



Adventure # 15 – Silverstone



My Fulbright Visiting Scholar Appointment is winding down to a close. But the beginning of July provided two final unique opportunities. First was the British Grand Prix at Silverstone. It was so much easier to go to this Formula One race than to get to the one in Austin, Texas in October, that I had to take the opportunity. A bus left Preston at 5:00 am for a five hour journey to the front gate of the track and then back again after the race. Way cheaper than air fare to Austin.

I walked the track and watched the support races from several different places.



And I checked out the food vendors.....many of whom would have looked right at home at a NASCAR race.



Then I settled in for the main event at the famous Stowe corner, at the end of the back straightaway. If there was going to be any passing at all, this was a likely place. I did see a couple of passes.....in a two hour race.



I had not seen an F1 race since the second year the USGP was in Indianapolis when I drove one of the course safety vehicles with a trauma doctor riding shotgun beside me. Then back a few years before that, I saw F1 at Watkins Glen and Mosport. Today's F1 racing cars are technologically impressive, but the racing is rather monotonous. There simply is very little passing. While the two Williams cars made a truly impressive start and jumped from the second row into first and second place.....in the end, it was the thoroughly dominant Mercedes team that took the top two finishing spots, as they have done at almost all F1 races in the past two years. Lewis Hamilton won in front of a highly partisan crowd of 140,000.



Most of the F1 teams and drivers never had a prayer of even staying within sight of the leaders. A far



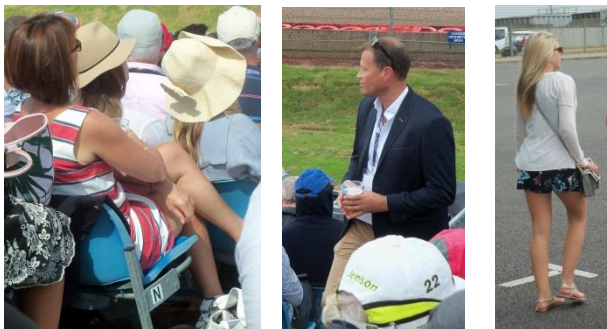
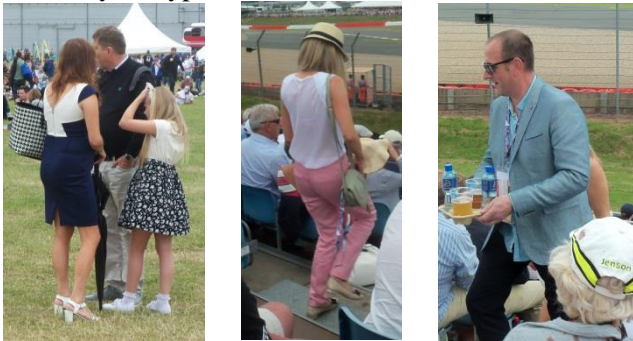
cry from today's IndyCar races where there may be over 50 lead changes in 500 miles.



Frankly, the most impressive thing I saw all day was an amazing 10 minute aerobatic exhibition by a pilot in one of the Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter jets. He was incredibly impressive, doing flips, rolls, stalls, dives, and all sorts of maneuvers right above the crowd. It was WAY beyond the simple fly-overs that we typically see before the start of major US races.



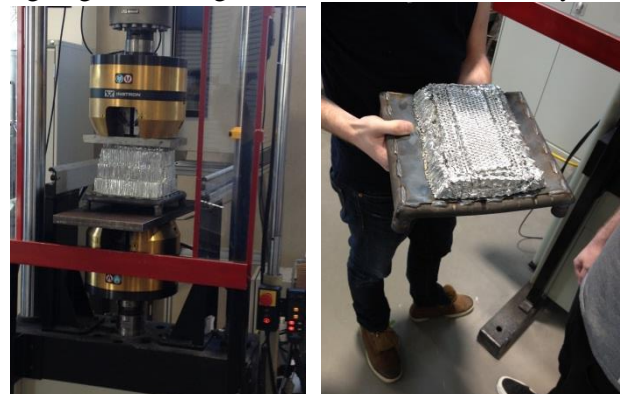
The fans were interesting too. In the pricier seats, the ladies were dressed more like they would be for Ascot than for a USA race.....with dresses, suits, hats, etc. Many of the men wore button-down dress shirts, quite a few with sports jackets and an occasional suit (including one in a two-piece shorts-suit). This is not how your typical American race fan would dress.



In the end, I am glad I went. But I would not plan to go again. I saw what F1 of today is all about. And I saw what the British racing fan is like. But next week is Sprint Week back in Indiana, and for the money I paid for attending this event, I could have attended all 8 events of Sprint Week. And I probably would have seen more passing in the first heat race than I did in the entire F1 race. For good racing, give me a 410 sprinter running methanol on a 3/8 dirt oval. That's racin'!

Immediately after the F1 race, Silverstone hosted the Formula Student event, equivalent to Formula SAE in the USA. One of my jobs here at Lancaster has been to serve as an advisor to the Lancaster team. To be perfectly honest, most of the students on the team are not big on motorsports. And there are no motorsports classes here. So they had little experience to help them. And the team is all fourth year students, who had not had the benefit of being on the team in their first three years, so they had not been able to learn from the mistakes of past students. Therefore, they made most of the readily available mistakes. Including the failure to heed faculty warnings to schedule their time, get their parts designed early, and send things out to vendors with plenty of time. No matter how many times they were told all those things, they continued to believe that they had enough time.....right up until they didn't. So the last 10 days was an absolute flail to finish the car.....and not a terribly successful one. The IUPUI system of involving students in their first and second years, and moving them up to leadership roles in their third and fourth years works much better, as the more experienced members are less likely to make the common fatal mistakes regarding timing.

On the other hand, Lancaster did try a few things that the IUPUI team has not yet attempted. Like designing and testing their own crash attenuator system.



And making their steering column and foot pedals out of composite materials



Here is this year's chassis next to last year's car.



Their rolling engine dynamometer.



And the rolling chassis and engine, without body.



Newsletter # 16 – Our Final Adventure

Our UK adventure has finally come to an end...but not without one final fling. After finishing my Fulbright Visiting Scholar activities at Lancaster University, we had a couple of weeks left on our visas.....so we headed for the Hebridian Islands of Scotland.

First we headed through the Highlands to the Kyle of Lochalsh, and crossed the Skye Bridge to the Isle of Skye. Skye is a vacation destination for people from London and the South.....think of it as like the Estes Park region of Colorado. We decided that if we ever come back to Skye, it will be in April or October, when the crowds are less. Still, the scenery is beautiful. It is lush and green, with sandy beaches and striking cliffs with lovely waterfalls.



The food on Skye and the Hebridean islands leans heavily towards seafood. Sole, cod, halibut, mussels, langoustines, and incredibly huge and delicious



scallops are common on menus. We tried them all.individually and in combination as fish pie or Cullin skink. Oh my word, was it all good.



We have previously shown you sheep on the road, which occurs frequently on Scotland's one-track roads. But this lass was blocking our way on Skye, and refused to mooooooove. Below that is a Skye lawn mowing service.



There are mountains on Skye as well, known as the Black Cullins. Their peaks are often hidden in the clouds. The black color comes from volcanic lava, as does the unique black sand found on some of Skye's beaches.





After a couple of days on Skye, we made our way to Uig, out at the tip, and caught a Caledonian MacBrayne (known in the Hebs simply as Caley-Mac) ferry to Lochmaddy on the island of North Uist. The islands of the Uist chain are not very high, and have countless lochs scattered around the islands, and much of the ground is marshy.



This is Trinity Temple on North Uist. Those are 17th century headstones marking graves that were dug inside the walls of the 13th century temple which was built on top of the 11th century temple.



We found this time portal at the temple. On the left is the portal as seen from our side. If you step through, you end up in 1715 and from that side the portal looks like the photo on the right.



But if you do step through, you'd best return quickly, or the English soldiers are likely to mistake you for a Jacobite, and you could be in real trouble.

We drove the causeway down to the island of Eriskay, where we visited the beach where Charles Edward Stuart (better known in song and legend as Bonnie Prince Charlie) landed when he tried to raise the Jacobite army to return his father, James Edward Stuart to his rightful place on the throne of both Scotland and England.



The waters around Eriskay and South Uist were incredibly colorful with a variety of blues and greens, with waves crashing on both white sandy beaches and stone outcroppings, alternately.



Then we caught another Caley-Mac from Berneray to Leverburgh on the Isle of Harris, home of the world famous Harris Tweed (yes, Wendy made me buy a Harris Tweed jacket.....and yes, it is cool). Harris



has some very rocky terrain and mountains that come right down to the water. Then on to the Isle of Lewis.



This is the renovated crofter's cottage (only a couple hundred years old) where we stayed on the Isle of Lewis. And we had interesting neighbors just over the fence....a herd of hieland coos.



The beaches of Lewis have long white sandy beaches with waves of blue-green water. The beaches look like those I have seen in the Caribbean.



One of the beaches we visited was the one where the famous Lewis Chessmen were found in the 1830s. These intricately carved walrus bone chess pieces date to the 12th century. How they came to be buried in a box in the sand on Uig Beach is still a mystery. The beach is guarded by a giant wood carving of one of the kings.



Carloway Broch is another Isle of Lewis landmark. It was a multi-story dwelling, sort of a centuries-old condominium.

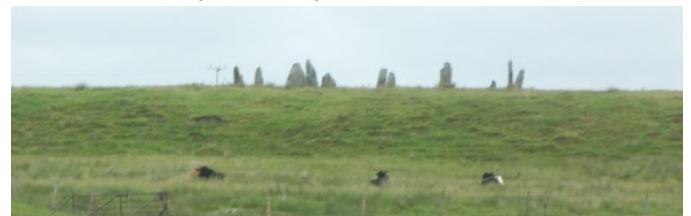




We also visited one of the most famous neolithic monuments on the planet, the Callenish Stones. The stones themselves are among the oldest on the planet, having formed 3,000,000,000 years ago. The arrangement of the stones by early residents of Lewis dates back 5000 years. Callenish is actually comprised of 12 different sites in the same area. The biggest sits atop a hill and is comprised of a central stone circle with an avenue made of two rows of stones heading off to the south, and single arms of stones heading off to the north, east, and west.



The other Callenish sites are smaller, and it is unknown exactly how they relate to the main site.



We caught another Caley-Mac ferry from Stornaway to Ullapool and then made another visit up to Thurso in Caithness, where I have been doing some curriculum consulting work for the University of the Highlands and Islands. Caithness is home to more neolithic brochs (hill forts/villages), chambered cairns (burial structures) and standing stones than any other part of the British islands. Here is hilltop broch.





Here is the entrance to the broch, which was originally 3 stories tall.



The walls of the broch show how carefully the builders used dry-stone-wall techniques to piece together very sound walls without the use of any mortar. It all depended on picking the right size pieces to fit together like a giant jigsaw puzzle.



The next photo is of a large chamber cairn.



And here is a stone circle, viewed from the hill above, partially overgrown with brush. Theories vary on whether these were religious sites, solar calendars, or social gathering spots.....or all three.



To get an impression of the size, I took this next photo from one side of the circle, and Wendy, in her blue jacket, is on the opposite side. Having read all of the Diana Gabaldon novels, Wendy was careful to touch each of the stones. However, at no point did she end up transported back in the middle of the Jacobite rebellion with a virile, red-headed highlander as her husband.



Now the holiday is over, and we have to head back to Lancaster to get things packed, and have one last dinner with our new friends. Then we take the train south to Manchester for our flight back to the USA. It seems very strange to be leaving someplace that has become very dear to our hearts since we landed here on Boxing Day last December. Several people have commented that after 7 months, we must be glad to be going home. My standard response is that I'm not going home,.... I'm going back to Indiana. Afterall, home is where your heart is.....and ours is in the Highlands.