

17 May 2010, Monday

We travelled from Castle Douglas in the direction of New Galloway.



New Galloway (Gd: Baile Ur Ghall-ghaidhealaibh) is a town in Dumfries and Galloway, southwest Scotland. It lies on the west side of the valley of the Water of Ken a mile north of the end of Loch Ken. There were scattered settlements in the area from at least the 13thC (when the nearby Kenmure Castle was first built), but the village was formally founded in the 1600s by the Viscount of Kenmure and granted.

Visited the local art centre and then went to the primary school that Linda and Andrew went to.

Sandra met a lady at the primary school and spent a fair bit of time chatting. She got an address for the then headmistress of the school (Nancy Fitzgerald) who it turned out lived next door to the Imperial Hotel in Castle Douglas.

On the way to Castle Douglas we travelled the Raiders Road – stopped at a picnic spot called the “Otter Pool.” Stopped for early afternoon tea.



At Castle Douglas, Sandra managed to catch up with Nancy Fitzgerald.

We are currently in Dumfries, Cairndale Hotel and Leisure Club. Website - <http://www.cairndalehotel.co.uk/>

Guests can use the Jacuzzi. I left my bathers in Avonbridge. Oh well, it is time to go commando!

The room at the hotel is very nice and has wi-fi. The room is commensurate with the cost of nearly 90 pounds for bed and breakfast.

We walked around the town centre of Dumfries and Sandra took some photos to send to Linda (has some special memory for her). There is a distinct lack of sit down eating places in the town centre. Some are very seedy. We elected to eat at the hotel.

18 May 2010, Tuesday

Looks like a better day – the all ordinaries are down 3 points – there must be some confidence creeping in or people are buying up cheaper stocks.



We are on our way from Dumfries, Scotland to the City of Carlisle, crossing over the border into England.

Hadrian's Wall is on the agenda.



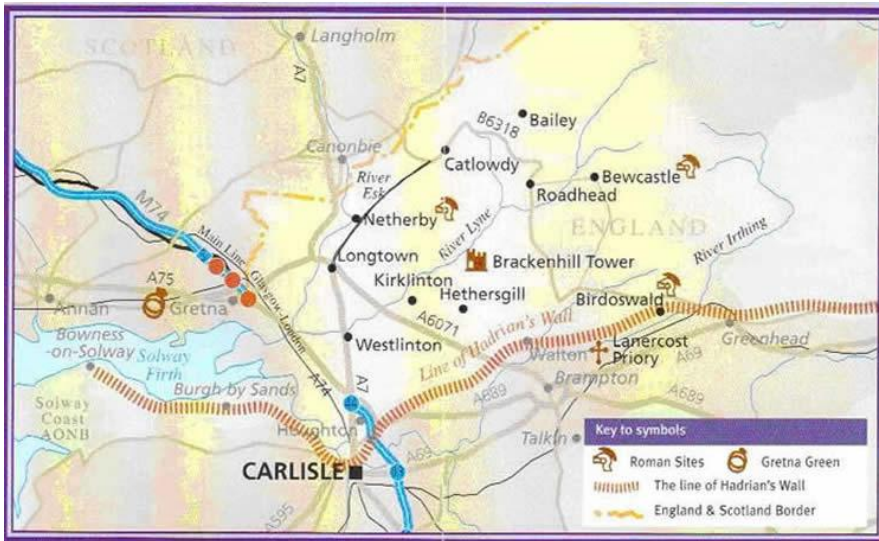
Hadrian's Wall was built in six years by Roman Legionaries who were from all over the Roman Empire. The building of the wall must have been welcome activity in this edge of the world outpost. The Romans had the best craftsmen working on this Wall, from architects to carpenters to masonries. The wall is mostly built of stone, and in parts is 10 Roman Feet wide, and later 8. It was started in the east and reached the river Irthing near what

is now Carlisle. It then weaves west to the Solway Firth but is built of 18" by 12" by 6" regulation turf blocks. Milecastles were placed at regular intervals, with each pair of Milecastles having two Turrets between them. A Milecastle could garrison between 8 and 32 men and the Turrets could also shelter some soldiers but acted primarily look-out vantage points. As Hadrian's Wall developed more legionaries were moved up to the wall and then large Forts like Birdoswald were built which straddled it. These Forts had gates to allow traffic to pass north and south through the wall.



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Hadrian's Wall is usually broken up into four distinct stretches, with each area taking you through different terrains. If you begin in the east you'll discover the South Shields stretch to Chollerford. This line passes through Newcastle, then out into Northumberland countryside, mostly farmland and through market towns like Prudhoe, Corbridge and Hexham.



The western stretch is perhaps the most notable, as in the west the line runs from Chollerford and Gilsland and takes you through some stunning countryside within the Northumberland National Park. It is here that you will find the most

visible remains of the wall.

Hadrian's Wall is definitely the most important edifice that the Romans erected in Britain. It represents a frontier to a Roman Empire which stretched across Europe, into Africa and beyond. The wall now stretches for 73 miles from Wallsend to Bowness and in 1987, the Wall was designated a World Heritage Site, alongside monuments such as the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China.

Following that it may be a run to the City of York and then to Bath. We are also looking at crossing over into Wales and have morning tea with the Noel family (Gary's Mum and Dad).

Dumfries to Carlisle is only 33 miles.

Carlisle to York is 116 miles.

York to Bath is 234 miles.

Bath to Barry (Wales) is 68 miles.

After that it is a beeline to Darlington to meet up with Ken and Janice Harwood. That is 300 miles.

We have to be back in Avonbridge by at least 28 May 2010 (we are leaving on 31 May 2010). Distance from Darlington to Avonbridge is 188 miles.

Over here they have a hotel chain called the “Premier Inn” that offers a double for 60 pounds. I am going to try that in Carlisle and see what it offers. Got there and the problem its location next to the highway – Sandra did not like it and we gave it the flick.

We drove into Carlisle (it felt strange crossing the border into England) and had trouble finding the information place. There were no signs on the road coming into the City to show the way to finding an information office. We found parking and then went for a walk. The street signs are not great and when I asked two locals which street I was walking along, neither seemed to know.

When in doubt ask a shopkeeper. We were directed to the mall and lo and behold there it was out of sight and easy to find if you were walking in the middle of the CBD. Hello! There are supposed to be signs for weary travellers pointing to the information place. In this case – none. Time to lift your game fellas!

After consulting with information we decided to travel to Hexham in Northumberland. The idea is to stay at a hotel (Best Western, Hexham, Northumberland – 90 pounds per night – great room – lousy under cover and off street parking).

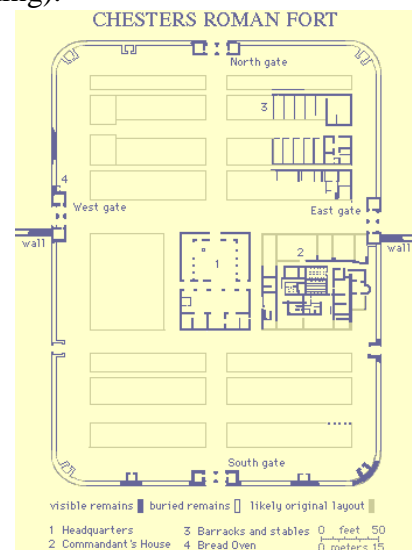


We arrived here around 2pm and after a drink took off for the roman ruin (fort called Chesters). The image on the left is what you actually see, the walls of the dwellings, etc. Website -

<http://www.aboutscotland.co.uk/hadrian/chesters.html>



It takes some time get around the fort and there are some interesting parts of the construction that makes you



think and realise how well organised they were, after all, they were in for the long stay. This image shows what has been excavated. Imagine how much more there is available still be seen if there is sufficient interest. The image on the left is the Commandant's house where it appears he has his own bath house.

We are staying one more night and looking to do some more visits to the forts and Hadrian's Wall in the direction towards Carlisle. I think that will do it as we need to move on (Thursday) towards York.

Perhaps Thursday and Friday in York and then a dash to Bath on Saturday. Perhaps Sunday and Monday in Bath with a visit built in to The Noel's who leave near Barry in Wales.

We must make tracks for Darlington on Tuesday, 25 May 2010 to arrive in time for tea with Janice and Ken Harwood and Janice's Dad (Alan Hodgson).

It seems Wednesday has been set aside by Janice for some sightseeing followed by Alan 88th birthday tea at a pub.

We have to set off on Thursday, 27 May 2010 for Avonbridge, Scotland.

I just realised something as I am writing this. Sandra will change her mind and the best laid plans (you know the rest).

19 May 2010, Wednesday

We are going to stay in Hexham today and see more of the Hadrian's Wall.

The all ordinaries are down today. Profit taking again?

The wi-fi in the hotel was longer an abnormal amount of time to connect to sites. Tried the dongle – all 5 bars available – works very well and fast.

We went to another of the Roman forts and the Roman Army Museum. The fort is called "Birdoswald" (website - <http://www.visitcumbria.com/car/birdosw.htm>). It is some 18 miles from Hexham towards Carlisle and to say the least, it was disappointing. Not enough information is provided to visitors (who are asked to pay a 3 pound parking fee – refunded if you pay to go in through the visitors centre) when you walk around the fort. All you are seeing are stones and very little information to go with it. If I did not have a book (purchased from the visitors centre) I would have been left wondering. I reasoned that they could do more. This site is not as impressive or informative as Chester's.

We decided to travel on to the Roman Army Museum. Good choice as it turned out because that was very impressive. Website - <http://www.vindolanda.com/>.



The eagle's eye film shown at the museum gives you a top down visual of Hadrian's Wall and the forts, towers, etc. The whole museum is full of information and if you wanted to, you could spend hours there. You have the option of going to see Roman Vindolanda - is situated in the heart of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, just to the north of the village of Bardon Mill, Northumberland. Roman Vindolanda is

one of the most exciting sites along Hadrian's Wall with its wealth of archaeological remains and ongoing excavations. The 2009 Vindolanda excavations continue until mid September 2010 and trench edge talks by archaeologists are given at 2pm each day during the school holiday period.

In retrospect, this is the first place to start (the museum), followed by Vindolanda and then perhaps Chester's to finish off. I would give Birdoswald a miss.

We visited the Abbey in Hexham later in the day and spent a long time there. Sandra was allowed to take photos. I spent a lot of the time looking at the construction. Website - <http://www.hexhamabbey.org.uk/>

20 May 2010, Thursday

The all ordinaries are down today – being Thursday, GESB shuts its unit values – looks like another loss this week.

Had a very troubled night. Had to get up around 11.30 pm last night to contact iPrimus regarding their unauthorised disconnection of our phone and fax numbers. More on this later. It was very troubling that this could have happened.

We are off to the City of York today. Website - <http://www.visit-york.org/>

I did not get much sleep last night and it showed when I was driving. At times, I was yawning and having trouble concentrating.

We got to York around 1.00 pm and are checked into a two star called “Hedley House Hotel.” Website - <http://www.hedleyhouse.com/>

The tariff is 80 pounds per night. We have a nice room, very clean and on the ground floor. It is just 5-7 minutes walk from the centre of York and has its own parking at the rear of the hotel (see image to the right).

The dongle works in this hotel. Their wi-fi is confined to their main lounge which does not suit me.



We were directed to two of the finer hotels by a person we met in a car park (turns out he was a former Mayor of York). We checked one of the hotels but they did not have any rooms for 2 nights.

We bought a tour bus ticket (much cheaper than Edinburgh tour buses) and had quite a long tour of the city. It is a pity that they used a Yorkshire man as a voice over because he just did not cut it and was boring. Website - <http://www.yorkpullmanbus.co.uk/>

We are going to eat in the hotel tonight.

21 May 2010, Friday

The all ordinaries are down today – a bad trade week. Another GESB loss coming up.

Tested if our phone line has been re-connected – nothing.

We are going to see more of York today – have the whole day out and also travel on the bus ticket we bought yesterday.

In my travel notes I have said that the prices charged by the places we have stayed in are not necessarily commensurate with the service/facilities they offer. It is probably time for the government to regulate the industry and award those stars (as they do now) but on the basis that there is a limit to what you can charge.

More on the iPrimus phone disconnection. It seems that they called our home number and did not get a response (we were away overseas). The said in the message that Telstra had received a request to connect a phone line to our address. As they did not hear from us by 17 May 2010, they went ahead and disconnected the phone and fax line (the galling thing is that we paid the bill in full on the due date of 17 May 2010). Lotta Noel checked the messages and found out what happened and sent me an email. I spoke to iPrimus in the early hours of the morning (between midnight and 1.30 am) of 20 May 2010 and was told that a request for re-connection was being submitted and that they would not be charging us for that (what a cheek!). I am going to play merry hell with iPrimus and if I do not get an apology/satisfaction, I will be writing to the Telecommunications Ombudsman.

Think about the implications of the actions by iPrimus.

- They don't care about their own customer and act on a request from another service provider (Telstra).
- A phone call is all it takes. Nothing else. They forgot about using email or writing to us.
- Both our businesses are aligned to the phone and fax numbers and could be affected if we don't get the numbers back (there is no guarantee that the numbers will be returned to us).
- Not everyone makes the sort of arrangements I do regarding access to phone and internet services. Imagine you being on holiday and not checking to see if everything is going along swimmingly. You get back and find that the gremlins have taken over.

