

Malta and Scotland

April 14-May 3, 2011

Thursday/Friday, April 14/15 - Since we were going to be gone so long, it was actually less expensive to hire a car to take us to the airport. After lunch we boarded our plan to Washington Dulles. Unfortunately, the plane was a CJ200 Bombardier, which is a small jet and very cramped; however, the flight was thankfully only one and a half hours. Our United flight to London was supposed to be in the lie-flat business class seats but they had changed planes and we had the regular business class seats, which were fine but not as comfortable (we're so spoiled I guess). When we arrived at London Heathrow Terminal 1, we had to transfer to Terminal 4 to get to our Air Malta flight but, since our bags had been checked through to Malta, it wasn't too bad. Anyway, we finally arrived at the airport at [Luqa](#) in Malta to be met by Tom, Alexander, Genevieve and Olivia. We got our rental car and drove to Tom's house. I called Nick, the contact for our apartment at [Tas Sellum](#), who arranged to meet me there to pick up the keys. Then I went back to the house where we gave the kids their presents and had dinner. After a lively game of charades, we left to get some much needed sleep at the apartment.

Saturday-Tuesday, April 16-26 - We spent these days visiting with Tom and the kids (more charades and Scrabble) and looking for a car for Tom. Unfortunately, I left my camera in the rental car when we left Malta for Edinburgh on Tuesday, April 26 so I don't have any pictures from this trip. However, we've been there so many times that I made a slideshow of pictures from previous trips that can be viewed using this [link](#) on YouTube. We arrived at London Heathrow Terminal 4 on Air Malta only this time we weren't able to get our bags checked through so we had to retrieve them and check them in for our bmi flight to [Edinburgh](#) which left from Terminal 1. We finally arrived in Edinburgh where we picked up our rental car. By this time, I was becoming quite adept at driving on the left and using a standard shift so I felt comfortable with this car; however, we got lost trying to find our flat until we bought a map. After settling in at the Garden Flat, I had to find a place to park the car (parking is very difficult in Edinburgh) and I learned about the benefits of park-and-display which involves buying a ticket for some amount of time to display in the car while it's parked. Most of the local parking was only for residents during the week between 08:30 and 17:30. We had purchased a parking permit when we arranged for the flat but

that's another story. Anyway, we found a local Chinese restaurant for a simple dinner and then crashed after a rather hectic day.

Wednesday, April 27 - Our arranged parking was at the Edinburgh Sports Club, which was about a mile and a half from the flat. So, I retrieved the car, drove to the club, parked and walked back to the flat. We decided to walk into Edinburgh and have lunch at a restaurant called [Café Royal](#). It was a long walk so we were ready for a good meal and we weren't disappointed. We started with a dozen local oysters followed by an excellent smoked salmon sandwich. After lunch, we walked to the [Princes Mall](#) on Princes Street to find a Vodafone store and purchase time for Alexander's old cell phone, which Angelique had given us to use on our trip. We ended up buying a different SIM card to be able to use it in the UK. Afterward, we walked toward [Edinburgh Castle](#), passing by the [Scott Memorial](#) which is an impressive spire in the heart of Edinburgh and houses a statue of [Sir Walter Scott](#). We proceeded on to the castle, crossing over from Princes Street to the [Royal Mile](#).



After a hike up the steep hill, we finally arrived at the castle. We purchased out tickets and began the tour. I was astounded to learn that the castle was originally established in 100 BC. Here are some pictures I took:



See more pictures on the next page.



Royal Scots
Dragoon Museum



Royal Apartments



St. Margaret's
Chapel



Stained Glass
at the chapel

The National War Museum was also quite impressive but I wasn't allowed to take pictures there. We also saw the Crown Room which contained the [Honours of Scotland](#) including the Crown, Sceptre and Sword which were first used at the coronation of nine month old Mary Queen of Scots in 1543. We left the castle and walked back to the flat. I was pretty well exhausted by the time we got back so we had dinner at [Sabor Criollo](#), another local restaurant featuring good Latin American cuisine, and then crashed again.

Thursday, April 28 - This was the day we would drive to [St. Andrews](#) so I walked the mile and a half to the sports club to retrieve the car and we set off. We arrived at lunch time and went to the [Jigger's Club](#) at the [Old Course Hotel](#), which is also used by golfers at the [Royal and Ancient Golf Club](#). We ordered lunch, Cindy opting for the Cullen Skink, which is a sort of fish chowder, and a chicken sandwich, and me having the fish and chips with mushy peas. After lunch we drove into St. Andrews and walked around the cemetery and ruins of the old chapel.



Then we walked to the ruins of [St. Andrew's Castle](#).



We decided to take the scenic drive along the coast back to Edinburgh but ended up getting lost in [Kirkcaldy](#). Fortunately, an attendant at a petrol station steered us back to the A92, which was familiar and took us back to Edinburgh. When we arrived, I found another park-and-display space near the flat so as not to face another mile and a half walk. After dinner at a local restaurant called Rafael's (now closed) we went back to the flat, read for a while, and decided to take another road trip tomorrow to [Glasgow](#) and the [Auchentoshan](#) single malt scotch distillery. This plan would allow us to avoid having to park at the sports club for the remainder of our trip since we could park-and-display after 17:30 until Monday when we would leave for London.

Friday, April 29 - Following a leisurely morning preparation, we left for Glasgow and arrived with time to spare before our tour of the Auchentoshan distillery. We stopped at a Marks & Spencer along the way to pick up some sandwiches for lunch (my favorite is the prawn and mayo). We proceeded on to the distillery where we ate our sandwiches in the car. Shortly afterward we began our tour. Our guide was surprised that there were so many of us there since "the wedding" was taking place at the time. When she said that, I said to her "the what?" which drew some muted chuckles. Oh well, somebody has to be the ugly American. Anyway, the tour was fascinating. We heard



all about how single malt scotch production begins by combining malt barley, water and yeast which is fermented then triple



distilled in the huge copper stills in the picture. The next step involves aging in oak kegs, most of which are purchased from bourbon distilleries in the United States although there are also some from sherry and wine kegs from Spain and France used as well. The bourbon kegs are used the longest and then the whisky is transferred



to one of the other kegs for further aging which can be from twelve years and up. The keg on top in the adjacent picture is said to be over twenty-one years old and a bottle of Scotch whisky from that keg would sell for around £500 (around \$800 at the current exchange rate). We were given a sample of their twelve year old single malt and it was very smooth. Since we couldn't transport a bottle back with us, we bought a mini-bottle of what they labeled "Three Wood" which is aged in all three kegs. Next, we left the distillery and drove to [Loch Lomond](#) where we stopped to take a few pictures and take a short walk. It was rather windy and cold so

we didn't stay long. Also, we had decided to take the scenic route back to Edinburgh, which would take longer but it turned out to be well worth the time.



Driving through the green hills and farmland was very beautiful and relaxing. We drove past [Stirling Castle](#) but decided not to stop since our goal was to find a good place to leave the car when we returned and it was getting late. As it turned out, we did find a park-and-display space only two blocks from the flat and we were set until Monday.

Saturday, April 30 - Our plan for the day was to walk along the [Water of Leith](#), a small river running through Edinburgh, all the way to the coast where we would visit the [Royal Yacht Britannia](#) on display at the [Ocean Terminal](#). Here are some pictures from our walk beginning near the flat:



When we reached the port, we stopped at [The Ship on The Shore](#) for lunch,



a great seafood restaurant. We had oysters again and I had a fantastic grilled salmon with Rösti potatoes, a poached egg and rocket (AKA arugula). After lunch,

we walked the rest of the way to Ocean Terminal where we toured the Royal Yacht Britannia. This picture was taken from the bridge overlooking the bow. On the right is a picture of the [Royal Barge](#), used to transport the queen and her guests to shore from the Royal Yacht. After the tour, we took a bus back to the flat and had dinner at Rafael's again.

Sunday, May 1 - This was a leisurely morning so I was watching BBC news when I heard the news about Osama bin Laden. This has been an eventful week, not only for us but for the world. First the wedding of William and Kate on Friday, now the death of bin Laden. However, our uneventful day would be spent walking through the [Royal Botanic Gardens](#) not too far from the flat. It was a beautiful day and we enjoyed the scenery at the gardens.



We returned to the flat and had dinner at Sabor Criollo again so that we didn't have to walk too far since we needed to prepare for our departure tomorrow.

Monday, May 2 - Edinburgh has been wonderful. Friendly people and a great city. We retrieved the car from its prime parking space, drove to the airport and flew to London Heathrow where we were able to take Heathrow Connect

from Terminal 1 to Terminal 4 and walk to the Heathrow Hilton. We had dinner at Zen Oriental restaurant (now closed) in the hotel and went to sleep early (I intended to wake at 6:00) after finishing "Just Kids" by Patti Smith.

Tuesday, May 3 - We got up early and checked in for United flight 919, then proceeded to the Star Alliance lounge where they have excellent food for breakfast. Our flight to Washington Dulles was uneventful but when we arrived, torture awaited us. First, we had to walk from one end of Concourse C to the other to go through Immigration which was packed with Americans returning from several overseas flights. Also, it was hot and humid in Washington and by the time we got through Immigration we were sweating profusely. Then we had to retrieve our checked baggage and go through FDA inspection, which wasn't too bad but then we discovered that we were required to go through security again, along with all those other returning Americans. It was horrible and took more than an hour. Anyway, we finally made it home and were happy to be back in cool Maine. Scotland was a great discovery. Here are some more pictures from the Royal & Ancient golf course in St. Andrews.

