

AGM Scotland 2010

By
Pattie Theriot



The Group

July 26th

We arrived in Belfast, Northern Ireland first thing in the morning after a long overnight flight. We met our tour guide Michael, and our bus driver Bill and began our wonderful 14 day adventure.

After picking up some of our group who had arrived in Belfast early, we began our tour of Belfast. Michael gave us all a wonderful history lesson on what the real causes of problems, or “the troubles” as they call them, are about. The issue has always dealt with the political power of the two parties. The royalist, want to remain a part of the UK and the republicans want to break away and become part of the Republic of Ireland.

We toured the housing areas for both parties and I was amazed at the steps that have been taken to keep the other party out of the areas. There were large barricade walls that went through the areas with large gates at the roadways to let traffic through. Although the gates are all open now, the recent riots that occurred around July 12th remind us that there are still significant issues that must be resolved.

Belfast is now starting to rebuild their city and the new courthouse walls contain glass windows to signify that they now feel comfortable. (The old courthouse was surrounded by blast proof barricade walls)

We then traveled to Armagh for our overnight stay.

July 27th

We began our day with a visit to the two different St. Patrick’s Cathedrals. Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland and the seat for the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh.

The St. Patrick’s Church of Ireland was built atop a hill in which St. Patrick built his first stone church.



St. Patrick's Cathedral (Catholic)



St. Patrick's Church of Ireland

We then traveled to Ireland's oldest county museum, the Armagh County Museum. The museum included displays that represented the lives of the people who lived and worked in Armagh.

From Armagh we then traveled to the Ulster American Folk Park. We toured the many different houses that were meticulously moved from other areas, and reconstructed in the park. The tour was self-guided, and provided a great lesson in how the people lived in the 18th and 19th century in Ulster.

July 28th

After our overnight stay in Derry, we began the wet and drizzly day with a bus tour of the Walls of Derry that surround the old part of Derry. The walls are approximately 1.5km in circumference and provide a walkway around the inner city with fabulous views. The walls vary in width between 12 and 35 feet and include the largest collection of cannons whose origins are known.

We then visited the "Free Derry" area in which the scene of "bloody Sunday" occurred in 1972. The area has been extensively redeveloped, but the original wall depicting "You are now entering Free Derry" is still prominently displayed. Many of the housing units also include murals depicting the feelings of the residents.

We then departed Derry and traveled along the north coast of Ireland to the Giant's Causeway. The Causeway was created when the volcanic lava from an ancient volcanic eruption intruded through chalk bed. As the lava cooled rapidly, contraction occurred and caused fracturing of the lava through the entire lava plateau. The size of each column is determined by the speed of cooling with smaller columns cooling faster than larger columns. The result was an area of about 40,000 interlocking basalt columns.



The columns were magnificent and the view of the North Sea was beautiful.



Our tour continued through the Antrim Glens on the north coast to Carrickfergus Castle. Carrickfergus is a Norman castle that was besieged by the Scots, Irish, English, and French. Because of the location of the castle, it played an important military role until 1928 when its ownership was transferred to the government for preservation as an ancient monument.



Our evening in Carrickfergus included a talk by Maynard Hanna, a member of the Ulster Scots Society in N. Ireland. He explained how the Scots immigrated to Ulster and then to America. He also brought with him a musician that demonstrated the Lambeg Drum and the fiddle.

July 29th

We were up early for our two-hour ferry ride to Scotland. I was pleasantly surprised at how smooth the ride was and survived the ride. (Boats and I do not get along very well!)



Once we arrived in Scotland, we met with our new tour guide Rosie and drove through the countryside to Loch Lomond where we stopped for lunch. Pat and I chose to grab a sandwich and eat by the large Celtic cross that we found. It was very peaceful and beautiful. We then walked down to the dock and took some pictures of the Loch.

From Loch Lomond we then traveled to Sterling Castle. The castle is undergoing some major renovations to return the royal lodgings to their renaissance magnificence and was closed to visitors. However, the Great hall was open and we were treated to

the musical talent of some local schoolchildren.

Since Pat and I visited Sterling in 2005, we decided to see all the areas of the castle that we were unable to see last time. We traveled down to the Nether Bailey of the castle grounds and toured the Tapestry studio that has been set up. The castle is in the process of reproducing the hand-woven "Hunt of the Unicorn" tapestry series that will be displayed in the Queen's Inner Hall when the Palace restoration is completed.



Sterling Castle



The Start of the Hunt" 1st of 7 Tapestries

July 30th

We began our day with a beautiful drive from Stirling over to the west coast of Scotland. We stopped at the remains of Inverlochy Castle near Fort William. This castle is a ruin today but was an important castle in Scotland history. There were two major battles fought at Inverlochy. The first battle occurred in 1431 in which Clan Donald won a battle against the Earls of Mar and Caithness. The second battle occurred in 1645 in which the Marquis of Montrose defeated the Campbells.

From Inverlochy, we traveled to the Commando Memorial, which commemorates those lost in WWII. We then traveled through beautiful Glencoe, stopping for some fantastic photo opportunities. Glencoe's history includes the rival clans Donald and Campbell. This rivalry came to a head on February 13, 1691 when Clan Campbell massacred Clan MacDonald by orders of King William III in London for the delay in taking the oath of allegiance. Captain Robert Campbell had asked permission from Clan MacDonald to quarter his 130 soldiers in Glencoe. Clan MacDonald agreed and entertained the soldiers for 10 days prior to the massacre and it was this act of treachery in response to the hospitality shown by the MacDonald's that made this such a heinous crime.



The evening was spent at a civic reception at the Stirling Smith Museum, hosted by Dr Elspeth King, the museum curator, and Fergus Wood, the Provost of Stirling. After a short reception speech, we were able to visit the museum and see the wonderful displays of artifacts depicting life in Stirling through the years.

July 31st

We left Sterling and traveled to Perth to visit the Regimental Museum of the Black Watch. The museum is housed in Balhousie Castle and contained displays covering the Black Watch from inception to their current assignments in the Gulf region.



From here, we traveled to Scone Palace to tour the rooms and grounds. The palace was the crowning place for the Pictish and Scottish kings and the rightful home to the Stone of Scone, better known as the Stone of Destiny. The kings were crowned atop Moot Hill, which was created by pilgrims carrying a boot full of soil to the site to show their fealty to the new king. The last king coronation at Scone occurred in 1651 when King Charles II was crowned as King of Scotland.



Scone Palace



Moot Hill

From Scone, we traveled to Montrose for our overnight stay. We visited the statue of the Duke of Montrose and had a small wreath laying ceremony. During the evening, we were invited by Robina Addison, the person in Montrose who arranges all the Montrose activities, to attend her niece's birthday party. A large group of us went to the party and had a very good time. Bill (our bus driver/comedian) got me out on the dance floor for ONE dance (that seemed to last forever!). Jeremy Dick however, danced the night away and certainly has more energy than I do. Way to go Jeremy!

August 1st

We started the day with a church service in Montrose and then walked in the parade to the Montrose Highland Games and Heavy Horse Show. The games in Scotland are very different from in America and include bicycle races, foot races, heavy weights, and a carnival atmosphere.

We had the day to ourselves so Pat and I decided to have lunch at a local pub and then go down to Montrose Bay to look at the North Sea. We were amazed to see two very hearty souls swimming in the water off the beach. The view was fabulous!

August 2nd

Leaving Montrose, we traveled north and east to the Highlands to the Royal Deeside route following the river Dee. Royal Deeside was one of Queen Victoria's favorite spots and chose Balmoral Castle as her holiday center. That tradition has been passed down to through generations to the current Royal Family, which was arriving at Balmoral Castle later in the afternoon, or the following morning.

The group was offered two choices for stops today. Some of the group visited a chapel by Balmoral Castle, while the remaining group visited the Royal Lochnager whisky distillery. Pat and I both went to the distillery (of course) and enjoyed the tour. "Nigel" the Royal Lochnager cat immediately greeted us upon our arrival and said goodbye when we departed. Of course, the best part was the whisky tasting at the end!

We then traveled to Glasgow for our overnight stay at the Millennium Hotel.

August 3rd



We spent the day at Mugdock Castle, once the seat of the Great Marquis of Montrose in the 13th century. Our society has a continuing effort to help restore this castle and grounds. We toured the completed tower and the Graham Room that has been decorated by our society and includes an interactive computer that is powered by solar panels on the roof of the tower.

During our visit to Mugdock, we ran into a couple from America who were visiting and just happened to be Grahams. We invited them to our festivities and they were treated to a weekday visit inside the castle that is normally only available on the weekends.

We were also entertained by the Albannoach Pipe and Drums group. Afterward Pat and I discovered that they will be at the Estes Park Highland games in September. We are going to make sure we see their full performance there!

The evening was spent at a ceilidh that the Mugdock Castle staff arraigned for us. Everyone had a great time and the food was delicious. We held our Mugdock silent auction and collected approximately \$800.00 for the restoration of Mugdock.

August 4th

Our first stop of the day was to Gartmore House, the former home of Robert Cunninghame Graham. The house is now a conference and activity center. We were treated with a history lesson of the house detailing the building and remodeling that was done through the centuries.

We then traveled to Buchanan Castle for a short photo stop. The castle is now overgrown and the walls are too instable to allow anyone inside anymore. It is amazing to see how the castle has disappeared behind the trees through the years. I have a picture that I purchased in 2000 that clearly shows the walls of the castle. Now you can barely see them at all!

Buchanan Castle was built by the 4th Duke of Montrose in 1854 after the original structure, the ancestral seat of the Clan Buchanan burnt down in 1852. The Buchanan's never occupied this castle but the name was retained. After World War II, it was de-roofed to avoid paying the high rates on the property, but is now protected by the National Trust of Scotland as a historical site.



Buchanan Castle 2010



Buchanan Castle 2005

We arrived at the Buchanan Castle Golf Club for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and luncheon. Our Clan Chief, the Duke of Montrose, and the Duchesse joined us for our AGM.



During the meeting, Richard Graham received the Presidential Award for all the hard work he has put in over the years for the Graham Society.

The Society also presented the Duke a beautiful wooden box with the clan design engraved on the top. Our youngest attendant, Alexander, presented the Duchesse with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.



After the AGM, we traveled to Lake Menteith to visit the island of Inchmahome. On this island is the Inchmahome Priory where Mary Queen of Scots was hidden away at the age of four following the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh.



Inchmahome Priory, Lake of Menteith

Royal visitors such as King Robert the Bruce, Edward I, and Robert II prior to becoming king stayed at the Inchmahome Priory.

With the Scottish Reformation, no more priests were being ordained and the priory was gradually passed into secular hands. In 1606 the land and property passed to the Erskine family, and later to the Marquis of Montrose. The 6th Duke of Montrose passed it to the State in 1926 and is now in the care of Historic Scotland.

Dinner this night was on our own and we joined up with Ron and Annette Jones to sample the food and beer at a local pub. The food and atmosphere were both great and we all had a great time.

August 5th

We left Glasgow for Edinburgh in the morning where we took a bus tour of the city. We then traveled on to Edinburgh Castle for our tour. We had two hours in the castle which Pat and I spent walking through the displays to the Honors of Scotland, the Royal Palace, the National War Museum, and the Military Prison.



The views from the Upper Ward of the castle, overlooking Edinburgh, are spectacular.

From Edinburgh Castle, the group walked down the Royal Mile to the High Kirk of St. Giles to pay homage at the memorial to the Great Marquis of Montrose. The stained glass windows of St. Giles is always a beautiful sight and is worth the time to look at every window.

Pat and I went on a hunt for the Bagpipe playing angles that are said to be in the church. We found these in the Thistle Chapel (with a little help) and finally got some pictures! The Thistle Chapel is used by the Order of the Thistle and contains 16 stalls for the knights, the Sovereign's stall and 2 Royal stalls. We found it amusing that the Graham and Campbell helmets and crests are right next to each other in the chapel. Even the tour guide had not noticed this!

We stopped at Holyrood Castle for a photo opportunity and some of the group then walked over to the Scottish Parliament building. From there we made our way to the hotel and our free night in the city.

Pat and I spent our night touring the Blair Street Vaults with Merkat Tours and enjoyed our time. Unfortunately we did not see any ghosts, but we did hear some very strange noises in one of the rooms!!



August 6th

This was our free day in the city to go anywhere we choose. Pat and I started our day in the rain with a bus trip to the Edinburgh Harley Davidson store. We enjoyed seeing the homes and neighborhoods of Edinburgh and although we got lost, the people of Edinburgh were extremely helpful in getting us to our destination. We then spent the remainder of the day on the Royal Mile enjoying the shops and street artists. The talent

that shows up during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is very diverse.



Edinburgh Military Tattoo 2010

That evening we spent at the Edinburgh Tattoo and enjoyed the fabulous music and entertainment from all around the world. The Tattoo began in 1950 and celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year. It has gone from just over 6,000 spectators and 8 events on the schedule in 1950 to 217,000 spectators today. Not a single event has ever been cancelled due to weather! The Tattoo is the Army in Scotland's contribution to the Edinburgh's International Festivals and donates a substantial portion of the proceeds to military and civilian charities and organizations.

August 7th

This marks the end of our trip and we traveled to the airport for our flight back home. We said our goodbyes to the bus driver, Bill, who had been with us the entire trip and those of the group that were staying a little longer. We then loaded up on the plane for our long journey back home.

The time was great and so were the people! We look forward to our next trip!