

Our 2021 Road Trip Commences

The date is set for this year's first trip, the 22nd of May is now approaching

Our plans like everyone else's have changed dramatically this year, rather than heading for Europe we will be heading to one of our favourite parts of our country.

The West Coast of Scotland, its sensational scenery, beautiful breath taking views, narrow roads and you never know we may even get some sunshine. With the current travel situation we are expecting it to be much busier than it has been before so we may have to go slightly off piste, and head to places that those who are traveling in their new motorhome for the first time and will only stay on 5* caravan parks.

Our travels in 2020 like everyone else's were minimal, during the brief spell in September we managed a quick trip to Mull, then after sitting on our driveway and not travelling anywhere since October 2020, Gloria has been serviced, had a full set of new tyres, passed her MOT with flying colours and is ready for the off.

First stop will be Cumbria and the amazing Lake District, for a family week, then Barb & I will be heading to Scotland's West Coast.

As usual there is no real planned route however the fantastic Isle of Skye is surly on the agenda, the last time we visited the island Andy Murray won the men's final at Wimbledon. We watched the match in a packed public house, full of extremely enthusiastic Andy Murray supporters. At the end of the game and the cheering had subsided, the landlord treated everyone to a wee dram of Scottish nectar.

Hi All yes I know that this has been somewhat delayed, but when you are with your family and have not seen them all together for some time, they come first. I will give you a brisk overview of what we have been up to (well if I can remember)

Day 1 Saturday 22nd May

Right the first week of this issue of The Hawks On Tour blog is actually family time, so it is my intention to keep it brief, well as brief as I can as I do have a tendency to go on a bit.

Amazingly after filling Gloria's Go Go tank we are ready to leave Liverpool on time, which is something that does not usually happen, the first leg of the journey is quite straight forward, M62 then turn left onto the M6 then turn left again onto the A590. The last section of the journey is down a narrow country road with some tight bends which are even narrower after a few deep breaths due to idiots coming the other way that do not know which side of the road they should be on, Barb navigates Gloria safely to the campsite, oops The Caravan & Motorhome Club Site don't you know, which is approximately 1 ½ miles from Coniston

village. We are soon booked in then it is time to find two pitches together, after a couple of circuits of the undulating site we find two pitches together, after parking Glo on one we then put a lead and a step on the second to reserve it for Jennie & Antony who are running late due to an "incident" on the M6 toll road. Reserving pitches on a C & M site is a bit of a no no and we will be on the naughty step if we are not careful but hey there is nothing new there, we do have to fend off a few other members who would like to pitch on it. Next job is to erect the awning, as with most couples putting up the awning causes some fractious moments, but they pass quickly and the awning is up. Not long after this Antony arrives and parks his car on the pitch which obviously stops any others trying to use it, not long after Jennie arrives with their Motorhome. There are hugs and a couple of tears of joy as we haven't seen them for such a long time, it's not long before they are set up, then it's decision time about what we do for dinner. It did not take long before we decided to go into the village have a bit of an explore and find a public house to have a bite to eat and possibly a little libation, then it's time to return back to the vans for a well deserved sleep.

Day 2 Sunday 23rd May

As the weather is not at its best today, breakfast is served in Gloria's awning, Andrea and Phil are arriving today which will be great as we haven't all been together for a very long time due to you know what. When they arrive it's time to erect their, well Jennie's tent, inside Gloria's awning, this job is definitely left to Jennie and Phil to be fair it's not long before the job is done along with the inflation of the air bed which apparently stayed inflated until about 3am ooops. Time flies by and it is soon time to eat again, after dinner we decide to walk into town for a family reunion drinket, we have been told by the staff on the campsite that there is a short route into the village by the side of the lake rather than walking along the road, which is a tad narrow and not really the best place to be walking. We head off down the allegedly shorter safer route, well it may be safer however said it was a shorter route should try walking it, as in our opinion it's a fair bit further than the one and half miles that the road route. Eventually we arrive in the village and head to the Black Bull for a few libations, anyone would think that we are always in the pub. The pub is dog friendly actually very dog friendly, there is one dog that stands out from the rest as he is bigger than the rest much much bigger, he is massive and I mean massive, I have seen smaller horses granted not fully grown horses. That said he is great and very placid which is good as his owner tells us that he weighs 55kg the dog not the owner. It has started to rain a little and by the time we are ready to leave this rain has turned into a torrential down pour that has no indication of stopping, actually it gets worse. We are looking at a long walk back to Gloria by which time we would be wet as a wet thing could be, which I had absolutely no intention of participating in, I was quite prepared to stay in the pubs covered beer garden rather than getting soaked to the skin, now what are the chances of getting a taxi in Coniston village at 10pm, the consensus of opinion was little to no chance. However I did think that it was worth a try so went back into the pub and asked if they new a phone number for a taxi, the reply was hang on minute as he ran off towards the kitchen saying I will see if Jan is still here, I am a tad confused. Anyway it turned out that Jan was indeed still there and that her husband was the only taxi driver in the village and also happened to be parked outside waiting to take her home, oh and he had a 7 seater minibus who would believe we'll certainly not the rest of the gang, It's a bit nuts that we got a taxi in a small village in about 2 minutes. We are soon on our way and the rain is getting worse if that was possible, when we got to the gate of the site members of the gang had concerns that we would get just as wet walking from the gate to the vans, but I already had a cunning plan, after asking the taxi driver how much we owed him I asked if he fancied earning an extra fiver to take us to the door of our vans, after saying that he didn't have a pass

key to get through the gates I passed him the one that I already had in my hand, ok off we go direct to our front doors to the amazement of some but not all of the gang. As I have said if you don't ask it won't happen, the very worst he could have said is no, mission accomplished and we are back at the vans without getting soaked to the skin.

Day 3 Monday 24th May

The weather looks like is bucking its ideas up and the sun has actually come out to play and the plan is to head down to the lake and have some messing about in boats along with some drone flying and filming. The first part of the plan goes to plan although the drone flying is kept to a very minimum as the wind speed has got up above the safe flying gusts, also the RAF boys are practicing their low level flying, I think that they would get a tad upset if it damaged one of their Typhoons not to mention the drone, before anyone gets smart, I had checked the CAA reports and there was not supposed to any flying in the area. The messing about in canoes and paddle boards went well, without anyone falling in and getting as wet as they would have walking home last night. After a couple of hours it is time to pack up all the stuff and head back to the vans. Some of us achieved this without too much of a problem as we were walking, however Antony and Co who were coming back in the car had a little difficulty as the gate back into the site was locked. After a couple a couple of phone calls to the site they got the code for combination lock and got back to the vans. After sorting the equipment stuff, it is time for dinner and there is not much more to report.

Day 4 Tuesday 25th May

Some of us had a better nights sleep than others as Phil and Andrea's air bed had decided to deflate at about 3am again, I think Phil implied that he may be taking it back to the place of purchase for a refund, well that is in interpretation of what he said as what he actually said is unprintable. After another leisurely breakfast it was time to pack Phil and Andrea's things together and take down the tent and put the offending air bed back in its original box, amazingly it did. Then it was time to take down Gloria's awning so that he could take it home and save us dragging it around Scotland as we won't use it, it is darn heavy, it takes up loads of room and the extra weight plays havoc with Gloria's fuel consumption. We say bye to Phil and Andrea it will be a couple of weeks before we see them again, Barb gives Phil instructions to water the garden and her plants in the greenhouse, well greenhouse is a bit of an exaggeration, it's more like a small plastic tent. As the weather is not great we spend the rest of the afternoon chilling out before it's time to eat again and then head off to bed. Gosh I made that one a lot shorter than most.

Day 5 Wednesday 26th May

Jennie and Antony are up and out early as they have an appointment with a Three Toed Sloth at the South Lakes Safari Zoo which leaves Barb and I do our own thing until later, Barb wants to chill out and also do some sewing, as for me it is too windy for any drone flying and the light is flat with low lying flat clouds and not great for photography so that's them off the list. I decide to walk into the village and try and find the actual short cut that club staff were talking about. I pop a camera in my backpack, well you never know, then head off. Needless to say I find no other short cut into the village, which means the short cut that was previously mentioned was actually a long cut. After a walk around the village and a small purchase, I head back via a little diversion to the Donald Campbell Blue Bird café for a coffee while watching the Steam Yacht Gondola make its way from the landing stage and into the distance down or up the lake, and also to take some pictures of a mummy duck and her 17 yes 17 ducklings. Then it's the long short cut back to Barb and Gloria who has phoned me, Barb not Gloria to say that Jennie and Antony were on their way back to the site. We exchange stories of our day's activities, both Barb and I were surprised to hear how big the zoo was and how many different animals they had. Not bothering with that cooking lark tonight as the fish and chip van was on the campsite this evening, our diet has been thrown properly out of the window this week, I have also written the rest of the week off, no point in kidding ourselves we will just have to get back on it next week. Everyone is tired this evening and it's not long after dinner that we all head off for a read before it's lights out time, that's your lot.

Day 6 Thursday 27th May

The weather has bucked itself up today, the sun is shining and it's a good 17° C not madly hot but a vast improvement on what we have been getting lately, while the sun is shining we take the opportunity to head down to the lake for some more messing about in boats & drone flights. Car loaded we drive down and park in the lower campsite, the canoes are soon unloaded and paddle boards inflated, then it is off to the lake. Although there was not a breath of wind at the campsite, however down at the lake with nothing to stop it the wind was blowing far too fast for safe flying especially as there was lots of other people around by the lakeside. Barb was doing very well on the paddle board, well that was until she decided to have a try at standing up, very nearly fully upright she lost her balance and fell face down onto the board she did very well to stay on it and not fall into the chilly water, unfortunately this was not caught on film but fortunately she had not hurt herself. The afternoon passes quickly and after we have packed the car up, we decide that we deserve coffee and cake as we have had no lunch, that's the diet down the pan again, note to self must try harder. After popping back to the vans for a quick change we head for the Blue Bird café unfortunately it closes in 15 minutes and they are no longer serving, even though there are dozens of people milling around. Back in the car we head off for the village, every café in the village is closed, which makes no sense to us, as being closed for so long due to Covid we thought that they would be open for as long as possible to recoup some of their lost revenue. After talking to people in the village that are involved in the hospitality business, there is a desperate shortage of staff, so if you fancy a job in a beautiful part of the country as a chef or anything related to the industry this is the place to go, you will be welcomed with open arms, although it can be a bit wet at times, the weather not the jobs. We had even contemplated it ourselves, although not for long, anyway where are we up to oh yes coffee time we head back to the Black Bull and take a seat outside in the sunshine, after we have ordered our coffee, yes coffee in a pub unusual I know. Shortly after our favourite and biggest dog in the village arrives and sits down, well wherever he likes, he gets lots of stroking and admiration and we ask the owner

what his name is, the reply is Lionel which we think is an amazing and a great name for a massive dog weighing in at 55kg because all we can think of is the dancer and entertainer Lionel Blair, it gives us a great laugh yes I know but it's a small boy thing. The coffee obviously moves up a gear into a pint of the local brew, on this occasion it really is "Just the one Mrs Wembley" if you are not sure what I am talking about, check it out on Google or Wikipedia. Then it's back to the vans for dinner alfresco style accompanied with a glass of fizz to celebrate Jennie and Anthony's wedding anniversary, as they are off home tomorrow.

Day 7 Friday 28th May

Antony and Jennie have packed their van ready for the off and we have packed most things away in Gloria ready for an early start tomorrow, we head off into the village for breakfast, this time to a café not the pub. After returning to the vans it is time to say our farewells which is a bit of a tearful event as we have not seen them for so long time, we know we will see Phil and Andrea in a couple of weeks but we are not sure when we will see Jennie and Antony due to distance their home and ours. That said it won't be too long as we have a long lost family reunion to arrange with my brothers daughters and son, which again I am sure will be another tearful event. With Phil, Andrea, Antony & Jennie all at home or on their way home, we are on our own and it's time for some route planning as we are still not sure where we are going, we decide that our first stop will be Annan as it is the birth place of some of Barb's ancestors. The rest of the afternoon is spent packing things away and relaxing, which had to be done inside Gloria as it has started to rain again. After a light dinner there is nothing much else to report as we are planning an early start in the morning, but hey by know you know how are planning goes, so early could be any time before 12 o'clock.

Day 8 29th May

To our amazement we are on our way before 7am, it feels a bit strange to be on our own, but we will get into it in a couple of days, the drive to Annan which is just over the Scottish boarder takes just under 3 hours, after arriving we find a suitable car park, unlike the car parks in the Lake District, it is free to park for as long as you like, right in the town centre. After a stroll around and a walk to the harbour, well I say harbour, it must have been at some time but it is not much of a one now, well what we saw of it. After a coffee, yes another one, we head off for the Caravan & Motorhome CL site which is a working farm that we have booked for one night. It is on the waters edge of the Solway Firth, quiet with beautiful views, as soon as we check in we immediately book for another night to

relax and enjoy the views, I think we have fallen in love with place. As with most CL sites it only has space for 5 vans and is fairly basic although it does have electric a loo and a shower. Also there is another campsite, sorry Leisure Complex, only 5 minutes away which has a brand new bar and restaurant which we are able to use, again overlooking the Solway Firth, what more could you ask for. Late in the afternoon we stroll down to the Leisure Complex for a coffee, you wouldn't think we could make one for free in Gloria but it's not quite the same. You will be surprised to know that the coffee led to Another Just the one Mrs, you know the rest, it was only one. While we were there a salesman sorry sales person from the Park brings two would be customers for a coffee at the next table. After hearing the conversation between them we decided that we would not buy a bar of chocolate off this guy never mind a luxury leisure home. Before we leave we have a look around some of the Luxury Holiday Homes which are in fact just big caravans, we are wondering what the costs of the rascals are. While Barb has another look around I head off to the sales office and find an alternative sales person. My opening gambit is "don't get excited these are just questions" 1 how much is the big rascal, 2 how much are the site fees, 3 how long in a year can you use it for. Without any hesitation and not the merest sign of remorse, he informs me that it is £165,000.00, £4,800.00 a year and you can use it for 11 months of the year, yes you did read that correctly One Hundred and Sixty Five Thousand Pounds, for a caravan, ok thanks I do not think we will be making a purchase today or anytime soon. When Barb returns we play that TV game how much is a house in the country, may I say she was no where near the 165 grand and asked me if I was kidding, nope I wasn't. Then it's back to Glo for a snack and time to catch up with the blog which is well behind schedule.

Day 9 30th May

Ok so back on track and today's events will not take long to report as we haven't done a great deal, another management decision was made last night which was we would stay another night here if possible as it is so peaceful and just a great place to chill out. First job is to see if they have another night free, I am up at the reception area also known as a caravan before they actually open and put in my request which not long after given the ok but we will need to move pitch, don't ask me why as there are 5 pitches in a straight line, but hey it doesn't bother us. As soon as the people on the next pitch to us depart, we move Gloria along one place, level her, plug her into the electrics that's it job done. What's next, not

much really we sit out in the glorious sunshine and then ridiculous as it sounds we have to retreat under Gloria's awning for some shade, it's a shame that it wasn't like this last week. It would have been a great day for drone flying but again once down at sea level the wind was blowing too fast for safe flying, I will get this darn thing in the air soon. There is a bird feeder just opposite Gloria and the guy running the site tells us that a woodpecker regularly comes and feeds from it, camera is at the ready while we sit out in the sun and Barb does some sewing, does the woodpecker turn up, does he heck as like. We do a bit more planning and a one way ferry trip is booked for Thursday to take us to the Isle of Arran for an undetermined period of time, at least the planning for the next couple of days is done apart from somewhere to stay on Wednesday night and for that matter any night on the island. A bit more tomorrow.

Day 10 31st May

We are staying here for another night, which means two things firstly we do not have to pack everything back into Gloria and secondly which is more to the point is its relationship with the blog. Which means that I will have pad it out a bit with today's activities or lack of them while adding a little story from the other day. You may remember that I mentioned the leisure park next door had a brand new bar and restaurant, we decided that we go there for dinner and possibly a small beer. When we get there we are met at the door by a waitress, who apologises saying that they are full and it would be an hour before we could get anything to eat. There was plenty of vacant tables both inside and outside, after a bit of a discussion we would be ok to just have a drink but it may take some time to be served, our reply was ok there is no rush. It's a good job that there was no rush as I took forever to place an order then another forever for the drinks to arrive, so much so that when they did arrive we recorded straight away. It transpired that there was only one chef, three waitresses and one bartender working, on a bank holiday Monday, madness. There was a number of conversations going on around us with some obviously unhappy customers, some of whom and been waiting for over an hour and a half and when it did arrive, it was not what they had ordered, free meals and drinks were being given all over the place. When our second drinks arrived, the very apologetic waitress said we did not have to pay for them. She was run ragged and nearly in tears, after we told her that we fully understood and could see that they did not have enough staff. It transpired that the restaurant / bar manager had left after her first week and the

general manger was supposed to be running it, although he not arranged enough staff and had also turned his phone off, she also told us that all three of the waitresses had started at 8.30am didn't finish until 10.30pm and started again at 8.30 in the morning, what a great way to treat your staff. If had purchased one of their ridiculously priced caravans, the general manager would have been both barrels when he made an appearance. When our bill arrived it bore no resemblance to what it should have been including the tip, which they were surprised and pleased to receive as most other customers had just moaned and left, without realising the stress the staff had to put up with. Back to today, after a sitting around while planning our route to the ferry and finding a couple of sites to stop at on the way, we think that we should actually do something. After some more deliberation a walk is planned, we set off along the banks of the Solway Firth, then continued to the village where one of Barb's ancestors had lived in 1800 and something. Next stop the graveyard and a spot of grave hunting, unfortunately without any success as it may have given some more clues into tracing the family tree. The walk turned into a bit of a hike and it is sometime before we return to Gloria a bit tired and footsore, time for a cup of tea in the sunshine and then pack up ready for the off tomorrow. I feel that I am not making this nearly as exciting as I should be and have done before in previous blogs, also I have not shared any photographs with you, but that is because I haven't taken any worth sharing since we left Coniston, but I will soon.

Day 11 1st June

We are ready to depart at about 10am and set off fir our next destination, a CL site just outside the village of Sanquhar, the site has been described on Search for Sites as "a lovely grassed CL site with level pitches, electric hookups, very helpful and friendly owners and is a short walk from the lovely quint village of Sanquhar". I will agree with the first part of the description as the owner is very helpful and gives me lots of information about places to visit on our way to Ardrossan, two of which I thought would be great to visit, these being Dumfries House that had been saved, rejuvenated and brought back to its by original magnificence by Prince Charles, well not just Prince Charles, obviously and team of fantastic tradespeople were involved. My main reason for wanting to visit, was that it has one of, if not the largest collection of furniture dating back to 1759 (the year, not the time) by the master Thomas Chippendale and the gardens which Barb would love. The second was Glenbuck the birthplace

and memorial of the legend Bill Shankly, you can not be 20 miles away and not pay a visit. We had driven into the village and had a walk around prior to our arrival at the campsite and as for the description of a “lovely quaint village” I am not sure I would fully agree, but hey that’s only my opinion, try it for yourselves. It does however have the oldest Post Office in the World, a point that the friendly campsite owner failed to mention. After dinner we have a walk into the village to visit one of the public houses of which there are three, the first two had no customers and no bar staff that we could see, also one of them advertised that it had a beer garden, this was actually a back yard basically in the street behind the pub, totally bizarre, needless to say we did not stay, and headed off to see if we could play third time lucky, this time there are 4 blokes including the landlord the pub, well better than the others I suppose. It turned out to be a good laugh as we ended up in conversation with the all, it was fairly obvious that they had not just arrived and were on their first libation. We were joined by a guy from Leeds who was on a trip up the west coast on a Harley Davidson, while swapping stories they also said that we should visit Dumfries House and Bill Shankly’s memorial at Glenbuck. We say our farewells to our new found friends and on the way back to Gloria we are please to think that we have interesting places to visit tomorrow on our way to the ferry, but we do also have the challenge of finding somewhere to stay tomorrow night. Hey we will deal with that tomorrow, until then that’s about it.

Day 12 2nd June

It’s another beautiful day, the sun is shining, it is warm verging on hot even at 8am with a light breeze to keep you cool, I have a couple of conversations with the other peeps on the site and then we ready ourselves for the off, we leave the site full of excitement and enthusiasm for today’s planned visits. First stop is the village to visit a craft shop that the site owner had recommended to Barb as making fantastic quilts and various other stuff, Barb thinks that she must have gone into the wrong shop as it had nothing apart from knitted hats. She hadn’t got the wrong shop, as there wasn’t another, perhaps we had set our expectations too high. Next stop that Barb wants to visit is the museum, again this is not quite as grand as the V&A or actually anywhere near it, as I am waiting for Barb, I see a sign for the ancient jail and I pop in to have a look, it’s a small stone built room and has a window to look into what the cell looked like, I got the fright of my life when I looked inside as there was a bloke sitting on a chair inside

the sell, well it wasn't actually a real person but he did give me a fright. Next it's off to Dumfries House which is about an hour away, off the subject slightly, I do moan a lot about the road surfaces in Liverpool, but the road surfaces even on the A roads can only be described as crap, they nearly shake our teeth out, and Gloria is begging for a smooth surface for at least a couple of minutes. After an hour of shake rattle and roll, ok miss the roll out, we arrive at Dumfries House, driving in we can see that the grounds are pretty spectacular with some enormous fir trees. Barb negotiates Gloria through the tight entrance to the car park and we are soon ready to explore Dumfries House, well that's what we think. Firstly we have a walk around the grounds and then head off to the house to view the magnificent Chippendale furniture. Now what our very friendly and informative campsite owner and also our new found friends in the only pub in the village had failed to mention, is that visiting the house can only be done by prearranged tours, that's Chippendale not happening then. After another look around the gardens, successfully negotiating the maze, well it wasn't difficult as it was only 2 feet tall and visiting the café (which you didn't have to pre-book) for a cup of tea we return to Gloria and head off to Glenbuck which is described as a Historical Village and also the birthplace of Bill Shankly. We retrace our route along the A76 which surface isn't any better heading in the opposite direction, we then head off the main road and follow Sylvia's instructions to the Historical village of Glenbuck. The first problem we encounter is that the road to the Historical Village and the monument is blocked by a 2.1 meter high restricting gate, as Gloria is taller than that so we have two options, we either continue through and end up with a convertible Gloria or we park her up just in front of the gate as there is nowhere else to park. As option one was completely stupid, we park her up and head off for a walk of, well we don't know how far. What does amuse me as we walk up the hill (now a hill that's unusual) is that there are signs saying beware low electric cables, these cables must be 5 meters above us, so what is the point if you have a 2.1 meter entrance gate. The walk to the memorial is not that far, it also up the best bit of tarmac road we have encountered all day and we couldn't drive on it. After a visit to the memorial you would think that we would pay a visit to the "Historical Village" well we would have only there isn't one, there is nothing left of it, now that's what I call historical. Someone somewhere is having a laugh, but Shankly's memorial was worth a visit. Next stop Ardrossan, again the road surface is abysmal separated by short stretches of smooth bits, when we arrive we have a few things to do, we need replenish items in the refrigerator, find somewhere to give Gloria a

wash as she is in desperate need of one, even though she had a good clean before we left Liverpool, then finally find somewhere to stay. The first two jobs aren't that difficult, finding somewhere to park for the night is proving a bit of a challenge, there are no proper sites within a sensible distance and the car parks suggested on the Search for Sites app have all got high restricting gates, so that's not much help, the one that hasn't is right by some houses and that's a bit of a no no. We know that there is a long stay car park at the ferry port and they are happy for you to stay in the Motorhome overnight as long as you are booked onto a ferry, this seems like the best option and it only costs £5 for 24 hours. We are soon parked up and head off for a look around, the weather forecast says Light showers and a light breeze, well no light shower as yet, but the statement light breeze, must be have a different meaning to the BBC forecasters than reality, as it is blowing a proper hoolie, we watch a couple of rowing boats with sea scouts onboard, attempting to row back to the harbour without a great deal of success as no matter how hard they try they are making no headway. There is a support motor boat which I suspect has the sea scouts officers on board watch the scouts trying to overcome the wind, and eventually end up towing them back to harbour. No change there then the bosses in a motor boat while the staff row for all their worth and then the bosses lend a hand for 5 minutes and take all the praise for the rescue, ok it wasn't really a rescue but you know what I mean. After a bit of messing about we walk over to the Calmac ferry building which is closed but we can see a message on an A board saying that Thursday's crossing may be delayed due to adverse weather conditions, they obviously know more than the BBC forecasters. As the night goes on we find that the Calmac adverse weather conditions statement beat the BBC forecast hands down. The hoolie changes to torrential rain and extremely high winds, gale force may be exaggerating a touch, but it feels like it in Gloria as she is rocking all over the place despite being parked behind a very high sandstone sea wall. The sound of the rain is also amplified to wet monsoon standards, won't be going out there anytime soon, all this makes us wonder if we will get to the Isle of Arran tomorrow, we will have to wait and see, on that exciting cliff hanging moment I will leave it until tomorrow to bring you up to date.

Day 13 3rd June

The wind and rain persisted all night and about 2am I was awoken by a noise, I suppose the best way to describe it is rattling noise not metal rattle

just a rattle. At first I did think that the gale force winds had dislodged Gloria's electrical connection cover and had contemplated going outside to have a look and lock it back into position, but decided to do the more sensible thing and open a side window and have a look, nope it wasn't that. By this time Barb is awake and together start tracking down the noise which as usual is not coming from where you think the sound is originating, it turn out that the wind was blowing that hard across Gloria's roof it was blowing through one of Gloria's skylights and making the blind rattle. Right let's try and get back to sleep, this was not a very successful mission for either of us, we eventually managed to grab a couple of hours, before things came to life in the car park and cars and trucks started moving around. The good news is we actually managed to arrive on Arran but not without a bit of a faff, firstly when I had booked the ferry I had entered Gloria's registration number incorrectly simple mistake I had entered a G not an F, check out a keyboard and you will see how it happened, off to the ticket office we go and the registration number was duly changed and we were issued with passenger tickets, which at the time we did think was a bit odd, but when booking tickets you have to get passenger tickets separately and we thought that was why ok job done or so we thought, there is a minor issue that will cost us later. We did try and get on an earlier crossing but they were all full. Next a trip to the local Asda to get a coffee and use something else, when I think about my downfall from Royalty, yesterday I had a p** in Prince Charles's loo and today I am back down to ground level and having a p** in Asda, oh well that's the way the cookie crumbles. Returning to Gloria and await for our departure time, when the time arrives we head up to check in, this is the moment that things go slightly wrong. We probably hadn't thought this out, but we had expected the check in to be like Dover and other ports, you might know how it works, you trip up and the system reads the registration number and they know that you have purchased tickets. Not the case here, you need the actual tickets, after searching for the tickets we find the, well the passenger tickets but not Gloria's ticket and we need that as well. No problem or so we think as we have the confirmation email which had Gloria and two passengers showing that we had paid in full, nope not good enough we need the ticket which we had either lost or not been issued with. After a bit of what I will call a discussion we are informed that we have to pay for another ticket as the ticket for Gloria could be used by someone else, I asked if the ticket would have Gloria's registration number on it, yes was the reply, I then asked how could someone else use the ticket as it would not match another vehicle. That was not an acceptable

reason god knows why, the only option was to pay a further £16.55 or Gloria wasn't coming with us, note to self and any readers check that you have a vehicle ticket and don't lose it. Needless to say Calmac Ferries received an email from a moaning arse customer, I think a justified one on this occasion, and believe me in my time in the motor trade I have seen some totally unjustified moaning customer letters, anyway they receive the email before we get off the ferry. Next stop the campsite, hi we have a booking, yes so you do, pick yourself a pitch, the showers are only open from 7-11am and 4-7pm because of Covid 19, I fail to see why that makes any difference but hey what the heck, oh and by the way that will be £25 a night without an awning, oh and we only take cash, it does however have electric. After setting up or trying to, as due to the pitches we can not get Gloria fully level, we head off into town, well village to have a look around, this didn't take long, after a stroll down the jetty I will let you guess where we headed next. After a quick visit to the Co-Op the only option for food supplies we head back to the site and Gloria's kitchen for dinner. After dinner it is blog catch up time, which I am unable to post as there is zero phone, data dongle signal and to my surprise no WiFi ☺ then as we had very little sleep last night it is time to get some, will post this when we are somewhere with a phone signal.

Day 14 4th June

(exactly one month before our wedding anniversary)

This is usually the time to return home after your holidays or possibly 21 days, not happening here, I am afraid you will have to put up with my ramblings for a bit longer and at some time we might actually do something ☺. At 6.30am the sun is shining brightly however Mr Sun has not done his stuff yet as there is a real chill in the air, I have a coffee outside Gloria in shorts, T shirt, flip flops and oh one sweetener. It's not long before I am defeated, retreating to Gloria to get some warmer clothes. Today's plan is to leave Gloria at the site, and go for a bike ride, but after breakfast the weather looks like it has different ideas, as the dark rain clouds have arrived and completely blocked out Mr Sun's warming rays. Scrap that plan and come up with another, which is, walk into the village and get a bus to the south west of the island to check out some Standing stones, something that never fails to amaze me. Today it would be easy, turn up, get your theodolite out of your bag, get the positions of the stones set up as required, tell the bloke with a big digger to dig a big hole, get the crane to lift up the massive stone and place in the hole as per the project

managers instructions, insuring that they are in the previously designated position, pour in some ready mixed concrete, get man with digger to put the soil back, that's it job done next please. Back in the day it was some clever thinking and man power, oh and for what exact reason, we think we know but do we, or did aliens build them, answers on a postcode to Standing Stones in a field inc. Anyway bags are packed with camera and various jackets and clothing to meet all conditions, as usual this trip was not planned, which was obvious as we got into the village. The bus only runs every hour and we have just missed it, coffee time me thinks, what I hadn't realised was that the coffee was like legalised mugging, I thought that I had purchased one of those 25 year old single malt whiskies and a large one at that. Back to the bus stop, the bus arrives a bit late but hey what do you expect, me to driver two tickets to Blackwaterfoot please, drivers response sorry we are not going there today as the road is closed, you need to get the bus going to Brodick and then get another bus from east to west, to get your destination, the bus you need will be here in a minute, me ok thanks. Next problem the bus that he said was about to arrive, had already been and gone, we had watched it go past. Now what to do next, we weren't going to let this minor setback defeat us, let's go for another mugging while we wait for bus, if we had been in Greggs or McDonalds we would have been given a bucket full of the stuff. The bus arrives and we head off to Brodick, then there is a detour as someone has a hospital appointment and needs to be dropped off. You could not make this up, well you could embellish it slightly, eventually we arrive in Brodick, let's see which bus to get and where to get it from. Oh for God's sake it doesn't leave for an hour, takes an hour to get there and the last return bus leaves 30 minutes after we get there. This is just not happening, right let's not have a complete waste of time, let's sort out which ferry we are going to get off the island, and to which destination. One route is £56 including Gloria and the other route is £16 with no need to book, just turn up and go, that's an easy decision then, we didn't really want to go to Campbeltown that much anyway. After a look around and a spot of food purchasing, we get the bus back to our starting point, this time without any diversions, what a complete and utter waste of a day. I am saying no more on the subject, in fact no more at all, until tomorrow, as long as we can get some phone signal ☺.

Day 15 5th June

My usual plan of being up early, having a coffee, a free one, sitting outside in the sunshine is not happening this morning, due to Mr Sun not playing out and also the midges are out in force. Top tip for midges repellent which I am passing on from Mr David Newton photography master, check out his work at photopositive.co.uk, he makes sick, sick with envy as his work is awesome, anyway his midges top tip instead of horrible insect repellent sprays is, "Avon Skin so Soft" the little rascals don't like and it doesn't stink, we haven't really had a problem with the little rascals before as we usually come before May and after September, if you are coming within these months, come prepared. The plan for today is to move further up the coast towards Lochranza, this is also the other ferry terminal on the island, well I say terminal that may be a bit of an overstatement, but a ferry does leave from there and you pay on board, £16.50 for Gloria and 2 passengers. We have checked out the local campsite and their website says that the site is full, as there are no suitable wild camping spots listed on "Search for Sites" I give the campsite a ring, yes we have space. It seems to me that people are booking sites and do not turn up without having the decency to phone and cancel, which is unfair to the campsite owners who have already lost enough revenue and also other people trying to book. The road surface from Brodick to Lochranza is just as bad as the rest of the roads, only this road has some stunning views, we stop a number of times to take in the scenery and at one stop we see a pod of dolphins. Then we travel through the mountains and up a steep and twisty narrow road, although not as steep or twisty as "Bealach na Ba" which translates to The pass of the cattle, it leads to the village of Applecross this is a road which is not for the faint hearted, a road that Gloria has tackled on three occasions. On one occasion when we got to the top of the mountain the mist and rain was so bad, that even I decided it was not safe to come down the other side and we parked up and slept at the top of the mountain. The village itself is well worth a visit, although there is not a great deal there, if you don't fancy tattling Bealach na Ba, there is another road to the village. We head into Lochranza and pass the campsite on the way, the village itself does not have a lot apart from the ferry terminal and one sandwich shop and even shop is an overstatement it's more of a hut, and that's about it for shops of any kind. After a coffee at the hut, which is a busy little place, we head back to the campsite, book in and pitch up, if you are heading this way it is £26 per night, nice site though we spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. Tomorrow's plan is to attempt to get to Blackfootwater by public transport, the mission we failed to complete the other day, this one should be ok as it travels in a different direction. We

have a walk to the bus stop to check times, you don't want to miss one as they only run every three hours. The bus stop is next to the Arran Whisky Distillery, got to be worth a look, the staff are extremely helpful and give us lots of information. There is a tasting tour of the distillery tomorrow morning at the cost of £25 per person, as Barb doesn't like the stuff we will not be going and I go off the idea when we visit the shop and the stuff costs upwards of £120 per bottle, ok there are some cheaper ones but they are not 12 year old single malt. While in the shop we do make a purchase, a little irresistible fluffy highland cattle key ring to add to the menagerie which we already have and is getting a tad ridiculous, but are memories of some of the places we have visited. Bus times sorted out we return to the campsite for dinner, after dinner we are having a read and a chill out when we hear someone calling out. As we look outside there is a large Buck deer standing about 20 feet from Gloria, he is a magnificent animal, the person shouting at him is a member of the sites staff. After the deer had jumped the fence and scampered off to his natural habitat we asked why he had been scared away, it turned out that the deer kept coming in search of food and had started entering into tents, scaring people and putting them in some form of danger. If this continued the deer put himself in danger of being shot, hearing this we agreed that scaring him away was the better option. The experience reminded us of when the Kangaroo's joined us for breakfast on a couple of occasions while camping in Australia, magical moments that will be remembered forever. After a tad more planning for tomorrow's journey, it's time to get some sleep, so that's it folks.

Day 16 6th June

I am awake early and plan to site outside for coffee, unfortunately the weather and the midges have a different plan, the sun has not risen over the mountains as yet and is also hidden behind what I hope are passing clouds. The air is moist and a little chilly, perfect weather for those pesky little midges, who are out in full force, millions of the little rascals, even David's magic spray is not going to help defeat them this morning. I am not going to sit out there with our Australian fly hairnets on, coffee al fresco will have to wait until the sun is shining brightly and the midges scarper off to wherever they scarper off to. We have a bit of a wait until our transport arrives, the bus, fortunately the sun is shining brightly and is warming things up, which sends the vast majority of the midges away. It is pleasant to sit out on our lawn having coffee and breakfast while taking in the sun's golden rays, then it's a quick sprint back to Gloria to apply some

sun tan lotion. Next is the short stroll to the bus stop which arrives around the expected time of 11.33, what's with the 3 minutes as if that matters, off we go towards Blackwaterfoot, sitting on the right hand side of the bus so as to get the best sea views which are stunning, the road surface is worse than the previous route, the bus and the passengers or rocked, rolled and shaken around especially as "Sandra" is behind the wheel (check out the movie "Speed") this guy is in a serious hurry, Blackwaterfoot is only 18 miles from the campsite but the journey takes just under an hour even with Sandra driving. When we arrive at our destination there does not appear a lot to do, especially as the next bus does not arrive for 3 hours, with this in mind we decide to stay on board the bus and have a tour of the island's coast road. The journey takes us Brodick which is where we first arrived on the ferry, we have the choice of getting the next bus, which is about to leave on the return journey back to the campsite or have a look around, get a bite to eat and then get the next bus which guess what doesn't leave for 3 hours. As it seems pointless to go straight back, we opt to wait for the next bus. Brodick is probably the biggest town on the island but as it is Sunday there is not a great deal open after a walk around, we check out the eateries, it turns out that there only two options a posh hotel or a café which for some unknown reason has a large queue outside ☺. Cafe it is then as there great rush so we book in for an available table, we are given a buzzer thingy to let us know when our table is ready, which isn't as long as we had expected. The service was excellent as was the food, after lunch we sit overlooking the sea while we wait for the bus, which after changing drivers is ready to depart at its scheduled time, this journey is short than the first one and will only take about an hour. The difference in driving style is amazing this guy is more like "Driving Miss Daisy" than Sandra in a rush. We get another chance to absorb the beauty of the Island without Gloria getting shaken apart, we can let that happen to the bus. When we arrive back at the site the sun is shining brightly and there is a gentle breeze, not the weather for midges so it is safe to sit outside, Barb is sewing and then reading her book, while I catch up with some blog creation and watch Mr Deer wander around doing his stuff, eating grass, at one stage he wanders over to us has a nose around our table and when he realises there is nothing to eat he carry's on munching on the grass, even though he has been wandering around for a couple of days, I am still in awe of the beauty of nature, these animals and how this one is totally at ease with humans, I only hope that is not to his cost. The rest of the evening does not have much more to tell you about other than a bike ride is on the cards tomorrow weather permitting.

Day 17 7th June

Right bike ride day, only first thing in the morning the weather might be having different ideas, by mid morning the sun has broken through and the possibility of rain looks like it is not going to happen. Bikes removed from Gloria and dressed in the appropriate gear including helmets, we set off to the northern tip of the island. There are no bike tracks but the road is reasonably quiet so it is not much of a problem, not sure T shirt and shorts was a good idea as it is a little fresh at times until the sun decides to dodge the clouds and stay out to warm us. The road follows the coast and Barb wants to dip her toes into the sea, after finding a suitable beach it's toe dipping time, which does not last long due to the temperature of the water. Right back on the bikes, as we ride along the road there are a couple of properties that Barb and I call projects, these projects are usually in need of a great deal of restoration or are complete no hopers. There is one close to Lochranza that shall we say is in need of some attention, but it does have amazing views out to sea, the only problem is that there is absolutely nothing near by apart from the ferry and a coffee hut, however it may be a tad remote but good fun scaring the kids with my next mad thoughts of ways to spend their inheritance, what there will be of it, but they may like it better than my barge idea. After a few more miles it is time to turn around and head back, the return journey obviously includes a stop off at the café for coffee and on this visit sandwiches, the diet has gone completely off piste. If you are planning on getting the ferry from Lochranza to the mainland I would highly recommend this outdoor sandwich bar, not because there is nowhere else but because the sandwiches are great as is the coffee and the service, oh and so is the chocolate tiffin. Then it's time to continue our ride, there is a small road that travels along the opposite side of Lochranza, the views from this side are even more spectacular and the properties dotted sparsely along the road, look like they are in the higher value bracket. Then it's back off to the ranch, as we won't be using the bikes again before we depart, they are loaded back on to Gloria ready for the next outing. Next is a bit more of that sitting out in sun lark and getting a few more snaps of Mr Deer, that is when he decides to stop munching and raise his head. Not much more to report other than we are leaving the Island tomorrow on the Lochranza ferry which is a turn up and get on service, so there is no need to book. That's about it for today, I will let you know how are next cruise goes tomorrow.

Day 18 8th June

We are heading off for our next cruise this morning we'll it's a short ferry crossing really, as I head off to the showers our neighboured deer is standing between Gloria and the van next to us, this time he is not munching on grass, which makes a change, instead he is posing for a photograph. As I walk away so does he and strolls past me for another close up photograph, they are only phone shots but I don't usually take a camera to the showers, stop it now. Time to pack Gloria ready for the next leg of the journey, we are getting the 12 o'clock ferry so there is no rush, we could have got an earlier ferry but that would have meant rushing and we don't want to be doing that. We arrive at the ferry terminal, that is a large overstatement as it is a numbered car park, an office, which was shut and a ramp to get to the boat. Anyway we have got there not long after the previous ferry has left, just to ensure we get a space as it is a turn up and drive on ferry. After a coffee at our favourite and only coffee shop it is time to board the ferry, this is a bit interesting as it only a small boat and there is a long queue behind us, including a large flat bed truck. The crew have us park as close to the car in front without actually touching it and as close to the side of the boat as possible, again this is interesting as the side of the has a large overhang marked with large yellow and black strips, what makes this interesting is that is lower than Gloria and much lower when we drive off. After we have parked up one of the crew tells Barb not to try and drive off the ferry without one them guiding us off, we could be heading for another convertible Gloria and a big bill. Everyone has to stay in their vehicles for the crossing, this is not a problem as the crossing is only 30 minutes, next the man with the ticket machine comes round to collect the money. Now this is a lesson for anyone else planning this trip go to Brodick and buy your ticket there. The reason is that when I checked online the cost of a ticket for a 6 meter Motorhome with a bike rack and 2 passengers was £16.50, but I could not buy an e-ticket. This guy wants £21.60 because he says that the van has a bike rack, another discussion follows but hey we are on board we have no option. What was Chris de Burgh song "Don't pay the Ferryman" am I going to bother writing another email to Calmac for £5.10 nope but I remember next time. We are soon at the other side and set off to find somewhere to park for the night, after a couple of hours drive, we have checked on the "Search for sites" app and there is a car park n a forest at which you can stay for free, well I say for free however the track through the forest to the car park which is about half a mile and was last used for a World rally championship stage,

shall we say it was not to Gloria's liking. We set up and are sort of level, after a while we are joined by another Motorhome but just the one, we do wonder if we will see any wildlife but no they are all playing hide and seek. Obviously there is not a sign of a phone signal never mind 4g, we make plans for tomorrow's journey which will be a fairly long one as we want to get close to the Isle of Skye, the journey is not really long in miles but it is in time due to the roads and the route we are going to take. I know that I moaned earlier about the road surface and I have now come to the conclusion that Scottish highways have found an inexpensive way of traffic calming, they just leave every pothole to get bigger and bigger until you can not drive at over 25 mph, in fact I think that they come and dig a few more in the middle of the night, just to make it more sure. Ok rant over time to get some sleep, obviously this won't be getting posted onto the blog this evening, more tomorrow.

Day 19 9th June

The night in the forest was uneventful, with no bears trying to get into Gloria, do they have bears in Scotland, I know that they have beers and whisky, anyway no sign of noise from any wildlife during the night. We head off into the Lochgilphead to find something and to fill Gloria's fuel tank and then find a suitable spot to have breakfast, we are trying to get back on track with our diet and have a suitable breakfast. Right let's go, our route is slightly unusual and a bit out of the way but we have traveled the other routes before, as it turns out we have travelled our proposed route before, but to get to a different location. Sylvia (sat nav) has told us that our complete journey to Skye is going to take over 5 hours without a stop, in Gloria with stops that's looking like 7 hours plus some. That is not going to happen so our plan is to stop as and when we like and see where we get to, the first part of the route takes us through the highlands and mountains through to Glencoe, the previous times we have travelled this route the views have been breathtaking, unfortunately it is not that way today as the mist is covering the mountains and it's persistently raining, well that's one description of the weather. Usually when on this route we would have gone to Skyfall Lodge (James Bond) and take in the spectacular view through the valley and surrounding mountains, but there is little point today. Our other stop would be at the Glencoe mountain resort and get the chairlift to the top of the mountain to take in the views, believe me if you are there you have got to go up, the views are magnificent. I can still see snow on the mountain even at this time of year

and today's weather, we have had a couple of rest stops along the way along with a food shopping stop at Fort William and onto Invergarry. Then it's time to find somewhere to park up for the night again "Search for Sites" comes into play and finds us a suitable lay-by which is set back from the A87 overlooking the top tip of Loch Beag again this would be a beautiful view apart from the weather. I do not want any smart aleck from Liverpool or beyond telling me that's is beautiful, sunny and 25° as I have already been told and I don't want to know, that said we are in Scotland and your not. No other Motorhomes joining as yet, and I don't think there will be given the time it is. Talking about the time that's about it, tomorrow we will be on Skye and will be looking for a proper campsite as the weather is supposed to be worse, stop laughing, let's hope tomorrow is a tad more interesting.

Day 20 10th June

Considering we slept in a lay-by last night, well we actually slept in Gloria parked in a lay-by, we had a good night sleep as the A87 was very quiet last night, mind you it's not really surprising as it wasn't that busy during the day. Next stop is to find some form of life and something else that may be required, we pass a few places that are closed, well completely shut, I imagine that Covid 19 has seen a lot of these business fail, as have many others throughout our country and the world, while others he seen their profits raise to obscene levels without a thought for small, medium and even large sized business that have failed and for the employees that have seen their lives change, possibly for ever, as usual the rich get richer. Hey get back into holiday mode, we arrive at Shiel Bridge and this seems to be the happening place, let's not get carried away it's not actually party time but it is livelier than any thing else that's going on. On a travel tip, make sure that you fill your fuel tank before you leave Fort William as the fuel station on the A87 charge £1.58 per litre for the stuff and it's not like you have any other option if you need the stuff, as there is no competition. Fed and watered we head off to the Isle of Skye, the weather forecast said high winds and it wasn't wrong and we did wonder wether the bridge would be open, the ferry certainly wasn't making any crossings today. Well the bridge was open and we are on the island next job find a campsite which proved more difficult than expected, the ones on the way to Portree were either closed or fully closed due to you know what, or fully booked, oops we might have a problem, anyway we head to Portree, while we are there we optimistically book a wildlife boat trip for Saturday, if the weather is

anything we won't be going on any boat, in fact they won't be sailing. Next while we have a phone signal it's time to make a couple of phone calls and find a campsite, first phone call is in the back of the net result and we are booked into the Camping and Caravan Club site at the North of the island. We have stayed here before, but when we think about it, that was about 9 years ago where does the time go, it makes you realise that if you want to do something do it now and worry about it later, that may not be the most sensible way of doing things, but if you don't do it you will find that the time to enjoy it has gone before you know it, it's being so cheerful that keeps me going ☺. As we have paid over the phone the booking in process was easy and we are shown to our pitch, it's blowing a proper hoolie but it's not raining yet, Gloria is soon level, plugged in and the kettle is on. It's not long before the rain starts and the hoolie picks up to speeds of over 45 mph which has Gloria rockin and a rollin and all the campers in tents running for cover. We should know better as it was the same last time we were here, but it's great sitting in Glo with a cup of tea while people watching, it's a great sport. Now I have never been able to understand the the price of VW T6 camper conversation, but the one parked next to us takes the price of one to another level an astronomical level, when he bought it he had just ticked every box on the options list and then added some more, it's got everything including full self levelling air suspension, all this for a mind blowing 84 and a bit K, yes eighty four and a half thousand of your British pounds. Now that it is just darn ridiculous for what is basically a VW van and you still have to sit in the passengers seat as there ain't nowhere else to sit, I just don't get it or am I missing something, if I am I don't want it. Again I don't want any smug remarks from anyone south of the border that the sun is shining and it's 25°C, stick it where the sun don't shine, here it is now raining profusely or harder and the wind speed is increasing deep joy. There is a pub about a mile away but we won't be visiting that, in fact we won't be venturing out of Gloria until the weather improves, looks like we may be waiting some time or possibly longer. As you can imagine there is not much to report for the rest of the evening so it's time to call it day, until tomorrow that's it.

Day 21 11th June

After rainy and blowy night, this morning the rain has gone away, don't get me wrong the wind is still blowing and it's not exactly warm, but the sun is shining which is a bonus, considering yesterday's monsoon conditions. As the weather is better we are going to have a trip out, while we are having breakfast, we notice our neighbour with the extremely expensive VW T6 is staring to unwrap the additional weather protection from the pop up roof tent, he does not look too happy and is getting no assistance from his other half. We have put stuff away inside Gloria, we just to unplug the mains supply and drive her off her levelling ramps, a couple of minutes job. While removing the mains supply from Gloria, I make this mistake of saying good morning to our neighbour and mention that the weather was a bit rough last night, but a better this morning, oops. Not really is the reply, it turns out that the tent on top of T6 had leaked during the night and his better half had said that she wanted to go home immediately and was never going to go in again, while ranting that he better sell it or there would be trouble. I think to myself that is going to be an expensive painful experience, I am not sure that my next comment went down very well, as I said "when you say sell her do you mean your wife or the van" oops again. I leave him waiting for the roof material to dry before he presses the button that lowers the roof. Me thinks it's time to go, our first stop is Uig which is only 30 minutes away, after a walk around the harbour we find the Skye Brewery shop, well obviously it be rude not to pay it a visit and while there make a purchase of their expensive but strong and different beer. Then it's back to Gloria to head off for our next location Dunvegan Castle, when we arrive there is a bit of a queue at the ticket office and a number of people grumpily returning to their cars rather than purchasing at ticket. It turns out that the entrance fee is 14 quid each and due to Covid restrictions the number of people entering the castle is being limited and the wait could be an hour or longer, depending upon how long the peeps already in the Castle stayed in there, but hey we were welcome to walk around the gardens. Our answer is thanks but no thanks and follow the other peeps back to the car park, muttering that it was a tad expensive to wander around a garden, especially when we were at Prince Charles gaff the other week the gardens were free to stroll around, hey did I mention that I had used a Prince Charles loo, well it wasn't really his but it was in the grounds of Dumfries house, that he helped to preserve for the nation, who am I kidding. After not being able to visit the castle it's time to visit the village to find somewhere for coffee and cake, this diet has

gone well down the pan. This is not the largest village in the country and as such has two options, one a take away and one you are allowed to sit inside, the takeaway option seems a bit pointless as we could make tea or coffee in Gloria, also there is a queue which is moving as slow as a slow thing could move, in fact I don't think it was moving at all. We head off for the second option, there is a short queue at this one but we are soon shown to a table. No mugs of tea here, it's fine bone china the stuff you have to hold your little pinkie out as you sip your tea, which of course I do, much to Barb's amusement and also to the people on the next table. Then it's time to make the trip back to the campsite, Sylvia decides to take us a short cut which is down a one track road with passing places, what was completely bonkers was that the road surface was as smooth as a smooth thing can be with not a pothole in sight and no traffic coming in the opposite direction. The last time we were on the island we visited a public house that was attached to a run down possibly closed hotel, that was about a mile from the campsite. We head off to it find it for old times sake and to relive a memory, wow how things have changed last time we visited it was a small dingy poorly lit dump of a bar with three locals sitting at the bar drinking with the landlord who was from either Blackpool or Bolton. Now it's a flash hotel that doesn't just serve drinks unless you are dining in the restaurant staying in the hotel, don't you know, oh sorry I asked. There is another bar over the road that was run down and fully closed on our last visit, this again has had a makeover, not as much as the neighbouring establishment and at least we were allowed in. We order drinks, take a seat and they are brought over to us, there are cushions on the settees which are great, they have a design of "Hairy Highland Cows" by Shirley MacArthur, a self taught Scottish artist, check out her work it's great and it will brighten up your day and make you smile, I guarantee it. I will be ordering a couple of the cushions when get home and have them as a Father's Day present, not that Jennie and Phil know yet. Then it's back to the campsite to have a light snack and check out one of the craft beers purchased this afternoon, not much more after that, so why don't we resume tomorrow.

Day 22 12th June

As three week holidays go, we should have gone home yesterday, but we haven't so you have some more of this to endure, well if your reading it. Unfortunately we have to admit defeat, the weather on Skye has beaten us and we are heading east in search of some better weather, don't get me wrong we are not expecting tropical temperatures but anything above 9°, no gale force winds and monsoon like rain will be much appreciated, don't get me wrong we love the Isle of Skye and we will revisit, but next time we will check the weather forecast first. We head of east towards Inverness which readers of our previous Scotland road trip blogs will know is the place to go if you want, well anything including 12mm pipe connectors. The route takes us down the island and across to the mainland, then we continue through the spectacular mountain ranges which would be even more spectacular if they could be seen in full glory but they can't due to the weather and the low cloud which is covering the vast majority of the mountains. The journey continues along the A87 towards Loch Ness, when we find suitable parking spot we park up for a tea break, we are parked in a valley surrounded by the mountains, unfortunately the weather has not improved as yet, meaning that the view is not the best. Then it's on to Loch Ness, we are travelling on the A887 which has us arrive on the west side of the Loch at the village of Invermoriston, we find a suitable car park and off for a look around an a spot of Nessie spotting. There is a craft fair on the village green local artisan traders selling their products including craft bees and various Gins from a small Local distillery, obviously a few had to be tasted and a purchase was eventually made. As for the Nessie spotting that did not go very well as she still holds the world hide and seek record, we did find a shop full of stuffed toy Nessie's, for a brief moment there was a though of purchasing one to join the menagerie, but the dashboard is not big enough to have space for the Loch Ness Monster. Next stop Inverness, I have booked us onto a site which is only a short walk from the city centre which sounded like a good idea when I booked, in me defence the reviews of the site were fairly good. When we arrive at the site it is apparent that the reviews were either written by the owner or people with far lower expectations that Barb & myself especially when it was £26 a night, compared to the £17.50 that we had paid for the Camping & Caravaning Club site on Skye, that has spotless facilities. The facilities here could in no way be described as spotless and should have been knocked down about 30 years ago, it was also not helped by the fact that there was a travelling fun fair in the adjacent field, which had the

usual associated fun fair issues. On the plus side it's only for one night and it's close to the city, as we walked off into the city I was slightly concerned about leaving Gloria and her contents, needless to say I would not recommend it to anyone and it's probably best that I do not leave a review. The walk into the city is pleasant and follows the side of the river Ness, not sure about the 20 minute walk that the site owner informed me of, he must run it, or it's like a Welsh mile. Anyway we arrive in the city and as we haven't been in a major city for a long I had forgotten that they are full of shops, luckily for me it is 5.20pm and most of them are closing, apart from Primarnie and TK Max so a visit had to be made to both of them, I didn't venture into Primarnie but I have to admit to visiting TK Max as it has other stuff to look at in the gadget department. Then it's time for a quick libation, the first establishment we found was obviously owned by Dick Turpin as it was like legalised mugging, just the one here we thinks. Next stop the old faithful Wetherspoons, Champagne tastes and beer pockets spring to mind, the place is absolutely full with not a great deal of social distancing go on in here, we are ask by a waiter if we are ok with tall stools and table, my response "we are that not that bloody old" he wasn't that sure what to say and showed us to a table. Not long after we make the return walk back to Gloria, there was a little bonus as the fairground must have had a curfew time as all went quiet at 9.30. I had planned to catch up with blog but that didn't actually happen, back to school reports "must try harder" ok I will tomorrow, until then that's it.

Day 22 13th June

Our next planned stop is to be Nairn which is actually not that far away, but as soon as we are awake we head of from this site even before breakfast and coffee, we will find somewhere to stop for that on the way, but first stop is Tesco's for fuel refill while we are in a city and it will be a reasonable price. After the fuel refill and we are of the city we stop for coffee and breakfast, then it's on to Culloden to visit the battlefield where in 1746 Jacobite rising came to a brutal end in one of the most harrowing battles in British history, in less than an hour around 1,600 men and possibly children were slain. The battlefield is also a memorial to those who lost their lives. Unlike war graves and battlefields we have visited in Belgium and France which are eerily quiet, here birdsong fills the air. We walk around the paths for over an hour and think about what a harrowing experience this battle must have been. After a coffee we set off for Nairn and the campsite, when we arrive the check in process is simples, as we

have booked and paid online, we are soon showed to our pitch and in no time Gloria is plugged in and level. Time to sit outside in the sunshine while we can, to be honest this did not last long before the chairs are put away and it's back inside for us. As there is not much more to tell you, I suppose that's about it, actually it is so some more tomorrow.

Day 23 14th June

There is no need to rush away from this site so it fairly leisurely morning our next stop is about an hour and a half away and we have arranged to be there around 1pm, we are off to Keith for a family visit. We are ok for time and head off into Nairn for a look around. That mission completed its time to head off to Keith but with a short diversion on route. While at Culloden we had to go through the Disney experience, you know the one, you can not get out of the place without going through the shop, where Barb had seen a very reasonable priced Harris Tweed mini backpack, unfortunately they did not have the the colour and pattern that Barb wanted, as she had seen a different style of bag in. Looks like it's time to visit every shop in Scotland that sells Harris Tweed bags, we could be here for some time. Unknown to Barb, yesterday afternoon I had emailed the supplier to ask them which of their retailers in the area had purchased the particular design of bag, so that we did not have to stop at every shop selling Harris Tweed bags from here to Gretna Green. This morning I received an email from them with the details of three retailers, well that cuts the search down a bit. This is where the short diversion came into play as one of them is another NTS (National Trust Scotland) location which will add another 45 minutes to our drive to Keith, but that's much better than visiting every shop. I phone them to make sure that they have one but I am informed that the shop does not open until 10am, I am told that someone would phone me just after 10am and let me know if they had stock, did this happen, did it heck as like. We had left the campsite and were on route, we soon had to make a decision on to head straight to Keith or make the detour to the NTS location. Time to phone them back and after going through the same conversation as my earlier phone call I was eventually told that they did have one in stock, that's great can you reserve it for us and we will be there shortly to make the purchase, sorry we don't reserve items over the phone, ok how do you reserve items, oh actually we don't, look I am travelling an hour out of my way to collect this can I pay you over the phone?, oh sorry we don't take telephone payments, this conversation goes on for a while and eventually it is agreed that the will

reserve it for us, bloody hell that was difficult, anyway off we go on our detour. After we had done a fair few miles I realised that I made a schoolboy error and had not asked how much it was, however I had assumed that it would be the same price in all NTS shops, how old am I, shouldn't I know better than to make assumptions, even if they are based on a reasonable thought process. Here we go let's make another phone call, reply oh no we haven't got a bag reserved for you as we do not reserve items over the phone, FFS yes you have will you please check, oh sorry about that yes we have, great can you tell me how much it is, yes sir it is three times the price of the one you had seen in our shop in Culloden, ok I look around Gloria for the hidden cameras this must be an Ant and Dec wind up, not a camera to be found, are you sure that is the correct price, yes sir that is the price, ok thanks stick it, no I did not say that however I did say that we would not be collecting the bag so you can sell it to one of the 300 people in the queue waiting to purchase it. Don't get me started on how ridiculous the whole buying purchase or none purchase was, especially as when we where in the shop at Culloden there was only us there. Time to reroute and head to Keith, only problem is there are no A roads to get there from our location, this is not turning out to be a good morning, that said the B road that took us most of the way to our destination, had a better road surface than most of the A roars we have traveled on. The afternoon is spent with Donna, Barry and the children, it was great to see them all, it has been far too long since we have seen them. I am not going to go into to much detail as this is family time and not general release ☺ One point to share with everyone one is that we FaceTimed Barb's mum, Barry's grandma and the children's great grandma, oh my second mum. It was great for us all be together for a virtual catch up ready for a real time catch up when they all visit Liverpool in a month or so. After a great afternoon it's time for us to go and after hugs and farewells we head off for tonight's campsite in Cullen the home of Cullen Skink, if you don't know what it is make sure you find out and try the real thing. We arrive at the campsite, well it's not actually a campsite as it is a car park right on the waterfront overlooking the bay, when we arrive there are four or five vans already there. We drive along the grass parking area to find the levellest place we can find, which happens to be adjacent to a parked car, we are surprised and amused to see the occupants in the back seat hurriedly putting on their clothes on, getting to the front seats and driving off, with Barb and I laughing ourselves silly, especially as it was only 7pm and it doesn't go dark here until about 11pm. The view is amazing, the scenery not what was going on in the car, the

rock formations are stunning and I need to find out more about them tomorrow, we had been hoping for a wonderful sunset this evening unfortunately the low cloud has put paid to that. It has been a long day and it's time to catch up on some sleep, let's see what tomorrow has in store for us.

Day 24 15th June

We have decided that we like our car park campsite so much we are going to stay another night, this will give us time to go for a walk and then explore the town. The sun is actually shining this morning although not to the temperatures that some of you have been getting, after breakfast we head off on our first walk of the day. The walk takes us to the west tip of the bay which lets us take in the amazing rock formations that had been forced up through the earth's crust when ancient continents collided in the neoproterozoic era, when ever that was, check out "Wikipedia" it gives all the answers, all I know is that it is stunning, I never cease to be amazed by this earth that we live on, and try our best to destroy, usually in the quest for money, profit and power. Anyway moving swiftly on, if you get the chance to visit this part of our coastline don't miss it. our walk then continues through the golf course which is on the side of a 45° hill, you don't need to play golf you need to be a mountain goat. At the top of the hill we then approach the first of two viaducts which formed part of the now disused railway which closed in the 1960's thanks to Beechings report, he has a lot to answer for. We continue on to the top of Castle Hill and then after crossing the second viaduct we follow the path down to the road and into the town. We have done about 6 miles and feel that we deserve a cup of tea and head for a café, we are asked if we would like anything to eat, our first answer was no, but then we watched the waitress take other customers meal to their table. We looked at each other and placed an order, well it was lunchtime after all, I am not saying what we had but it certainly was not on the approved foods list of our diet, it will probably put us on the naughty step for a week, and we will be having yogurt and fruit for breakfast, lunch a dinner for a good few weeks. After another walk around we return to Gloria for a bit of a rest before we set off on our second planned walk of the day. For reasons that my friends will know, my love of photography has diminished over the last 15 months and most of my pictures have been either phone snapshots or snapshots taken with my Canon EOS M5, don't get me wrong the M5 is a great camera but the views here have revived my interest and my Canon 5D has escaped

from hiding in my camera bag, let me say I had nearly forgotten how good this camera is. Anyway it's out now and if views like this continue, it won't be going back anytime soon, I will share some pictures with you when I have reduced their file size, so that they don't take up too much website space. Our second walk of the day is going to take to the east tip of the bay, again following the coastline and the amazing rock formations. The walk is cut short as it started to rain and by the look of the sky we will be getting some more of the stuff, now ain't that unusual. We return to Gloria just before the rain gets heavier, granted not as heavy as it has been and didn't stay with us for too long. It's then time for us to do a bit of planning for tomorrow's destination, so that is your lot for today.

Day 25 16th June

When doing our planning last night we had to take into consideration that we needed to find an actual campsite as Gloria's tanks needed emptying and refilling. We have a few more places to visit in the area so did not want to travel too far, as such a suitable site was found and an online booking made. Great we have a plan well for today and tonight but no further, we have moved to the car park at the other side of the bay so that we can have a different view. Oh how plans can go right to cock, the other day we thought we could smell gas but could not find any sign of a leak, this morning however while standing outside there is a proper smell of the stuff. Normally this would not be a great problem as all you would do is disconnect the gas bottle, only Gloria does not have one as she has a LPG gas tank which fitted underneath between the chassis rails, time to get the professional's in. We check on he who knows everything Google and find a couple of options and just in case we phone Donna for some local knowledge, the first one that we find is only a couple of miles away but there is no answer from their phone, as it's very close we drive there just to double check, the address was a private house and no one was home, we suspect he was mobile but not mobile enough to answer his phone. The next one is in Elgin which is about an hour away, another phone call required and we get the first line of defence the receptionist, "we are very busy and the only has certified person is out for an hour, you could try phoning then a see what he says". Blow that for a game of soldiers we are running out of day so of we set as when you are there, it is more difficult to say no. As we arrive, Dougie the person we need arrives at the same time, great news he will have a look, after a fair while with the sniffer and the good old fairy liquid mixed with water in a spray bottle, he finds the

leak. A pipe connector nut has split and is causing the leak, a most unusual thing to happen, and it now needs an new piece of pipe and a new connector, guess what, it's a peculiar size, I can see a trip to Inverness required. However Dougie comes to the rescue he pops out and gets one locally, then it's not long before the repair is complete and final checks are carried out. The bill was surprisingly small for the whole job including parts and labour, also the just turning up and being looked after straight away. Many thanks to Dougie and everyone at S & D Harper Ltd, it is very much appreciated, obviously I would recommend them to anyone needing repairs on their Motorhome or caravan. Or would like to purchase one, with the Aftersales service they provide, we would have no hesitation of purchasing one from them, if we were in the market, but it would be a bit of hike to have it serviced. Then we are off to the caravan park, we arrive just as the office is closing, as we have booked and paid on line it was just a case of parking Gloria on our designated spot and finding out the location of stuff we may need. As usual with some team work Gloria is level, plugged in and ready for the kettle to go on, mind you with the day we have had, we may need something stronger. After a walk along the beach and on into town we return to Gloria for a bite to eat and get ready for bed, there is only so much excitement one can handle in one day, that's it until tomorrow let's hope that it's a tad less frantic. Oh and that's it we are up to date.

Day 26 17th June

This is going to be short and sweet as we have decided to stay another day at the campsite and do we quite frankly not a great deal. Apart from some very mundane things like clothes washing and a very little bit of route planning for the next couple of days. Breakfast is served al fresco as the weather is beautiful this morning, don't get me wrong it's not that hot but at least the sun is shining and it's warm enough to site outside. The washing is done and dry by lunch time and after lunch we go for a stroll, which leads us in to town, did we go to the pub nope we went to a charity shop and then to the ice cream shop, which is supposed to be on a par with the famous one in Fochabers just down the road, need to go there tomorrow to make a comparison. We return to Gloria, as Barb is going to have a bit more chill time, I am off to the beach to take some photographs and try out the filters that I got for Christmas but haven't used yet, the results are already on Facebook, and there are a couple that I really like. Next plan was to move a bit higher and get the drone in the air for some

aerial photographs as well, however the weather scuppered that idea as it started raining, not much but enough to put a halt on any flying time. Time to head inside put everything away, recharge camera batteries and load pictures from camera to iPad. I have left the drone ready for action tomorrow morning as all the weather forecasts say it's going to be fine and sunny, we will wait and see. After dinner it's time to go for another walk to the east side of the of the bay, we returned to Gloria just in time, we had just closed the door and it poured down, weather forecasters got it wrong again. Time for another chill and get the blog done so that it is up to date, which is a change recently but hey it's done, let's see what happens tomorrow, until then that's it.

Day 27 18th June

On the move again today, but as I am awake, up early and the weather is good I have time to get some drone shots before we leave, I did not get a great deal of flying time as the batteries has discharged somewhat since there last charge and also within twenty minutes or so the find at 400 feet was getting a bit turbulent to say the least time to land it as the gusts are getting up 25mph and they don't like that and try to crash. We are ready for the off just after 11am, first stop is actually in the opposite direction to the route we are supposed to be taking. We are heading for Portknockie as there are more interesting rock formations that I would like to see, when we arrive Barb parks Gloria and does some sewing, while I go in search of a photographic location. After a bit of trying to act like a mountain goat, I get to the spot to take some photographs, then scramble back up the rocks and back to Barb and Gloria. Next we retrace our route in the correct direction, after a stop to look around Banff we head off to our next planned stop over at Cruden Bay, no campsite for tonight it's another car park overlooking the sea, what a great view, this car park is operated by the Harbour company who allow up to 5 vans to park for the night as ask for a donation to be put into an honesty box, when we arrived we were the 5th van. After our arrival another 5 vans arrive and park up, they either haven't read the notices, got to that page in the rule book or don't give one, however there are a fair few cctv cameras knocking about and I wonder if they monitor the amount of arrivals or if the are just happy if everyone makes a donation. It's fairly amusing as the guy next to us is in a huge Carthago thing that was probably £100,000 and was surrounded by Gloria and on the other side a 2003 something or other, it was quite good as we were all sitting out on camping chairs chatting and it made no

difference how big it was, mind you the guy in the big thing kept name dropping the spec of the big thing but know one took the bait especially the fish that he was trying to catch with a piddling little rod. The bit that I though was really amusing was that we were all sitting outside on chairs in front of Motorhomes having a beer in a car park. After all that excitement is time for dinner a glass or red and then bed. So guess what that's it.

Day 28 19th June

Next stop is Aberdeen which is only 30 minutes away from us, however we will have to make another diversion to get some LPG as Gloria's gas tank is empty so we have nothing to cook on, no water heater and no fridge when we are stopped, so that is a bit of a problem if we are wildish camping. Also buying the stuff is proving to be a bit of a problem, I did expect us to be able to get some of the stuff in Aberdeen however checking in with Google and getting a list of fuel stations that may sell it. After a number of phone calls, I was having no joy, there was a garage on our route that was listed as selling it, but it was in the middle of nowhere and Google said that it was shut on Saturday's. Well it's worth a call and yes they are open and yes they sell, great we are on our way, as we turn off the main road and start to drive down this single track road that is just wide enough for Gloria to fit down, we begin to think that's this is a wind up. Then we arrive at this reasonably large garage that sells and repairs car and more importantly LPG. Gloria's second tank refilled we are off to Aberdeen, as we didn't want to try and park Gloria in the city centre we had done a bit of research and found out that there is a park and ride bus service into the city, now that sounds like a plan. Well to be fair we thought that it's was a very good plan, after negotiating the outer roads of the city we follow the signs to the park and ride, and soon we arrive, slight problem there is a height restrictor barrier on the car park. Not that actually made any darn difference as the whole thing was shut and not a bus in sight and no signs saying that the system wasn't running, actually you did not need a sign, it was obviously shut and had been for some time, no doubt something else to blame on Covid, or possibly use it as an excuse. Or is that me being cynical again, we head into the city and as we do so it is obvious that Gloria and Barb are not happy in these surroundings and we imagine that the closer we get to the city centre the worse things will get, we make a managerial decision, abort the city centre idea, and head out of the place pronto, but not before finding a Tesco to fill up with fuel that goes in the front tank. Now we have another issue to

resolve, as we have been wildish camping for a while and the previous site did not have an emptying facility, Gloria's grey water tank is full, that's the water from the sinks and nowhere else. Being responsible types we wonder how to dispose of it, knowing that there is a Caravan & Motorhome club site at Stonehaven (the home of Mars Bars in batter) eeeek won't be trying that, we head to the site thinking that as we are both members our rational and reasonable request to empty the grey waste tank will not be a problem. Well how wrong we were, I was told in no uncertain terms that this was not allowed as it was a policy of the club, well you can imagine how well that went down, we will call it a discussion went on for a while, with me saying that this was totally irresponsible and somewhat stupid policy as it could lead to people getting rid of their waste in a none environmentally friendly manner, I also tried stretching the truth by saying that our next stop was going to be Liverpool and did they expect us to travel that far with a full grey waste tank. I was still told no, by this time I had now how do I put it, oh I know, I had completely seen my arse, although in a polite but firm manner. Needless to say the email to the club has already been sent, I know, I am becoming a proper moaning arse customer, however unlike some that I have had the pleasure of dealing with, this time and most times I do it with due cause and reason. We park up and have a walk around the town which we have visited before and actually stayed on the site in question, we don't stay long as the place is madness and chocker block, let's get out of here. After I cool down and think for a bit I come up with a plan for the grey waste, when we get back out into the countryside we find a farm and ask the farmer if it is possible to empty the waste in a reasonably manner, yes no problem and no payment required, we did purchase some eggs while we were there. Caravan & Motorhome Club please take note, not to sell eggs but to have a responsible attitude to their club members who are actually their customers and to the environment. We have tried to find a site on our route but without much success, but Barb has found a Motorhome stopover point in Arbroath. On our arrival we are in hysterics, this is a single line of car parking space in the town overlooking the sea. As we looked for a parking place we counted 27 vans lined up and even more arrived after us, I have seen less vans on a campsite, it was completely nuts, again they varied from a brand new Mobilveta which is the price of a house and then most other makes that you can think of. After a walk around the harbour we head into the town and guess what we find, that guy has got here as well, yes there is a Wetherspoons, well we cant go past we have a look inside and partake in "Just the one Mrs Wembley" then it back to Gloria

for food and bed, Thank god I can hear you say, all you have done is moan, ok I will stop know.

Day 29 20th June

Oh boy do we know how to live it up, we are going to stay in the car park again tonight which means that we won't be going anywhere in Gloria as we have now found the flattest and levellest space on the row. So it's all going to be on foot, it's one of those days when your not sure what to wear it's not really warm enough for shorts & T-shirt but it's too warm for grown up pants and a jumper. Let's man up and look on optimistic side, shorts a T-shirt it is. We walk to the harbour, around the harbour, along the harbour wall, back along the harbour wall, around the harbour again, then into town, around the town and along the sea front and back to Gloria, six and bit miles and not a single visit to an establishment selling alcoholic beverages. Now what else have we done today well frankly not a great deal, now I could embellish the rest of the day but it would be complete fantasy, so I m not going to bother. One thing that happened late in the afternoon was that single axle tanker arrive and parked up not far away from us, nothing special I can hear you say, only what was special was the paint job, it was incredible the front was a deep metallic blue, while the sides of the cab had amazing intricate Muriels sorry murals, oh and it had more lights than the Blackpool illuminations. We were wondering what it was doing parked there until about an hour later when Barb thought that she had seen lightening, when I looked outside there was a photographer with the full kit of remote flash lights surrounding the truck, taking pictures of the truck. It would have been good if the photographer had arrived earlier, as the shoot had only just started when heavy rain stopped play, ooops. We have gone mad and actually done a bit of planning, and have booked a site for two nights near Edinburgh, forward planning eh you can't beat it. That's about it for today tomorrow we will be heading for Edinburgh and the site, but as usual we won't be taking the most direct route, so I will let you know tomorrow where we get to.

Day 30 21st June

We don't need too much of an early start today as the chosen campsite or Holiday Village as they prefer to be called is only two and half hours away, also we have a little shopping mission to complete. We noticed last night that Gloria's remote locking key would not work unless it was really close to her, me thinks a new battery is required and would like to get one

before we leave a town with a good number of shops. It is one of those flat batteries like a ten pence piece, I have at least four of the things at home however when we were putting the contents of the house into Glo this was an item I missed even though it would have taken no space. Let the mission commence, I had expected this would be an easy one to complete however it was wrong, visits to Asda, Lidl, Home Bargains, Poundland, Morrison's all had a negative result. While we're out the yesterday Barb had seen a shop called Nickel & Dime that she fancied visiting for a bit of a laugh but it was closed yesterday. Off we trot, the shop is located in what was obviously an old Woolworths shop, and as the name suggests it is full of cheap tat, however it did have the required battery but not a nickel & dime price, as there was no other option a purchase was made and we can be on our way. First stop was going to be Dundee for a look around, after arriving it was proving a bit of a difficult job to find somewhere to park Gloria, as this was getting exceedingly difficult and it was only supposed to be a short visit we abandon the idea and head off to the site, with thoughts of visiting again on our next trip. After negotiating our way around the busy Edinburgh ring road, we arrive at the Haven Holiday Village for a bit of a Hi-de-Hi experience. We remember visiting such a place when our children were young and they enrolled "In The Tiger Club" which had its own theme tune that luckily for you all, I can not remember. Our expectations were fortunately wrong about the site as the tourers part was completely separate from everything else, with a totally level, fully serviced pitch with more than ample space, so impressed we were going to stay for longer, or so we thought. After setting up Gloria, getting the chairs out and enjoying the sunshine, we decide to explore the site, the bars and the entertainment area and also book in for a couple more nights. Well that was the plan, the first part went ok we found the swimming pool, mini supermarket, entertainment centre and the bar, no we didn't visit. Next stop reception to arrange another two nights, now as there are over 20 empty pitches on the site you wouldn't think that this would be too difficult, well you would be totally wrong. We are about to discover yet another display of total management stupidity, we are met by a receptionist who has clearly not got a clue what is going on, or any clue as to who to deal with customers, this was the first clue to well quite frankly totally useless management as she obviously had insufficient training for the position of a customer facing job. Anyway after a lot of faffing about she went to speak to the manager, came back and said yes we can do that and it will be £40 a night, sorry we have just paid £26 per night, trots off back to manager, then they return and said yes it would

definitely be £40 a night, here we go again, I am not going there it's a thanks but no thanks. Its totally illogical, the place is half full, they have a willing customer, they have a bar, a shop and restaurant all of which could have benefited from a customer staying another two nights, now they are getting nowt and another empty pitch, is it just me that can't see that is stupid. Anyway the rest of the day is spent walking into the local village having a look around and after clocking up 5 miles we get back to Gloria, for a little drink on the terrace and a BBQ, hip hip hurray, our first BBQ since we arrived in Scotland. Then it's a bit of the usual last minute planning for tomorrow, I will tell you what that was tomorrow.

Day 31 22nd June

The sun is shining brightly and it's getting warm even at 6.30am, plans is to get a bus from outside the HolidayVillage into Edinburgh, a journey that we have been told by our friends at reception takes 30 minutes. We head off for bus hope on and purchase our tickets, 30 minutes go by and we nowhere near the city, eventually we arrive at Princess Street one hour and twenty minutes after our departure, I hope that they are having a good laugh at the reception desk. We can't do any of the real touristy things due to you know what, but we have done that stuff before so it's a five mile hike around Edinburgh with a couple of pit stops to decide what our next move could be, oh well another pit stop and then another bus trip you know the 30 minute oh I mean a one hour and thirty minute bus trip, back to the Hi-de-Hi camp. There is shall we say some joviality going on at the site in preparation for the Scotland Euro football match, it actually wasn't jovially it was a right bloody noise from the Motorhome near to us, who by the look and sound of it had been partaking in a few or possibly more than a few alcoholic beverages for most of the afternoon. The afternoon sunshine is beautiful and we are sitting outside trying to enjoy it, the only problem is the noise from over the way, only thing to do is play some lounge really loud music to drown them out. It's at this stage that I am pleased at the incompetence at the reception that we encountered yesterday. The only thought is what happens if Scotland win, yes I know a little optimistic and as it happens they didn't. So all was quiet when they arrived back from the on-site bar, the site rules say that departure is by 10am that being the case we need to get an early night to enable us to pack up and get ready to go early in the morning, which means that's your lot for today.

Day 32 23rd June

We are up early to ready ourselves for our 10am departure but not as early as our noisy Scottish neighbours who have packed up and gone by the time I return from the showers, he must have had a bit of hump on, regarding last night's football score. We are ready to go before the 10am deadline with water tanks refilled ready for a couple of nights wild camping. The plan is to start heading south towards the Scotland / England border, or possibly into Cumbria and the amazing Lake District, a place that we love and have done for many years. As we travel south from Edinburgh we stop at Jedburgh to have a coffee and a look around the Jedburgh Abbey looks like a fantastic place to have a look around although there is not much of it left, no roof no windows basically just a fantastic structure. Now I fully understand that there is a World pandemic with us all, but when we get to the entrance, getting into what is basically wide open space, you have to prearrange a visit, this is probably understandable due to the queue of approximately 10,000 people waiting to get in and the 5,000 people inside the Abbey, ok I exaggerate somewhat, well not even somewhat as there is no burger in the Abbey and not even one person queueing outside waiting to get in. We enquire if we can pay to look around, guess what sorry not if you haven't pre-booked ok when is the next space, you could book in for 3pm, it's only 12 o'clock so enquire how many visitors they are expecting between now and then, oh none actually, so can we come in for 30 minutes now, no sorry not unless you have pre-booked, ok I just give on, common sense in Scotland has gone completely out of the window and I can not be arsed getting into a conversation. As we travel further south the weather conditions continue to worsen and from the weather forecast shows that it is not going to get better anytime soon. Decision time, do we park up in Gloria in the pouring rain for the next week or as we are so close to home do we let the weather defeat us and return home. We check the weather forecast to see if there is anywhere near us that is going to have better weather, the answer is no, that makes the decision for us and as we are 2 hours from home that is where we are going. We will have to see if things get better soon and we could possibly head into Wales and enjoy the sunshine for a while, going home will also give us the opportunity to empty stuff that we have carted all the way around Scotland but not used or worn. Luckily the wonderful M6 is extremely kind to us and we arrive back in the Pool of Life before it goes dark which it does here much quicker than it does in the far north of Scotland. Next Job move the car to up Gloria in here usual position on the drive, not quite that easy due to a flat battery. I am sure that it will only need a bit of a charge to get Eddie fired up and moved out of the way,

while we are waiting for this to happen we move some stuff from Gloria into the house, not much of it, as that can wait until tomorrow. It's not long before Eddie fires into life and places are swapped on the driveway of number 53, that's about it until tomorrow when we will have the usual epilogue with some facts and figures and interesting points regarding the journey, again that's it for today, last instalment of this trip tomorrow.

24th June

The Epilogue

Well that's it we are home, today's job is to empty Gloria of the stuff, boy oh boy did we take too much of the stuff, you would think that we should know by now not to take as much of the stuff with us, next trip we will definitely lay out everything we are planning to take, then we will go through everything again and decide whether we actually need to take it with us, I bet we can get down by half. Right some information about the trip, this is a brief resume, after our week in Coniston with the family. We traveled north to Carlisle and then headed north west through Scotland to the west coast to catch a ferry to the Isle of Arran then a further ferry trip from the top of Arran back to the mainland, past Loch Fyne then through fantastic Glencoe, from there north west to the Isle of Skye. Next we retrace our steps back through the mountains on up to Inverness next it's east to see family, then onto the east coast, from there it's down the east coast all the way to Edinburgh. Then we start the journey back to the Pool of Life, by the time we arrive home, Barb has driven Gloria a total of 1,560 miles, we have walked well not sure how many miles but it was a lot. We have seen the beautiful sights of Scotland unfortunately not in the best weather conditions during our 32 day road trip. It has been a great trip and we have seen parts of Scotland that we have not seen before

