

2015 in Scotland

*By Chris Hirschhorn*

We were sitting, discouraged, in a coffee shop in Paddington Station, London. I had left our tickets for the Eurail and phone numbers, etc. on my dining room table in Denver. So we were on our own and I couldn't phone my college friend who was awaiting us in Brussels.

While my son, Dave, was trying to use his cell phone, I decided to investigate this Station which was enormous. The ceiling was so high – perhaps four stories high. There was lots of room to walk. There were so many shops and exits to the street and to the Underground. As I was walking, a huge number of people walked by swiftly, about six or eight persons abreast carrying their bags and holding their children's hands. I stopped and they pushed ahead of me. They came from the station's Eurail platform.

Dave decided to use Paddington's phones but one needed coins. So we changed bills. Then the coin-fed phones ate our coins and there was no way to get the coins back. A scam on visitors like us! Our carefully planned trip became a nightmare.

We had been at sea for a week and my son, a driver, hadn't driven cars for two weeks. We decided to rent a car and drive north on UK.I. First we passed properties of hedgerows that secured owners' sheep. Traveling further north on UK.I the weather was cooler and hedgerows were replaced by wood rows and when we entered Scotland the weather was much cooler and the wood rows were replaced by rock rows.

Scotland was full of surprises for us. Our first night, in Edinburgh, found us wandering to a pub where we met and chatted with a caretaker for the local castle. The next day, we continued through Aberdeen toward to St. Andrews where we saw a huge sign stating "Trump International Golf Course." Aside was a small sign stating, "He promised 400 jobs and we got none."

There were lots of mountains – not as high as the Rockies but they were high and their tops were mostly rounded and snowcapped. It was May. One even had a ski lift. We felt 'at home.' We were in the Lake Country and stopped at Loch Ness. We parked and Dave called for the monster but Nessie didn't show. The road turned and twisted around the several lakes. Eventually we came to Inverness and parked. We looked for and found a pub. It was crowded. Apparently, we were not the only hungry persons at tea time.

Next, we headed to Liverpool where the Cunard ocean liners had been built. In fact, we were there because Cunard was celebrating their 175th year of luxury travel by sea. The three ships, the QM2, the Elizabeth and Victoria each blasted their horn and three planes flew overhead, each streaming either white, red or blue exhaust. It was a joyous experience.