

Glasgow 2001

Sun. 13 May 01. Pam kindly took me over to Ivor's house for 9.15 and Peter arrived from Coventry about the same time, Ivor was soon on the scene and we loaded our belongings into the capacious boot of his new car, then we were off to pick up Mervyn. Inga saw us all off with a hug, a kiss and a lovely strudel.

Leaving Kenilworth we joined the lightly used M6 making good progress to Knutsford service station for a break for coffee. Then on again to Wray just N.E. of Lancaster where we met Ivor's son who had not been well and his wife Ann. Garry recommended the George and Dragon as a good place for lunch, he advised us wisely. He also sketched a short walk around this very pleasant village which we took. At about 2.30 we continued our journey along the M6 breaking off at Gretna Green, not for our eligible bachelor to tie the knot but to see housing dating back to 1917 that was built to house munitions workers. The houses were of superior quality. Everyone thought it time for a cup of tea and a slice of strudel in case it wouldn't keep.

We then visited Lockerbie, the site of an air disaster where 270 men, women and children perished on the evening of 21st December 1988 as a result of a terrorists bomb being placed in the hold of a jumbo jet. We were told that the crater had been filled and little to see, but there was a garden of remembrance in the local cemetery. We found our way to this peaceful hillside cemetery that was immaculately maintained and saw the site to these unfortunate victims aged between two months and eighty years who were expecting to celebrate Christmas with their loved ones.

On again to The Heritage Hotel. Great Western Road, Glasgow that was to be our home for the next seven nights. Ivor's room was a climb of 23 steps, mine was 46 steps, Peter and Mervyn about 66. I will reserve comments on the hotel for another day.

Mon. 14th. My morning started with a walk to and in the nearby Botanical Gardens where there were some rather shapely glass houses to be seen, then I returned to the hotel to join the others for a good breakfast.

Breakfast over we all walked to the University passing Charles Rennie Mackintosh's home. Here we boarded a hop on hop off [not much hopping done] Guide Friday bus for a circuit around the city with a very informative commentary. There were countless outstanding buildings and terraces of many styles of architecture. We broke off at George Square to visit and a guided tour of the City Chambers [City Hall] c1890, and were truly impressed with its grandeur, marble staircases, colourful granite columns, decorated coffered ceilings, mosaics and alabaster figures. This interior has been used in many films.

A late lunch taken at Wetherspoons, then to the Transport Museum with so much to see and too little time we decided we must come again. It was turned 5.0 pm the weather was lovely so we sat in the Kelvinside Gardens basking in the sunshine gazing at the flamboyant architecture of the rich red stone of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and the neo Gothic University of Glasgow with an open type spire.

We thought we must try a circuit of the Under Ground Railway where we joined the train at Hillhead and emerged about thirty five minutes later rather shell shocked. Although a fairly modern railway, I felt we should have been warned of the noise and have been provided with earplugs.

A light supper taken in Byers Road and back to hotel.

Tues. 15 May An early morning walk along the Great Western Road then another good breakfast.

Today our main visit was to the New Lanark cotton mills situated some miles up the River Clyde. This mill complex is set in a deep wooded valley with the public car park high above. We took the liberty of driving down to the mills as some of us would have experienced difficulty on our return. It is a large site with five mills powered by water from the Clyde. There are workers houses, school rooms, textile machinery and a time travel ride which takes you back a couple of hundred years and also takes you well into the future. It was all very fascinating. We would liked to have walked to the Falls of Clyde but they were located about a mile up River and we felt possibly a little too far. We all thoroughly enjoyed our visit and were suitably impressed.

We left about 4.0pm with light rain falling and were going in search of Mauchlin Railway Viaduct which has a central span of 180` and is 160` above the R. Ayr. We got several tantalizing glimpses of it from a distance of half a mile but due to the foot and mouth problems in the area this was as near as we got.

We continued into Ayr where we had a good evening meal at the Tudor Restaurant, then an express journey back to Glasgow.

Wed. 16 May. It was a wet gloomy morning which brought wet gloomy thoughts, what should we do. Over breakfast it was decided we would go to the Burrell Collection in Pollok Country Park. It is a modern building situated in a large wooded park and houses about 8000 items and artefacts exhibited in appealing ways. Mervyn and I joined a guided tour of the galleries that was led by a little lady with the sweetest of musical voices that I have ever had the pleasure of hearing. I was quite enchanted and could have listened to her all day and given the chance all night as well.

Leaving the little lady and the comfort of the Gallery we motored the short way to Pollok House that contained a large collection of Spanish paintings. A lady guide thought we needed educating a little, she took us from room to room reading far more into the pictures than they probably contained. I'm sure she enjoyed herself.

At the car park of this house we discovered a large dent in the boot of Ivor's car and we could give no explanation when and how this may have occurred. It is very unfortunate.

A short journey was made to the south bank of the Clyde to a fairly new museum, Clydebuilt. This was all about ship building in this area, again of great interest and imaginatively displayed.

It was 6.0pm. the rain was over so we went sightseeing, driving through Renfrew, Erskine, Port Glasgow, Greenock, Gourock and Wemyss Bay.

An evening meal in a pub and being reminded that Gourock was the birth place of James Watt.

Another very good interesting day.

17 May. Thurs. Before breakfast I took an interesting walk in a westerly direction along the Great Western Road and saw a number of grand terraces comparable with ones in Bath, most were very well maintained.

Breakfast taken, then we all journeyed to Falkirk to see what was taking place there with the construction of a canal lift in the form of a wheel, which will lift or lower canal boats between two canals. The two canals are the Forth and Clyde and the Edinburgh and Glasgow Union, a difference in level in excess of one hundred feet. The Union canal has been extended by about half a mile with three locks added which takes it through a tunnel and onto an aqueduct at the site of the wheel. The tunnel passes beneath a railway and the Roman Antonine Wall. A lot of work has been completed and all should be finished within a year. A visitor's site is also being constructed. In all it is supposedly costing about £75M. The section of the Antonine Wall that we saw consists of two parallel earth banks with a deep ditch in between.

We had a good lunch at the Wallace Inn just outside Falkirk, then continued to a picture postcard village of Culross. In light rain we walked the cobbled streets, visited the Town House [small Town Hall] and the Palace of 1597[title a little grandiose]. N.T. cares for these two buildings and the village is often used in film sets.

We had hoped to see something of the Forth bridges but heavy rain precluded any sight seeing. A brief look at Blackness Castle, supper at a pub close by and then back to Glasgow.

18 May. Fri. After breakfast we drove to Ballater, along the western shores of Loch Lomond then transferring our affections to Loch Long and Gare Loch we arrived in Helensburgh for lunch.

Close by is Hill House commissioned in 1902 by the publisher Walter Blackie, considered to be C.R.Mackintosh's finest house. Externally it did not appeal to me as I thought it much too angular, but inside, yes I liked it very much. His high backed chairs with low seats are really sculptures rather than utilitarian.

It was now about 4.0pm. we felt that we had not seen very much of Glasgow so returned there and parked near St. Mungo's Cathedral and going in. It was very dark inside, there was frenzied activity by the staff to get every one out and the doors locked as it was about to close.

Mervyn and I climbed the Necropolis which is modelled on Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris. There are certainly saw many great monuments.

We then went close to the Peoples Palace to see the former Templeton carpet mill with most unusual polychrome brickwork, Venetian gothic 1889.

We called in at the Cathedral Hotel for a light supper and all the while there we were punished by raucous music.

Back to the hotel and a portion of Inga's strudel.

19 May Sat. An early morning walk then I returned as usual for breakfast at 8.15 to find Peter was missing at the table. The questions being asked, had he overslept, had he disappeared without paying his hotel bill, was he ill, we were left pondering with concern increasing. We were about to have his bedroom searched when he appeared quite red in the face claiming he had been out and got lost walking the banks of the R. Kelvin. He even claimed he had seen a deer and a Park Ranger said if that was so it was the first to have been seen in Glasgow for ten years. We all expected a News Reporter to arrive from Scottish T.V. for an exclusive interview. Things eventually calmed as we watched Peter tucking into a good breakfast no worse for his adventures.

After Peter's exploits we all returned to the Transport Museum as Mervyn and I particularly wanted to see more of the splendid models of the many ships built on the Clyde. They ranged from small launches, trawlers, dredgers, chain ferries to warships and Queen Mary and Elizabeth. These superb models were often made and painted in their finished colours before the ship was built. This enabled the prospective purchaser to see it in miniature before placing his order.

From here Mervyn and I separated from Peter and Ivor and walked to the Kelvinside Art Gallery/Museum, a superb building of red russet sandstone. It contained many treasures.

We joined the other two for lunch at the Transport Museum, then went our separate ways walking along Sauchiehall Street to a superior type tenement, known as Tenement House which the N.T. have owned for thirty years or more have kept it as it was when lived in by a maiden lady for more than fifty years. I feel living in one like this would be quite good especially if you didn't like gardening.

We passed by the Art School by Mackintosh on our way to the Willow Tea Room which is furnished with copies of his furniture and had a pot of tea sitting on uncomfortable chairs. After being refreshed we strolled back to the Kelvinside Gardens and along the R.Kelvin for a couple of miles. This was followed by supper in Byers Road.

Peter and Ivor motored to Leith and saw the Royal Yacht Britannia and the Bo'ness & Kinneil Rly.

20 May Sun. It doesn't matter how long a holiday is it comes to an end all too quickly so it was time to pack bags and pay bills.

We left Glasgow and travelled through Ayrshire to reach Culzean Castle and Country Park. The castle, the work of Robert Adam sits on a cliff top 150` high, giving lovely seascape views over Arran and the volcanic outcrop of Ailsa Craig. The sun shone, everything was lovely. Knowing we were still about 300 miles from home we had to break away from this peaceful place and search for the High Road to England, which Johnson told Boswell, was the finest sight in Scotland. We entered Dellmelinton that had formerly been a small coal mining area, the rest of the journey through New Galloway, Castle Douglas, Annan and Gretna was through green and rolling countryside.

At Gretna we joined the M6 and with stops at fairly regular intervals arrived at Kenilworth about 9.30pm dropping Mervyn off at his home, Peter had left his car on Ivor's drive so he was next, finally Ivor kindly brought me home.

It has been another excellent holiday, we all got on well together, visited many interesting sites and places, met many helpful and friendly people. The hotel was good but badly in need of a lift to the upper floors and better car parking provisions. We travelled about 1200 miles.

My thanks to Peter, Mervyn and Ivor for a very happy holiday.

Peter chater, May 2001

