from having to remove shoes, belts, jockstrap (I use the singular here), and so on. (This stands in remarkable contrast to what is going to confront us - really just me - at the Manchester airport on May 31. And if you're wondering why I wrote May 31 and not May 30, well, you'll just have to wait until you reach that part of this document.)

Over the course of the trip, I took some 948 pictures!! Oh, the joy of using a digital camera that does not require purchases of film and the cost of film processing! Only a relatively small number* have been

*By this I mean a mere 693 or so. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

uploaded to my Picasa account: some of the rejected pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. On the other hand, one can never have too many pictures of Japanese cities and scenery, right? I've posted the pictures in four separate albums at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>

On the way to the BA lounge, I stop at an airport shop and discover that today's issue of *TIME* is actually available. (Usually, these shops are two-to-three weeks behind in delivery.) When I then discover that it costs \$6.95 + tax, I'm not as happy. The lounge offers a nice variety of snacks (crackers, cheese, pretzels, soup, but - alas - no crumpets, kippers, or black pudding) and various drinks but I don't over-indulge because I know that we'll be well fed on the plane.

At 12:45, we rouse our bodies and head to the gate where we board the plane at 12:55. We have Business Class seats 12A and 12B on the Boeing 777. **Correction:** our seats are in "Club World," not Business Class. Even though the class system seems to be alive and well in jolly old England, British Airways has renamed the various classes on its planes. Economy Class is now "World Traveler" and Economy Class Plus, of course is "World Traveler Plus." Alas, First Class is still just "First Class."

Lee had already looked at the seating arrangements on Seat Guru and warned me that my seat, a window seat, would be facing backwards! That's also true on the 747 that we'll be taking on our return flight. Correction: as you'll learn when we get to May 30 in this travelogue, British Airways will cancel our Manchester to London flight and reschedule us for May 31 on a flight whose overseas segment will be on another Boeing 777. (Lee is heart-broken. She had chosen seats in the "upstairs" section of the 747 and now, sigh, we won't be able to take advantage of them.) The seats are arranged 2-4-2 which means that BA has managed to squeeze four more seats into Business Class than other airlines do with 1-2-1 seating (as in Delta's Boeing 777 and Airbus 330 planes). This feat of legerdemain is accomplished by making the seats quite narrow and by snuggling together a pair of seats, one forward- and the other rear-facing. Starting at the window, the paired seats are designated A/B, D/E/F/G, J/K. Seats B, D, G, and J face forward. The upper image shows the middle seats D/E/F/G but not seats A/B where Lee and I are. I went through all of the images I could find online and not a single one shows seats A/B or J/K - does British Airways have the equivalent of China's Great Firewall? The lower image is a bird's eye view of how seats like A and B are nestled together.



Furthermore, although I have a window seat, the two windows are essentially useless: the one to my front (which is to the rear of the plane) is so distant and at such an angle that I can see, perhaps, through only the left-hand 20% of so; and it has a great view of the wing.* The one behind me (which causes me great

*If British Airways really cared about customer satisfaction, they would have ordered the Seattle-based Boeing engineers to design a wing made of transparent plastic, just as Wonder Woman has on her aircraft.

pain as I twist my neck) is mostly blocked by the back of my seat. Do all of the "window seats" have so difficult a window arrangement? I don't know.

What else can I complain about? Well, there is no convenient storage area for books and papers, save for a drawer that is so far forward that it's necessary to unlock the seat belt and stand up in order to reach it. And the seats are too narrow and are poorly padded. Also, there is a barrier between Seats A and B that can be raised if one desires privacy or left down if one does not. This is fine for two people traveling together, but seats E and F, both facing backwards, have no such barrier - this imposes a level of intimacy on passengers in such seats. Furthermore, there is a foot rest that can be lowered from the rear of the seat at the far end of each cubicle/pod. The problem is that if the person in 13B (the forward-facing aisle seat behind Lee's 12B) has his/her/its feet propped on his/her/its foot rest and he/she/it is asleep ... and if someone in 12A (moi!) should want to get out and into the aisle, that someone would have to climb over the 12B person's outstretched legs. What an absurd design for an airplane! (But, to their credit, they do get 100% more seats in their version of Business Class than does an airline like Delta. Perhaps this is why they can charge less than Delta (\$8,800 vs. \$11,000). I'm too lazy to check out other airlines that also fly overseas routes. Maybe Delta is unique? Maybe not.)

Am I the only one who thinks that this arrangement is absurd? No, I am not. Here is an excerpt from a much longer rant that appears at the Seat Guru internet site:

The layout is 2-4-2 which gives you a clue as to how cramped it has to be. This is purely a money-earning exercise by BA who just want the max £££'s from their business class customers, and blow their comfort - the 2-4-2 firstly means the seats are very narrow, the legs part of the seats/bad area is narrower than the seat section to accommodate the shoulders/seat of the adjacent passenger. - the narrow part means you can't sleep on your side, if that's what you do, as there's nowhere to bend your legs - the aisle seats are very open and exposed to the aisle. In mid-flight with everyone sleeping it is an obstacle course to reach the loo as people's bedding is falling off, knees, elbows and feet are sticking out and I more than once woke someone by accident (not noticing feet with dark socks on for example) ... There is one pathetic light, tucked under the lip of the partition and impossible to find except by asking a crew member. There is nowhere to put anything. There is a small drawer - at floor level, down by your feet.

Note that this disgruntled writer registers most of the same complaints as I did.

I think it's interesting that the "steerage" section (a.k.a. Economy, a.k.a. World Traveler) has seats that are nine across (3-3-3), with two aisles. That is, these poor folk are only a little more cramped for space than those of us in Business Class (a.k.a. Club World).

All of the flight attendants, of course, have British accents. But just as American accents (on other airlines) cannot be comprehended on an airplane's public address, so, too, for these. I hope that I'm not missing life-saving information, like how to fly the plane in case of an emergency. Once we are air-borne, I really have trouble understanding the flight attendants because their English accents are accompanied by (and muffled by) the sound of the engines (right outside my window) and the whistling air that comes through the cabin vents.

Now, one thing that I do enjoy is the safety video.* After having experienced some unique attempts to

*Isn't it curious that either the safety video or live announcement on every flight, no matter the airline or the destination, has the phrase "In the unlikely event of a loss of cabin pressure ..."? I contend that oxygen masks will descend whether the event likely or not. No? But I do learn something very useful from today's video - what the proper brace position is for a person in a rear-facing seat. Of course, that's only going to come into play in the "unlikely event" of a crash.

hold passengers' attention on Delta, QANTAS, and Air New Zealand, I was pleased to see something quite different on British Air. Asim Chaudhry, a comedian better known to cognoscenti (not including RMM) as Chabuddy G, pretends to direct an A-list group of performers in reciting the safety features of the plane. Among these are Chiwetel Ejiofor, Thandie Newton, Ian McKellen, Gordon Ramsay, Warwick Davis, Rob Brydon, Jim Broadbent, Gillian Anderson, Jim Broadbent, and Rowan Atkinson. I surprised myself by being able to identify most of these celebrities by myself (with a bit of help from Lee), but there was a red-headed woman* whom I didn't recognize and who, apparently, was unknown at each of the web

*Although not named in any of many articles about the video, I did find her name at imdb.com, It's Jess Glynne (who?) with a long list of credits that include *Dancing with the Stars*, *Britain's Got More Talent*, *Snooker Shoot-Out*, and *Good Morning Britain*. I'm deeply embarrassed at not having recognized her on my own.

sites that describe the safety video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RedV-KyXWO4>

The plane leaves SEATAC on time. The unfamiliar sensation of being thrust *forward* during acceleration on the runway is, surprisingly, thrilling. Sort of. About two hours into the flight, we are served "dinner" (even though it is only mid-afternoon). I decide to start with a single malt: the choice is Glenlivet or nothing, so I opt for Glenlivet which arrives accompanied by the English version of trail mix. With the meal, I have a glass of Chardonnay (one of only two white wines on offer). I view the list of starters on the menu (pan-roasted scallops, roasted red and golden beets, organic split pea and kale soup, and fresh seasonal salad) and conclude that I have to choose one among them - but a tray is brought with all four items! There is, however, a choice for the main course - I opt for pan-roasted filet of beef, with petite heirloom potatoes, roasted baby squash, baby pepper, and roasted garlic butter. (What, I wonder, impels

the menu planners to use "baby" in the description of two items.) Following the main course, I have coffee and a lemon tart; Lee has "an amazing orange and chocolate croissant-raisin pudding with *lots* of dark chocolate sauce (according to her journal, from which I'll borrow from time to time).

Actually, it wasn't this simple. Lee's main course (pan-roasted salmon, broccolini and cauliflower, rice) arrives at about 4:00 but my filet of beef does not. I wait patiently, but when the wait becomes excessive Lee flags down one of the attendants. He "explains" why my meal is delayed, but his voice is clipped, sharp, jagged, and even painful when overwhelmed by the noise of the plane, and so I understand nothing. Lee does hear enough to comprehend that they were having trouble with heating the beef. Well, they could have told me, couldn't they? (In Gig Harbor, my audiologist installed four programs in my hearing aids: *normal*, *crowd*, *restaurant*, and *television*; the latter is supposed to help me with the dialogue on PBS's British dramas. I try all of them during the flight, but none of the specialized programs are an improvement over *normal*.)

Both before and after the meal, I read the issue of *TIME* that I bought at SEATAC and work a few puzzles. At about 5:00, I emerge from my pod to go to the loo/lavatory/toilet/whatever. Just as I feared, the man in 13B (the seat behind Lee's) has his foot rest down and his stockinged feet propped up. I do my best to vault over him, but without much success. The lavatory is tiny, much smaller than on other planes; this is consistent, I suppose, with the cramped quarters throughout the aircraft. When I get back to my seat, I ask Lee why in the hell we chose British Airways over other possibilities. She replied that it was \$3000 cheaper. Oh, well, lesson learned. Next time, SPEND THE MONEY.*

*Our return flight will involve two British Airways planes: one from Manchester to London and the second from London to Seattle. Sad to say, for our September trip to meet a Regent Seven Seas cruise, we are again flying British Airways to London; and then, again, from Barcelona to London and then to Seattle. I wonder if it's too late to change this; and if Regent will accept the change.

I finish the magazine and some more crosswords. Again, I curse the fact that there is no place to stash magazines, books, papers, etc. I wind up putting most of them to my side, hoping that they won't slide down into the bowels of the seat. At about 5:00 I pull down the blinds (hell, I can't see anything anyway) and close my eyes. Although I doubt that I slept the full time, I open my eyes at 7:15. Lee is awake, so I ask her if there's a light at our seats. (We can't find one - and the cabin lights are turned off.) Lee calls for an attendant who shows us where the light switch is located. The illumination is minimal, but it's better than complete darkness. (This was another complaint in the long rant from which I quoted on p. 2.) Pretending that it's late at night, I take my evening meds and I set my watch eight hours ahead, so that I don't feel bad about taking the pills too early.

I start reading Cass Sunstein's *Impeachment: A Citizen's Guide* but have to set it aside because the print is too small in this minimal light. So I go to my Kindle* and Meg Wolitzer's *The Interestings*. From this, I

*An unexplained mystery. At one time or another, I "borrowed" several Kindle books from Amazon via Pierce County Library. As with a physical book, the borrowing period for e-books is only three weeks. Amazon is supposed to "snatch" them back from the device. For whatever reason, several books have remained intact on my Kindle for a number of years: the Wolitzer (mentioned above), Joan Didion's *Blue Nights*, Olen Seinhauer's *All the Old Knives*, Christopher Hitchens's *The Portable Atheist*, Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and several that I've already read: Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Everything*, Jim Lynch's *Border Songs*, Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, Jasper Fforde's *A Thursday Next Collection* (from which I read the first one), and Daniel Silva's *Gabriel Allon Novels* (from which I read the first of four). Why are these books still on the Kindle? *Wer weiß?*

find a sentence that is much in need of a comma: "Gil was an investment banker at the new firm of Drexel Burnham and Betsy his artistically interested, pretty wife ..." Drexel Burnham and Betsy? Never heard of them. I wonder if Michael Milkin would have fared better at this establishment?

At 5:30 am (London time), breakfast is served: juice, yogurt, coffee, and a brioche roll with bacon, cheese, and tomato. (Translation: in England, "bacon" refers not to the crisp, nearly pyrolyzed strip of meat that we get in the U.S., but rather to what we would call ham. Following this, the cabin is now lighted enough (with the shades up) for me to begin reading the Sunstein book. We land at 6:39, shortly ahead of schedule, but the plane is stranded on the tarmac waiting for a gate to open. We have two hours to get to the gate for the Inverness flight.

It's a long walk to the next gate - and, to our surprise, we need to pass through immigration and security. (Why? In the U.S., once one has passed security at one airport, it's not necessary to do this at another.) The security area is a zoo!! And the "fast pass" that we were given on the plane is not accepted for domestic flights. (And so I ask again - if we are heading to a domestic flight, why ... ?) The security lines move very slowly, and I discover that it's necessary to remove liquids, laptop, and Kindle from my carry-on as well as belt from my torso. And now it's another long walk to Gate A22, but we eventually get there. We sit in the waiting area until we are allowed to board (Business Class, I mean Club World) first; the plane is an Airbus A319. At first sight, it appears that we'll need to descend stairs from the waiting area to the tarmac and walk to a staircase up to the plane, but it turns out that the plane, lower to the ground than the one we arrived on, is connected to the terminal via a downward pointing Jetway

We have Seats 3A and 3C. The 3-3 configuration of seats is the same as in Economy (I mean World Traveler) with one difference: Seat 3B is blocked. Thus, this is sorta kinda y'know like first class. The doors close right on time (8:55), but we are held at the gate for about 10 minutes. The safety video is the same as we saw on the flight from Seattle. Although we are not hungry, it would be rude to reject the nice breakfast that is served: cheese omelet, stewed tomatoes, mushrooms, and potato cake. I reject the kind offer of a roll and butter, but I do accept the coffee.

Alas, there are golfers on board! In Seats 2A, 2C, 2D, and 2F are four loud, boisterous, garrulous men who engage one another in loud conversation before the plane takes off. The good news is that their laughter and camaraderie are drowned out by the noise of the plane, once we are air-borne; the bad news is that these four are joined by two men in Seats 1D and 1F, one of whom must have been a good 20 years older than the others. (I surmise that age is not a barrier when golfers gather.) At one time, all six are standing and shouting at one another. Oh, dear. Lee, in her snarkiest mood, writes "They are a certain class of British male - not really posh, but rather aspirational. They might do middle-manager jobs in the City."

We land ten minutes early at 10:25. The Inverness airport is a wee bit smaller (ya hafta use "wee" at least once in every sentence when in Scotland) than London Heathrow. It has only one runway with so little air traffic that the captain makes a U-turn and heads back on the same runway that we had used for the landing. Of course, there is no Jetway and, of course, it has begun to rain.

We walk to the baggage claim and wait, patiently ... or not so patiently) for suitcases to arrive on the carrousel. Surprise! Instead of suitcases cascading onto the conveyor belt, a door opens and two airport employees begin delivering golf bags - big, expensive-looking golf bags, many on wheels (although I doubt that they have their own motor). They are too large and ungainly to be dumped on the carrousel and, so, they are deposited on the floor where the owners can retrieve them. I don't have an exact count, but I think that there were some 25 to 30 bags brought in from the rain. Only after the golf bags have all arrived are suitcases allowed in. We retrieve ours ... and then proceed to walk a considerable distance, out-of-doors but protected from the rain, to the main terminal. This is a surprise, as it now looks like a real airplane terminal. (We had expected much less, given the rustic nature of baggage claim and the absence of a Jet Way.)

We find an ATM to gain some local currency (£150) and then a taxi which takes us to the Kingsmill Hotel, fare £20 plus a £2 tip. When we were in Inverness in 2001, we stayed at the Marriott Kingsmill Hotel, whose address is identical to this facility in 2018. So this must be the same place, but we don't recognize it at all. It's no surprise that our room is not ready (it's only about 11:30 am when we arrive), so we hold

onto our carry-ons, but entrust the large suitcases to the care of the front desk. Rather than going for a walk, we sit in the lobby to read (and try to stay awake, given the fact that we'd each had very little sleep).

My anxiety about the Scottish accent is relieved by my being able to understand completely both the female taxi driver and the hotel clerk at the front desk. In fact, this will hold true during most of our time in Scotland. But when we rent a car and visit Northumberland and Yorkshire after May 23, our ability to understand the native patois* will be severely challenged on more than one occasion.

*Is it proper to use a French word in an English-speaking country? Maybe I should have used "dialect" or "jargon" or "cant" or "argot" or even "lingo"?

At about 2:00, our room is ready. A member of the staff leads us past the lounge and two dining rooms, through the outside doors, into the garden beyond which lie the garden rooms. It's a long walk, but the rain has stopped and so we are dry. Our large suitcases will be delivered to our room, we are told. The room is a modest type of the kind found in many chain motels, but what are missing are a bar of soap and a washcloth (a.k.a. face cloth in these environs). This is "strange" because on our 2001 trip to Scotland, only two of the twelve hotels that we used did not have washcloths; and Kingsmill, in its earlier incarnation, was among the ten that did! We did bring one from home, but we make it a point to buy some more when we go downtown. Although the room furnishings are somewhat down-market, the bathroom fixtures are new and modern. After a while, our suitcases are delivered. We'll be here for only two evenings before departing for the Hebrides for two nights and then returning here for six nights. Thus, we unpack just enough for this short stay.

Both of us are feeling the effects of a long flight, but we sit and read for a while (Sunstein and Wolitzer, for me) and indulge in a brief nap. The afternoon proves to be sunny but cool (around 10°C) as we walk back to the main building. The grounds are quite well kept and interesting, so I take a number of pictures. What is really striking is the amount of bird calls. This is something that we do not hear in our Gig Harbor neighborhood and it comes as a welcome surprise to hear the variety of calls, chirps, and songs; most prominent here and throughout the city are the characteristic calls of one or more mourning doves, not only in the afternoon but (as we'll soon learn) in the morning and evening as well. The combination of sounds borders on cacophony, but it is still enjoyable.

We had reserved a table at The Conservatory, the less formal of the hotel's two restaurants but surprisingly formal. The restaurant has an excellent selection of single malts: I order a Laphroaig, Lee a Bruichladdich, both from Islay. I start with a duck liver parfait, Lee with a "wee cylinder of Shetland crab surrounded by a lake of hot spring pea soup," or so her journal reads. For our main, we each have "venison loin with mini potatoes, foraged mushrooms, and a root veggie puree." (Lee's words again.) This main course is not shown in the online menu <https://tinyurl.com/yczdtpb7> but my notes are quite clear (and so are Lee's) - we *did* have it. Wine to accompany dinner is Pinot Grigio for me, Malbec for the missus. We finish with coffee and toddle back to the room, our tummies full and our bodies tired.

The lack of sleep is becoming quite intense as I find my self nodding a bit during dinner and when back in our room; I do my best to stay awake by reading and doing a crossword puzzle, but eventually sleep wins out and we retire at 9:00. I sleep soundly until 4:00 am but stay in bed for an hour, hoping for more sleep. When none comes, I get up at 5:00 to read.

MONDAY, MAY 14

It is a bright, sunny morning but (as also happens in Western Washington) the day turns cloudy and gloomy and cool by the time we go to breakfast. The breakfast buffet is, surprisingly, in Inglis, the more formal restaurant. Available are hot dishes: fried eggs, sausage, mushrooms, bacon (which is more like our ham), stewed tomatoes, black pudding, and - of course - haggis) along with cold offerings such as

cereal, toast, rolls, fruit, and juice. For the first two days, I indulge in the full panoply of offerings, but after a while I moderate my desires and have only cold cereal and toast or a roll.

At 10:00, we head downtown. It's a pleasant walk, past many elegant 19th and 20th century stone homes (some of which are now inns and one of which is a retirement home). Along the way, we are serenaded by bird calls plus the moan of the doves. I take pictures of some of the homes and also of Inverness Castle which we spot at the top of a hill. After about 25 minutes, we reach the High Street, open only to pedestrians. There is a diverse variety of shops, but most important right now is an bank.

Why you may ask, do we need a bank given that we got £150 at the airport ATM just yesterday. That's an excellent question and it deserves a good answer. We go into a W.H. Smith store so that Lee can buy me an anniversary card for May 18.* I go to another part of the store so that I can't see which card she's

*She claims to have purchased one in Gig Harbor but forgot to pack it. I suppose that I should accept her explanation, except that a similar thing occurred when we visited Scotland in 2001. Quoting from my earlier travelogue: "A little background on this: as is my wont, I had purchased all of the birthday and anniversary cards that I'd need for the entire calendar year many weeks earlier, but 'the woman of us' managed to forget all about our anniversary. Another 'Man vs. Woman Myth' exploded!! So, on May 11 when we are walking back from graduation (compulsory attendance for the Magids this year) and heading to the student center for lunch, Lee, having realized that she still hadn't bought my card, said 'I'm going to leave lunch early and go to the university bookstore to buy your card. But I don't have any money with me, so would it be too tacky if I asked you for the money?' "Yes it most certainly would be tacky, but here are two \$20 bills - buy me something really nice." And, as it turned out when we exchanged cards on the 18th, we had purchased *identical* cards!

selected. Thus, I am not a witness to the embarrassing incident that occurs when she attempts to pay with leftover British currency that we had brought with us from the U.S. Turns out, earlier this year Scotland (and presumably England) replaced most of its paper currency with polymer versions (harder to counterfeit) for the £5 and £10 notes. (The old £20 paper notes are still accepted.) Who knew? So first when her £5 note is rejected, she whips out three £1 coins. No good! These, too, have been replaced. So she pays the small amount with a credit card, but it is now necessary for us to exchange our old paper currency for the new. (By the way, the £150 I had obtained at the ATM yesterday consisted entirely of new notes. Whew!)

We find an HSBC bank, but they will perform this exchange service *only* for people who have accounts at their bank. (Well! See if I ever do my banking here again!). The good news is that a nearby Bank of Scotland is much more accommodating and allows us to do the exchange. Paper notes are exchanged for plastic and the old £1 coins for new ones, which are the same size but shinier. (Now I wonder if euros and Canadian dollars and whatever else we might have stashed away after trips are still valid.)

Our next goal is to find a store that sells washcloths. We go to Marks & Spencer for our purchase. Then, a mall directory says that there is a Laura Ashley store nearby, but finding it proves to be a challenge. Lee is eager to get there because they sell a type of nightgown that she likes. According to a map, it is adjacent to M&S, but every clerk we ask directs us to one or another of several possible exits, none of which works. Finally, we find a knowledgeable employee who doesn't guess but actually knows where Laura Ashley is located. And, *mirabile dictu*,* we find it. But they do not have the desired nightie. Damn.

*I've told this story in other travelogs, but it's worth relating here. One of my University of Tennessee colleagues, a professor of English, returned an exam paper to a student who hadn't been doing well. The grade was higher than typical for this student, so my colleague wrote *mirabile dictu* across the top. The student immediately filed a complaint with the Head of the English Department because his teacher had called him a miserable dick. True story.

Our next stop is the Victorian Market, about a block away. Dating from the 1870s, it is an eclectic indoor mall with stores ranging from weird* to upscale, along with restaurants and cafés plus an office for the

*One posted sign warns: YOUR DOG, YOUR MESS, YOUR £40 FINE. Another sign recounts the mall's long history, concluding with "QUEEN VICTORIA REIGNED FROM 1837-1901, THE LONGEST REIGN ON RECORD" but tacked on at the bottom is "UNTIL 9/9/2015 WHEN H.M. ELIZABETH CLAIMED THE RECORD AT THE AGE OF 89." Two stores offer a wide variety of Single Malt Chocolates (really!), each type of which identifies which whisky is used (e.g., Macallan, Laphroaig, etc.). Weirdest of all is a store whose window display has an organic chemist's plastic molecular model of *trans*-stilbene! There is also this sign on a door: DISABLED TOILET, which either means that it's broken or that it accommodates people with disabilities.

local Member of Parliament. The Market's motto (as seen at their web site): "Remember we are here to help you, and have been doing this for many, many years, hence we always try to ensure a warm Highland Welcome when you visit our shops." [Tsk, tsk - a run-on sentence!]

We are pleased to see a bottle of *Irn-Bru* in a store window. And why are we so pleased? Well, according to an article in the *New York Times* a few weeks ago, this is *the* most popular drink in Scotland (except, of course, for whisky). But because the government increased the tax on sugary drinks, the manufacturer lowered the sugar content, thereby causing deep and everlasting grief among the drink's devotees.* We

*As told by Wikipedia, "[The company] changed the formula of Irn-Bru in January 2018 in response to a sugar tax implemented in the UK in April 2018, intended to combat obesity. By reducing the sugar content to less than 5g per 100ml, [they] made Irn-Bru exempt from the tax. The manufacturer asserts that most people will not be able to tell the difference in flavour between the old and new formulas, but fans of the drink have started the 'Save Real Irn-Bru' campaign to stop or reverse this change, and have been stocking up on the more sugary formula."

stop at a café in the market for a snack. I have a slice of cake and cola but Lee, brave girl that she is, orders a bottle of the fluorescent orange liquid to accompany her raisin scone. Contrary to the judgment rendered by a person quoted by the *Times* that Irn-Bru tastes like a mixture of bubble gum and cream soda, Lee concludes that it tastes like restroom deodorant. Such a delicate palate, eh?

OBSERVATIONS (SOME CHARITABLE, SOME NOT)

- Unlike England (both rural and urban) where there are many dogs to be seen, here in Inverness there are very few. Don't the Scots like dogs?
- Sad to say, the denizens of Inverness are *not* a good-looking people. As we traverse the pedestrian-only High Street, we conclude that many people (especially the elderly - and, among these, especially the women) have a world-weary look. I doubt that life in Scotland is particularly hard; maybe it's hard just in Inverness?
- The Scottish accent is delightful and, for the most part, relatively easily understood. It's a relief not to have to strain, or ask for people to repeat, when talking with store clerks, restaurant servers, or hotel staff.

As we head back to the hotel, we stop at the Tourist Information Centre (note the spelling) which is on High Street, next to the HSBC Bank, the very one that refused our effort to exchange old money for new. This was the store where, in 2001, we purchased a wonderful CD of Scottish music (both instrumental and vocal) which we listened to as we drove through Scotland. Alas, the store no longer sells CDs. Boo!

For dinner this evening, we plan to eat at The Castle Tavern, highly recommended by the hotel staff and by reviews on Wikipedia. It is both a pub and a restaurant, with a surprisingly varied menu:

<https://www.castletavern.pub/> We'll pass by it on our walk back to the hotel - this will allow us to estimate how much time to leave when we return in the evening. It takes 22 minutes, much of it uphill (to the great displeasure of my nearly 80-year-old legs) which means that this evening's walk will be mostly downhill and should take no longer than 10 minutes ... or maybe 15 ... or 20?

The morning started with bright sunlight, but by the time we walked to the city centre(!) it was quite cool. I needed a jacket, but by afternoon the temperature rose enough that I could remove my outer garment (but no others) on the return walk. I'm glad (and my dermatologist will be, as well) that I brought my hat and was well lathered with sun screen (called suncream here in Scotland). Back in the hotel room, we read, nap a short while, and do some puzzles.

At about 6:00, we retrace our steps and head to The Castle Tavern <https://www.castletavern.pub/> (about a 20-minute walk from the hotel). The hotel staff assured us that we'd not need reservations, but as it turned out we got the last open table; any later and we'd have had to wait in line. The menu offers so many goodies that it's difficult to decide, but choose we must. Of course we each begin with a *wee dram* of a single malt (Lagavulin for me, Talisker for Lee). We decide not to order any starters (a good decision because the main courses are huge). Lee's first and second selections (quiche and Cullen skink*) are

*This sounds awful, but Wikipedia assures us that "Cullen skink is a thick Scottish soup made of smoked haddock, potatoes and onions." So why don't they call it that? Huh?

sold out, so she settles on muscles in a wine/cream/parsley sauce with a side order of chips (a.k.a. French fries). I order "steak pie" which is described on the menu as "Slow braised diced steak and vegetables in a rich red wine gravy, topped with a puffy pastry lid." It is delicious, once I figure out how to pierce the crust and cut the meat without spraying gravy all over myself. The vegetables are carrots, peas, and cauliflower; and, as with Lee's meal, there is a generous helping of chips. After coffee, we depart the pub at about 7:30 and encourage our stuffed bodies to make the uphill trek back to the hotel.

OBSERVATIONS (CONTINUED)

- There is, gratifyingly, no graffiti on the buildings downtown. Perhaps people have tagged walls in other parts of the city, but there's no evidence for that.
- Outdoor smoking (in the pedestrian area of downtown) is minimal, but not absent. Here at the hotel, there is a designated smoking area in the patio - some guests do take advantage of it.
- The bird song that was so cacophonous this morning persists as we walk back to the hotel and, also, on the hotel grounds.
- This morning at breakfast, some of the guests (golfers, I think) have either American or Canadian accents. The same is true for guests in the lounge and dining room as we return from dinner.

In the evening, we read a bit. We also pack two days-worth of clothes in our carry-ons because tomorrow we're going to Isle of Harris. We'll leave our two large suitcases with the hotel staff when we check out in the morning because we'll return here on May 17 (Thursday) for six nights. Starting tomorrow, we'll be touring with John Alastair Macdonald, the sole proprietor of The Hebridean Explorer, an independent tour guide that Lee found online: <http://www.thehebrideanexplorer.com/> The web site, the many emails as we customized what we'd like to see, and the testimonials on TripAdvisor encourage us that this will be an excellent experience. Our plan is to spend two days plus on the Isles of Harris and Lewis, then return here on the 17th, spend our anniversary the next day by ourselves, and then have John pick us up for tours around the Highlands over the following four days (May 19 through May 22). As we did with the first two days, we emailed John many times over the past few months to arrange what we'd like to see on the mainland - our wishes do not always coincide with his published tours because several sites therein are things that we saw in 2001 or are not interested in seeing this year. In addition to the sites that are of

historical or archaeological or geographical interest, we'll plan to stop at four distilleries for, as you might guess, a wee dram or two of Scotch whisky.

TUESDAY, MAY 15

John has arranged to pick us at 7:30. The early departure is necessary because we are to meet the ferry to Harris at its 10:30 departure. So last night we went to bed at 10:00, knowing that we wanted to rise at 5:00 this morning and have an early breakfast. Well, that was the plan, but neither of us was sleepy at 10:00 last night, partly because we had taken naps in the afternoon. Lee sleeps fitfully whereas I, unable to sleep, get up at 2:45 to do some reading. The Sunstein book is describing the impeachment hearings for Nixon and Clinton, compelling topics to be sure but finally causing me to doze a bit and return to bed at 3:15.

This failure to fall asleep allows me to make a *startling discovery*. Our room has a 24-hour digital electric clock. The 12-hour electric clock at home, when it reaches midnight, shows 12:01 ... 12:59 before reaching 1:00. The 24-hour clock, on the other hand, shows 0:01 0:59 before reaching 1:00. If you've been wondering how a 24-hour clock would behave for the hour after midnight, you now have your answer. You're welcome.

I awake at 5:04, just moments before the alarm is going to sound. This comes to seven hours in bed, but precious few of them asleep. This sort of behavior is typical for me on overseas trips: no problem sleeping the first night, but difficulty on the second and, often, third. Lee did get more sleep than I did, but probably not enough.

When we look outside at 5:45, we see a bright, sunny morning. The weather forecast on the TV, however, warns about possible rain showers in the outer Hebrides. We get breakfast as soon as the room is opened (actually several minutes later than the posted schedule because the staff is badly disorganized), but one delightful event occurs when a dour Brit tries to push in line ahead of us, but a hostess intervenes and sends him to the rear. Following breakfast, we return to the room, get our bags, and check-out. But there is no John Alasdair Macdonald at the 7:30 agreed-upon time. Hmmmm. While we wait near the hotel door, a hotel clerk tells us that our guide (who seems to know and be known by everybody in Inverness) has gone to the bathroom. Sure enough, he arrives a few minutes later and we make our introductions.

As we drive to Ullapool for the ferry, John tells us about himself. He's a young man (well, everyone seems young compared to me), I'd guess in his 40s, with a wife and three children, one of whom is about to start college. He is tall, well-spoken, a little stocky, and extraordinarily knowledgeable about Scotland - he has a bachelor's degree in Scottish history and is presently working on a masters degree in Scottish history, archaeology, and literature.

I hope that Lee has taken notes during our drive to Ullapool because I find that I'm unable to write very much in this bouncing SUV. But that's OK because John has written about himself at his company's web site:

I was raised on a small croft (a traditional Highland agricultural landholding) near the coast, in the village of Coll, on the eastern side of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. My family have been on the same croft for over two hundred years (at least since 1815) and for generations my ancestors have been crofters and fishermen - much to my father (ex-fisherman) and two brothers (a crofter and a sailor) shame, I never found my sea legs!

As a young child my first language was Scottish Gaelic and I didn't begin to learn English until I started school. However, my schooling was dominated by the English language (not so for my much younger brother who actually went to a Gaelic Medium School) and by the time I reached my teens, English

had become my main language. It is due to my mother that I have kept some Gaelic - she refuses to talk to me in English.

I left the Highlands at seventeen to go to college in Edinburgh. Twenty five years later I finally finished a degree! I've recently completed a BA Scottish History degree, which I studied for part-time (in the winter months) at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Inverness and am now midway through a Masters degree that includes Scottish History, Archaeology and Literature.

For the last fifteen years, I have been based near Inverness, in the Loch Ness village of Drumnadrochit. Before beginning *The Hebridean Explorer*, my wife and I owned a Bed and Breakfast - in fact it's where the seeds of being a tour guide came from. Spending time talking to guests about where they were going, I thought - wouldn't it be great to actually take people there! I am now very fortunate to be able to do a job I absolutely love, travelling the Highlands and the Hebridean Islands, visiting the best sites and the real scenic gems, sharing Highland history and brushing up on my Gaelic!

Here is some additional information. His mother and father still live in Stornoway as do his two brothers: one is a sheep farmer, the other the captain on the evening ferry back to Ullapool. He is an engaging story-teller and is eager to learn about our backgrounds, interests, and ambitions. It doesn't take long to establish a common ground - all three of us despise Donald Trump. His Scottish accent is easy to understand and he seems to have no trouble with our American lingo. Throughout our time with him, we exchange thoughts about differences between our languages. For example, British people will say "the orchestra *are* playing" or "RCA *are* hiring employees" and so on - they have no collective singular noun as we do in America. I'll say more on this topic on pp. 33 and 40. (Note, also, his writing "My family *have* been ..." at his web site.) The only language problem that we encounter is when he says that his younger daughter is taking her HIGHERSH. We soon discover that his S, whether at the beginning or end of a word, is pronounced SH (e.g., Shtone, cowSH, etc.) and that the Scottish equivalent of England's O-levels is HIREs (shorthand for higher grade).

John tells us that barely 1% of Scots can speak Gaelic and that inhabitants of the lowlands are opposed to having any government money spent of Gaelic language preservation. In addition to speaking Gaelic with his mother (see above), he also uses it when conversing with friends and neighbors in and around Stornoway. He confesses, though, that he cannot carry on a conversation on a complex topic.

As we drive along, I express amusement that the UK has gone *nearly* 100% metric: the currency is now metric, meaning that one doesn't have to deal with shillings, crowns, and farthings; liquid quantities are in milliliters and liters; weights of groceries, produce, and meat or fish are in grams and kilograms; but distances are still in inches/feet/miles; and people know their own body weight only in stones (1 stone = 14 pounds).

According to Google Maps, the trip to Ullapool is 57 miles and should take about one-and-a-half hours. In fact, we arrive at the ferry line at 9:10, well ahead of the scheduled departure. Leaving Inverness, we cross the Beaully Firth* which connects to Moray Firth and then to the North Sea. The road out of

*According to Wikipedia, "Firth is a word in the Scots and English languages used to denote various coastal waters in Scotland and even a strait." Or as they said about George Washington, "Firth in war, firth in peace, and firth in the hearts of his countrymen," amended to this description of the hapless Washington Senators (the baseball team, not the 100 men and women who do very little while managing to appear on evening TV news), "First in war, first in peace, and last in the American League." But I digress.

Inverness is a nice four-lane separated highway that connects with a two-lane highway a short while later. The scenery at the start features lush fields, large trees, and flat vistas but after about 20 miles the terrain becomes more barren, the lush green makes way for brown grass, and mountains begin to appear. Also,

all of the road signs name the passing towns in both English and Gaelic. Another ten miles puts us alongside Loch Glascarnoch (on our right) and fields of scrub grass and peat and bogs on our left. (There are also precious few sheep, sigh!) As we near Ullapool, the vegetation becomes more lush: scotch broom or gorse (Lee can tell them apart - I can't) on both our left and right, Loch Broom on the left.

Ullapool (population less than 2000) is not particularly attractive. Nevertheless, our early arrival allows us (forces us?) to walk along Shore Street with the harbor on the right and a long series of row houses (homes, hotels, restaurants, taverns, shops), most of them painted white, on the left. (John, having seen it all remains in the car and works, via WiFi, on business correspondence.) We take some pictures, not because of the scenery but just to document how gloomy the town appears to be.

The CalMac ferry (short for Caledonian MacBrayne) arrives from Isle of Lewis right on time at 9:30. We drive onto the ship at 9:50. The ferry agent directs us to ascend a ramp on the left where we stop, about halfway up. Surely they don't expect us to get out of the car when it's at such an angle, do they? Well, in fact they don't. After we and one or two more cars behind us are in place, a powerful motor lifts the rear of the ramp so that it is level with the rest of the ship. Now we can exit. In contrast to the many ferries in the Seattle area, this one is quite posh: large interior, ample and comfortable seating, excellent visibility through a wide observation window, an extensive dining area, and many different kinds of food on offer.

The voyage across The Minch* takes 2.5 hours. The passage is quite smooth, even though rain has

*I can't find anything authoritative on the origin of this name. And Wikipedia just muddies the waters, so to speak, by writing "**The Minch** (Scottish Gaelic: *An Cuan Sgitheanach*, *An Cuan Sgith*, *Cuan na Hearadh*, *An Cuan Leòdhasach*), also called **North Minch**, is a strait in north-west Scotland, separating the north-west Highlands and the northern Inner Hebrides from Lewis and Harris in the Outer Hebrides. It was known as *Skotlandsfjörð* ('Scotland's fjord/firth') in Old Norse." So it has four names in Scottish Gaelic, none of which even remotely resembles Minch.

begun about halfway to our destination. The crossing can, at times, be quite rough, thus earning the ferry the unattractive nickname: vomit comet. John's wife, having got sick (along with everyone else on board) on her first crossing, refuses to travel to Lewis by this ferry. Instead, the family drives quite a long distance from Inverness to Isle of Skye (not a true island as there exists a land connection to the mainland) and from there a much shorter ferry trip to Isle of Harris, the distant southern end of the Outer Hebrides and far from Stornoway (on Isle of Lewis) where John's parents live.

The CalMac web site for the various ferries informs us:

"Voted No.1 island in Europe. As TripAdvisor's top island pick in 2014, **Lewis** has got a lot to recommend it. The Callanish stones are one of the finest examples of Neolithic standing stones to be found anywhere in Scotland, and the beaches are broad sweeps of white sand and clear seas. The ferry to Stornoway delivers you to the hub of the island, home to the HebCelt Festival each year - and the rest of the isle is yours for an adventure. The moors and lochs and coasts support plenty of wildlife, and a round of Stornoway Black Pudding should keep you going while you explore. And to warm up after the days outdoors, the 200 year old Abhainn Dearg Distillery is worth a visit."

However, another CalMac web sites challenges the claim of Lewis:

"TripAdvisor's best island in Europe. Best island in Europe? It shouldn't be a surprise. The Isle of **Harris** has the beaches, puffin colonies, and seafood to make it the envy of the continent. Get the ferry to Harris direct from Skye, and once you're there head out on a boat trip for basking sharks, minke and killer whales, or stick to the shore to go otter spotting. You can see St Kilda from the west coast, and you can book a day trip to go see the wildest isle in the Outer Hebrides. Stay in a whitewashed croft, climb An Clisham, the highest peak in the Outer Hebrides, or spend an afternoon

exploring the history of the island's cloth, Harris Tweed.

Seems to me that Harris and Lewis can't *both* be the best island in Europe (or even in the United Kingdom). CalMac needs to clean up its act, doncha think?

So we arrive in Stornoway (population 8,000). Rather than taking us to our hotel, John does a couple of tourist stops. At about 2:00 we arrive at The Calanais Stones,* about 17 miles away. The road is two-

*This is how it's spelled on a sign at the entrance, but Google searches change the spelling to Callanish https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callanish_Stones

lane with a decent surface, most of the way. We pass bogs and peat fields. John tells us about his boyhood digging peat out of the ground because, at that time, nearly all homes were heated with peat. Everyone in the family "owned" a long plot of peat and neighbors were careful to cut peat only on their section, not on someone else's. Plots remained with a family "forever."

John tells us about the *guga hunt*, the annual hunt for young gannets off the northern coast of Harris. John's father has had a place in the guga hunt for years and cherishes it greatly. The killing of gannets was outlawed in 1954, but this hunt operates under a special permit. See: <https://tinyurl.com/ycg7gsk8>

We learn about the potato famines of the mid-19th century, causing starving Scots and Irish to emigrate to Canada. John also tells us that the MacLeods and the MacDonalds are the dominant Western Isles clans; the former have Viking genetic markings, the latter not.

In addition to discussing U.S. politics (i.e., the Age of Trump), John fills us in on what's happening in Scotland. The dominant divisions are the Unionists and the Nationalists, the latter supporting Gaelic language and traditions. Brexit failed in Scotland, 38% to 62%. A few years ago, the vote for independence also failed, but narrowly: 45% to 55%. Younger people favor independence from the United Kingdom and John suspects that if another vote is held soon, the breakaway will occur and Scotland will be able to remain in the E.U.

FUN FACT: Mary Anne MacLeod was born in 1912 in Tong, about three miles north of Stornoway. In 1930, she left for the U.S. and worked as a domestic servant. Six years after her arrival, she married one Frederick Trump and had five children, the fourth of whom is Donald J. Trump. (One wonders if she was an undocumented alien who escaped the clutches of ICE only because there was no ICE at the time.)

Despite the relative cold and fierce winds (and the tour bus of Americans), it is a joy to walk among these huge stones. I take many many pictures. Wikipedia describes the site as:

"an arrangement of standing stones placed in a cruciform pattern with a central stone circle ... The stone circle was set up between 2900 and 2600 BCE. It is not clear whether the stone alignments were constructed at the same time as the circle, or later." Furthermore, "The [central] stone is 4.8 metres high, 1.5 metres wide and 0.3 metres thick. The largest sides of the stone are almost perfectly oriented to the north and south. The monolith has the shape of a ship's rudder and probably weighs about seven tonnes ... The stone circle consists of thirteen stones and has a diameter of 11.4 metres. ... The stones have an average height of three metres. The ring covers an area of 124 square metres."

Near the Callanish Stones is the Dun Carloway Broch, described this way at their web site: "However fascinating the Standing Stones are, they are not the only prehistoric site worth visiting - Dun Carloway is one of the best-preserved Iron Age Brochs in the whole of Scotland. Positioned above a crofting township and close to a large sea loch Dun Carloway, like the Standing Stones ... The origin of the broch and its precise use is still not clear." Again, we take many pictures of it and of the many sheep that guard it (although not very attentively).

We drive south to Dalbeg Beach where we arrive at 3:30. It is on a secluded bay with cliffs on all sides, it faces the Atlantic Ocean. Further on is the Arnol Black House. A web site informs us " The blackhouses were dwellings which had straw thatched roofs and included areas where the animals or livestock were housed. There were no chimneys - and a peat fire was kept burning in the central living and kitchen area Whitehouses really only came into existence later when legal pressures and health regulations started to demand that the livestock should be housed in separate dwellings."

A busy day, but we certainly did get our money's worth. And now it's time to go to Broad Bay House where we'll spend tonight and tomorrow night. It's about 8 miles north of Stornoway and situated on a broad bay called, appropriately, Broad Bay. <https://www.broadbayhouse.co.uk/> There are four guest rooms and a large dining/lounge area, which has a vaulted ceiling and windows on three sides. This is where breakfast will be served. Our room (judged by John to be the best because of its view of the bay and its easy access to the beach) is lovely, modern, and well-appointed. The inn does not serve meals (aside from breakfast) but they do offer to prepare a plate of cold cuts for guests who don't want to drive to Stornoway for a restaurant.

The owners are a married couple, Ian and Marion, although we only get to meet Marion during our stay. She greets us, shows us around the property, and invites us to have our dinner in the common area. This is a beautiful room with several tables for eating and many comfortable chairs and couches; there is a view of the beach and surrounding area, including a number of sheep who parade alongside the water each morning. It has the requisite telescope (two of them, as I recall), a state-of-the-art sound system (expensive components, I would judge),* access to coffee, snacks, and sweets any time of the day

*The iTube docking station and iTube valve amplifier pictured here are similar to those in the common room. There were also Tannoy speakers, but I have no pictures of them. Our room also has a docking station, amplifier, and TEAC speakers, but they seem not to be connected to anything - we need a sound engineer (or just someone sound) to set it up.



or night, and an excellent selection of single malts, honor system in force if one imbibes.

Two items on the breakfast menu (Hebridean Sizzler and Local Smoked Fish) must be ordered the previous evening. The former features black pudding, mushrooms, sausage, bacon, and eggs, served in an iron skillet; the latter has smoked haddock or whiting with a poached egg or a trio of locally smoked salmon with scrambled eggs. Other items on the menu (e.g., Omelette or Full Hebridean Breakfast or lighter fare) do not need to be pre-ordered. Lee requests the Hebridean Sizzler for tomorrow.

When we booked our room, we asked for a "an assortment of cold cuts, fish, and cheese" for dinner the first evening. What came was enough to feed a small army: four different kinds of smoked fish (salmon smoked over peat, gravlax, Stornoway double smoked salmon, and cold smoked herring); salami, chorizo, ham, and prosciutto; six kinds of cheese (three kinds of cheddar, two Brie-like, one blue); six(!) warm rolls; green salad with balsamic vinaigrette; and a wide variety of condiments (mustard, pickled onions, cornichons, two chutneys, capers, tomatoes, anchovies, dill sauce). Whew! And, of course, this was accompanied by wee drams of a single malt: Lee has Dalwhinnie Winter Gold, which she characterizes as "delish" while I forget to record what I had.

We stagger back to our room and read in front of the large window where we can enjoy a beautiful sunset at about 9:45. And we are in bed by 10:15 where we rapidly fall asleep after this very full day.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16

I sleep very soundly until about 6:00, but stay in bed until 7:00 when the alarm goes off. The groggy feeling of not having slept enough two days ago is gone. It is a sunny morning. According to an

indoor/outdoor thermometer in the room, the outside temperature is 19° (I assume that that's °C).

The bathroom is new and modern in design, but (alas for MiLady) there is no bathtub to soak in, just as there was none at Kingsmill. Maybe our next hotel (following our six days at Kingsmill) will provide a bath. Curiously, there is a posted note urging users to keep the bathroom door closed when using the shower; apparently the steam can set off the smoke detector (really??). It's a bit early for breakfast (which is not served until 8:00), so I take pictures of the room and outdoor garden (including the sheep).

For breakfast, we help ourselves to juice, fruit, and rolls or bread. I order the Full Hebridean Breakfast: sausage, bacon (which is more like ham), tomatoes, mushrooms, Stornoway black pudding and white pudding, toast, and fried eggs. What, no haggis? Everything is loaded with a year's supply of salt - I drink two glasses of orange juice to clear the palate and slake my thirst. Last night, Lee placed a pre-order for the Hebridean Sizzler (described a few paragraphs earlier). Tomorrow I plan to have only corn flakes and toast, neither of which is likely to be saturated with salt.

There are three other couples at breakfast: an elderly pair (but probably younger than the Magids) from the south of Scotland, a young man and woman from Germany, and a middle-aged couple who arrived late and don't speak loudly enough for me to identify their accent. Marion tells me that she and Ian purpose-built this building 11 years ago. They keep it open five months a year. The decorations, the lighting, the sound system are all *very* modern ... except for the replicas of the Lewis chessmen.

In our room, there is a "device" on my night stand that reveals inside and outside temperatures, humidity, the weather (sunny or cloudy), and the time of day. It also produced a bright light that flashed on and off in the middle of the night. It's more than a night light - in fact it was bright enough to illuminate the room.

After this bizarre behavior occurred again on the second night, I asked Marion if she could explain it. I forgot to write her answer in my notes of the trip, but I think she attributed it to either an incorrect setting or a failing battery. Thank goodness she didn't attribute it to ghosts! Well! In the interest of making this journal as accurate and complete as possible, I wrote to Marion on July 18, 2018 to determine if she could recall the incident *and* her answer. This is her reply:

Yes I remember you mentioning something about the weather station in your room - alas we could find no reason for it behaving in such a way. The only light that might come on is a frost sensor, but clearly it was far too warm for that to be the case.

Since you stayed no-one else has reported anything similar, so we are at a loss to explain your experience. Ian has examined the weather station carefully and there is nothing obviously wrong with it. So I guess it must remain a mystery, but I'm glad it didn't prevent you from enjoying your stay here.

Hmm, so maybe it *is* ghosts, after all!

Following breakfast, we return to our room at 8:45 and await John's arrival at 9:30. (He is staying at his parents' home, just a few miles from here.) We drive into Stornoway. John shows us where he grew up and where his parents and brothers live. Lee and I are paying special attention to the intricacies of driving on the "wrong" side of the road in a vehicle with its steering wheel also on the "wrong" side. Intellectually it seems so easy, but we recall having had difficulties and challenges when driving our rental car in Scotland, Ireland, England, Australia, and New Zealand over the past many years.

A prominent feature, at the top of a hill, is the castle (called Lews Castle) <https://www.lews-castle.co.uk/> Within it is an excellent museum of local history, customs, language, and commerce. Featured is a special exhibit called Scotland's Early Silver: silver objects from 75 AD to 1000 AD, some intact and others broken down to be used as money. Other exhibits are of clothing (particularly the history of the tartan), arms, inventions, etc. Of special interest are the Lewis Chessman, made of walrus ivory, six of which are here on loan from the British Museum. Archaeologists trace their origin to Trondheim, Norway in the 12th

century. They were discovered in 1831 during a dig here in Lewis. <https://tinyurl.com/qc3vw7q>

One of the museum's exhibits features an interactive video display that allows the user to focus on geography anywhere in the world. It's very much like the web site that Lee and I loved exploring when we lived in Ruston, overlooking Commencement Bay: <https://www.vesselfinder.com/> I had been having trouble describing the greater Seattle area to John, so this interactive display is perfect: I can zero in on Washington State, Seattle, Ruston, and Gig Harbor.

For a local museum, this was superb. It gets the coveted *R. M. Magid Seal of Excellence*. (Should I write to them and tell them?)

John points his trusty vehicle in a southward direction on the A859 and we drive to the Isle of Harris. We pass bogs and fields of peat, eventually approaching a hilly region with lots of rocks but little vegetation; there are several lakes that run parallel to the highway where we stop to take pictures of the wide, shallow beaches with cliffs at the rear. This highway is the only road in this general region.

Lewis and Harris are misnamed as islands because, in fact, they are connected at the town of Tarbert by what looks on the map like a tightened 1500-foot belt having pouches of water on either side. In fact, the water to the west leads to the Atlantic Ocean and that to the east to The Minch (and eventually the North Sea). Continuing our journey, we get to the most southerly part of Harris and the town of Rodel. By this time, the A859 has become a single-track road, populated by lots of sheep (but, fortunately) very few oncoming vehicles.

We stop at the 15th century St. Clement's Church, built by the MacLeod clan, who lived in Dunvegan Castle in Skye. Wikipedia informs us:

In 1528, Alasdair Crotach MacLeod, 8th Chief, prepared for himself a magnificent wall tomb on the south side of the choir - possibly the finest medieval wall tomb in Scotland, being crowned by an arch and ornated by carvings of biblical design. The 9th Chief, Alasadair or Alexander's son William, had his grave prepared in the south wall of the nave in 1539. In the south transept, there is a third grave probably belonging to John MacLeod of Minginish, the 10th Chief. There are five more grave slabs leaning against the wall of the north transept. The graveyard surrounding the church contains a number of MacLeod tombs.

We take many pictures of the exterior and interior of the church, including the tombs of the MacLeods and the many old grave stones in the cemetery. The MacLeods dominate this region and also Skye where the clan seat is Dunvegan Castle. Most McLeods belong to the Free Presbyterian Church, which is much stricter and more Bible-oriented than the Church of Scotland. Sunday-closing laws are strictly enforced here.

About a mile north of Rodel, we stop at The Anchorage <http://www.anchoragerestaurant.co.uk/> for a nice lunch in a pleasant setting, indoors, out of the wind. Lee and I both have a creamy fish chowder with two kinds of white fish plus bay shrimp. Served as a side is a creamy cole slaw.

Further north, we stop in Tarbert (the afore-mentioned town that straddles the land between Lewis and Harris) for Lee to browse at the Harris Tweed Shop and for John and me to patiently twiddle our thumbs at the adjacent Isle of Harris Distillery. No, they do not give free samples but they do sell a gin* in a very distinctive bottle, so distinctive that it's made its way into all



*I had thought that the Scots reserved their florid descriptions for the taste and aroma of their whiskies, but I now find that they are equally effusive about their gin. From the distillery's web site, we read "A well-defined juniper note with pine needles, immediately followed by the fresh citrus notes of bitter orange, lime and grapefruit. Develops a complex floral note of rose and wallflowers with crushed green herbs, coriander and gooseberry all underpinned by mixed spice. Sugar kelp adds to the

complexity and richness and gives a dry maritime note." Note (oops) the three-time use of Note in the preceding.

sorts of products. Harris Tweed can be fashioned into garments anywhere in the world, but the wool must be produced here by local weavers. Lee buys a pair of gloves and a scarf.

We eventually make our way back north to Stornoway. Along the way, John regales us with tales of the Lords of the Isles. It is all too complicated for this old brain, what with its tales of MacDonalds, MacLeods, MacClains, MacNeils, (and big Macs?). For example, Wikipedia informs us "In 973, Maccus mac Arailt, King of the Isles, Kenneth III, King of the Scots, and Máel Coluim I of Strathclyde formed a defensive alliance, but subsequently the Scandinavians defeated Gilla Adomnáin of the Isles and expelled him to Ireland" yadda yadda yadda. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_of_the_Isles

We have a dinner reservation at Digby Chick the top-rated restaurant <http://www.digbychick.co.uk/> According to our server, the name comes from Digby* in Nova Scotia where the owner had traveled; the

*In 2006, Lee and I visited Nova Scotia and spent two or three days in Digby. The highlight of our visit was the Digby scallop-shucking contest that featured local fishermen doing their best of cut open dozens and dozens of clam shells without cutting off any fingers. Other contests were for rope knotting and net mending.

origin of Chick is less clear. The restaurant is crowded and very noisy, becoming even noisier when a party of six and another of seven arrive. Lee writes, "Beware the loud voices of the after-work party of female work colleagues, the most talkative/loud species on the planet." Dear Reader, please note that a woman wrote this, not I.

We arrive in time for the three-course early menu, priced at £23.95. We start with single malts: Laphroaig for me, Arran for Lee who also has a glass of Sauvignon Blanc with her meal. We both start with "brie, cranberry, and red onion puff pastry tart that comes with a Waldorf salad (green beans and blue cheese, grape and sultana chutney). For her main, Lee has the pork belly and I the cod; I could quote the details of each from the menu that I purloined, but I won't. And, of course, dessert: Lee has a warm treacle tart and I (well, I just have to quote it in full) "Strawberry shortcake, fudge ice cream bonbons, elderflower mascarpone, strawberry sauce." What decadence!!! Lee's comment "Wow! Wow! Wow!

John is waiting for us outside the restaurant and takes us back to Broad Bay House. At the end of this busy day, we are tired (and we didn't even have to drive the car) and get to bed at 11:00.

THURSDAY, MAY 17

We set the alarm for 6:45 and awaken to another bright, sunny day with an outside temperature of 17°C. Breakfast is served at 8:00. Today I decide on having something less extravagant than yesterday's Full Hebridean Breakfast, but I will not go hungry, no sir, not after juice and fruit, two eggs, sausage, mushrooms, toast, and coffee. At 9:15, we check out and wait for John's arrival.

We head north, some 30 miles and we arrive at 10:45 at the Butt of Lewis (please refrain from making any jokes) at the northern-most point of the island where the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea meet. It features waves crashing against huge rock walls and a red brick lighthouse (from the 1860s) that is 121 feet high. This was automated in 1998 and now it is mostly replaced by GPS navigation on the ships. According to Wikipedia, "The Butt of Lewis features some of the oldest rocks in Europe, having been formed in the Precambrian period up to 3000 million* years ago."

*Here is another strange difference between the American and United Kingdom use of words. In the U.S., "one billion" means 1,000,000,000 (or, in Sci-talk 1×10^9) but on the other side of the pond "one

billion" for many years referred to a "million million" (or 1×10^{12}). This so-called "long scale" is still used in some European countries, but the UK has now adopted the American convention of saying that one billion is a thousand million. But they often avoid using the word billion (as in the preceding sentence). Got it?

Some interesting tidbits learned on the drive south from Butt of Lewis: ● John and his wife ran a B&B for five years, but the pace was killing so he switched professions to tour guide. ● This is clan Morrison land. They provided the judges during Lords of the Isles time; the Macbeths were the doctors; other clans were the pipers. ● John had a Morrison great-grandmother on his father's side; his mother would say to him "That's the Morrison in you" (meaning that you're never wrong, in your own opinion). ● Everyone on the island uses on-line grocery delivery because all of the large supermarkets are in Stornoway. People also use Amazon for other items. ● AirBnB has taken a lot of housing stock out of circulation, making it difficult for young families to find housing. ● Speeding laws in the UK are very strict. There are mobile speed vans everywhere that give a grace of just a couple of mph over the speed limit. ● Speyside whiskies have no peat - rather the barley is toasted over other heat sources. But such a whisky *can* be aged in a peated cask from Islay (e.g., Glenlivet) but John thinks that this doesn't work very well. ● John's brother and his pals have a bothy (a small hut or cottage) on a small loch filled with trout. [This paragraph is written courtesy of Lee who was actually able to take notes during the drive. More power to her!]

We return to Stornoway, arriving at about 12:40. As the ferry to Ullapool doesn't leave until 2:00, this gives us time to walk around the dock area and take pictures of the boats, store fronts, and some of the imaginative sculptures (a fisherman in a yellow slicker, a woman cleaning fish, a Lewis chessman). Lee buys an artificial posie made of Harris tweed as a gift for Barbara Williams who is watering our plants. We pass a Berserker* statuette in front of a store that sells full chess sets. And best of all, we see a huge

*Wikipedia: "Berserkers (or 'berserks') were champion Norse warriors who are primarily reported in Icelandic sagas to have fought in a trance-like fury, a characteristic which later gave rise to the English word 'berserk.' "

statue of a Lewis chessman, right next to a red, white, and blue pennant with the faces of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. The royal wedding is on Saturday.

We board the ferry at 1:30 and make our way, first, to the outdoor seating area where an interesting assortment of dogs are at play, and then to the spacious indoor lounge with its wide view of the sea. We buy lunch in the ferry's dining area: for me, a much-too-large, much-too-juicy cheeseburger that came with fries and a salad. (I didn't see the counter where a simpler sandwich might have been obtained.)

FUN FACT John tells us that the rear of the ferry's truck deck is left open because many of the trucks are carrying foods that require refrigeration, so it's necessary for the vehicles to run their engines during the two-and-a-half hour passage.

ANOTHER FUN FACT John tells us that during his boyhood, there was a mobile van that came to different towns and showed movies. Its nickname was the "Screen Machine."

OBSERVATIONS

- There are very few smokers on the streets of Stornoway
- There is a passenger on the ship wearing a kilt and matching woolen socks, a "surprise" to us but it won't be when we see many men dressed this way when we return to the Kingsmill Inn (*vide infra*, as we say in the chem biz.)
- John tells us that all almost male Scots own a suit with kilt, socks, sporran, and tight jacket and vest but that they wear it only for special occasions, such as weddings and bar mitzvahs (I made that up).
- A large passenger cruise ship, the Queen Victoria (Cunard Line), crosses in front of us. Super-sleuth

Lee discovers that she is bound for Portree (on Skye).

As he drives us to the Kingsmill for our return check-in, John tells me that he started reading my 2001 Scotland journal and enjoyed it. (He was kind enough not to criticize my American-biased version of Scottish history and culture.) He especially enjoyed my description of the Ardbeg whisky. (Actually it was not *my* description but, rather, the words used by the distiller to describe their product.) He also tells us about his favorite whiskies and where the best places are in Inverness to find them. He particularly recommends Springbank, made in Campbeltown which is near Glasgow. He describes it as very peaty. If you're curious, you can find the earlier journal at <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/europe01.pdf> The description of Ardbeg's whisky is on pp. 49-51.

We arrive at Kingsmill at about 6:00. We are given another garden room, 910 instead of 905 (not that it matters). We choose to have dinner in the Whisky Bar, adjacent to The Conservatory (the less formal restaurant). I have an Ardbeg 10-year old while Lee has a Benromach, 10-year old. I eat a ham sandwich with chips; Lee has a prawn Marie Rose* baguette with fries. We both have coffee. The server is from

*Uneducated boor that I am, I had to look this up. I learn that Marie Rose is either "a British condiment made from a blend of tomatoes, mayonnaise, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice and pepper" or a character in the video game *Dead or Alive*. My guess is that it is the former that's on her baguette, but I prefer to think it's the latter who is describe as "an 18-year-old Swedish maid who uses the Russian fighting style, systema."

northern England. His mother moved to Back, eight miles from Stornoway, twelve years ago. (Tomorrow he will tell us that she knows Ian and Marion.

While sitting in the Whisky Bar or on walking in the garden, to and from our room, we encounter numerous folk who are celebrating (while inebriating) at one or more wedding parties. Nearly every adult male is sporting the full Scottish regalia (kilt, woolen socks, vest and jacket, sporran); many young boys are clad similarly. The women all wear with giant hats and taffeta gowns. Two men are steady enough on their feet to pose for my camera. There is also a bagpiper to greet the bridal party as they make their appearance. (Some people would run away, rather than toward, the bagpipe sound but Scots are a curious folk who actually enjoy this music.)

We read in our room, do a bit of internet work, and get to bed relatively early.

A BRIEF INTERLUDE IN THIS GRIPPING NARRATIVE: FROM FORMER TRIPS TO SCOTLAND, IRELAND, ENGLAND, AND WALES, I MADE SOME OBSERVATIONS THAT ARE ALSO PERTINENT TO THE CURRENT VISIT, SO I'M GOING TO BORROW LIBERALLY FROM EARLIER TRAVELOGUES RATHER THAN CREATING THESE IDEAS ANEW. BECAUSE I AM QUOTING MY OWN WORDS, IT'S NOT REALLY PLAGIARISM. IS IT? FOR THIS INTERLUDE, I'LL PRESENT MY WARPED VERSION OF 2500 YEARS OF SCOTTISH HISTORY. LATER INTERLUDES WILL FOCUS ON LANGUAGE, CAR DRIVING, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL TOPICS. THE MAIN NARRATIVE WILL RESUME ON P. 21 WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF MAY 18.

At this point in the narrative, a brief history of Scotland is in order, as matters will soon get quite complicated with tales of bravery, treachery, loyalty, infamy, and a grrreat many blooody murrnderrrrs. Some key dates and events: the Romans (ca. 55-400 AD) are driven out by the Picts; St. Columba brings Catholicism from Ireland to Iona in 563; the Scots, Britons, and Picts unite under the Catholic flag of Malcolm III (1058-1093) whose son, Edgar, signs a treaty with Magnus the Barefoot (King of Norway) in 1098. (You following this?) Over the next couple of centuries there is a lot of to-ing and fro-ing as armies move this-away and that-away. The year 1297 finds William Wallace (a.k.a. Mel Gibson) winning the equivalent of the World Cup by defeating the English, the French, and the Norwegians at Stirling, only to lose a great battle the next year at Falkirk. Then Robert the Bruce (strange middle name, what?) has

himself crowned (1306) at Scone (thus establishing the tradition of afternoon tea and scones) .

A century later come the Stewarts (also spelled Stuarts): there is a succession of kings named James, leading eventually to Mary, Queen of Scots (well, what else would she be queen of?) who refused to ally with one of the sons of Henry VIII; this got Hank pissed off, so he attacked Scotland (1544) but Mary escaped to France. In 1561, her French husband having died, the 18-year-old Mary returned to Scotland and married her cousin (a tradition continued by their modern-day descendants in Tennessee and Arkansas) who was murdered six years later. Mary abdicated and fled to England where she was imprisoned by Elizabeth I, when she wasn't worrying about getting tickets to Shakespeare's new plays. Mary had a little lamb ... oops ... Mary had a son named James (so you expected something different?) who became James VI of Scotland and, when Elizabeth forgot to produce an heir, also became James I of England in 1603. Thus the two nations were united in *unending harmony* which, alas, *un-unended* when James's son, Charles I (at last a new name!) imposed the Scottish Prayer Book (and the infield fly rule) on the Episcopal Church, leading to the stool-throwing incident at St. Giles Cathedral. (One assumes that these were stools of the sitting-down type, but then again ...)

Well, push came to shove, armies moved, Charles I was executed, Charles II was defeated by Cromwell's army in 1650, and Scotland became an occupied country. This Charles II was executed so that another Charles II could become king, this avoiding the necessity of changing the name on the stationery and linens. (You sure you're still following this?) This second Charles II was replaced in 1689 by his brother, another James (VII, in case you're counting) who was a Catholic and therefore in conflict with the Protestant William and Mary in England. The Jacobites (followers of kings named Jacob - I mean James) tried to go into hiding, but were, for the most part, bumped off. Now the Presbyterian Church reigned supreme in Scotland. England decided "To hell with all these Jameses and Charleses" and they crowned George I in 1714.

There were several Jacobite uprisings, the most determined of which occurred in 1745 during the reign of George II* and was led by Charles Edward Stuart (and you thought that the Stuarts were long since gone)

*These kings, George I and George II, are not George Herbert Walker Bush and George Dubya Bush.

a.k.a. Bonnie Prince Charlie. His army had some successes, but then he suffered a crushing defeat at Culloden in 1746. (Curiously, modern Scots celebrate their defeat at Culloden with the same intensity that modern Serbs celebrate their defeat by Ottoman Turks in 1389.) Scotland was occupied again and the Scots were forced to give up their customs (the wearing of kilts, the playing(??) of bagpipes, etc.) and were driven from the most fertile farm lands to barren tracts near the coasts. This forced migration called "the clearances" (not to be confused with modern clearance sales) was awful for the Scots and, subsequently, for the French Canadians who were themselves packed off into exile as the Scots made their way to Nova Scotia.

Well, George II was succeeded by George III (the only king whose name and number Americans know) whose son IV (well, if we can refer to our President Bush as "W" ...) visited Scotland in 1822 at the invitation of Sir Walter Scott. IV is revered for having allowed the kilt to be worn again, but reviled by everyone (except the Scots) for permitting bagpipes to be played. Well, there was more to-ing and fro-ing, including the finding of the stolen "Stone of Destiny" in Westminster Abbey and its return, after an absence of 700, years to Edinburgh in 1996. In 1999, the Scottish Parliament was opened (a beautiful modern building is currently under construction) and Sean Connery became King. OK, so he didn't. Nor did Mel Gibson.

Parts of the Edinburgh Castle date from the 11th century. Only once has it passed out of Scottish hands (when captured by Cromwell who successfully repelled a raid by Bonnie Prince Charlie). The Royal Palace houses "The Honours of Scotland," principally the bejeweled crown (which, by law, *never* leaves Scotland but was actually *touched twice* by Elizabeth II during a visit - this is of great significance to locals, although the meaning of it escapes us) and "The Stone of Scone" a.k.a. "The Stone of Destiny," believed by some to

be the very stone that Jacob used as a pillow during his famous dream. Uh-huh. According to the *Michelin Green Guide*, "the Stone of Destiny [is] the ancient symbol of Celtic kingship. [It] was returned to Scotland in 1996 after 700 years under the Coronation Chair at Westminster Abbey." (And if you think that a little pea under a mattress was disruptive ...) I'm sure that this stone has great importance to the Scots, but this dispassionate observer is neither in awe nor inspired. A big amorphous-shaped rock, that's what it is.

FRIDAY, MAY 18

It is another sunny morning. How many more days will we be blessed with such good weather? Today is my wedding anniversary - also, not coincidentally, Lee's! In the entry for May 14, I revealed the events related to our being in Scotland for our anniversary in 2001. At least this year, she bought my card in advance of the date - a full four days in advance!

We ask the hotel staff to reserve a dinner table for us at The Kitchen Brasserie, a downtown restaurant that gets good reviews. In the hotel lobby is a sign board that announces the names of the groups meeting here. Most intriguing is a learning seminar entitled "MAJORING ON THE MACRO." Go figure.

At noon, we walk downtown and head to the train station to print the tickets and seat reservations (that we had already purchased) for our trip to Edinburgh on the 23rd. We encounter a particularly nasty clerk who informs us that it's a waste of her time to print our tickets. Instead, we must do it ourselves at the kiosk across the hall. Now listen - we are normally quite adept at managing 21st century devices (ATMs, self-check at grocery, self-check at the library, gasoline fill-ups, etc.) but this device defeats us. The instructions are vague (and we thought that Scots wrote in English!) and the various buttons are unresponsive, even when we insert one credit card and another. Frustrated, we return to the ticket office and this time encounter a slightly more pleasant clerk who prints our tickets but says that we have no seat reservation. The receipt we have in hand says otherwise, but he is not convinced. Nevertheless, he deigns to give us Seats 3F and 4F which are, at least, in the same car.

Walking through the shopping area, we spot the offices of The Flat Earth Society. They are hosting a big meeting tomorrow to discuss the following: "The idea that we've been lied to about the shape of the earth is one that is often met with derision and ridicule." On re-reading this, the syntax is strange but it seems to be saying the reverse of what is intended. Maybe.

Following the miserable adventure at the train station, we head to the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery. That is, we head to it but can't find it even though we have its address and a city map that shows its location. Yes, there's a sign pointing to it, but when we ascend a ramp we find only business and dental offices, no museum. I walk into a restaurant to ask directions - the first person I ask has very little English (no, he's not Scottish but - I think - Turkish) but the manager steps outside with me and shows us where we need to go. Well, it's a hot day - and we've done a lot of walking - and the museum is not air-conditioned - and the only art are three sculptures in a hallway (the art gallery is closed as it is prepared for an exhibition) - so I plop down on a chair and try to cool off while Lee explores the museum itself. When I get a chance to snoop in her journal,* I can remind myself of what she saw. My notes identify the collection

*Milady's journal reveals all: "There are some wonderful fossilized fish (and a scallop)! plus examples of many minerals. The first inhabitants of the Highlands - Mesolithic peoples of about 9,000 years ago - are represented by polished stone axes. [This goes on for *nine* more densely worded paragraphs, but I have no intention of re-typing them for you. Suffice it to say that words like Bronze Age, Picts, V-rod and Z-rod, Vikings, Macbeth, and Jacobite are sprinkled throughout her learned writing.

as "pre-history and pre-pre-history," so what more do you need to know?

ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION - In the downtown shopping area, people tend to gather in

groups of three or more and stop right in the middle of the sidewalk to chat, oblivious to the fact that they are impeding others (i.e., a particular American pair of tourists) from proceeding.

As the museum has no café, we return to the restaurant, where I had asked for directions, at the corner of High Street and Castle Road. Its name is Loqoom Mediterranean Café Bar & Restaurant and it gets a dismal two stars out of five on TripAdvisor, but we figure that it can probably provide some pastry and coffee. A middle-Eastern employee with poor command of English takes our order and comes back with a beer. Not even close. Eventually we get what we ordered, but then it comes time to pay and this is a new challenge. While sitting in the restaurant, I notice that I had set the time on my camera incorrectly - all of the time stamps are eight hours earlier than they should be. I make the correction, so from here on they should all register the correct time.

We find an ATM to get cash for John's tip, then splurge on a taxi (£5 + £1 tip) back to the hotel. One of the hotel clerks informs us that The Kitchen Brasserie, our choice for tomorrow's dinner, could accommodate us only at 5:00 (too early) and 8:15 (too late). I ask the clerk to try again - now the only time available is 9:30! Groan. So we make a reservation for tomorrow at The Conservatory for 7:00. And when we ask the clerk to reserve for us on Sunday at The Kitchen Brasseries, we secure a 6:30 slot. Before returning to our room, we stop at the Whisky Bar and sample a wee dram of Springbank 10-year old (John's favorite whisky). I find it good, smooth, but not as pleasing as my preferred single malts (Lagavulin and Laphroaig) and quite pricey at £6.95 each. And then a miracle!! Because the bar's online billing system is not yet fully operational, we are charged on £4.90 each.

We take a taxi to River House <http://riverhouseinverness.co.uk/>, an excellent downtown restaurant on the banks of River Ness. The restaurant uses Harris gin bottles (see p. 16) for water dispensers. Both of us begin with a "crab risotto surrounded by hand-dived Shetland scallops" (words stolen from Lee's journal). For our mains, I have "turbot with cockles, capers, celeriac mash (love those C-foods!), and leeks." Lee orders "Scrabster Hake with Orkney crab, chilies, Mediterranean tomato sauce, samphire (crisp and tender), and a potato cake." We notice that the menu describes a particular wine as "Pinot Grigio in Disguise." Huh? Well, I order it anyway. Lee drinks a Grenache Blanc. We both have coffee, but Lee accessorizes it with "a toasted almond tart garnished with whipped mascarpone and raspberry goo. Yum! Yum! Yum!" (again, Lee's words, not mine). We walk to a taxi stand to get a ride back to the hotel. We notice that many of the guests of the hotel are older people (quite a few with canes); I wonder why. Perhaps they're attracted by the MAJORING ON THE MACRO event that was advertised this morning? Nah.

Upon returning to our room, we see a few oyster catchers on the lawn and on the roof of the hotel. Are we really so close to water? Then ... we learn (via the internet) that there has been yet another U.S. school shooting (eight dead), this one in Santa Fe, Texas. Surely there's got to be a way to stop this madness! Gun rights activists insist on preserving their "second-amendment rights" but I wonder if they've actually read the language of the amendment. It states: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." When Scalia and four other justices ruled on this, they paid attention to the concluding clause while ignoring the introduction. It seems clear to me, admittedly a non-lawyer, that the writers of the Bill of Rights included the part about the militia for a reason. It's not just boiler-plate. Retired Justice John Paul Stevens has written a book in which he suggests six amendments to the Constitution. His remedy for the gun madness is to insert five words so that it reads "... the right of the people to keep and bear arms *when serving in the Militia* shall not be infringed." Good luck with that!

SATURDAY, MAY 19

We are up with the alarm at 6:45 and are pleased to be greeted with yet another sunny day. Our schedule for today (which we may or may not adhere to) includes The Tarbat Discovery Centre, a Viking settlement in Portmahomack, and the Glen Ord distillery. For breakfast, I eschew (love that word!) the heavier fare of

the past few days and opt for Rice Krispies (with "semi skim"(?) milk), a roll with margarine and jam, some cold ham and cheese, tomato (pronounced to-MAH-to) juice, and coffee.

John arrives at 9:00. We cross the Moray Firth to the Black Isle (really a peninsular not an island) and head northeast on the A9. Although not on John's proposed itinerary, we make a brief stop in the town of Alness, just so that we can take pictures of the town's name to send to a Heron's Key resident whose last name is Alness. Continuing on the A9, alongside the Cromarty Firth, we reach Nigg* to see the Nigg Old

*I can't help it, but I'm uneasy writing and saying the word Nigg. Can't they rename it Colored or Black or African-Scottish or some other euphemism?

Church (some 1200 years old) and the Nigg Stone. The graveyard is cluttered with many headstones of considerable age. Inside the church, the benches and decorations are simple and austere. There is also a massive Pictish Stone (2 meters high and 1 meter across), held in place by two strong metal prongs and spanning the height from the basement to halfway up to the roof of the church. One face of the stone has Pictish carvings, the other Christian symbols.



If one Pictish stone is good, two are better (or so John contends) so we drive some four miles from Nigg to Shandwick whose stone sits outdoors, encased in thick glass (to protect it from the ravages of nearby sea water and of vandals). The Shandwick Stone (*Clach a' Charridh* in the unpronounceable Gaelic), like the Nigg stone, has a Pictish side and a Christian side. It stands about 10 feet tall and dates from about 800 AD. An excellent description of the carving can be found at: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/15278/shandwick-stone>



Eight miles to the northeast is the Tarbat Discovery Centre <http://tarbat-discovery.co.uk/>. Situated in an old parish church, surrounded by graves and headstones of considerable age, this museum tells the story of the Picts through their art, stonework, and household artifacts. Below ground level is a crypt, described as a "barrel-vaulted, ancient sacred space with appropriate solemnity." A special display is the Viking silver horde. I suppose that I should devote a few words to the question of who the Picts were. Wikipedia tells us:

The Picts were a tribal confederation of peoples who lived in what is today eastern and northern Scotland during the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval periods. They are thought to have been ethnolinguistically Celtic. Where they lived and what their culture was like can be inferred from the geographical distribution of brochs, Brittonic place name elements, and Pictish stones. The name Picts appears in written records from Late Antiquity to the 10th century, when they are thought to have merged with the Gaels. They lived to the north of the rivers Forth and Clyde, and spoke the now-extinct Pictish language, which is thought to have been closely related to the Celtic Brittonic language spoken by the Britons who lived to the south of them.

Are we finished looking at Pictish relics? No, we are not. We leave the peninsula where the Tarbat Discovery Centre is located and drive nearly 50 miles southeast to the outskirts of Strathpeffer in Easter Ross. Casual tourists will never find the nearby Eagle Stone, but John knows where it is and leads us up a trail to see it. Wikipedia tells us "The stone was originally located further down the hill, towards Dingwall, but was moved to its current site in 1411. One old tradition is that the stone marks the site of a Scottish clan battle that took place in 1411 between the Clan Munro and a branch of the Clan MacDonald, and that the stone commemorates a Munro victory as it is marked with their symbol, an eagle." John, our guide, is a MacDonald and has a great deal to say about the victories and defeats of his ancestors. What he also knows is that the carved eagle in the stone, which is difficult to see, "comes to life" when a bottle of water is poured over it.



A short distance away is a meadow with a hill that people love to climb. Rephrase that as "some" people love to climb. John and Lee are among these people. I stay behind to "guard the car." The hill even has a name: Knock Farril. It is 715 feet high and features a vitrified fort at the top, or so my reading tells me. Then, it's only about 10 miles to Evanton and the Storehouse of Foulis, a combined restaurant and gift shop, where we have lunch: tuna mayo sandwich for me, free range egg mayo for Lee. The coffees are served with a wee square of Mrs. Tilly's Tablet: a maple sugar version of fudge. The building looks out on the Cromarty Firth and is close to the Foulis ferry dock.

Twenty minutes and 12 miles later, we are at the Glen Ord distillery where we have a brief tour followed by tasting samples of their whiskies. Did I mention that today is the day of the Royal Wedding 'twixt Prince Harry and Meghan Markle? Well it is. And to help celebrate it, some of the female employees at the distillery wear appropriate garb, including that weird "hat" called a fascinator. Such items may be purchased at many places, including Amazon which features a wide variety, starting at \$10 and getting astronomically higher as one flips to the next page and the next and ... <https://tinyurl.com/y7bqjjz7> Actually, it's amazing how little attention many Scots are paying to the great event. In the taxi that we took yesterday and the others that we'll take soon, the drivers were not caught up in the excitement, even when I told them that Ms. Markle, an American(!), was a spy who would infiltrate the Royal Family.

Are we finished touring for today? Not a chance. It's only three miles to Beaulieu Priory, the ruin of a monastic church from the 1200s. We wander the grounds and take photos. Information and many pictures can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/yd4ja7yl>

It's been a long day, longer (I suspect) for our driver/tour guide, but we're only 12 miles from our Inverness hotel where John deposits us at 5:00. We eat at The Conservatory where I have chopped liver parfait followed by halibut, wine, and coffee. Lee has langoustine bisque with a tiny tortellini (filled with spinach and ricotta) followed by Macbeths* lamb chop and shoulder, which comes with hazelnut-encrusted gnocchi,

*No, no, no. This is not the Scottish king of Shakespearean fame but rather the name of one of Scotland's largest purveyors of lamb, beef, and pork. How disappointing!

turnips, carrots, and pea puree. I drink Pinot Grigio while Lee has a South African Cabernet Sauvignon. Neither of us remembered to write down the names of the whiskies that we began with. The TV in the bar area is showing and re-showing and re-re-showing details of the afternoon's wedding including the departure of the married couple from some castle or other into a brilliant red Jaguar* sports car which Harry

*My notes say that it was a blue Ferrari, but my memory says red Jaguar. Aside from this, I have three questions: (1) Why did it have left-hand drive? (2) Why didn't either of the couple put on seat belts? and (3) Are they really going to drive into traffic, unaccompanied by security? Well, no - see below

drives all the way across the grounds to another part of the castle where there is a reception. What a life!

We are back in our room at 8:30. Early this morning, I finished reading the Sunstein book. He's not sure that Trump has committed an impeachable act among the many indiscretions thus far revealed, but one is still hopeful. During the day when I was left alone (e.g., when John and Lee went up the hill to fetch ...) I read some from my Kindle. Back in our room, I finish the May 14 *New Yorker* and the April/May issue of *The Progressive*, and start the 2017 September/October issue of *Yale Alumni Magazine*. We get to bed at 11:00.

IN THIS INTERLUDE, I'LL FOCUS ON LANGUAGE; LATER INTERLUDES WILL DISCUSS OTHER ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE AND SUNDRY OTHER MATTERS. THE NARRATIVE STARTING WITH MAY 20 WILL RESUME ON P. 25.

A favorite word in **ScotSpeak** that one hears in conversations, radio ads, nearly everywhere is *wee*. For example, "the boat crossing is a *wee* bit bumpy" or "tomorrow we'll have a *wee* bit of rain" or "the road makes a *wee* turn" and so on. Okay, class, use *wee* in a silly sentence. OK, teacher, how about: "Whee! We wee-wee. Oui?"

Another example of **ScotSpeak**: *odd* is used in the sense of *occasional* or *infrequent*; *poor* is two distinct syllables (*puu urrrrrr*); *bonnie* and *wee* are used either together or separately in nearly every sentence. Thus, "*Of an evenin' when me mood is puu urrrr, I'll aft ta'e a wee bonnie nip o' the odd drrrrram.*" [I created that sentence, all by myself. Not bad, not bad at all!] Another delightful example of **ScotSpeak** occurred the other day when I used the exact change to pay for something, and the clerk said, "That's looovely. "Ooh," said I to my beloved traveling companion, "She called me lovely." "Not you, you idiot, she was referring to your money." "Oh."

At St. Giles Cathedral, we miss seeing the plaque and statues commemorating one of the protests against the Episcopacy, the "Jenny Geddes stool-throwing incident" (no, we still don't know for sure what kind of stool it was, see p. 20), but we do see the Moray aisle (an obvious typo - they must have meant the Moray eel) and the Thistle Chapel (built this century in honor of The Order of The Thistle from the time of James VII in 1687). [One reflects, at this point, on the difficult words that the Scots have imposed on us: The Thistle, The Firth of Forth, and (probably) Phthalic Athid, which is difficult for a chemistry professor to thay without thpraying the firth theven rowth of hith audienth with thspit.]

You'll recall our visit to the Tarbat Discovery Center that is located on the site of an ancient Pictish church (8th century), complete with gravestones and crypt. The first syllable of *Tarbat* is of Viking origin, the second Gaelic (pronounced Gallic), and the full word means "dragged across" referring to hauling things across the narrow spit of land from Moray Firth to Dornoch Firth. Silly me, all along I thought that Tarbat referred to the famous pine tar incident when George Brett's home run at Yankee Stadium was disallowed because he had rubbed foreign substance too far up the bat handle.

SUNDAY, MAY 20

We arise at 6:30, ready for a day of sight-seeing that is to include Eilean Donan Castle and Fort William, a much less intense itinerary than yesterday's. Our excitement at greeting yet another sunny day is quenched by the stiff wind and clouds that roll in shortly. As has been true every day at Kingsmill, there are tour buses in the parking lot. This morning, at breakfast, we are surrounded by loud-mouthed Americans, mostly female, all using poor grammar,* and (my suspicion) here in Scotland to play golf.

*Examples: "Her and me were" and "It went quick ...". All of the women are some 40 years younger than the Magids. Have U.S. schools really become so bad that they allow people like this to graduate? The discerning reader may, at this point, note that the Magids are of an age where they find fault in everyone who is younger. Guilty as charged, your Honor.

It's a considerable distance (about 1.5 hours of driving) to get from Inverness to Eilean Donan and its castle. The road traverses farm land, rocky cliffs, and modest hills; and skirts two long lochs. It's about 11:00 when we arrive at our destination. Wikipedia informs us:



Eilean Donan (Scottish Gaelic: *Eilean Donnain*) is a small tidal island where three sea lochs meet, Loch Duich, Loch Long and Loch Alsh, in the western Highlands of Scotland. A picturesque castle that frequently appears in photographs, film and television dominates the island, which lies about 1 kilometre (0.62 mi) from the village of Dornie. Since the castle's restoration in the

early 20th century, a footbridge has connected the island to the mainland.

The castle was founded in the thirteenth century, and became a stronghold of the Clan Mackenzie and their allies the Clan Macrae. In the early eighteenth century, the Mackenzies' involvement in the Jacobite rebellions led in 1719 to the castle's destruction by government ships. Lieutenant-Colonel John Macrae-Gilstrap's twentieth-century reconstruction of the ruins produced the present buildings.

A stone footbridge connects the mainland to the island. Inside the restored castle are rooms devoted to history, to armaments, to Scottish customs, and to the history of the tartan. Details of the bloody history of the building can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eilean_Donan. We have lunch in the cafeteria associated with the castle. I have a sandwich with ham, Orkney cheddar, and egg mayo; Lee has a Scottish pie (beef mince)* with brown sauce and baked beans. We share a flapjack, but eat only a portion

*You can learn a lot by reading! According to Google, beef mince is beef very finely ground.

of it because it is way too oaty for our taste. I drink coffee while Lee has a rose hips lemonade.

FUN FACT (courtesy of John) Loch Ness is the largest loch in Scotland, as measured by volume of water (it's a very deep crevasse) but Loch Lomond is the largest loch by surface area.

CONFESSION I'm not reporting pages and pages from Lee's journal when she recounts the bloody history of the regions that we're visiting. So the tales of Macleods and Macdonalds and Macgregors and Mackenzies are absent from this document which, goodness knows, is long enough already. When, however, we visit Culloden in two days, it will be impossible to ignore the battle that took place there.

We drive to Invergarry Castle about an hour away, overlooking Loch Oich (Oy!) and, according to Wikipedia, "the seat of the Chiefs of the Clan MacDonnell of Glengarry, a powerful branch of the Clan Donald." It's a ruin that is protected by a chain-link fence whose sign says "These ruins are dangerous. They have been fenced off to exclude the public from danger." I don't intend to recount the history of the castle (you can read about it at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invergarry_Castle) but I suspect that John included this in the itinerary because of the heroic acts of The MacDonnells of Glengarry, his ancestors.

From there, it's on to another ruin, Inverlochy Castle (about 30 minutes distant), which brings to mind the words uttered by a tour guide on the Rhine cruise that we took a few years ago. He said that after a while tourists begin to tire from seeing ABC (which can be translated as Another Bloody Castle or Another Bloody Cathedral, depending on the circumstances). This one dates from the 13th century and, like its numerous "brethren," was the scene of a great many bloody battles https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inverlochy_Castle

It's only a short distance to Fort William. During these drives, John regales us with tales of history and warfare among the various clans. It's not really clear why John has included Fort William in his itinerary. Lee informs me that it is but 10 miles from the most tallest mountain in Scotland, Ben Nevis (4411 feet), but that's hardly sufficient grounds for a visit. The weather has turned to "spitty" and cloudy; and a tour bus has disgorged many visitors who are clogging the street. What we discover, as we walk the length of its main shopping street, is that it is a town of little charm and only a bit of interesting history, as related in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_William,_Highland There are a few funky stores, but not much else

It's a little more than 1.5 hours from Fort William to Inverness. We skirt the western edge of Loch Ness, but fail to see the monster. However, we do see the swing gate bridge and locks in Fort Augustus. We get back to Kingsmill at 5:30 and back in our room, I finish reading *Yale Alumni Magazine* before we take a taxi to The Kitchen Brasserie, <http://www.kitchenrestaurant.co.uk/>, the restaurant that we had hoped to visit on May 18. It is located downtown, in a very modern, glass-enclosed building. We must climb to the 4th floor where we are offered an undesirable table right near the stairs, the utility station (e.g., squirt bottles of cleaning liquid), and an outdoor terrace. As we near the end of our meal, a group of young men (whom I labeled Russian Revolutionaries) are seated on the terrace, their butts pressed against the glass wall that separates them from us. I choose the very reasonably priced (£13.95) two-course early bird dinner:

salmon mousse on bread followed by chicken supreme with brown sauce, potatoes, turnips and carrots. Lee starts with haggis bon-bons (brave girl!) followed by mac and cheese with leeks and bacon; and she orders sugar snaps to add to the festivities. I have Lagavulin and Pinot Grigio; Lee drinks Oban and Pinot Noir. Our conclusion is that the restaurant does not live up to the strong reviews that on TripAdvisor; my notes say that the vegetables were too soft and the appetizer was boring. A tough audience!

OBSERVATION In the many places that we stopped for lunch, coffee, tourism, I see exactly zero New York Yankees garb (hooray!) and, surprisingly, no people of color nor Muslim women with head coverings.

In the evening, we do some reading in our room. And (what excitement!) I prepare a laundry bag for the staff to pick up tomorrow morning.

MONDAY, MAY 21

Although of interest only to me, I must report that I had trouble sleeping last night. I awoke suddenly at 2:45, unable to fall asleep, so I got up at 3:30 and read until 4:00. During this time, I finished the Wollitzer book (*The Interestings*) and started Christopher Buckley's *Florence in Arabia*. I returned to bed, but slept fitfully until the alarm went off at 6:30. I call the receptionist to say that a bag of dirty clothes, much in need of cleaning, is outside our door. Breakfast is largely the same as yesterday: cold cereal, toast, juice, and coffee. As we walk to the main building of the hotel, we see evidence that it rained overnight. We encounter a few sprinkles, but no significant rain despite the presence of thick, dark clouds.

John (and his vehicle) pick us up at the hotel at 9:00. During the drive, he tells us that the class system is still very much alive in Great Britain. Even though he is highly educated, he considers himself working class (a "peat digger"). As a tour guide, he loves Americans because we are prompt. He learned the hard way not to mix nationalities for a given tour: for example, Germans (who always arrive early) don't mesh well with Italians and Indians who are much less reliable as tellers of time.

An hour's drive to the south takes us to Ruthven Castle in Kingussie (pronounced KingYOUsee, as we learned on our 2001 visit). Wikipedia informs us:

Due to continued unrest, the British government decided to build fortified barracks in strategic locations: the new barracks at Ruthven were completed in 1721 on the castle hilltop. The barracks accommodated 120 troops and 28 horses for dragoons. In August 1745 a unit of 12 British soldiers, commanded by a Sergeant Terrence Molloy of the 6th Regiment of Foot, defended the barracks against 200 Jacobites losing just one man, whilst killing at least two Jacobites and wounding many more. The following year Lieutenant Terrence Molloy surrendered to a larger force of Jacobites with two cannons commanded by John Gordon of Glenbuche, after a short siege where the British repelled a Jacobite attack, killing many of the Jacobites.

On the day after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, some 3,000 Jacobites retreated to Fort Ruthven but they were sent home by Prince Charles Edward Stuart as their situation was hopeless. The departing Jacobites destroyed the barracks on 17 April 1746. The remnants remain.

On the half-hour drive from Kingussie to the Dalwhinnie Distillery, we stop to take a photo of a sign warning "Elderly People Crossing"; it is near another sign that says Glebe Pond. And, as we emerge from the car, dozens of geese and ducks descend upon us, obviously hoping that we will feed them. When we don't, they trudge back home to await the next possible benefactor. At the distillery, there is the requisite tour and propaganda session (photography *verboden*) followed by a tasting even though it's not yet noon. We sample their 15-year-old and their Winter Gold, which we prefer. According to the person doing the pour, the latter has more warm spices because of the "copper conversation" in the spirit still; i.e., there is more condensation in the colder winter months leading to more spice. (I suppose that this makes sense to the speaker, but I'm dubious.) We are urged to add a drop of water before sniffing and drinking; and we are offered a small square of chocolate along with the whisky. Lee takes advantage of our stop to call Auto

Europe to say that our arrival time on May 23 is not 10:00 but 1:45.

And then it's on to Cairn Gorm Mountain, more than an hour away. An information board tells us that we're at an elevation of 635 m (2083 ft) in "one of the highest car parks in the UK." Whoopee!! Wikipedia says:

The Cairngorms (Scottish Gaelic: *Am Monadh Ruadh*) are a mountain range in the eastern Highlands of Scotland closely associated with the mountain of the Cairn Gorm ... There are no glaciers but snow can fall in any month of the year and snow patches usually persist all summer; for snow and ice climbing the area is the most dependable in Britain ... The Cairngorms feature the highest, coldest and snowiest plateaux in the British Isles and are home to five of the six highest mountains in Scotland.

Related to this, the guide at the Dalwhinnie Distillery said that it is located in the coldest region of all of Scotland. And, while we are in the parking lot, a few skiers at a nearby car are removing their gear after skiing in the mountains. Twenty minutes away, John takes us to a funky and rustic restaurant attached to the Pine Marten Bar. We look out on a small forest and several bird feeders. We both enjoy "a delicious thick creamy mushroom soup" (Lee's words) and we share a toastie with brie and cranberry. Our meal is *ruined*(!!) by a young man who is wearing a New York Yankees cap. I decide not to confront him and explain why he should never endorse the evil empire, but he looks tough and I'm a coward. We drive a short distance to Aviemore where I acquire some more ££££ at a local ATM.

We stop in Carrbridge to admire its arched stone "packhorse bridge"* that spans the small River Dunain.

*Wikipedia informs us: "A packhorse bridge is a bridge intended to carry packhorses (horses loaded with sidebags or panniers) across a river or stream. Typically a packhorse bridge consists of one or more narrow (one horse wide) masonry arches, and has low parapets so as not to interfere with the horse's panniers. Packhorse bridges were often built on the trade routes (often called packhorse routes) that formed major transport arteries across Europe and Great Britain until the coming of the turnpike roads and canals in the 18th century."

There are over a hundred of these bridges in England, five in Scotland, and eight in Wales. There is a wooden staircase down to the river level that carries the warning SLIPPERY SURFACE WHEN WET. Why do I bother to mention this? Because in 2001, several such signs bore the spelling SLIPPY which, when one reflects on it, is probably a better word than the American usage, SLIPPERY. After all, the sign warns about slipping, not about slippers. Have we corrupted the Scots in the intervening 17 years?

Surely we're not going to do only one distillery today, are we? Of course not. So we drive some 10 miles to the Tomatin Distillery (a name that is unfamiliar to me), half an hour away. We do a tasting but do not take the tour. Correction: Lee does the tasting - and the procedure is complex. To taste the premium range of whiskies, one must purchase "discs" (like poker chips) that are then used to acquire samples of booze. In her journal, Lee confesses that she talks up a friendly barmaid who keeps adding freebies. The result of her scientific study: the 14-year-old has no peat but is delicious; other whiskies use grain that's toasted over peat, but they are "more flowery" than those from Islay; Cù Bòcan, from 2006, is 100-proof and "amazing -spices." (There are more details in her journal about the type of wood used for the casks, the different procedures for distillation, and so on. I'm getting bored reading them.) Lee purchases a bottle of Cù Bòcan, even if she can't pronounce the name. We hope that it will return to the U.S. in our luggage without breaking.

It's only about 20 minutes back to the Kingsmill Hotel where we are greeted by a sudden heavy rain. We take a taxi to another downtown restaurant, Rocpool <https://www.rocpoolrestaurant.com/> where I order from the two-course menu: scrambled eggs and crab on toast, then hake with green beans and chorizo; Lee goes à la carte with crab/sweetcorn soup with shrimp and mussels; then linguini with scallops, shrimp, tomatoes, and spinach; and (finally!) a blood red sorbet with slices of sweet brioche (an idea that the restaurant owner brought back from Sicily). Of course we drink something: I have Caol Ila whisky (quite peaty from Islay) and Pinot Grigio; Lee has Skapa Skiren (from the Orkneys) and a glass of Côtes de Provence rosé. Following dinner, we walk to a taxi stand and return to the hotel where we read and surf

the internet until bed at 10:30. (In fact, I'm exhausted - recall my lack of sleep last night - so I retire before Lee does.)

TUESDAY, MAY 22

I awaken at 4:30 but manage to fall asleep and get up with the alarm at 6:30. There is no rain right now, but it is cloudy and very cool; Lee says that weather.com reports a temperature of 10°C. Again I have a light breakfast. The dining room is very crowded, mainly with a large contingent of Japanese tourists along with the noisy American female golfers.

YET ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION Here in the dining room, the serving staff move rapidly (and often recklessly) through the room without regard to the patrons whom they are cutting off. The same is often true with random people on the street. For some reason, these Scots have very little appreciation of personal space.

John collects us at 9:00. Our first stop is Clava Cairns, seven miles east of Inverness. Wikipedia says:

The Clava cairn is a type of Bronze Age circular chamber tomb cairn, named after the group of three cairns at Balnuaran of Clava, to the east of Inverness in Scotland. There are about 50 cairns of this type in an area round about Inverness. They fall into two sub-types, one typically consisting of a corbelled passage grave with a single burial chamber linked to the entrance by a short passage and covered with a cairn of stones, with the entrances oriented south west towards midwinter sunset. In the other sub-type an annular ring cairn encloses an apparently unroofed area with no formal means of access from the outside. In both sub-types a stone circle surrounds the whole tomb and a kerb often runs around the cairn. The heights of the standing stones vary in height so that the tallest fringe the entrance (oriented south west) and the shortest are directly opposite it.

This 4000-year-old Bronze Age site has been made famous (infamous) by *Outlander*, the TV series and novels by Diana Gabaldon. Never having seen (or even heard of) this very popular piece of American culture, I surmise that it involves the magical teleporting of 21st century British citizens to the 18th century where they can choose sides in the Jacobite revolution. Many of the archaeological sites that we visit play important rôles in the TV drama. To his credit, John refuses to take tourists on *Outlander*-inspired tours.

It is spitting* rain and the field is a bit muddy as we walk among the standing stones and inspect the cairn.

*John's word to describe the weather is *spitty*. I like it.

The stones are part of a stone circle that is cut into two parts by the road on which we arrived; that is, the final stone is on the other side of the road. These stones may well have archaeological and mystical significance, but the practical Scots have obviously decided that this is where the road must be built. One of the stones has suffered a vertical cleave, whether by act of nature or mischievous vandals.



From the cairns, it's only a little more than a mile to the Culloden Battlefield. The official website informs us: "On 16 April 1746, the final Jacobite Rising came to a brutal head in one of the most harrowing battles in British history. Jacobite supporters, seeking to restore the Stuart monarchy to the British thrones, gathered to fight the Duke of Cumberland's government troops. It was the last pitched battle on British soil and, in less than an hour, around 1,500 men were slain – more than 1,000 of them Jacobites." Details of the battle and the effort of Bonnie Prince Charlie to rally his troops can be found in an excellent article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Culloden

We walk across the moor where the battle raged and where 2,000 Jacobites (from an army of 5,000) died in contrast to only 100 government troops. The winds are fierce and the air is cold. There are stones that display the names of the Clans who fought here; one has Maclean and Maclachan (plus two more that are

illegible). Then we go to the indoor museum where all aspects of the battle are covered in a most imaginative manner. For example, as we walk down one corridor and then another, on the right-hand wall is a chronological account of the activity of the Jacobite army; on the left-hand wall is a chronological account of the British soldiers. The detail is extraordinary. At the end of the corridor is a room in which after the doors are closed a movie (with sound) of the battle is shown on all four walls as if one were standing in the exact middle between the two armies. Finally, there is a room that has a display of the types of weapons used. This museum gets the R. M. Magid Award of Excellence (not that any trophy or monetary transfer accompanies it.) Alas, photography is not permitted inside, so I have no pictures of the displays.

We leave the museum at 11:30 and head to Cawdor Castle, just eight miles away. From Wikipedia:

Cawdor Castle is set amid gardens in the parish of Cawdor in Nairnshire, Scotland. The castle is built around a 15th-century tower house, with substantial additions in later centuries. Originally a property of the Calder family, it passed to the Campbells in the 16th century. It remains in Campbell ownership, and is now home to the Dowager Countess Cawdor, stepmother of Colin Campbell, 7th Earl Cawdor.

The castle is perhaps best known for its literary connection to William Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth, in which the title character is made "Thane of Cawdor". However, the story is highly fictionalised, and the castle itself, which is never directly referred to in Macbeth, was built many years after the life of the 11th-century King Macbeth.

We tour the inside of the castle, admiring the many rooms on several levels: the furniture, art, armaments, kitchen, bedrooms, etc. (We do not meet the Dowager Countess, so we can't say if she looks like Maggie Smith.) We also tour the gardens and we have a small lunch in the castle's café. We finish at 12:30.

From Cawdor, it's a little over ten miles to Brodie Castle and the Rodney's Stone where we arrive at 2:00. Wikipedia describes it this way:

Rodney's Stone is a two-metre high Pictish cross slab now located close on the approach way to Brodie Castle, near Forres, Moray, Scotland. It was originally found nearby in the grounds of the old church of Dyke and Moy. It is classed as a Class II Pictish stone, meaning that it has a cross on one face, and symbols on the other. On the symbols face, at the top, are two fish monsters; below is a "Pictish Beast", and below that a double disc and z-rod. On the cross face there is a cross and animals. The stone is most notable, however, for its inscription, which is found on both of the sides and on the cross face. It is the longest of all Pictish inscriptions, and like most Pictish inscriptions, is written in the Ogham alphabet. Much of the inscription is weathered, but it does contain the Pictish name Ethernan (a prominent Pictish saint), written as "EDDARRNON".



Five miles away is the Benromach Distillery <https://www.benromach.com/> Compared to the large distilleries that we've already visited, this is on a much smaller (and more enjoyable) scale with an annual production of only 400,000 L. Their website informs us:

Our distillery has been making Benromach since 1898 using the same spring water rising in nearby Romach Hills. Come and see our distillers at work as they orchestrate every second of the production by sight, sound and touch. One of our friendly tour guides will proudly show you around our boby mill, mash tun, wooden washbacks, 2 copper stills, spirit safe, filling room, dunnage warehouses and visitor centre with many mementoes. And, of course, you can enjoy a tutored tasting of our gorgeous classic Speyside Single Malt Whisky.

Do I know what a boby mill is? What about a mash tun? A dunnage warehouse? Well, one could look these words up. Suffice it to say that this was the most pleasant of the distilleries that we visited. Every step in the production is done by hand (there is no automation). The tour is filled with information.* We

*The meticulous Lee devotes a full four pages of her journal to: the history of the distillery; the provenance of the barrel staves for the casks; the source of the water used in the distillation; the field that the peat comes from; the barley and yeast that are used; the equipment for fermentation and distillation; and so on. What a pedant!

see every operation and witness a master brewer operating the spirit safe.* In another room, Graeme (our

*From Wikipedia: "A spirit safe is a large, padlocked, glass walled, usually brass bound container found at Scotch whisky distilleries which allows the distiller to analyse and manage the spirit coming out of the pot still without coming into contact with the spirit itself."

guide) keeps track of the number of barrels filled by adding to the "database" (i.e., by making a mark on a small chalkboard described as an iPad). And, of course, at the end of the tour there is the opportunity to sample some of the product. Most of the day is windy, cool, and "spitty," but the whisky takes some of the edge off.

We finish our tour at 3:45 and arrive back at the hotel an hour later. We have dinner in the whisky bar = lounge. I order a scotch (Benromach, in honor of our visit) and a burger that turns out to be huuuuuge. (The burger, not the scotch.) Lee has a picture of it on her phone. Back in our room, we read, surf the internet, and pack our suitcases in preparation for tomorrow's departure for Northumbria.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23

The weather looks like a carbon copy of yesterday's: cool, cloudy, a threat of rain. After finishing packing, we have breakfast (I go "light" again with juice, cereal, toast, and coffee). We check out of the hotel and take a taxi to the train station, arriving much too early, about 50 minutes ahead of departure. Our train and its track are not posted until 9:25.

It's a crummy first-class car. Lee's description: "a quite junky commuter-style train with two half-car, tiny, first class sections. Zero space for suitcases and no porters." Well that pretty much sums it up except to add that the air conditioning is very poor, and the seats are uncomfortable. The train leaves at 9:45, right on time, then comes to a stop at 10:05 because there's a single track ahead of us and the national train coming our way has priority. (Has the railroad not considered creating passing places like those that exist for cars on single-track roads?) It stops again, same reason, for ten minutes in Dalwhinnie. And there is a third ten-minute stoppage at 11:45. And of course there are the many scheduled stops at a series of small towns and cities. We are sharing a table with a couple from Australia who prove to be good conversationalists. We are all in hearty agreement about the awfulness of the business class (oops, Club Europe) seating on British Airways.

But we finally reach Edinburgh.

The first challenge is to locate the Auto Europe office at the train station. It's a very long walk along the train platform until we enter the main station with ticket windows and shops. Then, following signs, we walk down long hallways, take two elevators (one down, one up), and find ourselves out of doors (fortunately it's not raining) dragging our suitcases and our aging bodies a considerable distance until we find a building with the rental car sign. Once inside, we take yet another elevator down two levels and locate the office. Well, this may be *an* office but it is not THE office. We were supposed to find another Auto Europe office inside the terminal to do the paperwork before coming to this office to get the car. Who knew? We prevail upon the clerk to let us leave our large cases with him before reversing our steps (and the three elevators) back to the main terminal.

Even then, it's difficult to find the office, but find it we do. When we arrive and present our credentials, we learn that they have no car with automatic transmission, even though that's what we ordered on the

contract. We reject the standard shift vehicles (single track roads are hard enough to negotiate without having to shift gears). They say that they're expecting the return of two automatics today but that they have not yet come back. *Finally* they report that a Škoda sedan has been returned and is available. We'd driven one of these Czech-made cars before and were willing to accept it.

Are we finished? Not a chance! It's now necessary for the agent to fill out the paperwork *by hand* (are there no computers in this city?) and this takes "forever." Finally it's finished, so we retrace our steps and the elevators (see above) to the office where we left our suitcases (still there, *gott sei dank*) and get our rental car.

It's about 1.5 hours to drive from Edinburgh to Chathill, Alnick where our hotel Doxford Hall is located <http://www.doxfordhall.com/> Lee does the driving (as she will for the next several days) because I'm sensing a hesitancy and apprehension in my ability to handle a right-hand drive car on the left side of the road. We drive due east to the coast, then turn south and (at some point) enter England. It's a lovely drive with excellent views of the North Sea. Along the way, we pass towns named Tweedmouth, Conundrum, Cockburnspath, Twizzle, Wandylaw, and Tweedmouth. Slightly south of our road are Trapain, Luggate Burn, Papple, Pitcox, and Spott - as in X marks the Spott? Well, are these any sillier than some of the town names in the U.S.: Intercourse, PA; Bull's Gap, TN; Bugtussle, KY; and Mud Butt, SD?

From Doxford Hall's web site, we read:

The Northumbrian coastline was voted Holiday Destination of the Year in the 2017 BBC Countryfile Awards, with its acres of unspoilt beaches and pretty coves to explore, dramatic clifftop castles and thriving seaside towns to amble around. There's the Northumberland National Park, the Cheviot Hills and the North Pennines for those who love big skies and wide-open space. The area's rich with wildlife, and mile after mile of coastal paths make for invigorating walking and cycling adventures. Head inland and you'll discover beautiful gardens, family-friendly attractions and a wealth of stately homes to explore.

Indeed, Doxford is one of those stately homes – a Georgian masterpiece built in 1818, it's been lovingly restored over the years, including a wealth of beautiful wood panelling and a grand handmade staircase. Old stone fireplaces, classic leather armchairs, elegant sitting rooms, grandfather clocks – the sense of a grand but homely residence pervades. The Doxford estate has a sedate, secluded air, but is conveniently accessible from the A1, and as Northumberland's only four AA red star awarded hotel, in recent years it's become very much a destination in its own right. We have 35 handsomely appointed bedrooms, elegant lounges and a fabulous spa, swimming pool and gym, making Doxford the ideal place to unwind after exploring the delights of Northumbria. Add to this the award-winning dining in our George Runciman restaurant, the yew maze and acres of landscaped gardens to explore and everything's in place for a relaxing and memorable stay.

Well! Yes, it is stately, but it is old and our room is a bit of a Victorian pile. It is also very poorly lighted, something that will be a problem once the sun sets. Well, we've booked this place for three nights, so we had better learn to like it. Oh, yes, there is no WiFi in the rooms - it's necessary to take laptop and iPad to one of the public rooms (lounge, library, meeting room) to find the internet. On the other hand, the man who signs us in takes us on a tour of the public rooms (library, dining room, lounge, etc.) - Lee's observation (of the rooms, not the man) is "charmingly decorated in a shabby chic way."

Because we arrive later than expected, we choose to have a casual dinner in a large sitting room (the Georgian Room). A server comes to take our order, then returns to the kitchen (wherever) to turn it in. Lee and I start with whiskies, Talisker for her, Laphroaig for me. I order butternut squash soup followed by liver parfait; Lee has hot smoked salmon and crawfish on "rocket"; some excellent bread is also provided. A positive note: the whisky pours are much more generous than those given by the penny-pinching Scots. While we are eating our dinner, two elderly British couples come into the room for a pre-dinner drink and chat. Eavesdropping on their conversation, we learn that Philip Roth has died today. I chat with one of the women about my affection for Roth's writing, but she proves to be even more of a fan than I, having read

nearly everything that he wrote. I wouldn't have thought that Roth's Jewish-New Jersey-centric tales would appeal on this side of the ocean, but I'm glad that I was wrong.

Although our room's decor is not to our liking (not to mention the dim lighting), it's in an unusual place. We need to traverse a garden and a maze between the main building and what was probably a carriage house*

*According to the hotel's web site, "With large arched windows, original stonework and exposed beams, we have three elegant bedrooms in our restored Coach House, each with its own luxurious bathroom. The Coach House is a short walk from the hall, with its own guest parking area for extra convenience."

that has been repurposed with three guest rooms. Ours is the middle room and almost certainly the largest. The bathroom has modern fixtures, but the bed, chairs, tables, and dresser are tired-looking at best. The good news is that this hotel actually supplies washcloths, so we have the opportunity to let our wet washcloths from Kingsmill dry on the towel rack. We persevere in the dim light and do some reading, then head to bed at 10:30 and set the alarm for 6:30 tomorrow.

IN THIS INTERLUDE, I'LL FOCUS AGAIN ON LANGUAGE. THE TRAVELOGUE STARTING WITH MAY 24 WILL RESUME ON P. 36.

George Bernard Shaw is usually credited with the line "The United States and Great Britain are two countries separated by a common language." Bertrand Russell amplified on this: "It is a misfortune for Anglo-American friendship that the two countries are supposed to have a common language. A Frenchman in America is not expected to talk like an American, but an Englishman speaking his mother tongue is thought to be affected and giving himself airs. Or else he is taken for a German or a Dutchman, and is complemented on his grammatical mastery of the language of another nation."

There are many words that one hears in Great Britain that have different meaning or are spelled strangely or are pronounced differently from what we're accustomed to in the U.S.; and many that are not ever found in our country. There are several well-organized web sites that try to educate Americans about Britspeak and vice versa. Among these are ten pieces of British slang that *should* be imported into the U.S. (<http://tinyurl.com/kzqxztl>) and ten words that *shouldn't* ... ever (<http://tinyurl.com/lefwd23>) For comprehensive lists of British slang (including scatology of all sorts), check out <http://tinyurl.com/6grq3> and <http://tinyurl.com/6fk2xsq> And, of course, one can count on Wikipedia for a learned comparison of American and British English (<http://tinyurl.com/kvclpnc>) as well as for lists of words that have different meanings in the two countries: <http://tinyurl.com/mqchhpb> and <http://tinyurl.com/36urcb5> Master all of these and you, too, can become bilingual (as well as a bit batty).

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF BRITSPEAK: ● A road sign SEVERE DIP AHEAD, alongside a meadow filled with sheep. Sheep dip? ● Another road sign LIABLE TO ICING. The grammar seems awkward; we would say "subject to icing" or "liable to ice over" or "possibility of icing." ● A road sign GIVE WAY is their equivalent of "yield"; I don't know which is preferable. ● My favorite road sign is HUMPS FOR NEXT HALF-MILE; are we entering a red-light district? ● And how about the sign LOOSE CHIPPINGS? ● Trucks are "lorries," jewelry is pronounced *jewellery*, divided highways are "dual carriageways," and sidewalks are "foot paths." ● Of course, there are also the warning signs that one sees posted here and there: "Mind the step," "Mind the doorway," "Mind the poop" (OK, I made the last one up). ● And then there are the parts of a car: trunk = boot, hood = bonnet, gas = petrol, and sedan = saloon.

THE COLLECTIVE NOUN: This is unknown in the U.K. So, whereas Americans would say "The orchestra is tuning" or "The government is corrupt" or "Microsoft is a large company," the Brits would say "The orchestra *are* tuning," "The government *are* corrupt," and "Microsoft *are* a large company." Of course we're

somewhat conflicted ourselves, changing from singular to plural depending how it sounds to our ears: "New York *is* a terrible team" but "The Mets *are* a terrible team." A nice discussion of this and other differences between the languages can be found in Wikipedia: <http://tinyurl.com/kvclpnc>

THURSDAY, MAY 24

We arise at 6:30 and look out on a cloudy, misty day. Despite the age of this hotel, the shower works nicely (it's one of the rain shower types that take some getting used to). We make our way to the main building for breakfast at 8:00 in the formal dining room (the 2 AA rosette George Runciman Restaurant, if you please). There are a few "young" guests (in their 40s or 50s) but most are over 80, or so I would guess.

There is a cold buffet table from which I help myself to juice, cereal, and toast. Lee orders from the menu: eggs benedict "with oodles of ham and properly runny yolks" or so sadhe the missus. While eating, I think that I'm crunching a seed from the bread, but in fact I've broken a crown on one of my upper teeth. Fortunately there is no pain for the remainder of the trip.

Following breakfast, we return to the Georgian Room (where we had dinner last night) and attempt to use the laptop and iPad. The connection is so slow that it is almost impossible, for example, to open *New York Times* articles. After considerable frustration, I decide to quit - I hope for better results either tonight or tomorrow.

From Doxford Hall, it's only 7 miles to the town of Seahouses (population under 2,000) on the shore of the North Sea. It's a foggy, misty day, but we can see (barely) Bamburgh Castle, three miles up the coast. Seahouses is not only a fishing community but also an embarkation port for boat travel to the Farne Islands, also barely visible in the fog. The sea is very rough, so we're not tempted to make the journey. We wander around the port area, the pubs, and the restaurants, noting the excellent dog scene and admiring the fishing gear and numerous boats that are tied up in the harbor. To stave off possible starvation later tonight, Lee purchases some sweets at a small bakery: "a border tart slice (very raisin with a thick white icing) and some mini millionaire slices (shortbread, caramel, chocolate)."

We drive north toward Bamburgh Castle, undaunted by the motto ABC (Another Bloody Castle). I am informed that this is a "bucket-list" item for Lee, so there's no chance that we might skip it. Wikipedia offers the following history:

The site was originally the location of a Celtic Brittonic fort known as Din Guarie and may have been the capital of the kingdom of Bernicia from its foundation in c. 420 to 547. After passing between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons three times, the fort came under Anglo-Saxon control in 590. The fort was destroyed by Vikings in 993, and the Normans later built a new castle on the site, which forms the core of the present one. After a revolt in 1095 supported by the castle's owner, it became the property of the English monarch.

In the 17th century, financial difficulties led to the castle deteriorating, but it was restored by various owners during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was finally bought by the Victorian era industrialist William Armstrong, who completed its restoration. The castle still belongs to the Armstrong family and is open to the public.

An amusing set of cartoons at the entrance relate the history of the castle (see the photos at the google site, see p. 1). It's a long walk up to the castle. When we arrive we traverse the parapet with its many cannon. We then head inside and walk through the impressive kitchen, drawing rooms, dining room, studies, and the massive king's hall with its ostentatious display of important personages and lethal armaments. We descend and view other rooms, including a drawing room, the armory(sic), the court

room, the keep, the bakery, the service passage, and the scullery. We complete our tour at 1:15, having spent some 75 minutes inside, and head to the on-site Clock Tower Cafeteria where I have a border tart slice and Lee has a brown crab sandwich; of course we also order filter coffee.

Sixteen miles further up the coast is Lindisfarne (also known as Holy Island). It is connected to the mainland by a causeway that is under water when high tide arrives. Lee had checked the tide tables and knew that we'd arrive at low tide and would be able to get onto and off the island before the road flooded. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne>

We walk through the town, admiring the many dogs, and then go to the Lindisfarne Priory, founded in the 7th century by the Irish monk Saint Aidan. Many monks came here to pray, one of whom was Saint Cuthbert. From Wikipedia:

Saint Cuthbert was a monk and later abbot of the monastery, and his miracles and life are recorded by the Venerable Bede. Cuthbert later became Bishop of Lindisfarne. An anonymous life of Cuthbert written at Lindisfarne is the oldest extant piece of English historical writing. From its reference to "Aldfrith, who now reigns peacefully" it must date to between 685 and 704. Cuthbert was buried here, his remains later translated[c] to Durham Cathedral (along with the relics of Saint Eadfrith of Lindisfarne). Eadberht of Lindisfarne, the next bishop (and saint) was buried in the place from which Cuthbert's body was exhumed earlier the same year when the priory was abandoned in the late 9th century ... Cuthbert's body was carried with the monks, eventually settling in Chester-le-Street before a final move to Durham. The saint's shrine was the major pilgrimage centre for much of the region until its despoliation by Henry VIII's commissioners in 1539 or 1540.

The priory is a magnificent ruin and we spend considerable time exploring it. Lee then walks to the nearby Lindisfarne Centre for its Viking display, while I (a weary pilgrim) find a bench where I can sit and read my Kindle.

More silly town names: Fenham-le-Moor (near Bamburgh), Hutton-le-Hole (where we'll drive in a couple of days, p. 44), and Hetton-le-Hole, near Durham (see p. 40).

We return to Doxford Hall at 5:00. Because of the eight-hour time differential between England and PDT, I wait until this afternoon to call my dentist and ask for an appointment to repair/replace the broken crown from this morning. I get an appointment for 8:30 on May 31, the day after we return to the U.S. (As it turns out, I'll not be able to keep this appointment, as you can read in the entry for May 30.)

When we drove through Bamburgh this morning, we tried to find The Potted Lobster, the restaurant at which we have a reservation this evening. It was complicated, but we found it. So this evening, we re-visit Bamburgh and find the restaurant: <http://www.thepottedlobsterbamburgh.co.uk/> It is a very popular place. I begin with a cup of mushroom soup followed by "Lager and Lemon Battered Fresh Haddock with Pea Puree, Chips and Homemade Tartar Sauce," a huge portion that I am unable to finish. Lee has a starter that consists of scallops (with sex organs still attached) wrapped in pork belly (or so my notes say) followed by a one-half lobster, prepared thermidor style, accompanied by an exotic-sounding French wine: *Picpoul de Binet Beauvignac* ; my wine must have been less romantic as I made no note of it.

Back in the hotel, we decide to see if the WiFi signal is stronger in another room, The Library. (This is a very impressive room with floor-to-ceiling bookcases along four walls, Toby mugs all along the top shelf; the collection is eclectic, but largely focused on the UK.) The computer registers a signal strength of two bars, but the behavior is erratic whether using email, WordPerfect, or the internet. I manage to download a couple of *New York Times* op-eds, but give up before attempting to get others. And although I see that I have emails from friends Agosta and Kargon, I don't even try to open them. Maybe we'll have better success tomorrow. Maybe not.

FRIDAY, MAY 25

It is a cloudy, misty morning. The weather forecast is for intermittent rain. Unlike the Kingsmill, which provided air conditioning in our room, such is not the case here at Doxford. Despite the cool outside air, inside the room it is hot and stuffy. The bathroom is especially hot because of a heated towel rack that seems to have no off button. We try leaving the outside door open but this brings in bugs. And it's not just our room - the public rooms in the main building are also hot.

Again, we go to the formal dining room for breakfast. As yesterday, the clientele is amazing: aging Brits, several with canes, all soft-spoken, all formally dressed ... they look like the cast from a British sitcom set in a restaurant. The room's PA system is playing soft jazz, much of it for guitar, and verging on new age dreck.* This is quite a contrast to yesterday's offering which was loud pop/rock/techno "music" that

*A Yiddish word meaning trash or rubbish. Well, that's how Merriam-Webster defines it, but it has the added connotation of disgusting and disreputable. (If it's not clear to you, the reader, I detest new age music.)

seemed inappropriate for the elderly and very proper patrons who are eating here. I have a light breakfast: juice, Rice Krispies, fresh fruit, and coffee; following this, I do succumb to the enticement of a sweet roll. Lee, as is her wont, goes in for something more substantial: "swallows of kippers" followed by a soft-boiled egg that she orders as "slightly runny" but that emerges as quite hard-boiled; she also has toast, juice, and coffee.

When we walk back to the Coach House, we hear (as we did in Inverness) a wide variety of bird calls (from small birds and larger ones such as crows and mourning doves).

We drive the short distance (10 miles) to the town of Alnwick (pronounced Alnick, or so we're told), park the car, and walk around. Alnwick is a market town with a population of over 8,000. It also has a castle (well, of course it does!) whose grounds we enter but eschew paying to actually visit the building. Wikipedia says: "The town dates to about AD 600, and thrived as an agricultural centre. Alnwick Castle was the home of the most powerful medieval northern baronial family, the Earls of Northumberland" (not related to the Dukes of Hazzard or the Dodgers of Brooklyn). The castle grounds feature kid-centric things such as: a large pond with swans and ducks (alive) and a boat containing the owl and the pussycat (not alive); a cascade fountain (hard to describe); and a mini-golf course with imaginative beings and large toadstools to guard the holes.

The city proper has interesting stone- and ironwork around its buildings and a large memorial for the war dead from both world wars. By 10:30, we are at Barter Books <https://www.barterbooks.co.uk/> a huge and impressive second-hand book store, located in a former train depot. It is a wonderful place for browsing and it advertises itself as dog-friendly (as several patrons whom we encounter have taken advantage of). The only dispiriting thing is that one of the customers is wearing a baseball cap with a New York Yankees logo. For shame! We stop at the coffee shop (located in the former waiting room for trains) to have a coffee and pastry. This turns out to be more difficult than the preceding sentence suggests. The room is relatively small, with about ten tables and chairs, but with no obvious way to order food. I ask for help from one of the customers who already has some food - I'm told to go to the Station Buffet. "Where is that?" It turns out that I need to exit the coffee shop, walk past the toilets and three other coffee shops and past several sets of bookshelves until I find it. I place my order, pay for it, and then return empty-handed to the table where Lee is waiting, hoping that someone will eventually deliver our goodies. And so it comes to pass.

At a nearby table are three adults and, under the table, two large and well-behaved dogs. Well, they're well-behaved, but one of them decides to stand up suddenly, nearly upsetting the table (and its plates) that are above him/her/it.

When we leave the bookstore, we pass a pedestal with nothing on it. It does bear a sign that says: "JIMMY'S DRIBBLE This structure is a reconstruction of the original pant,* built circa 1870, as part of the

"I can't find a definition for "pant" but I do discover that there are/were twelve of them in Alnwick and all seem to have something to do with water supply. My "extensive" search of the internet yields only this description of pant: "A Grade II Listed Building in Alnwick, Northumberland." I also have no idea who Jimmy was nor why he is being shamed by our focusing on his dribble.

town water supply."

We walk further through town and arrive, around noon, at an open market. It proves to be a huge disappointment, as it features mostly cheap clothes, leather goods, shoes, scarves, and only a few stands with fruits and vegetables. Lee's one-word description is *desultory*. (I'm not sure what that means but I suspect that it's not complimentary.) She wants to find a cross stitch store that she had seen advertised, but it doesn't seem to be on the street whose address we have. We ask a police woman who proceeds to walk a considerable distance to show us where to find it. When we get there, it's closed. And someone at a neighboring shop says that it's been closed for some time.

We return to get our parked car. Along the way, we pass the entrance to the castle (and its pond with the swans and the owl-and-pussycat). Yesterday I had announced that I do not (that's NOT) want to see another castle, especially one that is no longer a castle but rather a much too elegant Victorian home. Today, Lee agrees. So we get to the car at 1:00 and drive some 20 miles south to the town of Amble, a seaport on the North Sea, population about 6,000. We wander about the main dock, looking at and taking pictures of the boating- and fishing-related stores, the gear piled up on the dock, the small and large boats that are docked, the lobster cages, and (of course) the many dogs. I should also mention that the weather has gone from warm and sunny to cold and cloudy. Lee buys an ice cream, but I'm too cold to even consider one for me.

The people of Amble look downtrodden and sullen, probably because their accent is so thick that they don't understand one another. Well, at least I don't understand them. The Northumberland accent is a thing unto itself, so different from Scottish or English (from other regions).

Returning to the car, my pocket disgorges a number of coins that disappear under the seat. I have no idea how much money I've lost, but - hell - it's not "real" money like quarters and dimes and nickels, eh? It has also begun to rain a little. We drive some 13 miles north to view Dustanburgh Castle, located at the water's edge and between the towns of Craster and Embleton (but you knew that, right?) We view the castle from a distance, but have no desire to approach it. And then we return the short distance to Doxford Hall, using several minor roads, but the trusty iPad gets us there by about 3:30. (As I wrote earlier, Lee is doing all of the driving. More power to her!)

Back in our room, we plot a route to Seahouses, where we are having dinner tonight. We choose the coastal route (that we had taken yesterday) rather than the inland route. I spend the rest of the afternoon reading (and almost finishing) *Florence of Arabia* and I take a brief nap.

We leave for Seahouses at 5:40; it has begun to rain. Our destination is St. Adans, a restaurant located in the St. Adans hotel <http://staidanhotel.co.uk/bistro/> for which we had reserved a table because they are only open on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. It's a small space, rather simple in design. We order a couple of single malts to start (Bowmore for me, Highland Park for Lee). Lee describes dinner as "Fabulous: duck confit croquettes for Ron, smoked haddock 'rarebit' - a bed of cheesy leeks for Lee; followed, for Ron, by chicken with chorizo and a sort of 'potato' cannoli, mashed potatoes on the inside, potato looking like spaghetti wound around the outside. And for Lee, sea trout with beet aioli and skillet browned potatoes. We also have a shared peas and green beans side that is part of the main dishes. Lee splurges and has dessert: an apple-cinnamon 'cake' with toasted almonds and a custard cream. Yum-yum-yum!" The woman does have a way with words when she's describing meals. The amazing thing is that she remembers for years nearly every meal we've eaten in a restaurant. (Lee takes a picture of my cannoli and has it on her iPhone.)

Back in the hotel by 8:30, a miracle occurs - there's a strong WiFi signal in the Library, so I get everything done that I had been unable to do the previous two evenings. In our room we read and get to bed at about 10:30.

SATURDAY, MAY 26

It's another grey and misty morning. There are also some serious problems in our room: it is much too hot and stuffy, even with the door open (the large windows are, apparently, only for show as they are not capable of being opened). And this is made worse by: (1) the very hot bathroom whose heat permeates the entire living quarters, such heat being generated by the heated towel rack whenever the light is turned on; and (2) the heated floor in the bathroom whose control we lower to 67°F every day but which the maids raise to 75°F despite a note asking them not to do so. And, as noted earlier, there is just not enough light to read, unless the drapes are opened (and it isn't night time).

On the walk to the main building for breakfast, six cows in the adjacent field take note of us and come to the fence to glare at us. Fortunately, the fence holds so that we do not become breakfast for these (alleged) vegetarians. As we walk to breakfast, the wind picks up. So who asked for it?

The music in the breakfast room is new agey (piano this time) and subdued, thank heavens. Speaking of music, in the car we listen to both BBC Radio 3 and Classic Radio. Both stations play fragments or single movements of works, never the full piece. Shame on them! (Classic Radio also has commercials.) I have my regular breakfast: juice, cold cereal, fruit, toast, and coffee. Lee orders poached eggs and sausage to go with her juice and coffee.

Following breakfast, we finish packing our suitcases and prepare to head south to Saltburn by the Sea and our next hotel (one night only). On the way, we stop at a service plaza. The observant Lee notes that on the inside door to a women's WC, there is an advertisement offering a 40% interest rate loan for people with bad credit. Near the sinks is a vending machine that offers condoms and a pill that boasts "nothing stronger male support formula." At the entrance to the WC is a sign: "Male Operative On Duty." There is a video gaming room and a convenience store that sells Krispy Kreme donuts! Hey, this is my kind of church!

I begin reading Alastair Macleod's *No Great Mischiefs*, coincidentally a novel about Scotland's MacDonald clan (the ancestors of our guide, John), their wars and tribulations in Scotland, and their later story when they migrate to Canada, particularly Nova Scotia and Toronto.

We drive some 60 miles south to Durham (that's in the UK, not NC) and park in an indoor garage (Bishop Car Park); the sun has come out and the temperature has risen from 14°C to 17°C. On the way, we pass the village of Shilbottle (which, no surprise, the Magids initially read as Shitbottle). Both the A1 and M1 on which we travel are divided highways with excellent signage. We walk about the business district, glancing at the shops, restaurants, and pubs before setting our sights on the cathedral (at the end of a steep uphill slog). It is a magnificent structure, even when viewed from a distance across a huge green. Adjacent to the green is University of Durham; a sign on a classroom building admonishes passersby to be quiet, as exams are in progress.



An excellent Wikipedia article informs us:

The Cathedral Church of Christ, Blessed Mary the Virgin and St Cuthbert of Durham, commonly known as Durham Cathedral and home of the Shrine of St Cuthbert, is a cathedral in the city of Durham, United Kingdom. It is the seat of the Bishop of Durham, the fourth-ranked bishop in the Church of England hierarchy. The present cathedral was begun in 1093, replacing the Saxon 'White Church', and is regarded as one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in Europe. In 1986 the cathedral and

Durham Castle were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Durham Cathedral holds the relics of Saint Cuthbert, transported to Durham by Lindisfarne monks in the ninth century, the head of Saint Oswald of Northumbria, and the remains of the Venerable Bede. In addition, its library contains one of the most complete sets of early printed books in England, the pre-Dissolution monastic accounts, and three copies of the Magna Carta.



Ooh, cool, we're going to see body parts from three saints because "Bede also known as *Saint* Bede, Venerable Bede, and Bede the Venerable." Alas, no pictures are allowed inside, a shame. One wonders how the photographers whose images are plastered all over the internet received permission to film inside. Inside the cathedral, we see a statue of Saint Cuthbert and the gravestone of Venerable Bede.

The official guides (of which there are many) are easily recognized by the clerical gowns (in purple, blue, and other colors) that they wear. We ask many questions: how many people come to local services; what sort of organ is used; etc. One guide, apparently hearing our American accents, shows us a wall marker for John Washington who was prior of the church from 1414 to 1446, and who is the great-grandfather of George Washington.

We have a snack in the cathedral's café. Lee has a quiche (made with cheese and caramelized onions) with rocket salad and cole slaw (sounds like more than a "snack," eh?) and I have "lemon drizzle." We both have filter coffee. In the city and on the green where there are large crowds, we see very few people with tattoos, wild hair coloring, or face piercing. Lee continues her on-going quest to find a needlepoint shop. In Market Square (which is packed with noisy young 'uns and some rough-looking teenagers) she asks a tourist guide where to find Fowler's Yard where a needlepoint shop is supposed to be located. The guide walks us over to a steep staircase (going down) that Lee descends while Ron sees no point and stays put. The store has a huge display of needlepoint books, but they are not for sale.

OUTRAGEOUS WITTICISM When edicts were handed down from the clergy at the cathedral, they were known as the Durham Bulls.

The parking garage (see above) has no staff. Upon entering, we are informed that a photo of the car's license plate would be made. Upon leaving, we type the license plate number into a computer and enter a credit card. If all goes well, the gate will open as we approach it and it "sees" our license plate. And so it came to pass. And all was well. And the people rejoiced!

RADIO NEWS We find a new station on the car radio to take the place of BBC3 and Classic. It is called National which has 15 channels, one of which is classical music.

It's less than a half-hour's drive to the southeast to reach Saltburn by the Sea and our hotel for one night, Brockley Hall <https://www.brockleyhallhotel.com/> (We had hoped to reserve at Swinton Park for three nights, but they were unable to accommodate us on May 26.) Brockley Hall is a strange place, a red brick mansion with florid statuary guarding both sides of its front door. We park (temporarily) in a handicapped space to facilitate carrying our luggage into the building. (We leave our large suitcases in the car, hoping that this is not a crime-ridden city.) The manager takes our information and escorts us to our room. There is to be a 60th anniversary celebration later today, and so we wend our way through the banquet/dining room and to the most unusual elevator I've ever ridden. It has no ceiling and no walls on three sides. The fourth side has a half-height wall with the controls to move the beast. We're told to hold the button for floor four in position for the full ride. As we ascend, it's crucial not to lean against any of the walls as we are moving (albeit slowly) upward and they, of course, are stationary.

The manager looks out our window of our room and notes that no spaces are available in their parking lot; one client has parked badly, taking up two spaces. So she authorizes us to leave the car in its present illegal space. The room is small, the furniture edging on ratty, and the bathroom sink has separate taps for

hot and cold water, something that one rarely sees these days. Like the Kingsmill, wash cloths are not available. Fortunately, we have the cloths that we bought in Inverness. And, of course, the room is hot because it has no air-conditioning.

It's hard to believe, but this hotel has the same four-star rating as Doxford Hall. It and its furniture seem run-down and tired. We reserve a table in the dining room for 6:30, then spend the remainder of the afternoon in the hot and stuffy room to which we've been assigned. Down below, in the garden, are the guests who are coming to the wedding. They seem well-lubricated, even before 5:00. The good news is that the internet connection is fast!

Dinner is included in the price of the hotel. The dining room is attractive, if also too ornate for my tastes. We are permitted to order anything from the menu, rejecting the seven-course tasting menu in favor of three courses from the à la carte fare. I start with a shrimp cocktail followed by the Ploughman's Platter*

*I didn't make note of what makes up this classic dish. Online, all that I can find are references to Ploughman's Lunch, which is a typical pub meal of cold meats, cheeses, and bread, sometimes accompanied by pickles, hard-boiled eggs, and an apple. It's supposed to be accompanied by a mug of stout ale, but I suspect that I had either a wine or a whisky.

and conclude with Sticky Toffee Pudding (with caramel sauce and vanilla ice cream). Lee has a tomato bruschetta, tagliatelle with wild mushrooms in a brown creamy sauce, concluding with rum baba (with rhubarb ginger coulis and custard). She also is offered a palate cleanser: strawberry sorbet with prosecco and "crackling crystals" (it's best not to inquire, although our server says that this is readily available in a grocery store). In the evening, we read, I work puzzles, we do some internet surfing, and get to bed at 10:30.

YET ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION Similar to my observation about the citizens of Inverness (p. 8), we conclude that the visitors to the cathedral and the guests at this hotel are not a good-looking people. That's a cruel, but accurate, assessment. They're probably lovely people who are kind to animals, but they are decidedly not pretty or handsome ... unlike the Magids who are both.

HERE IS ANOTHER INTERLUDE ABOUT LANGUAGE. THE NARRATIVE ABOUT BROCKLEY HALL WILL CONTINUE BELOW

FURTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR "COMMON" LANGUAGES: Not only do we use different words and different verb forms (e.g., "I lit a cigarette" in the U.S. vs. "I lighted a cigarette" in England) but many words are pronounced differently: TELEvision in the U.S. - teleVISION in the U.K.; LABoratory in the U.S. - laBORatory (or even laBORatree) in the U.K.; or CONtrovrsy in the U.S. - conTROVrsy in the U.K. Other British pronunciations are: weekEND, SingaPORE, telePHONE, noTATed, orientATed, etc. And far be it for me to say that "orientate" isn't even a word - at least, I don't believe it is. And I'm convinced that the Brits are hiding deficiencies in their school system when they refer to "fifth form" or "upper sixth" or when they "sit an exam" or when they distinguish between A-levels and O-levels. And why do they pronounce *specialty* as *speciality*? Should I even mention the different spellings: colour, centre, realise, etc.? Nah, these are well known and, besides, don't cause much trouble.

MORE BRITSPEAK: ● Words related to vehicles: *tyres* and *waggons*. ● Words overused in normal conversations: *brilliant!* and *lovely!* These are used at unexpected times. For example, I might say "I think I've got the exact change" to which the clerk says "Brilliant!" or I might say "I've like a pint of ale" to which the bartender replies "Lovely!" ● The British say that something is different *to* something else, instead of different *from* ● Finally, when giving the time of day, a Brit might say "Half Eight." Does this mean half-an-hour past eight or half-an-hour before eight ... or does it, possibly, mean four?

AND I am reminded of a curious difference between BritSpeak and USSpeak, as noted earlier on pp. 11

and 30. In the American version (which is, of course, the preferred version) of English, we have the concept of the collective singular noun, whereas people in the British Isles say things like "the orchestra *are* tuning" or "RCA *are* putting out new CDs" or "The government *are* making new laws" and so on. But why, then, do we Americans say "The people *are*" when we are perfectly comfortable with "The public *is*" or "The citizenry *is*" and so on. Another expression that catches us by surprise each time is a warning to "Mind the step" or "Mind the bump" or "Mind your head"; to an American, an imperative like "mind" ought to be followed by "the children" or "your manners."

SUNDAY, MAY 27

It is a bright and sunny day. Hooray! We go to breakfast at 8:00 - only two other tables are occupied. I have juice, toast, cold cereal ("sugared" is the only style on offer), and coffee. Lee has juice, toast, sweet roll (from the buffet table), coffee, and scrambled eggs with salmon (the latter ordered from the menu). The full menu also lists such treats as Yorkshire Breakfast (bacon, sausage, tomato, mushroom, black pudding, and two fried eggs) or, alternatively, Texan Breakfast (American pancakes, two fried eggs, bacon, and maple syrup). So what's "Texan" about that? No barbeque, no chili, no hot peppers? During our meal, loud pop music comes on over the P.A., but (mercifully) it ends after just one song.

When a couple vacates a table in the dining room, one of the staff arrives with a new tablecloth that he or she irons with great care and precision to get the wrinkles out. Then, cutlery and china are carefully set in place. It's not quite as in *Downton Abbey*, but perhaps this really is a four-star establishment. The restaurant is really quite elegant: the decor, the serving of the food (only from the left, of course), and, as noted, the precision with which the tables are set.

The Yorkshire accent is almost as incomprehensible as that in Northumberland. An elderly man, who had trouble figuring out the strange elevator yesterday, is engaged in a long conversation with one of the breakfast servers. He is very loud and, also, quite hard of hearing and the conversation includes empty commentary about the hotel, the weather, movie and TV personalities, and yesterday's 60th anniversary party at which he was either a guest or one of the honorees.

Upon leaving the restaurant and walking through the banquet room, we note a table with many gifts for the anniversary couple. Notable is a photo of Queen Elizabeth and a signed card saying "I am so pleased to know that you are celebrating your Diamond Anniversary ... "

We check out of the hotel and drive down to the city's shoreline that features a wide beach, an iron pier (touted as the longest in England), and The Saltburn Cliff Lift, described in Wikipedia as "one of the world's oldest water-powered funiculars ... The railway is water-balanced and since 1924 the water pump has been electrically operated. The first major maintenance was carried out in 1998, when the main winding wheel was replaced and a new braking system installed" to the great relief of those who ride it. There is also a commemorative plaque for World Speed Record Attempts. On the packed sands in 1924, Sir Malcolm Campbell set a record for motor cars at 144.3 mph. Captain James Cook was born not far from here and lived in nearby Staithes. We drive there - Lee is eager to see a statue of him, but all that we can find is the Captain Cook Inn.

Our next destination is Whitby, some 17 miles to the south. This is another seaside town that also boasts an impressive abbey. Alas, all of Yorkshire has decided that a sunny Sunday would be an excellent day to visit Whitby, so we can't find a parking space ... anywhere and the traffic is bumper-to-bumper. Unable to tour downtown, we do drive up the hill toward the abbey ruin. Leave it to Wikipedia to tell us about the abbey. Some memorable names are involved in the history:

A monastery was founded at Streatonæshealth in AD 657 by King Oswiu or Oswy



of Northumbria, as an act of thanksgiving, after defeating Penda, the pagan king of Mercia. At its foundation, the abbey was an Anglo-Saxon 'double monastery' for men and women. Its first abbess, the royal princess Hild, was later venerated as a saint. The abbey became a centre of learning and here Cædmon the cowherd was "miraculously" transformed into an inspired poet whose poetry is an example of Anglo-Saxon literature. The abbey became the leading royal nunnery of the kingdom of Deira, and the burial-place of its royal family. The Synod of Whitby, in 664, established the Roman date of Easter in Northumbria at the expense of the Celtic one.

The monastery was destroyed between 867 and 870 in a series of raids by Vikings from Denmark under their leaders Ingvar and Ubba. Its site remained desolate for more than 200 years until after the Norman Conquest of 1066. After the Conquest, the area was granted to William de Percy who, in 1078 donated land to found a Benedictine monastery dedicated to St Peter and St Hilda. William de Percy's gift included land for the monastery, the town and port of Whitby and St Mary's Church and dependent chapels at Fyling, Hawsker, Sneaton, Ugglebarnby, Dunsley, and Aislaby, five mills including Ruswarp, Hackness with two mills and two churches. In about 1128 Henry I granted the abbey burgage in Whitby and permission to hold a fair at the feast of St Hilda on 25 August. A second fair was held close to St Hilda's winter feast at Martinmas. Market rights were granted to the abbey and descended with the liberty. Whitby Abbey surrendered in December 1539 when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries.

Whew! This is probably the first (and likely last) time that you will see these names in print: King Oswieu, Cædmon the cowherd, St. Hild, Penda the pagan king of Mercia, among others.

We drive 16 miles to the southwest, crossing over the North York Moors National Park, until we reach Rosedale Abbey. The roads are horrible and it's starting to warm up, the temperature now being 23°C. The route is very hilly, lots of ups and downs; it is not quite a single-track, but also not quite wide enough for two cars to pass. (By the way, Rosedale Abbey is a town, not an abbey.) Along the way, we see a sign: CAUTION: HORSE DRAWN VEHICLES AND ANIMALS. (The animals are horse-drawn?) There are many sheep on the moor: lambs who are skittish and ewes who seem oblivious to cars.

Google maps is letting us down, so we stop at an ice cream shop in Rosedale and ask for directions to Hutton-le-Hole. It's only ten miles away, but we are given two options. We choose the more adventurous one, ascent up a steep hill (with a 33% grade) with many S-curves that provides a great view, then down to our destination. Along the way, we encounter numerous sheep who have no interest in ceding the road to our more powerful vehicle. One of them, protective of her lambs, baas as loudly as I've ever heard a sheep baa. And finally we are at Hutton-le-Hole at 1:25. It is a pleasant town with a large green. Alas, it has attracted several dozens motorcyclists and their vehicles.

Some nine miles to the west is the market town of Helmsley where we arrive at 2:15. Its web site informs us: "A warm and friendly Yorkshire welcome is something you're always guaranteed in Helmsley. Whether you're walking, eating, shopping, cycling, riding, visiting or pottering Helmsley has everything you need, whether you're staying for a few hours, a weekend or you never want to leave." Well, we happen to be doing none of those things: we are driving ... and, also, discovering that it impossible to find a parking space! This town is even more crowded than Whitby. Lee is determined to find a parking spot so that we can walk around the attractive town but after exploring every parking lot, even those a considerable distance from the city center, we give up. Nevertheless, she manages to snap a few pictures when we stop and park illegally for a short while. I'm showing a picture borrowed from Google.



To the west, just three miles away, is Rievaulx Abbey. It's a ruin, yes, but a truly massive and impressive ruin. From Wikipedia:

Rievaulx Abbey was the first Cistercian monastery in the north of England, founded in 1132 by twelve monks from Clairvaux Abbey. The first abbot of Rievaulx, St William I, started construction in the

1130s. The second abbot, Saint Aelred of Rievaulx, elected in 1147, expanded the buildings and otherwise consolidated the existence of what with time became one of the great Cistercian abbeys of Yorkshire, second only to Fountains Abbey in fame. Under Aelred, the abbey is said to have grown to some 140 monks and 500 lay brothers. By the end of his tenure, Rievaulx had five daughter-houses in England and Scotland.



By the end of the 13th century the abbey had incurred debts on its building projects and lost revenue due to an epidemic of sheep scab (psoroptic mange). The ill fortune was compounded by raiders from Scotland in the early 14th century. The great reduction in population caused by the Black Death in the mid-14th century made it difficult to recruit new lay brothers for manual labour. As a result, the abbey was forced to lease much of its land. By 1381 there were only fourteen choir monks, three lay brothers and the abbot left at Rievaulx, and some buildings were reduced in size.

At the time of its dissolution in 1538, the abbey was said to consist of 72 buildings occupied by the abbot and 21 monks, with 102 lay employees, and an income of £351 a year. The abbey owned a prototype blast furnace at Laskill, producing cast iron as efficiently as a modern blast furnace. In the 1750s Thomas Duncombe III beautified his estate by building the terrace with two Grecian-style temples. They are in the care of the National Trust. The abbey ruins are in the care of English Heritage. When awarded a life peerage in 1983, former prime minister Harold Wilson, a Yorkshireman, adopted the title "Baron Wilson of Rievaulx"

We have dropped so many ££££ at various Pay-and-Display stations, as well as in both indoor and outdoor parking areas that the sum total is on the verge of exceeding the national debt. Is free parking never possible? Well, yes it is - there is *no charge* to park at Rievaulx Abbey (although there is an entrance fee of £8 each) nor will there be when we stop at Leyburn on May 28. Lee wanders the abbey grounds for a seemingly unending time while I, feeling my approaching senescence, sit on an available pillar and bask in the hot sun. At least there's a nice breeze.

After a snack in the abbey café, we depart at 3:30 and head to Swinton Park Estate Hotel, some 27 miles due west of the abbey, our home for the next two nights. <https://www.swintonestate.com/hotel/> We drive through towns named Sutton-under-Whitstonecliffe, Skirsk, and Skipton on Swale. I don't recall the details or reasoning but we decide (i.e. Lee decides) to ignore the direct route and take the great circle route to Masham and then to the hotel. Problem was: the highway A1(M1) had no exit at the B6267 (the road to Masham), so we go some 10 miles out of the way to the next exit, then loop around and arrive at the hotel at 5:15.

The estate grounds are extensive and impressive. A porter (who isn't a young man) carries out luggage up to the room. From the lobby, we walk through a couple of well-appointed sitting rooms. There is an elevator, but it's more convenient for us to take the stairs. Our room is on the first floor (that is to say the second floor in the strange manner that European hotels count hotel floors) and beautiful, with very modern bathroom facilities, comfortable bed and couch, breakfast table and writing table, each with chairs. Alas, the room is quite hot, but it has windows on two sides that allow a cross breeze to cool things off. Although the tub, sink, and shower stall are very modern, it's curious that the toilet is quite old-fashioned: unlike the low volume flush units that we've encountered in every hotel so far, this one has a large water tank and an old-fashioned flush handle.

The formal dining room is called Samuel's Restaurant but we have chosen to eat, tonight, in the less formal Terrace Restaurant, located a considerable distance from the main building in the estate's Country Club & Spa. Its specialty is small plates. (I assume that the plates will have food.) Lee and I share a salad (potato, shallots, capers, rapeseed oil, parsley, flat bread). I have the plate with "Yorkshire Ham, mild garlic, Arancini, Garlic Mayo" while Lee has lamb rump with asparagus and salsa verde. I drink a Lagavulin and Lee a Dalmore. We also have coffee. The restaurant, though advertised as simple, is quite pricey: the coffee is £4 and my Lagavulin £10 (as compared to £4-6 in other restaurants that we've visited). Following our meal, we walk about the estate's grounds before returning to our room. In an adjacent field is a large

herd of deer.

Our room is still hot and stuffy - there is very little air flow despite our having opened a few windows. The good news is that the WiFi is strong (five bars!) and so we can do our normal internet surfing. By 9:30, the room has begun to cool off. We continue reading, then head to bed at 10:30.

IN THIS FINAL INTERLUDE, I'LL TALK ABOUT SINGLE TRACK ROADS AND THE HAND SIGNALS THAT DRIVERS EMPLOY. LEE AND I DID NOT DRIVE ON THE SINGLE-TRACKS IN SCOTLAND, THIS YEAR, SO THE FOLLOWING IS "BORROWED" FROM THE 2001 TRAVELOGUE. MANY OF THESE OBSERVATIONS STILL HOLD FOR THE NARROW ROADS THAT WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN NORTHUMBERLAND AND YORKSHIRE OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS.

We are slowly learning the subtle details in etiquette for the passing places on single-track roads. To signal an oncoming car that you are going to submit to his/her superior position by taking the fetal position (i.e., stopping in or next to a passing place), one stops and flashes the car's headlights. Sometimes the oncoming car, having reached a passing place at precisely the same time, will flash its lights. Then, whichever driver gets bold starts inching forward, unless both drive forward in which case one (or both) will retreat to the passing places, where the choreographed ballet begins again. But let's say that only one car has stopped and the other has gone forward. Then the driver of the car in motion signals his/her appreciation of the other driver's courtesy by a hand wave (see below).

One group of local residents who can certainly use a good grounding in etiquette are the sheep who stand in the road and defy drivers to hit them. (Believe me - after several days of this, it does become tempting.) One can flash lights, beep horns, or inch forward but if the sheep has no interest in moving, it does not move. Here, the immovable object wins over the not-so-irresistible force every time. **Guaranteed money-making idea:** We could manufacture and supply reflector lights for sheep, but only after the Scottish Parliament passes a law requiring that all sheep display them. Even better, we could install neon billboards on sheep and sell advertising. And even better than that, we could convert selected sheep into the earth-bound equivalents of the Goodyear Blimp or *The New York Times* building, complete with lighted advertising messages that scrawl across one side of the sheep and onto the other.

While a passenger on this part of our day's driving, I decide to make a catalog of the different kinds of hand signals, almost always with the right hand, that passing drivers give as acknowledgment of our courtesy in pulling into a passing place. There are: the full hand wave; the full hand wave and salute; the full hand wave with the palm forward; the full hand wave with the palm reversed (much like the Pope blessing a crowd); the full hand wave with palm forward and the arm fully extended (Sieg Heil!); the partial hand wave with one finger lifted off the steering wheel; the partial hand wave with two fingers lifted off the steering wheel; the combined full and partial hand wave, with the entire hand lifted and one finger raised; the combined full and partial hand wave with the entire hand lifted and two fingers raised; the semi-hand wave: a half-hearted wave with the *left* hand, accompanied by the flashing of the headlights. (Maybe the latter was caused merely by a short in the lights - or perhaps by a light in the shorts?) Nobody, so far as we can see, has given the "one-finger salute" that is so common in the U.S. So, **another guaranteed money-making device:** we should manufacture a robotic mechanical hand that can be programmed to do all of these hand gestures (plus several more that are anatomically impossible?) in random order. Right? Right!

MONDAY, MAY 28

It is a cloudy morning; perhaps it will not be as hot as yesterday. We open the windows of our room before

going to breakfast. Leaving the room and pausing at the top of the staircase, we look directly down on the self-serve table with fruit, cheeses, cold cuts, cereals, rolls, juice, etc. It's a nice display (the nicest we've seen on this trip but only a pale imitation of some spectacular ones of the past, particularly at Hotel Bareiss in Germany's Black Forest). The maitre d' wears an impeccable suit and has an impeccable manner accompanied by an impeccable accent: a plummy upper-crust British accent (obviously something he has cultivated to mask his Yorkshire accent, as he reveals that he grew up in this area). Think Colin Firth is his rôle as Mr. Darcy in the TV movie of "Pride and Prejudice." The restaurant opened at 7:30. We arrive at 7:45 and for quite a while we are the only patrons. Says the host, "I was beginning to worry that nobody would show up."

I stick to my light fare from the buffet table (juice, corn flakes, fruit salad, toast, coffee); Lee has juice and a yoghurt parfait from the cold table and French toast with bacon ordered from the kitchen. The music piped into the room are brief excerpts (Philistines!) from longer classical pieces: Pachelbel's canon, Mozart's clarinet concerto, Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, etc. I'm surprised not to hear the Rodrigo Concierto; maybe tomorrow?

It's only about four miles, but on a very narrow road, from Swinton to Ripon (population over 16,000) where we arrive at about 10:30. The road is a little wider (maybe) than a true single-track but it has almost no passing places; and those that are so identified are merely gravel or dirt areas carved out on the side of the road. England could learn a lot from Scotland about how to build passing places and use flags to help identify them. (I offer this advice to Parliament, free of charge.)

And why are we going to Ripon? Because it has a famous cathedral! And why are we visiting yet Another Bloody Cathedral (ABC)? Because it is magnificent and, unlike Durham's cathedral, this one allows pictures inside. Wikipedia gives us some of its history:



The Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Wilfrid, commonly known as Ripon Cathedral, is a cathedral in the North Yorkshire city of Ripon. Founded as a monastery by Scottish monks in the 660s, it was refounded [was it "lost"?) as a Benedictine monastery by St Wilfrid in 672. The church became collegiate in the tenth century, and acted as a mother church within the large Diocese of York for the remainder of the Middle Ages. In 1836 the church became the cathedral for the Diocese of Ripon. In 2014 the Diocese was incorporated into the new Diocese of Leeds, and the church became one of three co-equal cathedrals of the Bishop of Leeds .



The cathedral is notable architecturally for its gothic west front in the Early English style, considered one of the best of its type, as well as the Geometric east window. The seventh-century crypt of Wilfrid's church is a significant example of early Christian architecture in England.

As we walk from our parking place toward the cathedral, before we even see it we hear its bells. They are loud. THEY ARE VERY LOUD!! Wikipedia comments on them: "A ring of 12 bells with an additional 'flat sixth' bell is hung in the south-west tower. A diatonic ring of ten bells was cast in 1932, and three additional bells were installed in 2008 with two new trebles being added to give a diatonic ring of twelve, and an additional 'flat sixth' bell to give a light ring of eight." Wikipedia does not, however, tell us how LOUD they are.

In addition to religious icons, statues, etc., there is a display of paintings that artists have made of the cathedral. The most interesting has the title: "View of Cathedral with Volvo." You can see an image of it in my set of google pictures (see p. 1) or at this web site: <https://tinyurl.com/yckk17fc> The provenance of this painting, its donation, and its place among the other paintings of the cathedral can be learned at the quote web site. Along one



entire wall is a series of about 20 needlepoint "drawings" that tell, in chronological order, the history of the cathedral and of Ripon. An example is shown here. Another cushion shows "Lewis Carroll dreams of 'Alice in Wonderland' in Ripon." The story behind this is that Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), whose father was a canon here in the mid 1800s, visited the cathedral and examined the undersides of the choir stalls. All of them had wood carvings (misericords)* from the 15th century displaying various religious and

*Wikipedia explains "A misericord is a small wooden structure formed on the underside of a folding seat in a church which, when the seat is folded up, is intended to act as a shelf to support a person in a partially standing position during long periods of prayer."

secular whimsical themes and ideas; one had a griffin chasing a rabbit and another had a rabbit escaping into a hole. Hence, the idea for Alice, the White Rabbit, and all of their friends.

The sun has come out, but overcast skies return and the temperature drops to 18°C. From Ripon, we drive 20 miles to the northwest, more or less past Swinton Estates, to Leyburn, a north Yorkshire market town with a population of more than 2,000. Wikipedia proudly proclaims "The town boasts two markets, several pubs, one bank with cash machine and the Co-op supermarket with a cash machine inside, and many small speciality stores." Woo-Hoo!! *En route* to Leyburn, we pass several towns with intriguing names: Little Crakehill, Patrick Brompton, and Constable Burton. Woo-Hoo, indeed.

We arrive in Leyburn at 12:15 and find a parking space in the central public lot. There are signs warning that one must purchase a pay-and-display sticker for the car, but I wander all over the parking area and see no machine that might dispense such a thing. Lee stands by the car to explain our predicament, should a member of the gendarmerie approach. Finally, I ask a pleasant looking couple where the dispensing machine might be. She says, "Luv, ye don' haf ta buy a sticker. It's all doon by donations." And her husband grabs my elbow and steers me to a building on which are the words PARKING DONATIONS and a huge arrow pointing to the right. And on the right there is a yellow box with the words PARKING DONATIONS TOWARDS THE UPKEEP OF THE TOWN WILL BE APPRECIATED. SUGGESTED DONATION £2.00. THANK YOU. "But," I say, "After I make the donation, no receipt is printed. It's just a metal box with a slot." "Just do it, luv," she says. So, I get two £1 coins out of my pocket and insert one when a second woman comes over and says, "Luv, ye don' haf ta pay at all!" So I put the second coin back in my pocket. On reflection, I realize that it's a curious system in that locals (at least some of them) ignore the entreaty to make a donation; and even if one put the request £2 in the box there is no receipt printed out that can be placed on the dashboard of the car. After having spent the equivalent of a month's salary on the many many parking lots and garages over the past few days, this comes as a huge surprise. On my return to the car (and to Lee who has been patiently waiting), I see two sets of confused tourists who are looking for the ticket-dispensing machine. Now that I'm an "expert," I explain the system to them.

Why are we in Leyburn? Well, as Wikipedia told us, the town has "many small specialty shops" so Lee goes off to satisfy her hormonal female urge to buy something (anything!) while I find a place to sit and read my Kindle. The sun is warm, but the day is quite windy. I hope that it doesn't begin to rain. Well, it appears that this shopping expedition was the sole reason that my in-house tour guide chose for us to stop here. But at least I do derive the pleasure of learning how the city parking lots make money (or not).

YET ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION Here in Leyburn and in many other cities and towns in Scotland and northern England, pedestrians are at risk when trying to cross a street. Inverness, at least, did have crossing pedestrian lights, but most locales do not. Cars zoom past, hardly slowing down when a wary pedestrian tentatively sets a foot off the sidewalk and onto the street. (One wonders how the Beatles managed to cross Abbey Road in single file without getting struck by a vehicle.) This bad behavior stands in contrast to the goodness of the population, as evidenced by their devotion to dogs. My google photos will show lots of dogs at many stops along our travels.

At 1:00, we leave Leyburn and drive to Hawes, 17 miles due west. We drive through the picturesque Yorkshire Dales (farms, cows, sheep) and we pass towns named Swinithwaite, Aysgarth, and Askrigg. (The latter two do not sound as if they were in England.) The roads are very congested and there are

some horse-drawn farm vehicles in front of it. Surely there must be a reason for coming to Hawes. Here's what the town's web site tells us:

This magical little market town is England's highest, set 850 feet above sea water. Hawes was first recorded as a market place in 1307 and the lively Tuesday market still entices shoppers in. Home to the world famous Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese and set amidst breath-taking scenery it's no surprise Hawes is one of the honeypot tourist attractions of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The name Hawes means a 'pass between mountains' and it stands between the stunning Buttertubs and Fleet Moss.

Honeypot? Buttertubs?? Oh, well, it does sound interesting. We arrive in Hawes at 1:45. As in so many of the small towns we've visited, finding parking is horrendous. We finally locate a space in a distant lot and walk through town toward the Wensleydale Creamery. The Visitor Centre at the creamery is very crowded, so we decide to get some lunch at the coffee shop before going to the tasting room. The coffee shop is very crowded, as well, but we manage to order some food: grilled cheese sandwich, flapjack, and coffee. Torn jeans at the knee are very common (as in the U.S.) but there is also a man in the coffee shop with torn britches at his right cheek (*not* the one on his face). Does he know?

Lee is an enthusiastic fan of the few Wensleydale cheeses (one with cranberries, another with honey) that can be found in Western Washington. When the long line on which we've been standing finally reaches the door, we enter the tasting room where the cheeses are displayed. The variety is astounding. We are "encouraged" to sample small squares of cheeses, many cheeses, lots of cheeses, one after another. We see some morbidly obese people (too much cheese in their diet?), in stark contrast to what we've encountered elsewhere on this trip.

Both in the tasting room and outside the creamery, we see some strangely dressed people. The pictures at my google site will show some of them: men with bowler hats, suspenders, bandanas, short pants, and partly blackened faces; a woman, with a face painted half white/half black, wearing what looks like a witch's hat with a long black coat covered with several dozen pins (I'm not close enough to see what they denote or advertise); two men with pork pie hats from which protrude black feathers; and others. We learn that they are Morris Dancers; indeed several do have bells on their shins, as Wikipedia tells me is their wont.

When we leave Hawes at 3:20, it is sunny and pleasantly warm (22°C). On the return to our hotel, some 28 miles distant, we pass through Masham and stop at the White Bear Restaurant to confirm a 6:00 reservation for tonight. (With much reluctance, our hotel had finally agreed to make the reservation for us, but as we had no written record we deemed it sensible to stop and confirm.) The restaurant is associated with the White Bear Hotel <http://www.thewhitebearhotel.co.uk/> I have some apprehension as I approach the door to the restaurant: the outside patio and steps are filled with locals who are quaffing beer and ale and having raucous fun, all at 4:30 in the afternoon!

We return to the hotel and find the room to be at a tolerable temperature as the housekeeping staff followed our request to leave the windows open. Back at the White Bear, the food turns out to be much better than expected. We share a pulled pork/apricot/hazelnut terrine with fig chutney and toasts. For my main, it's chicken supreme which is stuffed with Wensleydale cheese and comes with large quantities of mashed potatoes and carrots and broccoli. Lee has fish pie with mashed potato crust and Wensleydale spring peas. I drink a Talisker while she samples Theakston, the local ale.

We return to the hotel again. Our room bears the name Burton Agnes, which is not a person but a town in East Yorkshire, on the North Sea. All of the rooms in the hotel carry the names of similar towns. We pack in preparation for our departure tomorrow. I spend the evening reading the Wolitzer book, doing crossword puzzles, and surfing the internet. We go to bed at 10:30.

TUESDAY, MAY 29

We are up with the alarm at 6:30. The day looks much like yesterday at the start: misty and cloudy. For breakfast I have juice, fruit, toast, and coffee, but I also splurge by ordering French toast based on Lee's positive recommendation from yesterday. Lee has two poached eggs, yogurt, and salmon from the buffet.

Our destination is an airport hotel in Manchester, but on the way we are stopping in Harrogate (to see if we can find buildings featured in the TV series *Last Tango in Halifax*) and both Halifax and Hebden Bridge because these towns are prominent in the TV series *Happy Valley*. We check out of the hotel at 9:50 and head south, some 20 miles to Harrogate. On the way, we pass towns named Warthermarske, Grewelthorpe, Kirkby Malzeard, and Bishop Thornton. We park on the street in Harrogate and walk to the town information office. The people working there have no idea where we might find locations used for the TV show. In fact, one of them says that she thinks it was filmed quite a distance from either Halifax or Harrogate. She also alleges that Harrogate is not even in Yorkshire but rather in Lancashire. Now I don't pretend to be knowledgeable about such arcane matters, but I can say that Wikipedia identifies the region as North Yorkshire and, in a separate article, shows Lancashire considerably to the west of where we are.

Well, we've invested £1 or £2 in a parking pass, so we feel obliged to walk about a bit. The information office is adjacent to the Royal Baths, one of the features that the city (population 75,000) is known for. Again, Wikipedia provides details:

Harrogate grew out of two smaller settlements, High Harrogate and Low Harrogate, in the 17th century. Since 2013, polls have consistently voted the town as "the happiest place to live" in Britain.

Harrogate spa water contains iron, sulphur and common salt. The town became known as 'The English Spa' in the Georgian era, after its waters were discovered in the 16th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries its 'chalybeate' waters (containing iron) were a popular health treatment, and the influx of wealthy but sickly visitors contributed significantly to the wealth of the town.

There are billboards on the walls of the baths that explain what sorts of spa treatments were available back in the day. among these are Thermo-Chemical, Thermo-Electrical, and Thermo-Mechanical. The details of what the client will endure in each of these is best left to the imagination. (For pictures and descriptions, check out the photos posted at google.)

We leave Harrogate at 11:25 and drive to Bradford, a little more than 20 miles to the southwest. Even larger than Harrogate, Bradford (population over 520,000) was a center of the textile industry but is now a tourist destination with many museums, theaters, Victorian architecture, and distinctive churches. My notes do not reveal why we're chosen to visit this city (perhaps my intrepid tour guide/spouse can it explain it) but I can report that the city is congested and that traffic is very much stop-and-go, largely owing to construction projects everywhere and the traffic lights that turn red every time that we approach one. There is also considerable diversity in the population (i.e., it ain't all white Anglo-Saxon types). In fact, we drive through a Muslim community, as evidenced by the clothing of pedestrians and by the specialty shops. And we see other shops and food stores that are Turkish, Ukrainian, and Slovakian. (We pay tribute to Google Map's blue dot that succeeds in helping us find our way through the city.)

At 1:10, we are in Halifax, another eight miles to the southwest, but we see nothing that reminds us of the TV program mentioned earlier. So we decide not to stop here (save for a potty break for the missus)* and,

*More precisely, we do take a space in a car park solely so that Lee can take a picture of the Halifax Minster. We beat a hasty retreat when a parking-control vehicle approaches our aisle.

because the town seems quite grim, we head straight for Hebden Bridge, one of the cities featured in *Happy Valley*, nine miles to the west. We stroll about the central shopping district and take a picture of a stone marker with the legend "Hebden Bridge - Center of the Universe." (And I always thought that Fremont, WA was the center of the universe - well, that's what their literature proclaims!)

We stop at a café for a coffee. Not to be too critical, but there are three wrong ways to spell *prosecco*

and two of them are shown on the menu or chalk board: prosecco and prosseco. Lee is convinced (or at least has managed to convince herself) that some of the storefronts and streets are familiar from the TV show. According to Wikipedia:

The BBC One crime drama series *Happy Valley*, written by Halifax-born Sally Wainwright, broadcast in 2014, was filmed and set in and around the town. Local landmarks, such as the graveyard at St Thomas the Apostle Church, and the sweeping landscapes provided a prominent backdrop to the narrative. The show received critical acclaim and was expected to lead to a noticeable increase in local tourism. A second series was filmed in 2015 and broadcast during 2016.

More funny town names encountered on this segment of the journey: Mytholmroyd, Hoo Hole, and Luddenden Foot. It's been a grey day, but as we leave touristic things behind and head to Manchester Airport the sun comes out. This is some 40 miles to the southwest, mostly on high speed roads. Unfortunately, the airport is south of the city, so we get involved in some heavy traffic as we approach it. Lee, bless her heart, does all of the driving, not only today but also for the past several days.

We have instructions from Auto Europe about where the drop-off office for the rental car is located. Problem is, we've also been looking for a petrol station, ever since we exited the highway, to top off the tank. None is to be found. Anywhere! We stop at some hotel to ask if there is a station on the airport grounds. An employee tells us where to find one, but we follow (or try to follow) his instructions and find nothing. Finally, we find ourselves exiting the airport proper and driving along major and minor roads, hoping for fuel ... somewhere. In the town of Altrincham,* some five miles away, we locate a petrol station.

*Kudos to my obsessive wife to recognize that the home of Sarah Lancashire, a character in *Last Tango in Paris*, is right here in Altrincham. <https://tinyurl.com/yc19qukl>

We ask the man who is filling the tank if there aren't stations closer to the airport. He replies that there used to be several, but all have closed.

When we return to the airport, we find (of course!) a petrol station very close to the car rental return. The only explanation is that it was built and installed during our short time driving to Altrincham. As for the fill-up, we added 54.1 L for the total 620 miles that we'd (i.e., Lee'd) driven the car since Edinburgh. So, 620 miles divided by 54.1 L, that quantity multiplied by 3.785 L/gal = 43.3 mpg for this diesel car. The cost, about £72 or about \$108.

From the rental car return, we take an bus (hot and stuffy) to Terminal 1 from which a considerable walk (with our luggage) gets us to the Radisson Blu <https://www.radissonblu.com/en/hotel-manchesterairport> We have dinner at Collage, the hotel's restaurant which boasts "Experience our unique twist on the classic British Brasserie in our Collage Restaurant. From sumptuous steaks and smoked haddock kedgeree* to a

*Kedgeree is a dish consisting of cooked, flaked fish, boiled rice, parsley, hard-boiled eggs, curry powder, butter or cream, and occasionally sultanas. The dish can be eaten hot or cold.

classic British cheeseboard, enter our world of Collage where the theatre of service and unforgettable dishes are the order of the day." Well, we don't choose either steak or haddock. Lee and I share a chicken liver parfait. Then, I have a beef burger (without the bun) and a beer. Lee has the burger with buns (sounds sexy!) We both have St. Mungo lagers, a beer imported from Scotland.

Following dinner, we print boarding passes for tomorrow and then return to our room. A floor lamp won't turn on *and* while we were gone, the air conditioning shut off. Lee discovers a wall switch (for the floor lamp?) but we call maintenance to ask about the lack of cooling. Easy answer: when we removed the magnetic card from the wall slot, all electricity (including the power for the air conditioner) is shut off. We finish packing and get to bed at 10:30.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30

We rise with the alarm at 6:00. At about 7:00, Lee checks the messages on her cell phone. British Airways has *anceled* Flight 1391 to London and has re-booked us on a flight that has already departed Manchester!

We call British Airways. After a very long hold, I finally get to an living person. The first thing we learn is that our re-booking is for *tomorrow* (which, had we read the phone message, we would have known). As it turns out, the phone message arrived at 3:00 am, but Lee saw no reason to interrupt her sleep to read it. Tomorrow's re-booking has us leaving Manchester on BA 1385 at 7:00 am (what a ghastly hour!), arriving Heathrow at 8:15 am; and BA 0053, leaving Heathrow at 9:25 am, arriving Seattle around noon.

The agent on the phone is very soft-spoken and has an Indian or Pakistani accent, all of which makes her difficult to understand. Before we accept tomorrow's flight arrangements, we ask if there are any other Manchester to Heathrow flights that will get us there in time for the 3:30 departure of Flight 0049. Well, no there aren't ... and besides, BA has already canceled our reservation on that afternoon flight when they re-booked us for tomorrow. She does offer a connecting flight to Seattle through Philadelphia that would entail such a long layover that the total would be 18 hours.

We go to the Radison front desk and ask (beg?) for a room for an extra night. They can give us the same room that we just vacated ... at a huge increase in rate (£299 vs. £185); and breakfast is not included! We go to the Business Centre to print tomorrow's boarding passes, then to Collage for the buffet breakfast that's included in the room rate (from yesterday's reservation).

Because our flight tomorrow is so early, we decide to see how long it will take to walk to Terminal 3 and the British Airways check-in counter. Using the covered skyway, moving sidewalks, and our own legs, we manage the trip in 15 minutes. We want to know if BA has a courtesy desk for Business Class (oops, I mean Club World) customers. I ask a man who seems to be in charge if BA has a counter where Club World travelers can check in and deposit their luggage. He shows us where it is and he confirms that BA will refund our hotel and meals for the extra day once we can send them receipts. And he assures us that, although the Heathrow connection is tight, we will certainly, most assuredly, no worries mate get to our Seattle-bound flight.

We return to the hotel. I go back to our room (not yet cleaned) for some reading material to keep me and Lee occupied while we sit in the hotel lobby. I encounter a housekeeper and ask if she can make up our room soon. She says that our room is not on her list, so when I get back to the lobby I ask one of the hotel receptionists if cleaning the room could be expedited. He says that they will send someone to do it. We read in the lobby until 11:00 when I return to our room to see if housekeeping has cleaned it. They have.

YET ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION The lobby is very noisy. We are sitting close to the counter where people check in or check out, but the conversations are conducted at a loud volume and, invariably, there are impatient and rambunctious children who need to be corralled. To make things worse, our ears are assaulted, both in the lobby and in Collage, by painfully loud and very ugly "background" music. The principal instrument is either an organ or accordion, accompanied by various strings and percussion. The memory of Steve Reich's notorious piece, *Four Organs*, comes to mind.

Back in our room, I send emails to one and all about our delay: to Barbara at the dentist's office to cancel my appointment for May 31; to security at Heron's Key to tell them that we haven't died; to Barbara Williams who has our apartment key because she's watering the plants; and to Steve, Larry, and others.

Lee had been looking forward to flying on a Boeing 747 which is used on the 3:30 pm flight to Seattle, albeit still with the bizarre forward/backward seating arrangement that we encountered on the Boeing 777. Our re-booked flight is on a 777 again. Instead of seats like 12B (aisle) and 12A (window), as on the Seattle to London flight (p. 2), we are assigned Seats 11F and 11G. Both are in the center section with 11G facing forward on the aisle and 11F facing backward. There will be further commentary about this on p. 49.

A little after noon, I look out the window and see that it's begun to rain. Fortunately, most of the path to Terminal 3 is covered, so even if it's raining tomorrow morning we should be protected. Our hotel is attached to Terminal 2, so at about 1:30 Lee and I go downstairs to see if the airport has a place where we can get a snack. We order coffee and a pastry at Caffè Nero (which Google informs me is Italian for black coffee). The eating area is a zoo. There are many people of differing nationalities (many flights to and from the Mideast use Terminal 2). Seated at a table for four, near us, is an extended family of about ten people dressed in Muslim garb (white gowns for the men, burkas for the women).

Back in our room, we turn on the TV to see what we've been missing. Afternoon TV in England is as mindless and vapid as in the U.S. I work on puzzles, read on the Kindle, and devote most of my attention to Alastair MacLeod's "No Great Mischief." At 5:15, I call Barbara in Dr. Flatley's office to reschedule my appointment to assess the fate of my broken tooth or crown (see p. 30). At 5:30 we go to Collage for dinner. I have broccoli soup followed by the same bun-less hamburger as I had yesterday.

Our table is adjacent to a window that allows us to look down onto the hotel's parking lot. We witness an event that almost makes us feel pleased that our flight was canceled. A black Audi sedan approaches a parking space. The parking spaces in this lot are parallel to one another, which means that cars either go in forward or backward. There are two adjacent open spaces. The driver attempts to pull into the left-hand space, but winds up straddling the line between the two open lanes. So he backs up and tries again and again and again. It's evident, from our vantage point, that every time he backs up, he's turning the steering wheel the wrong way, resulting in his putting himself farther and farther from the car on the left and, finally, right in the middle of the two vacant spaces. The driver exits the car and walks to the rear to observe his expertise. He stands there for many seconds, contemplating what he has accomplished. Either satisfied (or defeated), he walks away from his car, then returns, then views the scene for considerable time, and finally walks away, leaving his car at an angle. And, of course, he has managed to occupy two spaces, preventing a new arrival from getting one of them.

About 30 minutes later, he returns. He enters his car and, despite the fact that there is almost a full car's width between his car and those to his left and right, he can't manage the simple task of backing out. Instead, he backs up a bit, turns his wheel the wrong way, goes back in, turns the wheel, backs up, *und so weiter*. Finally, he "frees" his vehicle from his not-very-tight parking space and drives off. (It would be amusing to be able to follow him to see where he goes next.)

Back in our room, we pack (again) for plane-flight mode and get to bed early for tomorrow's 7:00 am flight.

THURSDAY, MAY 31

We arise at 3:45 (!), get washed, finish packing, check out of the hotel, and walk (about 15 minutes) to Terminal 3 for our 7:00 flight to London. We have a tight connection (we're scheduled to arrive in London at 8:10 and the flight to Seattle leaves at 9:25). Both flights use Heathrow Terminal 5, but we recall that it's a huge facility; and we'll need to go through security again. (Why? In the U.S., this doesn't occur - but having experienced a second security screening when we flew Seattle to London to Inverness on May 12, we are expecting the worst.)

Things start out smoothly. British Airways has a counter assigned for Club Europe and our boarding passes, printed at the hotel last night, are supposed to give us easy passage through security. We get to the security area, along with several thousand of our closest friends, and all are in the Club Europe line. This seems unlikely. Maybe they can't read? Maybe they don't care? Maybe BA doesn't care.

So we wind back and forth in roped aisles - and move in tiny increments, eventually getting to the counters where bags and other belongings are to be placed in bins. There is a PA announcement that electronic devices need to be put separately into bins - and I'm prepared to do this. (I need to add that the area is extremely hot and humid with no air movement - both Magids find themselves drenched in sweat.)

The PA announcements never indicate that liquids need to be removed, but I see others do so and so I follow suit. I start loading my things into the bins (Lee had preceded me) when I am also instructed to remove my belt (at the risk of having my pants descend to a scandalous level). Lee has already cleared the area when I approach the full-body scanner. Now I am told to empty my pockets (something I do routinely at SEATAC before reaching security) and so I comply. Upon emerging from the scanner, an agent wands me all over (oooooh!) and then has me remove my shoes so that he can check for bunions and athlete's foot. I resist telling him that we elderly folk are *not* required to remove shoes in the U. S. of A. (Make America Great Again, I say).

By this time, Lee has collected not only her own carry-ons along but also my briefcase, her laptop, my Kindle, and my belt; and she asks me where my little suitcase is. I have no idea, but then an agent (with whom Lee has been having a heated exchange) says that my bag is on a trolley "over there."

"Over there" refers to another secure area where my bag and dozens of others are on a conveyer belt. Time is passing quickly - we are worried about getting to our gate before it closes and our checked suitcases depart without us.

Finally, my carry-on gets to the front of the conveyer belt. An attendant has me unlock both compartments whereupon she empties all of the contents onto the counter; she also removes everything from my toiletries bag and inspects them; and she wands everything in sight. She then speaks to a supervisor who types something into a computer and then comes over to me to explain that *traces of explosives* were found on the bag. Really??? So she takes me to another area where I am wanded again (oooh, twice in one day!) and, again, forced to remove my shoes. The woman then asks me many questions: where I spent the night before; how I got to the airport this morning; did anyone else touch my luggage (I was going to point to Lee, but I decided not to do so); what I ate for breakfast (I made that one up); where I lived; and so on. Finally, having decided that I was unlikely to have designs on blowing up the plane, she turns my bag over to me.

Lee estimates that we spent 15 minutes in line just reaching the security area and another 45 minutes to clear security before I was absolved of having terroristic leanings. By this time, my pants are drooping perilously, but I get my belt into place and avoid arrest for obscene exposure. We make it to the British Airways Club Europe Lounge (we can't go directly to the gate because it's not posted, even though the ETD is barely 50 minutes away). A woman at the desk informs us of the gate, so after making sure that all of our body parts are intact we go there. The line is huge and the plane is not yet ready for boarding, but finally it is and the people in Groups 1, 2, and 3 (which are probably for the non-steerage classes) are allowed to proceed.

We then learn that the plane is being held for 20 minutes (uh-oh, are we going to make our connection?) but at least we're on board. The plane is an Airbus 321 and we have seats 7A and 7C (with 7B blocked from having someone sit there). While sitting and waiting, we are pleased that Dvorák orchestral music is being piped in through the PA; and even better we spot a passenger wearing a New York Mets cap, the first that we've seen on this trip. The safety film is old-fashioned (not the amusing one that we viewed on the two flights coming over here). Although the plane was scheduled to leave at 7:00, push-back does not occur until 7:20 and we're not air-borne until 7:39. The plane flies into and above the clouds; we'll not see the ground again until we near our destination.

When the flight attendant passes down the aisle, we ask for a copy of *The Times*. Even though it's owned by Rudolph Murdoch, it is an excellent paper with lengthy articles about important subjects. Alas, as a broadsheet, it is difficult to manage within the tight confines of an airplane. Breakfast is served at 7:45. (At least that's what my notes say - was it really a mere six minutes after take-off?) Having had nothing to eat in the Club Europe lounge, I'm eager to get some food. (An unrelated observation - even though we've eaten filling meals these past couple of weeks, my pants feel looser, my tummy smaller, and my belt a notch further in. This apparent loss of weight will be reversed, I'm sure, on our return to "civilization.") I enjoy a fruit cup, croissant, coffee, tomato and combread.

Ten minutes after we've begun to eat, the captain announces that we've made up the lost time and will be landing soon. So our breakfast trays are *snatched* away; and probably the poor blighters in steerage have received nothing. As we land, one of the flight attendants tells us that a driver and van will meet us at the top of the Jetway and will drive us to Flight 0053 (and its 9:25 departure). Really? The plane lands at 8:13 and we reach the gate at 8:19. As promised, a driver meets us in the Jetway as we exit the plane and escorts us down an elevator and to his waiting chariot (or SUV). Because we are actually early, he takes us on a leisurely of Heathrow, allowing us to view these huge airplanes from below. (That our driver looks like our Gig Harbor friend Al Vazquez is a curiosity but of little relevance.)

We drive to the Boeing 777 that will take us to Seattle and ascend an elevator that takes us to the top of the Jetway. Our concerns were of no import: we do *not* have to march through all of Terminal 5 and we do *not* have to go through security again. We are securely in our seats at 9:07, nearly half-an-hour ahead of departure. Uh-oh, comes an announcement over the PA that we're being held at the gate until "engineering releases us." Huh? One downside to my being in 11F is that there's no privacy screen between me and anyone in 11E, also facing backward, although there is one between me and whoever might be in 11G, which happens to be my wife. Similarly, when we flew from Seattle to London, there was a moveable screen between Lee in 12B and me in 12A, which we didn't need because we, like, sorta, kinda, knew one another. Such will not be the case on the present flight.

While still grounded, waiting for "engineering" to determine that the plane is air-worthy, Lee notices that two adjacent seats 12J (aisle) and 12K (window) are vacant. She asks the flight attendant if we can both move to those seats and we are given permission. And unlike my so-called window seat on the earlier flight (from which I could see out of neither close-by window), *this* window seat gives me access to not two but three useful windows. While waiting for take-off, I read more of Alastair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief*.

At 9:55, the plane pushes back, but goes only about 100 feet and stops. At 10:10, it is pushed back another 100 feet. At this rate, it will be next year before we get to Seattle. Finally, we are cleared to leave the gate area and we are air-borne at 10:19. I read a mixture of Macleod and my Kindle. I set my watch back eight hours for PDT. Lunch is served at 3:40 am: gravlax as a starter, braised beef for my main, "warm chocolate butterscotch and almond sponge pudding" for dessert, wine, and coffee.

At 5:30 am, I close my eyes and sleep until about 7:00 am. I keep my eyes closed for an additional 30 minutes, but no more sleep comes. I return to the Kindle and finish the Wolitzer book at 9:00, then read some more of the Macleod. At 10:15 the flight attendants serve "afternoon tea" which consists of three separate sandwiches, two of which I can eat (egg mayonnaise on a roll; smoked salmon and cream cheese on a bagel); I reject the third sandwich, which has curry. As we descend into the Seattle area, there are thick clouds, but when we break through we are over downtown. Even though we were held for 20 minutes at the gate and an additional 15 minutes on the taxiways, the captain floors it and gets us to Seattle at 11:30, just about on time. Now begins an experience almost as awful as the one at Manchester airport.

The plane's door opens, but we are not allowed onto the Jetway. Weird!. When we are allowed to proceed, we get to the terminal building and at the end of a long hallway we are held again. An agent allows passengers with Nexus, Global Entry, and [something else] to proceed but the rest of us have to wait because the immigration area is over-crowded. Finally we are allowed to move along and, indeed, the large international arrivals room is packed with passengers coming from Paris, Amsterdam, London (both on Virgin and British Airways, which departed and arrived at about the same time) and other places. There are the typical cattle lines that we wind around, finally reaching the area where the scanners are located: we scan our passports, have our pictures taken (I expect to see mine on YouTube any day), and stand in another line until an immigration office beckons us forward. (I hold D. J. Trump with his racist immigration rants responsible for this!).

We go to the baggage claim area and watch the carousel as luggage from our flight is unloaded. Even though our bags were given priority labels in Manchester, they have not arrived after a considerable time. I find a British Airways agent who informs me that although *we* made the connecting flight in London, *our* bags did not. He assuages our anger by saying that they *will* arrive on the afternoon flight (arriving at 5:15)

and will be sent to our home address. He has a computerized printout of all of the bags on (or not on) flight BA 0049. We give him the address and our phone numbers; and we specifically say that the bags (which might not get to Gig Harbor until the middle of the night) should be left with the concierge at Heron's Key.

We head home. Around 7:15 pm, Lee gets a text message that the bags will be transferred to the courier at 10:00 this evening. There is no mention of an estimated time of arrival in Gig Harbor. We tell Mike (at the concierge desk) to be on the lookout for the bags; he says that he'll tell Rorry, who will replace him at midnight, to be on the alert. Alas, when next morning (Friday) we head to the reception desk, we learn that no suitcases have arrived overnight.

FRIDAY, JUNE 1

Lee calls the British Airways phone number for baggage claims to find out what has gone wrong. There ensues a very heated and lengthy phone call with a man (who identifies himself as Baram) at a call center (somewhere in this world ... or maybe not) and who is quite useless (either by design or incompetence). He refuses to contact the transfer company until Lee screams and tells him it's his job to do so. By this time, another text message has arrived. It has two errors in our delivery address: the word STEWART (huh??) appears below Gig Harbor, there is no zip code, and there is no indication that the bags are to be left with the concierge. The agent to whom Lee is talking has no intention of correcting these errors; and insists that the bags can only be delivered to the rightful owners despite our having authorized the concierge when we filed the report.

After lots of angry words, he agrees to make these corrections with the transfer company (although I suspect that he never does so and just seems to agree so as to get Lee off his back). We get the name and number of Archer Distribution, but when she and then I call, we get transferred to voice mail. At 8:00, Lee calls again and, this time, gets a person who turns out to be totally unhelpful. They are not computerized nor do they have an online tracking system, so he has no idea where the bags are or when they'll be delivered. She does succeed (we think) in correcting the errors in our address and getting him to include the information: LEAVE WITH CONCIERGE.

Lee and I go out to breakfast and the grocery store to restock our larder. Upon our return, she calls Archer again at 11:00. The man says that they sent the driver back to SEATAC last night to pick up additional luggage - they had not all been cleared by the airline at 10:00 last night. Realizing that there are additional bags, the driver then went home for the evening! This morning, he's sent back to the airport ... again. The agent can give no idea of when we should expect delivery (or even if he can guarantee that it will be today) because the driver needs to deliver first to Bonney Lake, Puyallup, Tacoma, then Gig Harbor, before going on to Bainbridge. The man moans that he's a tiny company, that the airlines pay him only \$1.00 per mile, and he wonders if it's worth it. So do we!! It would be nice if British Air (and any other airlines that use Archer) would vet the delivery service before choosing what is (obviously) the lowest bidder. Finally, he guarantees deliver today ... sometime ... maybe.

When we do our grocery shopping we also stop at Rite Aid so that Lee can pick up a prescription. I explain to the pharmacist our dilemma and the fact that my meds are in my wandering suitcase; I asked if I could get an emergency short supply while I wait for the arrival of the bags. She says that I'll need to have my doctor call it in. The medicines I'm missing are lisinopril-HCTZ and allopurinol. (I have supplies of ranitidine and simvastatin in the apartment.)

Wonder of wonders - upon our return from dinner this evening, Lee finds two voice mail messages. One is from the driver who says that he has pulled up to Heron's Key Building A but doesn't know where to deliver the suitcases. The other is from the front desk, letting us know that the driver had figured out that Building A was *not* the main entrance and had actually come to the concierge desk. In fact, when we go down to the lobby, Mike has both suitcases safely in his office. (I call Rite Aid to cancel Kahn's order; I wonder if it had even been filled yet.)

There are rules that airlines follow for compensating travelers who are inconvenienced by cancelled flights. Alas, there's some question about the application of such rules when the cancellation is weather-related, as BA alleges was true about our May 30 Manchester to London flight. The European Union uses Regulation 261/2004 for determining what compensation (if any) will be made. At the least, we expect to be reimbursed for our extra night in the Radison Blu and for meals that we ate that day. I won't (can't) describe the many phone calls, letters, emails, online forms, etc. etc. that Lee makes in an effort to get BA to pay up. Finally, in the week of August 13, Lee receives a message saying that only \$344 (approximately £248) is being deposited into her checking account. That's "nice," but it's less than the cost of the room and meals, and avoids any penalty that should be imposed. The reason? BA's rules say that they won't reimburse more than £200 for a hotel room (even though our extra night cost an exorbitant £299). We guess that £248 was £200 for the room and £48 for dinner. And not a pence or a farthing in compensation for our mental anguish, pain, and suffering! Alas, we are committed (maybe we *should* be committed) to fly BA in September 2018 in connection with our Regent Seven Seas cruise. We are flying Seattle to London (sound familiar) on September 13 and returning Barcelona-to-London-to Seattle on September 30. Unless, of course, there's a "weather-related" event that allows BA to cancel us once again.

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Summary of books read on the trip:

Impeachment
Florence of Arabia
The Interestings
No Great Mischief

And these magazines:

TIME, THE NEW YORKER, THE PROGRESSIVE, YALE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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Bill Bryson wrote a wonderful book called *The Road to Little Dribbling. Adventures of an American in Britain*. It's a whimsical account of his travels from the south of England to the north. Bryson is an American who has moved to England, in part because he has an English wife.

In the book, he talks about the time that he was asked by a local "Why do you live in England?" His answer goes on for several pages, but here it is in truncated form.

... her question is a most reasonable one ... Why would I choose to leave the most successful country in the world, where my taxes would always be lower, my house warmer, my portions of food larger, my gratifications more immediate and abundant, and decide instead to live on a rainy island adrift in a cold grey sea?

He then goes on to list five things, the first of which are "pleasing Brittanic things" such as: Boxing Day, County Pubs ... and villages with ridiculous names like Shellow Bowels and Nether Wallow."

The second thing is that "Britain gave me a million good things that I wouldn't otherwise have had."

Third is that "Britain is fundamentally sane." (The book was published in 2016 before the insanity of the Trump era became apparent.) As evidence, he refers to a law that Congress had passed that prohibits the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service from funding research that *might* lead to gun control. He continues, "On tricky and emotive issues like gun control, abortion, capital punishment, the teaching of evolution in schools, the use of stem cells for research, and how much flag waving you have to do in order to be considered acceptably patriotic, Britain is calm and measured and quite grown up ..."

Fourth is quality of life: the pace and scale of British life - an appreciation of small pleasures. "The British, you see, are always happy when they ought to be - when the sun is shining and they have a drink in their hands ... they are also very good at remaining happy when others would falter. If, for example, they are walking in the countryside and it starts to rain, they pull on their waterproofs and accept that that's just the way it sometimes is."

Fifth is the beauty of the countryside.

In another chapter, he talks about a visit to "a great piece of earthwork sculpture called Northumberlandia ... It is an enormous figure of a recumbent woman, a quarter of a mile long and a hundred feet high, made up of earth dug up during the course of mining coal ... It is beautiful to behold but also a pleasure to walk over. Paths lead to the top of her head, to the twin summits of her breasts, along her arms, and down her grassy thighs. It was just splendid, the best thing I have seen in a long time." And why do I mention this? Because my local tour guide/spouse failed to include it on our travels even though it was on the road, halfway between Alnwick and Durham!! (Oh what I would have given to have traded a cathedral or two if we had stopped here.)