

2005,07,07 Thursday

- Arrived Gatwick airport to a 40 minute tarmac holding pattern, then a huge reception of heavily armed security in terminal. Very interesting!
- Cleared port in a breeze, while others were “interrogated” through customs- perhaps the white skin and bright red Canada rugby shirt and “accent” were a factor. Nice!
- Train to Tring diverted around London by 3 hour circuit route while bombings were in progress. Great free city tour! Walked to Nithsdale arriving around 1700 H.

2005,07,08 FriDay

Ric and Stella working, Jeremy also (Off-Betting parlour) and Justin (outdoor Paint Ball). Chris and I took a walk around Tring, the old Rodwell yard and had a beer, then I enjoyed an hour in the Museum once again while Chris buggered off to cricket. After dinner, stood with Ric on Tring Cricket club porch having ales watching last hour of Chris’s shorter 120-over nite-match. Chris got a nice backside hit for 4 “on the kneel” as they say. Two old guys next to me commented on his play ending with, “Ees a Rodwell then, in’he!” Lots of Rodwell entries on wall boards of Honour for FH & Cricket player and exec. Makes my ‘Loma RD Hayes look smallish ey!

2005,07,09 Saturday

Ric and I built his porch stairs down to the patio. We all sat around the porch late aft and evening, drank wine and chatted about what all the kids are upto back in Canada, Ric and Stella’s holiday, her mom and dad, Pete & Sue and other family stuff going on with England folk. I like Pete and I don’t really know Sue, but the boys AND James were a little catty comical about her attempts to act “more posh than she is”, around other people. She seemed quite nice to me when I chatted with her on this trip, at the Cricket and Nithsdale, even though I did get off to a bad foot when I mentioned nicely that her accent sounded more like South African twang than the harsher English one. I think it was twang that got me into trouble there. Perhaps I should have said lilt. I prefer Awfricaans to proper RP English. She profaned shock and said, “Ooh, I speak leyek this, when I’m not so tieyered”. It was funny hearing the boys giggle and chirp back at her to her face. All in good fun I suppose. It was just interesting to hear family gossip from over here. I felt I was rather kind to all of the Canadian family branch after that. Heather, don’t worry. I didn’t tell one anecdote about how many people in Fiji said how young you looked despite how much you suntan.

2005,07,10 Sunday

Went to dump with Ric to recycle... quite a setup of stair-sided bins to sort to. Then we went walking around Locks

reservoirs. Sat chatting with Pete and Sue et al in aft. Family- salad, cold-chicken dinner w/ iced-Pimms drinks on new porch.

2005,07,11 Monday

All Reads working, so went walking for the day. Spent 45 minutes touring all 3 floors and every nook and cranny of the Rothschild's manor. The huge and amazingly beautiful carved oak panel library and several other rooms are now dance studios. I found a "fake book" panel which opened through to a very sexy study with a naked women plastered ceiling. As I was leaving the front door, a women approached and said, "Oh! This is private property, you shouldna' be in here. Security must be at morning tea". I said politely that I had seen no signage and the gate and front door were wide open. When she insisted there was a sign and escorted me to the main gate she discovered the wooden archway sign from the previous evening's fundraisng ball, "Arabian Nights" had been stored in front of "the sign". Must have been my lucky day. Great tour though.

In the aft... I wandered down Grove Ave. to the Grand Junction Pub for an ale and sandwich. Looked around the olde foundry watching ornimental garden iron being poured. Stu would have loved it. Watched a few Lock changes, chatted w/boatsmen and ambled slowly back along canal past "Heather Bel" to Tring. I did not know

that's how we spelled it! We all dined on the patio again.

At 8 o'clock- Ric, Chris, Justin, James and I went for a "man's nite out", to charming little Horshshoe Pub canal-side, in nearby Winkwell. Jez is resting up for Crones intestinal re-section op on Thursday and Stella was off to crocheting class. Poured a rare 4 cider into Ric and shared stupid man-tales like the time I lost a few pints of blood literally, nearly enlarging my arsehole, lacerating my femoral artery landing on a sharp stub of branch and walking out from the intake at C-wack Lake with a tournaquet off and on. Ric and I talked of Huckleberry Finning on the Fraser for his Scout's First Class journey. And of course there was the obligatory telling of the "burnt-knife", he running from the fire, me walking floating moss in the dark to the bottom of Cat Lake, air temp 25 degrees F, towel over arm, toothbruch in hand and instantly shattered glass lens coleman lantern in the other. Chris won with his description of gashing his thumb to the bone with a carpet knife, then accidently sprinkling and flicking blood all over the white carpet and walls as he merrily went back to carpet trimming, thinking he had staunched the flow with a few bandaids. Eight stitches later he was fine but had a lot of cleaning to do.

2005,07,12 Tuesday

Headed to Aldbury, church, etc. and on up to the monument at Ashridge. As I

approached, a line of 40 school-kids aged 8-9 (yes school gets out mid-July... ouch) two boys ran off on a chase with the 3rd and last teacher at line's-end in pursuit. I merrily followed the rest of group un-noticed. On top, another adult hesitantly mentioned, "Oh! This is a school group", to which I replied, "Nice! On an outing are we?" Then the other adult said, "Where'dyou come from?" To which, of course I answered honestly- "Vancouver Canada". She then said I shouldn't actually be up there. As I had had a fair look-see jostled by many tiny ones, I left. Later, Stella asked how much it cost. I looked at her puzzled and answered hesitantly, "Nothing?", to her slight surprise and incredulity. Two days later, seeking info at an Internet-Kiosk in Wiggington, I noticed a banner ad- "Earl of Bridgewater Monument - Open Sat. Sun. 1-5... School groups by prior booking only". Must have been my lucky day. Nice view.

Leaving Ashridge estate I walked along the ancient Ridgeway then followed "The HertsPath" and field markers to Pitstone Beacon for a fabulous view and photos w'nary a soul in site. Saw several red-fox sunning on hillside. Walked the fields and Gwyn Dyke past a few small deer in bush, down to Pitstone Windmill circ.1627 in the centre of a few acres of near rype blond barley. Next was Ivinghoe's St. Mary's Church circ.1300s. As it was just shy of 3 p.m. and no one around, I very gently picked ancient lock with coat hanger

and viewed the tower clock, circ.1800s. Locked door, straightened hanger, wandered around Ivinghoe and had an ale.

Wandered back through Ivinghoe and Pitstone then following along above rail to Tring (lots of rabbits) in time for late-ish dinner with Ric, Stella, Justin and newlady, Suth-Aufricaans Amy at Winkwell pub. (Chris at training, Jez working late).

2005,07,13 Wednesday

Walked to Wiggington then back around along Ridgeway across new footbridge, assorted trails, through Pennley Estate and Tring RFC where I trained w/Peter 23 years ago. Bought fixing's for steak dinner at new Tesco Superstore other side of Cricket pitch. Watched Discovery channel with Ric... one of a zillion SkyeBox channels. Crazy stuff that "selection!"

Thursday- helped Chris plane doors... then off w/Stella&Chris to drop Jez at Chiltern Hosp for op. After dinner Ric & I wandered over to cricket for a last few pints and sunset before we part in a.m. Good news by phone... all went fair well with Jeremy during operation and so far.

It's been raining quite sometime apparently, but very sunny with billowing clouds and a nice soft breeze

since I arrived. This nite was a perfectly red sunset and cool.

Friday- Off to Edinburgh / Edinburgh at 6:48 a.m. Tring to Watford change to Crewe, arriving EdinB app. 12:27 (noonish) in trime to savour town before release of Harry Potter at 00:01 a.m. July 16, in local shops.

Saturday - plan to hang out near castle or Princess Park reading HP all day with breaks to look around.

2005,07,17 Sunday Edinburgh

How about this for a tradition Tee, Stu and Thms. Chuck the cheese cake type desserts for a wee dram of drambue no ice. It's certainly something I've enjoyed a long time now. So even if it doesn't become your tradition always remember, other than fruits- grapes, oranges, pineapple etc. if your dad did not consider the last glass of wine, dessert... then a real dessert treat was a simple dram of Dram. Ahhh now! That and Oatmeal porridge will "put hair on your chest". (Just joshin' Tee).

I'm sitting in this small cellar room of Milnes Bar where the Scottish socialist movement began- "Little Kremlin" as it became known. To top it off, this gang met about the time I'm in here, 2 to 6 and ate of all things Yorkshire Pudding and roast beef dinner. Although the bar-maid said, "there's no Yorkshire today". To which I replied, "That's okay! My grandfather was from

Yorkshire, so it's probably not as good as my gran's, mom's, or even ex-mother-in-law's. Perhaps I'll try it next week when I get back from Inverness to compare". She smiled and said, "Don't be too harsh, ay!" I was good with the rest of the dinner as the food in Scotland can be pretty beaten up what with the fried food even including of course batter fried Haggis which I tried a bite of at the bar with the two Scots the other day. 'Tis'nt too bad actually... but the artery clogging factor of the Wee Puddin' is already off the chart without the added bonus. The dinner of of several tiny steamed as well as a few roasted potatoes, a large handful of crisp beans and baby carrots and two bread slice sized tender roast beef along with two pints of locally made Highland lager really was a lovely SunDay dinner, especially as no one smoked in this particular secluded area the whole time.

(I'd forgotten how disgusting it was to begin a savoury dinner at the White Spot, Keg or any Vancouver restaurant in the days when those at the next table had just finished enjoying THEIR tasty meal only to lean back and light up during yours... or more disgusting watch and suffer as someone chewed a mouthful, all the while taking drags on a cigarette with a mouthful. Yumm! Tasty. Dad, I recall seeing that fellow "gridiron" football official associate of yours who called me for holding whilst on all fours under some Trojan MLBacker, doing exactly that one time

when I was at a restaurant on Kingsway with Hughie MacKinnon and Mike McKay-Dunn and thinking "I hope you choke!" Hughie said fairly loudly, "If I'd wanted that taste I'd have sprinkled tobacco on my food!" Scotland and bits of Europe are just now starting the process of transition to smoke free bar and dining areas.)

Tee, Stu, Thms- I'm sitting on oak bench surrounded by ancient carved oak panels in this 250 year old booth. The floor is of solid oak planks, the open floor joists and second floor planking above are rough cut- 'adzed' oak as well. The actual cellar walls just behind are fairly rough hewn stone. The radiators (not on) are pretty reminiscent of the size and shape of the ones we had at West 14th before forced air. ( Too bad we'd not known to keep that better system while adding a more efficient hot water furnace when we scrapped the olde RobinHood wood/coal furnace. )

All of this only served to make the "socialist" experience of course, more meaningful and romantic.

2005,07,18 Monday Inverness

Lite breakfast with HPotter this a.m. then picked up silver Ford Fiesta with 400 miles on it. Bus strike today so I'm glad I decided to pre-hire it when I arrived in Edinburgh. I initially thought to save money by taking bus and backpacking around but then I thought it would be great to have a car for Greta

and I. Apparently the trains to the North, if you can get a ticket, will be standing room only carrying the hordes headed home from the Scottish Open at St. Andrews (which I believe Tiger Woods won again).

I'm a crappie solo driver at the best of times on the right side of the road and the only time I've ever driven on the wrong side of the road I almost killed Cath and I on the motorcycle going CCW or Widdershins as some might say, into a roundabout leaving England in 1981 so I was a wee bit leery to drive at all. At first, I was doubly thrown off while checking out the controls because, although I can drive standard and actually prefer it, I was assuming the car being a rental, would be automatic and thus not to have to focus on shifting as well. I already knew I was without my excellent Canada navigator Thms and would be trying to drive and follow the route markers as well as see the scenery. Now I would have to adjust to left handed 5 speed shifting as well as play helmsmen and map reader. It was some relief suddenly, realizing after a slight panic that the foot pedals were the same. Why is that anyway? Shifter on left... why not clutch right, gas left? I've driven a few tractors where the gas is on the column with the dual clutching on the lefty foot, but never a car or motorcycle with left foot clutching. Thank god for anomalies.

Leaving the city was a relatively easy route up Leith, right on Queens and West and North following the M-9 markers over the Fourth Bridge (£1 toll). Once well out of the city I began to relax a little. But still wanting to see the scenery a bit I stayed in the left hand slow lane.

One thing that was particularly enlightening was the reinforcement of the idea to me that those at home driving under their L & N license should not have the radio on, or distraction from passengers until fully licensed... let alone the cellphone to ear, coffee in hand, while smoking and applying mascara. I turned off the radio 'til well up the road in lighter traffic then I picked up an excellent BBC 3 Discovery style program then a BBC Classic station. I could not have realized this until I tried to re-learn basic skills in a foreign land. Even when I approached rather hairy traffic situations skirting towns around Dual-Carriage motorway roundabouts, I turned off the radio and paid greater attention than I usually do flying solo.

Arrived near Inverness about 1400 h and took turn off to Culloden. The guide book was £3.50 so I paid £4 for the one hour guided tour instead. Intimate with just five of us, two young Swiss on honey-moon and two mid-age lowland Scots. Interesting to think the very descriptive and informative tour lasted about the time it took for 8000 to 9000 "Government" troops to suffer

300 dead killing 1000 of 3000 Jacobite Scots. By the battle description given by the guide, it would seem the Scots lost the battle more than the opposition won it. The team who make the least mistakes and capitalize on those of the opponent wins. Somewhat like most rugby games, except for the dying part. Of course after that the "hero of England", Cumberland became known as the "Butcher of Culloden" for the massacre of all the wounded and as many remaining Scots, women and kids included in the neighbourhood.

1530 h - Booked into a hostel in Inverness, £15 (B&B £30). Having already looked for a Skein Douh in Edinburgh to replace the one I bought while travelling here with Cath. After a short search here in two olde Kiltmakers shops, I found one at the Victorian Market. While the blade is a couple cm shorter than the last one, it being the rare Red-deer Horn could be it's twin. Mailed it home to Thms with a note saying he could consider it a grad present as no doubt I'd not be there if and when he does graduate, stating also that it was a wee bit "dear" (at £40 - Can\$100).

As I'd not had anything since first breakfast but a bottle of orange juice at Culloden, I walked down towards the river Clyde to the Gellion Pub, the oldest surviving pub in Inverness and had dinner at 1600 h of veggies and chicken leg. Read and wrote then

chatted 'til 2000 h with barmaids, both from Glasgow, up for summer work.

At Claire the barmaid's suggestion, I walked over to Wetherspoons Pub. On the way I phoned Greta and cautiously sought to fit me into her plans. Luck for me, she had just returned from from a weekend artshow at nearby Nairn and will be free until another show next Saturday. Organized to be at her place at "quarter of ten" whence she'll show me a great-gran's grave, and other sites I'd not seen last time here.

The Wetherspoon is quite spacious and posh, but was originally the foyer of a guest-house where Bonnie Prince Charlie stayed... it's one of the few partially smoke free pubs in GB. It's to be smoke free May 2006. After the routing at Culloden, Lord Cumberland also stayed here. The lady who owned the original building was recorded as saying, "I've hused twai Konigs in my life, I'll ne're ha'nother" or some such thing. For supper\*, as Ric suggested, I tried Black Angus steak. It came with "jacketed" potatoes and peas. Very tasty. A large sign proclaims "Every Sunday, Roast Beef dinner with Yorkshire pudding and Fresh seasonal vegetable- £5.49". Seems they like those Yorkshires a lot in Scotland... no wonder grandma could make them, or did she have to learn to perfect them for her Yorkshire mate.

(\* Stu Thms I skipped "second breakfast, lunch, and tea" *LOTR*)

Went back to hostel and crashed. Quick breakfast and off to Buckie after buying assorted fruits and flowers for Greta.

Made it to easily to Buckie arriving by 1030 h. I remembered the Murrays were near the old harbour front and stumbled on Rathburn #8. Knew Greta immediately at the door. Some "olde" people d'na change too much. Chatted over soup and toast until 1400 h, then headed out to see gravesite at Deskford, Grandma Read's father John Lawrence and mother Jane Rankin. Went for a long drive down around the Spey getting nicely lost on some tiny road running back along the rivers edge. It was beautiful. Came back in at some tinytown and bought some groceries. After dinner we looked at photos from home.

At this time I became quite sure of Greta's nearing blindness. While we were at the grave site and shopping she had made the excuse that her siatica was acting up. Although true it was more that she could nto see tghe gouind in front of her. After the photos she told me about how she had gone througha year of bleedign in the eyes and had lost some vision. It is apparently getting worse. Must be quite scary for an artist. It's the last thing I would want to lose. Watched several videos from home, including Heather's birthday pics accompanied by her recorded message "NaNa na BooBoo, you're getting fired (after explaining the Pope thing); Trixie

Chix from school singing “Jesus Song” which she really enjoyed and asked to see again; kids and Cath laughing at Parrot sketch; then had a huge laugh as Greta and I watche dit aand she was in hysterics. Nice to see for an old gal. What a sense of humour. Off to bed at 2300 h.

2005,07,25 Aberdeen Scotland - Noose & monkey Pub

Had such a great sleep up stairs in “the suite” after the nites in hostels and was woken by umbrella taps as Greta banged to call me for breakfast. Exchanged poetry... but her’s was in The Doric that Grandma Read knew so that was really cool.

### *Daffodils*

A blaze o’yalla hit me  
Whilst I drove tae Aiberdeen  
As in the poet’s Rainbow,  
M’hert leapt at the scene.

A mile o’daffies swayin  
An whisperin in the win’  
As tellin’ me that Sprong had come  
Wi’wild geese on the wing.

I wish tae linger wi’them,  
But the rule o’road’s aye nigh;  
My spirit fe, the joy ‘as left  
Tae ither passers-bye.

What Was and Is and Ever... (The Crookit Widdi)

The crookit widdi hieds ahin’  
The purple shuther o’the Bin.

An crookit roadie skirts a’round  
Gets lecht at time frae gold when  
bloom.

An’ crookit hoosies crouch near by,  
That aince stood prood agains’the sky.

Poor crookit fowkies Noo a ‘gone  
But still this crookit life moves on!

[partial trans.

The crooked woods hide behind  
The purple shoulder of the Bin  
(Heather covered Ben/hill named “Bin”  
family farm)  
lecht=lit golden at times from broom  
like prickly plant called “when”  
hoosies=houses ]

Written after Greta had spoken with a  
sad old country lass who lamented the  
loss of old homestead like the  
Lawrence’s that fell down when the  
emigrated.

In the Doric Language - a local coastal  
dialect from Aberdeen to Inverness. I  
know believe this might be the dialect I  
heard Grandma speaking to other’s  
when I stayed there as a kid... not Galic.  
Although that to is possible I suppose.

G.F. Murray, Buckie

F is for Fraser  
April 2005

These have been published in- *Leopard*, “the magazine for North-Eastern Scotland, established in 1974 which takes it’s name from the leopards on the city of Aberdeen coat of arms.”

Greta navigated me out to Plusgarden Abby, telling me to look for this and that road marker as she can “no see the distant anymore”. Here, Grandma Read’s father’s brother Uncle Harry was the Forest Warden (Grounds Keeper). It was incredible. By the dates it seems it was started some 20 years before Westminster Abby. A dozen Benedictine monks were Gregorian chanting when we arrived. After the service one of the older monks Father/brother??? Calise (sal-ee-se) came up and said “Greta?” They chatted a bit while I looked around. Then she introduced me “from Canada”. This fellow “came to orders” several years after serving in the RAF in WW2. He and Greta were both very concerned about 94 year old father Maurice who had gone on his regular daily two hour daily walk to the town six weeks earlier and never returned. Extensive dog, infra-red helicopter and human search found nothing. Suspected abduction but perhaps he was just beamed up. He was well over six foot and served with the Scots Guards in WW2 at Gold beach to Arnham and Dachau, similar to John Murray who was in the signal corps. Both of these guys had promised to serve god if they

had survived the horror engulfing them on many occasions. Better than drinking yourself to death trying to escape the memories I should think.

Greta has an absolutely sharp and phenomenal memory that makes me envious of the one I never had and which is getting much worse. She pretty much knows everyone in Canada from Liam up, and that “his mom is pregnant and what many are up to. Knowing names while asking questions like “How is it that you and wee bonnie Mary Campbell never stayed together?” or “Now! Your wife Cathy MacLeod was it, John’s daughter- why did ye’no stay together?” Boggles my mind... not the questions and answers... just that she knew their names.

Returned to Buckie, and put on the water for tea, while she showed me some of her paintings. The one called Autumn was gorgeous, and reminded me a bit of the red and yellow abstract in mom and dad’s living room. Took a few photos of them and then had tea and Abby-made orange&ginger snaps. While chatting, she kept saying, “Now, when yae get bahk tay Canada...” to which I eventually, quietly mentioned, “Greta, I’m not goin’ back to Canada for quite some time... there’s a huge world out there and I kinda feel like I can make a little difference seeking out things to do to make more of a difference somehow”.

We talked about it for quite a while then she said, "I'm very saddened, and as the English say, 'Flabbergasted and gobstopped', but I think ya have some of the Lawrence blood in ya'... they moved all over Scotland over the generations then off to the colonies." I've never thought of myself as a Lawrence or Read for sure. Perhaps more Goring or South somehow.

I tried to explain that I felt I had done soooo much already in Canada, but I didn't really fit into the lifestyle anymore and that rampant consumerism, Ford F-150 trucks sales and the fact that the fastest growing business/industry is storage facilities (which took some explaining she could not get her head around) and that it all really bothered me anyway.

She leaned close over the table and whispered, "So yeyr' goin'ta' do something like Seyr Bob then?" (Geldoff)

I leaned closer and said, "I guess. Kind of".

She patted my arm and said, "Ye'r a bray bonnie lad".

"Noooo!", I said, "That would be Stuart now. I'm just searching for some peace."

"Eye that he is too", she said.

After teary good byes, she said, "So I'll no'ever see ya'again?"

I said, "Well I dropped in 30 years ago, perhaps we'll meet again in 30 years time".

"Only under the slab for me then", she winked and smiled.

Wrapped her up in my arms dearly and gave her a really long long hug and snuggle on the neck. Got into the car and drove away, waving goodbye, heading towards the Spey Valley whisky route.

I am so very very glad I made the decision to spend the money gifted from mom and dad to make this last connection. While planning the trip I debated when I realized it was going to be quite dear to do so, and did I really need to waste money going back again. So M&D... cheers again. I actually saw and am seeing beautiful places back home here. If ya no get together with Greta soon, I think she'll no be able to travel at all due to blindness which she'll certainly deny over the phone. She spills hot water when pouring tea like Mr. Magoo, has to hold her pill bottles 5 cm from her eyes to read the label, etc. She is still painting but more Turner-esque /Emily Carr abstract than detail, although it seems quite good to me. Does someone become a famous painter only after they die or after they can no longer paint?

This time I chose to follow the tiniest roads along the Spey I could towards Glenfidech distillery (valley of the red-deer). As I drove along the valley road amongst the wee farms, perhaps thinking about what Greta and I had talked I became a little misty eyed. She's a sweet lady. Then I passed a sign that simply said Leaving the Shire which was LOTR poignant and brought me to tears as it seems like it's one step more forward and away from my past. As coincidence happen in my life, some ten minutes on, the BBC Classic station began playing the music from LOTR, and the Shire music really hit me. It's just such a connection to STu and Thms. Having recovered from that emotional upheaval... they hit me with a double-wammy, following it shortly with Pacalbells Canon played beautifully by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. That connection with Tee was too much, so I just merrily wept. There is a great joy being back in some old stomping ground and sadness to leave it behind forever. Needing a refreshing break, I went for a lay down au natural (photos too) in a peat-goldened feeder stream running into the Spey way off down in the distance. Almost as cold as C-wack Lk. at it's coldest.

The tour of Glenfidech was very interesting. What a complicated process involving another major feeder stream, local peat, oak barrels and fermenting in BC Douglas fir. They've always used it in their 5 metre tall 30,000 litre

fermentation tanks. Apparently he got the wood originally from ship masts that were brought over and never used as they stopped making wooden ships. i.e. A thrifty Scot got a deal on lumber and never changed a thing in case it changed the complicated taste he had developed over time. At the turn of the century, the Gordon family bought 1200 acres surrounding the stream to protect it. It remains there only source of ingredient water. The cooling process is handled by water from another Spey feeder stream. The young lass leading the group is actually from Rothes up in Banffshire towards Buckie. She's a music student (flute) at St. Mary's College in Glasgow each of the six guides has another language. In her case, Claire speaks French and Gaelic and actually spoke to two older couples from The Islands (didn't say which) in our group. I'm pretty sure that was NOT the language I heard Grandma speaking.

Bought a bottle of 12 year old, and had Legends RFC put on the special label they will do for you no charge. Quite nice actually. Now to compose some sarcastic, bitchy note to "you olde bastards or some such thing. Will send to Peter Robinson for the boys to take a swig after their first away game next fall, the only games I ever played with them. Hopefully that might be Victoria James Bay, my favourite park.

Drove the back roads over the Grampian ski mountains. Stopping at the historic Lecht Well... at least I know

what Lecht meant from Greta's poem. Lots of squished bunnies on this road. Had to wait a few times while a ewe butted her lamb off the road when I came up. Quite cute actually.

Arrived at Aberdeen and had a look around... found out due to the St. Andrews Masters tourney... there is absolutely nothing left in the entire area... not even a hostel. The closest was B&B 45 miles away. (Thms- great memories of the few times we drove all nite or slept in the car doing Canada). Took a photo of William Wallace... checked out a few churches including a Presbyterian one where the first printer in Aberdeen, a Jew, named Rabin (1570) was buried... made my peace with Grandma Read as I'd have no clue to where she worked or lived. Went to one of the older pubs, to write and had Caesar salad, £5 and two pints. The barmaid said the old Aberdeen was heavily bombed in WW2 and totally rebuilt so nae much use lookin for grannies haunts anyway. Drove down around the old area and harbour then hit the small coast road south.

At 2130 near Auchenblea, just inland and south of Stonehaven, it was still very light out so I stopped to see Robbie Burns family tombstones. By about 10:30 it was getting dark enough to pull off for the nite so I would not miss the scenery. More tomorrow. I pulled off northwest uphill on a farm field road and pulled off to the side away from any possible early morning

tractors as it looks as though they've begun harvesting tatties already. The vista in front of me will reveal the rising sun and sea far below, so sleepwell or not I have that early feast to look forward to.

I've half the bottle of wine, two scots baps and a few pieces of fruit I bought, left over from Greta's which she insisted on me taking.

Finishing up the diary for the nite. Locked the car, dropped the seat back and settled in to a spell with HPotter. Yayyyy!

2005,07,21 Sterling Castle 0630 h

Stopped at McDonalds on the very lower eastern edge of the castle mound for egg McMuffin. This morning I awoke to a glorious pre-sunrise sky. One of those kind of skies painters would have trouble putting on canvas. Perhaps the Christian god of creation made a mistake designing humans as dad says, with back problems and childbirth difficulties, but s/he sure can paint. Drove for an hour in the general direction I was heading and ran into a small town called Laurencekirk. I believe this is just a shorter version of n-Kirkton or Kirktown, e.g. Grampian Kirtkton or Kirktown of Dunleevy, and instead combining the name directly with kirk to designate which designates the shire or county town that has the church.

I'd not desire to actually see another big city like Dundee or ??? and certainly no interest at all in seeing St. Andrew's Royal Golf Course, home of one of the world's most boring sports to me.

## Wallace Monument

Took lots of photos, some spectacular in on and around the monument. Although it was sunny a fair strong wind was blowing the whole while. I could smell "onions" everywhere and after about an hour and a half I went down to the tiny restaurant built in the original caretakers area, to eat some leaks and tattie soup.

"William Wallace, was the son of a minor Scottish Lord, after the death of his father he was brought up by his two uncles. It is likely that he travelled during this time to France and Rome, where he became as well educated as any in his day in reading and speaking Latin and French as well as Gaelic and English. From all accounts it would seem Wallace was also well versed in knowledge of the natural world. His love for the wildlife, flora and fauna of Scotland and his skills in woodcrafts occasioned him to be as capable as any Forest Ranger of his day. His outdoor skills allowed him to live somewhat comfortably in the wilds of Frei???? Forest as he conducted guerrilla raids on the English.

Wallace was a peaceful giant who wanted nothing more than to live a quiet industrious life, but his uncles had spawned in him the notion that all men deserve to be free, when the English were trying to subjugate the Scots at the time."

Ranger Stuart, protector of the forests sounds pretty good to me. Could there be anything more important than protecting the environment? My dad's mom's uncle Harry Lawrence was the Forest Warden at Plusgarden.

Stopped at The Settler "cellar" Pub at the base of Stirling to have a glass of wine and charge my battery, for the camera. On the way down after two hours at the top in 30 degree sun, I also stopped for a pint. Photos of piper and piping instructor, pub owner Janice Valentine decorate the walls of this tiny historic pub. Incredibly, she knows my teaching colleague... SFU pipe band instructor Jack Cairney. They've met many times. She has a great accent and beautiful voice and I asked her to correct my pronunciation of Loch Lomond song. The pub is at the base of the main castle street and was frequented by off duty soldiers.

Sterling has changed so much in 30 years... they've put £25 million into restoring it to more of a royal castle look. When I was here with Mary Campbell in 1976 it had been last used as the Black Watch & pipers barracks since 1850... it's more interesting now.

The peasants life is well represented also in the mock kitchen. Dark, smoky, crowded and noisy, the 1600s kitchen staff, all life-size mannequins under 5'7" busy themselves with bread making, pastries and pies, fruits, meats and assorted large platters ready to send upstairs to the great banquet hall feast for 500.

A video titled "Where the Food Comes From" showed- spices from the orient via the Dutch East India Company, dates & figs, pomegranates, lemons & oranges from the Mediterranean, wines from France, as well as venison, black angus beef, pheasant & fowl, rabbits, and assorted other meats, grains, ales, apples, plums, and other fruits & vegetables from local peasant farmers.

There is apparently a kind of pagan revival going on in the late teen, college crowd in Briton. A kind of return to spiritual roots. I spoke with a group of 9 girls and 3 guys wearing a certain simple kind of almost hippyish outfit. Four of the girls were dutch and several were wearing Children of Bodum linen and hemp, black, long sleeved mediaeval cut pullover shirts they had decorated in a tent at the concert; part rudimentary silk-screen, part hand decorated. They had been to an outdoor concert and festival at Standing Rocks near Sterling. I completely identify with the nature worship / mother goddess beliefs they described. The Dutch kids are travelling down to Stonehenge next.

Drove through Elderslie where it is believed Wallace was born. Then on to Falkirk outside Sterling and back to Edinburgh to drop the car by 1800 h. next to the hostel I stayed in before. When I got to the hostel, two girls were discussing weather or not to take a bed. The Aussie clerk said I was lucky as I had one of the two beds of 50 left. It was only £13 this time. It's £15 Fri - Sun. I settled my stuff in a room for 6, dressed the bed and started to leave. The two girls were being told there was now only one bed left and they looked upset. At this time of my life, I'm thinking snooze ya'lose". Oh well, too bad for them. Went back to Milne's bar /Little Kremlin and this time there was Yorkshire pudding, but it was a little heavy compared to Gr.Read and mom's. I don't care for gravy but this is more like a dark beef broth with a berry flavour. Good meal though. Took one last walk around Princess park area and then to internet café and to bed at 11.

2005,07,22 Onboard Train

Woke up wide awake, what hour I'd no idea. Thought I'd slept in except beds were all full. Had a shower and walked the very bright and quiet streets. Lots of deliveries being made especially beer kegs. Sat in a small park reading HPotter for a few minutes then asked a "bobby" what time it was. He said "five thehyrtee son". I had no idea, as I thought it might be 7:30, I was so well rested. Read for half an hour then found a café for a bagel and mocha. Read HP again 'til 8 then back to pick up pack at

hostel and head to train. Sat in Princess Park reading then caught the train out at 10:06.

Sat with a very interesting business man from Rugby in the seats with "desks Reserved for Laptop Use". He was going to watch a DVD but we ended up talking computers. He said his son at Uni and a growing number of his friends preferred Mac. He had a Dell Pentium PC himself. We talked computers, then rugby, then Canada. He has travelled on business in Canada frequently and seemed to feel kids in public there better behaved. His impression is there is a growing number of "wankers" whose parents don't seem to give a shite about behaviour. I was suggesting perhaps it's the rats in a cage syndrome; more in the small cage, more the unruliness.

Arrived Tring. Had dinner with Chris and went for a walk. Beautiful night, rains coming he said.

2005,07,24 Saturday, lazy day.

Finished "Friction" by E.R Frank about a teacher in an alternate school who goes through some of the complaint shite I did. Joanne Coghill our librarian always checked out three or four of the years popular books with boys, girls and boys/girls. It so kewl now how she can call up an inventory of check-outs. She used to just kinda think about what she saw going out most. Excellent book. Passed it on to Lenay Boleak, an

ex-student who hung with a trouble kid from grade 8 'til 11.

Gr. Rodwell and James brought Jez home from hospital. His abdominal muscles a bit achy. He rested on the TV couch. I brought him stuff. Then his two friends Ed and Alus (ter) came to accompany him.

Alternately spent the day edited Scotland iMovie and read HPotter out in the hammock. Ordered pizza... two large £21.00 / Can \$45... wowww! Edited 'til 2400, Jez sleeping. Chris working at Cricket club (home by 0100).

2005,07,25 Sunday

Woke up at 5 and fed cat who was whining for attention. Let the cat out and left door open slightly as it was pissing rain as hard as I've seen it. This the first hard rain since I left Canada, although we had a few Scotch mists or is that Scots mists in Scotland, (Scotch mist sounds like a mild whisky). Curled up on the couch in "front" living room and read. Fell asleep for a bit. When I woke up the cat was laying on the couch curled up in the hollow against my belly. He was sound asleep.

Edited iMovie a bit then started to make Cath's Chicken Rice Roger for Jez and his two friends and Chris.

## English dialects

While R, S and J were in Canada the boys threw a few get togethers. Usually less than 10 people. When I was included in the conversation, they spoke in a way that I could pretty much understand only occasionally asking what a word meant sometimes. When I was heard two or three talking away from me while I was getting wine or cleaning up on the go like Heath, I could barely make out what they were talking about.

As I say, I prefer Awfreecaans to proper RP English, though I must say I prefer RP to the cockneyish twang & slang the boys put-on around their mates which sounds like, if I can be reduntant to clarify, the WASP version of Black Ebonics. They know they can say anything they want and I won't understand it. Actually, Chris and Jez did give me little lessons occasionally. Came in useful at one of their infrequent social gatherings at Nithsdale. None of these parties got rowdy at all. Some interesting music, but not too loud to talk which is what they did the most. Jez's friend's are all very nice and polite, artsy, gainfully employed, usually at minimum wage jobs, sort of Gen X-(Y + Zed) hippyish or as I called them Bohemians... which they liked... though as Jes's friend Jim said, "you're a kinda left-wing, pinko socialist?!". I immediately and

catagorically denied it, telling them all straight out that I was "a definite, left-wing red socialist."

"Like a commie?" Jes's friend's lady friend queried?

"Well! That label only ever seems to attract psycopathic leaders! Sooo... No! More like a strong left wing socialist... who's trying to give up meat, especially RED meat."

That got a few chuckles because most of Jez's friends are veggan. He's trying to give it up too, but he's just been happy to be able to eat anything these past few years to try to keep weight on. (Oh, my gawdess he looked great even one and two weeks after the crones [sp?] op. Pink, less ribs, healthy).

"What do you believe or think socialism means?" she also asked.

"Like! I believe everyone who can should have to work, but not be exploited to support a piggish, Mother Gaia destructive lifestyle of fat-cats in their Hummers. That all pregnant women and mothers of young kids should receive adequate help and assistance from the child's father or society if he's an irresponsible dickhead. I believe that the fat cat countries living a lifestyle in effect based on slave labour must immediately start a smart anti-overconsumption advertizing campaign even though we would begin to put landfill workers on

the streets, or destroy one of the fastest growing businesses in Canada.”

“Which business is that?” one of them daringly inquired, expecting a punch line. There were no chuckles when I responded dead-pan, “Storage! The storage business”. Puzzled English speaking faces stared back at me. One ventured to say it, “What’s storage?”

Then I said, “You know! Like if you have too much stuff, extra tables, old books, clothes, you rent space somewhere and store it all there.”

“Why don’t they just get rid of it? Sell it or gift it to thrift?”

I said, “See, now you’re talking like a left wing, social welfare type yourself. How far do you lean?”

That got a discussion going. I just sat back and listened to accents and tried to translate for myself answering the odd question mischievously.

Chris’s mates are women.

At least the ones who come to the house. They are usually pretty articulate, interesting, athletic and taller than average. There are like four or five. Two of them smoke. The guys could be articulate, etc. too. I’d not know. I’d never met any personally, although most of his Berkamsted mates in the photos of the wedding he was at work

in London, Leeds or Birmingham. His local, partying guy friends are always with him at the Cricket Club, out pubbing somewhere or in London. The girls all seem pretty down to earth, sportsy, actually. Buy they’re all mostly Sean Hall type gal pals, though I’m sure a few are more. That’s why he’d like to come to Canada, to work and find a mate. He says, a lot more of the women in Canada are active. I wouldn’t know. It does seem 99% of young English women seem to smoke. Europe is worse apparently.

Political Commentary-

The recently released Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince begins... “It was nearing midnight and the Prime Minister was sitting alone in his office, reading a long memo... He was waiting for a call from the President of a far-distant country... trying to suppress the unpleasant memories of what had been a very long, tiring and difficult week...”.

It is remarkable that the long prior established release date for HPotter & the HB Prince coincided with the same Friday July 15, ending a long and terrible week for the PM of Britain Tony Blair.

Anyone who has read the last couple of books in this series will recognize that the Wizarding community at the heart of the HPotter series has entered into a battle with evil, darker forces. These

darker forces do not agree with the leniency of those currently in power in the Magickal world of Harry Potter. These darker forces want to destroy the Muggle world.... and anyone who desires to live in parallel harmony with the Muggles who represent us non-magickal folk.

All I'm saying here is that it is remarkable that a small group of Islamic fanatics are prepared to blow themselves up to make a point about a western lifestyle they despise. In western eyes, they are certainly misguided in their choice of means to do so. However, perhaps that lifestyle of ours is worth taking a closer look at.

While Ford of North America proudly announced light truck sales increased 14% in 2005, it is incredulous to me that this occurred since the oil crisis. The oil crisis that, as we have now learned, was what really spurred GW and his wild West cowboys to invade Iraq.

Having recently left Canada at the age of 53, a home and country I was so proud of all my life, I want to be away from that decadent planet destroying lifestyle. I personally have always tried to tread more lightly on mother Gaia. Since joining all sorts of perhaps socialist for there day groups in college and Uni, such as the Outdoor club which founded Mountain Equipment Co-Op, or working quietly behind the scenes in the office, when Greenpeace

was founded in my own small neighbourhood of Kitsilano on Cypress off Broadway... I spent 30 years doing my part. In recent years I gave up my small car, to ride and take the public transit to my grade 6-8 Middle School, where years ago I was instrumental in initiating a recycling program first at our school then district wide.

It was a 30 year battle I just grew weary of. My daughter of course, made one last attempt to get me to stay by saying, "Dad, you've just got to try to have more letters published in the Letters and Ed-op pages of the newspapers!" I said, "Tee, I'm tired of doing that. I've had some 80 of some 90 odd letters criticising western consumer driven lifestyle published and no one here is listening. SUV sales are up and Canada still leads the world in per-capita pollution and I am ashamed of that."

I do not condone and in fact despise what these extremists are doing. But perhaps, just perhaps we in the west really need to take a closer look at our way of life and see if there's room to quell the rampant consumerism that is driving us to irrevocably harm our lonely planet. As one of my Environment Club grade 7 students said, "Mr. Read it's like we're pissing and 'shite-ing' in our own swimming pool and no one gives a damn!" I agree.