



Adventure #8 – Back to the Borders

Pete's been busy with student projects and grading papers, so we have stayed close to Lancaster lately. In fact, we've been living a bit like average Brits. We attended a Morecambe Shrimps football (i.e. soccer) game in the neighboring town, (the photo shows the "Shrimettes" welcoming the Shrimps onto the playing field).



We got involved in watching the re-interment of King Richard III, who died in battle in 1485, but whose remains were discovered two years ago under a parking lot in the Midlands. His history, legacy and reburial were extensively covered on TV for an entire week. We have also gotten caught up in the brand-new BBC series being made of Winston Graham's Poldark novels, set in beautiful Cornwall. Pete was a huge fan of both the 12 novels and the original 1970's BBC series which played in America on Masterpiece Theater. We also participated in the hoopla of Red Nose Day.



Red Nose Day is part of Comic Relief, which is sort of like a nation-wide, month-long, fund-raising comedy telethon, which this year raised over a billion pounds (over \$1,500,000,000) for charity. We watched the Red Nose events on TV and also attended a hilarious Red Nose concert of "classical music" which occurred on campus, and included such classic performances as the Pachelbel Canon Pop-Music-Remix, Beethoven's 9th

symphony (sung in Japanese), an English translation of Verdi's opera "Figaro" (I had no idea that it had anything to do with boiled carrots and eskimos), and a very unique new version of Handel's "Halleluiah Chorus." If I point out that there are the same number of syllables in "Halleluiah" as there are in "to the pub now" you will perhaps get a flavor for the new version.

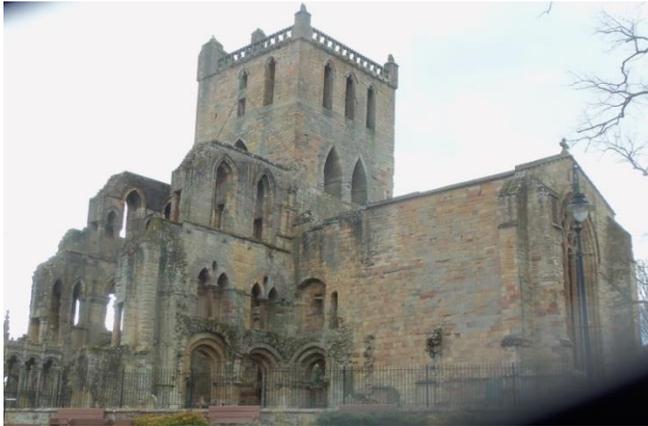
We joined almost everyone in Britain in watching the solar eclipse. Everyone watched the eclipse, as the sun was blocked by the moon, even if it was behind the typical UK clouds.



Pete has attended numerous masonic lodge activities and has been asked to make a presentation in the near future. So while not traveling much, we have really gotten to know what it is like to live in the UK.

But now it is Term Break at the University of Lancaster, and so we have a wee bit of time-off to go exploring. Naturally, we hopped onto the A7 carriageway and headed north to the Scottish Borders.

*"When I get on that old A7,
I know I'm on the road to heaven."
.....lyrics from Borderland by Kenny Spiers*



First stop was Jedburgh where we visited the Abbey (above) and Castle (below)



We attended Palm Sunday services in Minto Parish Church shown in the photo below (Church of Scotland – built in the 1831).



And we drove the scenic Borders countryside.



We visited Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott, one of Scotland's favorite sons, and author of many famous novels including *Waverly* and *Ivanhoe*. Abbotsford today is a huge estate house, full of incredible furnishings. Believe it or not, Scott began it with a small cottage and across the years, he added, and added, and added.until it became quite magnificent. It is quite probably the most impressive home I have ever been in. We loved the 12,000 book library with books that stretch back to the 1400s.



Not far away is Scott's View, reputed to be the prettiest spot in the Borders. The story is that Sir Walter always stopped at this particular spot as he rode the path from town to home, because he was so partial to this view over the River Tweed to the Eildon Hills. All his horses knew his tendency so well, that on the day of his funeral procession, on the route from Abbotsford to



town without instruction, the horses pulling his funeral carriage.....all stopped at the viewpoint.....just as they always had with their master.



We celebrated our anniversary (albeit a few weeks early) with a night at Dalhousie Castle, which dates from the 13th century.



Dinner was an all-evening affair. It began in the library with a wee dram of good Scotch Whisky, olives, seasoned nuts and canapés. Then it moved to the dungeon, which has been converted to a dining room, complete with suites of armor and medieval weapons. Dinner began in earnest with a scallop starter, and then a meal of braised beef (Pete) and guinea fowl (Wendy), a

pre-desert treat of chocolate mouse and macarons, and then a rhubarb crisp and a cheese and chutney tray.

Our room was in the round tower shown in the preceding castle pictures, and it had incredible antique furnishings.



But the highlight was the falconry experience that Wendy got for her anniversary present. She has always loved birds of prey, and she got over two hours of working with the birds under supervision of a falconry expert. Here a Harris Hawk, named Brennan, comes to perch on her gloved arm.



Then she got to work with an amazing Little Owl, named Puck, who weighted a mere 4 ounces.





Next came Dolly, a Common Buzzard.



And finally there was an amazing Turkmanian Eagle Owl, named Duke. It was quite an amazing experience and will be a memorable anniversary gift.



She also got to meet Jake the Raven, a real movie star.



Jake has had roles in a number of movies and TV shows, most notably of late the popular "Outlander"

series made from Diana Gabaldon's Scottish novels. He is a bit spoiled, drinks coffee from a cup and shares lunch with his keepers. He is also so smart that he watched his keeper open a key-pad lock, and then after the keeper left, he opened it himself with his beak. Realizing what the bird had done, the keeper changed the combination for the lock. The raven watched again, learned the new code and again let himself out. They have had to be more creative with his cage ever since.

We spent Easter weekend in the village of Peebles, took a long hike, and attended Easter service at Peebles' Old Parish Church (Church of Scotland, built in the 1700s – photo below). Then we headed back for Lancaster for an Easter Evensong service at the Anglican priory that we attend regularly.



One foggy day we took the wee ferry out to Piel Island and visited the remains of 14th century, Piel Castle, which is shown here lurking in the fog. The island has the ruins, a couple of homesthe obligatory pub.





Ever since we arrived, Wendy has been compiling what she calls an English-to-English Translation.....a list of all the words for common things that are completely different in America compared to Britain. On your car, a trunk is a boot and a hood is a bonnet, and you put petrol in the tank not gas. In the kitchen a rutabaga is a swede and turnips are neeps. Every week we encounter strange new words for familiar objects.....if you don't believe me, take a look at this photo I took of the eating utensils we bought for our flat (apartment)....got them at a real discount price for some reason.



Now we're off to hunt the gowk.....*Là na Gocaireachd*



Adventure #9 – The Reiver's Festival

The history of the Scottish Borders is dominated by the constant movement of the actual borderline as the Scots and the English argued from the 13th to 17th centuries over where each country's rights stopped. The region on both sides of this moving boundary was populated by clans who made their living by farming and reiving. Reiving involved crossing the border in the dark of night (often under a full moon which was called a Reiver's Moon) and stealing cattle, sheep, daughters, and anything that wasn't nailed down. The exchange of property, culture, and daughters who became wives on the other side of the line, is probably one of the reasons that the borders region of the two countries bear such a strong resemblance to each other.

Every March the town of Hawick in the Scottish Borders hosts a Reiver's Festival that gets everyone from the school kids to the visiting guests involved. They encourage everyone to dress in costume and make the entire town a huge re-enactment of a by-gone historical era. Wendy had pieced together costumes for us by shopping the charity shops around Lancaster, and we fit right in and had a fantastic time. Her costumes were so good that several times we were mistaken as being part of the troupe of re-enactors who were at the festival



The day began with a parade of re-enactors and local school children, all in period costume.



Lady Wendy was briefly taken captive by a band of border reivers from the local school.



The re-enactment troupes had typical working animals of the era, which included horses, as well as a giant Irish wolf hound and birds of prey, including a regal looking barn owl trained to hunt for his mistress. There was also a fife and drum corps and a musketry squad.



In the evening everyone gathered at the entrance to the village park for a torch-light procession led by a band of bagpipers, as we marched into the park for a fireworks display. For 4 pounds you could buy a real torch, and probably a quarter of the 1000 or so people who walked in the procession carried real flaming torches. Children as young as 6 were allowed to carry them. Watching all these blazing torches scattered in amongst the crowd, we could not help but think “this



would never be allowed to happen in the states.....some risk manager would be having a triple heart attack.”



The evening concluded with a reiver's banquet in which we were served Scotch broth, then roast beef, vegetables and gravy on a bread charger, followed by clutie pudding. It was much as they would have feasted at a celebration back in that era. For example, before plates became commonplace, they served on a bread charger, which is a round loaf of bread baked about an inch thick. It was used to deliver the food to the table. The meal was placed on top of the charger as if it were the plate, but it was an eatable part of the meal. The meal was punctuated with music and song from the reiver's times.



We also visited Hermitage Castle, the largest and strongest of the borders castles built to defend the inhabitants against the reivers. For over 800 years this monster of a structure has been the definition of impregnable. The walls are 5 foot thick solid stone.





More common were the borders towers, much smaller than a castle, but just like them, built as a defense against reivers, to protect families and their livestock, all of which could be herded inside the wall during an attack. Below is Smailhome Tower

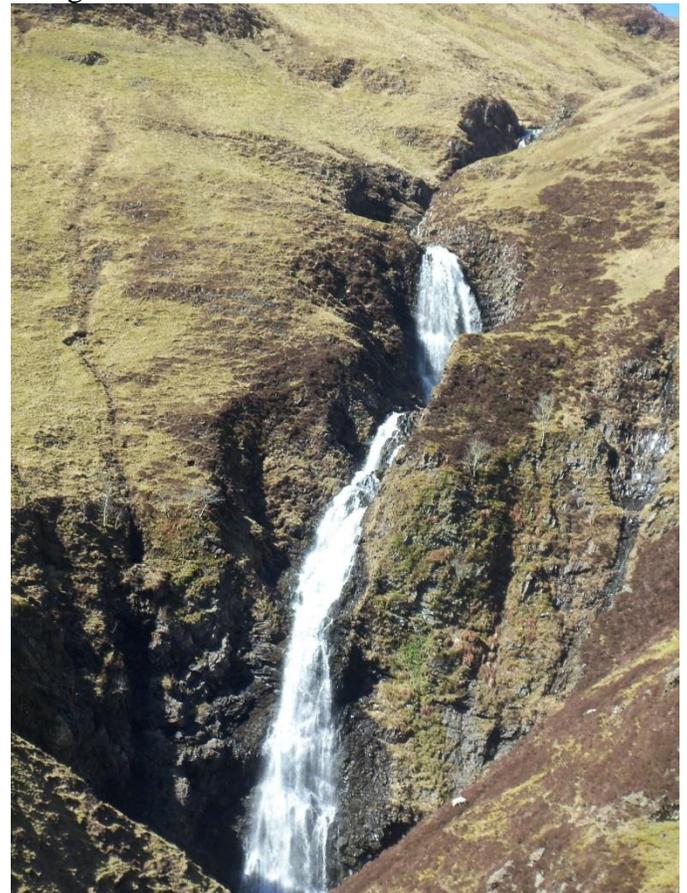


In size, between Hermitage and the towers, there were a number of small borders keeps, like Neidpath Castle (14th century with a 17th century expansion) which we hiked to near Peebles.



We hiked halfway up to the Grey Mare's Tail, a magnificent waterfall (the fifth highest in the UK), and one of the landmarks of the reivers' regions. It is surrounded by the dramatic mountain scenery of a hanging valley.

It flows out of an area called the Devil's Beef Tub, which is one of the most noted landmarks in the borders region. It is a deep hollow between four hills. Border reivers once hid their stolen cattle in this depression, thus leading to the name Devil's Beef Tub. William Wallace is reputed to have gathered men from the Border clans here in preparation for his attacks against the English that led to his historic victory at the Battle of Sterling Bridge.





Adventure #10 – UK Motorsports

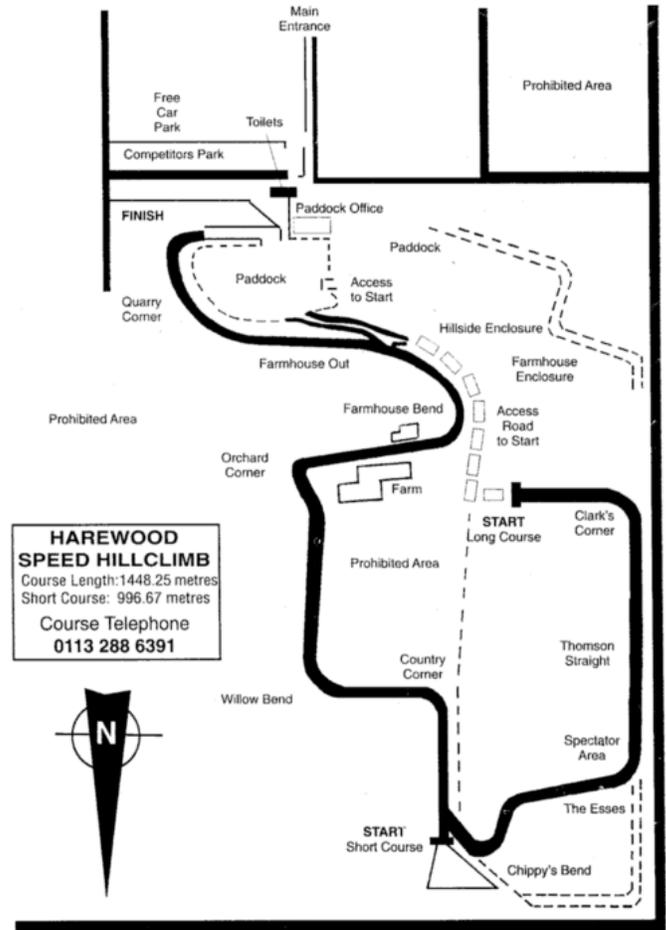
When I was Archivist for the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA), I enjoyed reading through the old racing magazines from the fifties and sixties. Back in those days the British racing events were widely covered. I remember reading about a hillclimb event that began in 1962 near the village of Harewood. Well, the British Auto Racing Club (BARC), which is the UK equivalent of the SCCA, still sanctions events at Harewood. So we took a jaunt over to Yorkshire to see the event. The course is nine-tenths of a mile (1,448 m), making it the longest British hillclimb event.

Then, while Wendy was back in Indiana for three weeks, I went to Aintree, the site of the British Formula One Grand Prix in the late fifties and early sixties. Interestingly, Aintree is also the site of the Grand National horse race (a steeplechase) which is such a big deal that on the day of the event it seems that every pub in the whole country has its TVs tuned in. Back in the days of the Grand Prix races at Aintree, the same grandstands used to be used for both car and horse races. Today, the car racing circuit is still used, but only for single car time trials, and that is what I attended. Here are some photos from Harewood followed by some from Aintree.

First is the view from the top of the hill. The time trials are held on the private drive through this old farm.



Next is a track map of the Harewood Hillclimb course.



This event had a collection of pre-WWII Austin 7's competing. These little sporty cars had tiny 750cc engines. I think Wendy's sewing machine has more power. Some were in original trim (left) and some were modified as all-out racers (right).



This next car truly was a pure racer, and looked a bit like an Indianapolis 500 racer from the thirties. It had a supercharged version of that same 750cc engine.



Next is a blue TVR Vixen. This is the car I wanted to own when I was back in high school, but they were very rare (and pricey) in the US. The red one is a Volkswagen GTI (supercharged) of a vintage similar to my old racecar back home. Wendy keeps pointing out that if I do retire over here I could bring Thumper along and race here. Hmmmm....don't give the old man expensive ideas.



Old Lotus Super 7s, and more modern look-alike kit cars were extremely popular because of their light weight and good handling.



Here are some shots from the "twisty-bits" (a thoroughly British expression)



The original Harewood circuit had wooden guardrails, that look more like farm fences (left). Now it is steel guardrail, gravel traps and tire walls.



Here is a bright yellow, brand new MG-3. This is one of the new products from the recently rejuvenated MG Car Company, now owned by a Chinese firm, but making new cars in Britain. I drove one of these recently at an MG car dealership. Nice. Solid and powerful (not traditional MG traits) and it handled well. Very reminiscent of an early VW GTI.



Next is a picture of a piece of the Harewood course in 1962.



Some things haven't changed much.



Here are some of the Austin 7s on track.



For all of you fans of the Top Gear television show, I got to have lunch with James May, after he visited our race car lab and sat in last year's racecar, surrounded by my team of students.



Here are some of the interesting old classics from Harewood, like a Sylva Phoenix, a Mini Jem Mk3, a Ford Capri, an Anglia, a Renault 3 Turbo, and a suped-up mini.

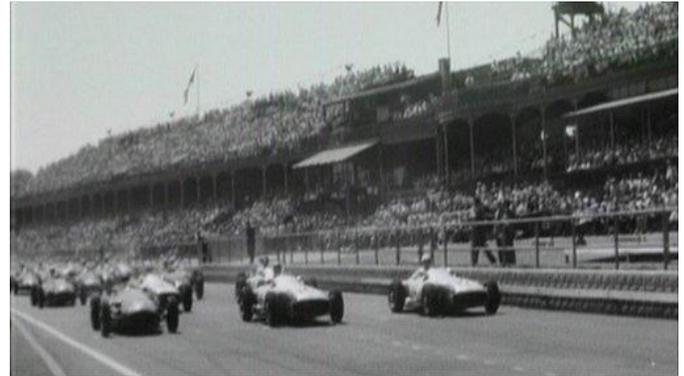
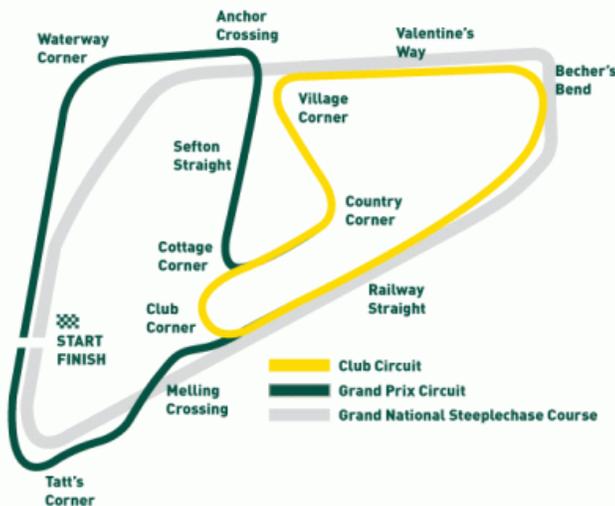
Pete & Wendy's UK Adventure

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The Aintree racing track was first used in 1954. It was 3 miles in length, but the current circuit only uses 1.5 miles of that. When it was built, there were few well-developed racing facilities in Europe. Aintree had the advantage of sharing the grandstands with the horse racecourse (still home of the British Grand National – the UK's biggest horse race). As a result, the car track quickly rose to prominence in post-war Britain. It was picked to host the British Grand Prix in 1955, a memorable race as Stirling Moss beat his Mercedes-Benz teammate Juan-Manuel Fangio. Tony Brooks recorded a popular win there driving a Vanwall, the first win ever for a British-built car in the World Championship. Other winners included Wolfgang von Trips in a Ferrari, Jim Clark in a Lotus, and Sir Jack Brabham in a car of his own design, before the British GP moved to other venues.

Here is a map of Aintree, and some 1950s photos.



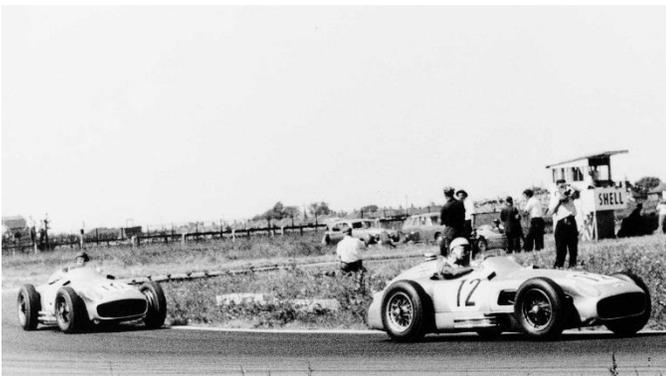
I attended a Time Trial (one car on course at a time, racing against the clock) at Aintree. You can see the horse race grandstands in the background behind the starting line.



Although many of the cars in attendance could turn quite high speeds, safety issues were less prominent than they would be in the US. Here a car flies past a clump of unprotected trees only a few feet off the course.



The Indianapolis Motor Speedway may claim to be the only racetrack in the world with a golf course in the infield.....but someone neglected to tell Aintree. In addition to the car and horse tracks, there is a golf course in the infield. In this photo you can see the well-trimmed greens in the





background and a souvenir that I found in the grass alongside the track.



A car at speed in the “twisty bits.”



And down the short straight.



In my lectures on the history of motorsports, I talk about how many of the early American races were run on fairground horse tracks, and I often

show old black and white photos of the cars racing past the guardrails that were designed for the horses, not for automobiles. In these next photos you will clearly see that if the driver were to leave the course to the left side, he or she would be destined to hit.....yes, that’s right,.....a horse racing barrier. Safety precautions on UK racing circuits definitely seem to lag behind what we consider normal in the US today.



Now for some of the interesting cars. Here is a classic Mini Cooper.....and one that has been “hotted-up” (another British term).





The old and the new.....an antique Gemini, powered by an American V-8 engine, next to a modern Formula Atlantic.



MGs, old and new



A "hotted-up" old MG



Aston Martins, old and new.



Formula cars, old and new



Lotus, old and new.



Lotus 7s and their newer replicas, like the Caterham, are extremely popular, as one can tell from the long line of them waiting to compete.



Classics like an American Shelby Cobra and a British Healey 3000





A modern Radical sports racer and a pair of home-built specials.



And I will close with the car that carried the biggest “drool” factor for me, personally. It is a Mallock. I have only ever seen two before. One was 20-some years ago where it was running as a sports racer at an SCCA Club Race. More recently, I saw an early version at a vintage race.

The Mallock is a truly British phenomena. The first one was built over 50 years ago, but they are still being built and are extremely popular, having their own class in British club racing.

What is a Mallock? Well imagine that you mated an SCCA Formula Atlantic car with an Oswego Supermodified short track racer. You would end up with a front-engine, offset-chassis, aerodynamic, winged, formula racing car. You would end up with a Mallock...inspiration for many a man's mid-life racing crisis.

