

SCOTLAND 1994

Wed., 9/21:

Fuzz comes to pick us up at 10:30, for the ride to Dulles. We stop in Leesburg, VA for lunch and arrive at the Airport at about 12:30. We have hours before our flight but it is wonderful to walk right in, without the hassle of parking the car miles away and bussing to the Terminal! Larry, the man who checked in T.'s rifle last year is there again and we have a little reunion. He doesn't even check the permits this year, just takes a quick look at the gun and seals it up. We check the luggage and wander the shops for awhile. Finally we take the bus to the International Terminal and settle into the Red Carpet Club to wait for our flight, a very comfortable place to spend the time!

The plane leaves on time at about 5:50. A 767, and our seats are nice, in a double row, up front, not jammed into the middle of the zoo. If we can't fly 1st Class....

Thurs., 9/22:

We arrive on schedule at about 6:00am in Glasgow. All the luggage and the gun arrives too and Hertz opens early. Off we go in a little VW Golf sedan with automatic transmission to ease the stress. T. drives, L. takes up her position as navigator and we strike out for the Highlands, heading up along Loch Lomond, stopping in Inveraray for breakfast at a little hotel overlooking the Loch. The farther north we travel, among the lochs of the Western Highlands, the more varied and dramatic the scenery becomes. Mountains loom higher and higher into the clouds and deep glens brood among them. We stop again in Oban, a lively, bright and busy town, to stretch and walk a little, fending off impending Jet Lag and photographing the colorful harbor. Two seals surface for the camera.

Northward, along the shores of Loch Linnhe, ringed by massive peaks, to the Lodge on the Loch in Onich, (pronounced Oneese). The drive has more than lived up to its reputation as one of the most beautiful in Scotland and our heads are spinning with the sights we have seen and the sleep we have not had!

We carry the bags to the room, overlooking the Loch, and have lunch in the lovely Dining Room. L. begins this time in Scotland with fresh Salmon, to celebrate their arrival.

The afternoon is for napping, reading, napping, recovering.

L. calls John Hunt to announce our arrival. It's great to be speaking at much less long-distance than usually and we make plans to meet in the morning to spend the day talking and touring.

Dinner is wonderful: roast pheasant and strawberries & cream for desert. We'd better start walking, tomorrow!

Early bed. Jet-lag still hovers.

Fri., 9/23:

Ten hours of sleep for us is unheard of! We never moved all night and in the morning we feel quite human. Ready for the day...and all the adventures ahead. We are the last into the Dining Room for breakfast, which, since we are always the first for a meal,

seems very slothful. Then L. calls Neil McIntosh over near Loch Ness to tell him we have arrived and to make plans to see him on Sunday, to deliver his new fishing rod. We wait in the lounge for John. We will all tour the area together today. It's so wonderful to be back...especially now, after a good night's sleep!

John arrives about 11:00. It is wonderful to meet now as friends and equals rather than clients and Stalker. He looks wonderful. We have waited a long time to begin this friendship and we are all deeply content. We set off to explore the area, having one of the great Bar Lunches that Scotland does so well in a little place at the entrance to Glen Coe. We drive up into that terrible Glen of tragic history. It is a world of towering cliffs and high rock-strewn meadows, filled today with lowering cloud and mists, fitting dress for a sorrowful place. We wander out onto the rocks for awhile and then have coffee in a little pub tucked away on a side road. L. takes the portraits of some fine shaggy highland cattle nearby. We never stop talking for a moment, catching up on a year's news and strengthening the bond that began in 1993. Up the road to Ft. William for awhile. Many shops are closed as it is 5:30 now, so we return to the Lodge and sit by the fire, still happily talking away and wait for dinner. That meal includes a game soup and quail, roast lamb and a haggis for T. Excellent food. In the lounge later there is a delightful Scottish folk singer. We talk and listen and at 9:30 John leaves for his 1 1/2 hour drive home and we go up to bed at about 10:00. This has been a wonderful day!

Sat., 9/24:

We are frequently reminded once again of the vagaries and vicissitudes of Scottish plumbing, first encountered last year. Sometimes hesitant and halting, sometimes fierce and furious, even taking a shower becomes an experience. It takes two people, for instance, to keep the hose in the tub at the Lodge on the Loch from kinking up and slowing the shower to a trickle...but at least there is a shower!

After breakfast we start out to take T.'s rifle to Corrie Garth for safekeeping for the week and to pick up the rod for Neil. The countryside becomes familiar around Fort Augustus and suddenly, there it is, the old watering can hanging in the dead tree at the entrance to Corrie Garth's road! If they ever move that, we'll never find that place again. Mike, Frank and two clients are there and we have a fine visit. Frank looks much healthier than last year and Mike is as feisty as usual. Hugo is away for the day, but he'll be cooking at Kinloch Lodge. It's grand to be back in the pretty, sunny kitchen again. Everyone assures us that Kinloch is marvelous, so we aren't feeling deprived, but Corrie Garth is still a well-loved place. It holds special memories.

We have Eilean Donan Castle in mind for this afternoon, so we leave and have lunch in the Whitebridge Hotel and then pick up the road to the Western regions. As we go west the mountains loom higher and higher and the views are dramatic and breathtaking. Scotland shows so many faces and they change within a few miles. Every drive is a wonderful adventure. We wend our way westward and through Glen Shiel where a battle was fought between Jacobites, accompanied by Spanish troops and Government forces and on to Eilean Donan on Lochalsh. Countless photographs have been taken of this wonder, but L. is thrilled to be taking her own. We tour the rooms and peer from the battlements and read the history of the castle on plaques, starting with the Vikings and including beheadings and battles, as in all these fascinating castles.

We return to the Lodge at about 6:30, a little weary and with the usual collection of beautiful images in our minds. Our dinner tonight is the best salmon we have ever tasted, not a statement to be made lightly! It is Loch Leven Salmon, from the Loch just across the way, where John took us driving yesterday. It's odd claim to local fame is that it never gets the sunshine down into some parts of the glen there. Perhaps the

salmon thrive in that dark, cold water. Some of our own Brown Trout originated in Loch Leven and L. will love them the more for having seen this place of their ancestry. John calls to see how our day has been and to clarify the directions for L., as we will meet at his house tomorrow, before we deliver Neil's rod and move on to stay in Beaulieu for one night. This has been a charming and excellent place to stay and L. feels certain that she would end up mothering all of the young ladies that work here, serving in the dining room and cleaning and caring for the Lodge, if we stayed longer. They are, one and all, sweet and dear and we will miss all the staff. We forego the Social Life in the Lounge tonight and go up to read and pack for the morning.

Sun., 9/25:

We are up and have the car packed in time to have breakfast at 8:00 when the Dining Room opens. This has been an exceptional Hotel and we will remember it very fondly, for the kind and friendly people and the fine room and food! We get under way at about 9:00 and travel the road up to and along Loch Ness to meet John at his house. His directions are perfect and we arrive to a chorus of little welcoming terriers and go out for a walk up the little road above the house, looking out over the lovely peaceful fields to the mountains. It is clear at once why he so loves this place, high in the hills above Loch Ness.

We drive off in John's car to have lunch at his favorite pub in Struy, stopping by a power station, where, from the depths of the dark water, a salmon leaps up in greeting! The Struy Inn is a warm and cozy little pub and L. is transported with delight at finding the most delicious steak and kidney pie she has ever eaten. This place should be held in high esteem and kept a very deep secret!

We drive up to Cannich and out into the beautiful Glen. Here there are remnants of the Ancient Caledonian Forest, small groups and individuals, scattered across the hills. The bracken is turning to gold with the coming of winter and the river dances down the Glen. We stop at the dam and walk out to see the small loch it has formed, which is an hydro-electric project. The light in this lovely valley is a silver similar to that in our own Western mountains.

We return by way of Neil's house, to find it and having done so, get our car from John's and take Neil his new rod. He is delighted with it and presents L. with a fine selection of flies to try on the lochs and the river around Kinloch Lodge. He is a delightful young man with a nice little family and is very enthusiastic about fishing and hunting. He is also pleased to send two E-Mail messages for Linda, just as a fun way to keep in touch back home with Lisa and with Robert the Pen Pal.

We stop by John's and arrange to meet for dinner at our Hotel in Beaulieu. We depart to check in and rest for awhile, until it is time to dine.

The Dining Room is another elegant one. We are finding that the custom in the Hotels is to seat diners in the lounge, where they may have drinks and relax and their order for dinner is taken there. When it is ready, one is escorted into the Dining Room for the meal. John joins us at 7:30 and we have venison (Red Stag) medallions for the entrée, and L. finds another treasure from Loch Leven, mussels, sweet and tender, as an appetizer. Loch Leven hold wonders untold!

During dinner, L. pulls out the 200LX to check a fact. John's eyes widen and they're off, a woman from the States and a Stalker from Scotland, discussing computers great and little in a small hotel in the Highlands. T. patiently listens for what must seem like hours...but L. has often listened long to tales of bullets, ballistics and The Kill, so things

do even out sometimes.

Another pleasant custom is coffee served in the Lounge after dinner. This hotel presents it in small French infusion pots, an exceptional touch!

We go up to bed at about 10:00, tired and pleased with the day.

Mon., 9/26:

We pack up again in the morning. This has been a pleasant hotel, but impersonal compared to the warmth and personal attention at Onich. The plumbing is on a par, though. T. stands before a complex shower mechanism, waiting in vain for something to happen: the directions say "pull the cord"; there is no cord; L. begins to try wall switches; suddenly ...a nice warm shower! Amazing and quite a victory. Breakfast is served in the Dining Room and is laid out, in familiar fashion, on a table, cereals, fresh fruits, juices, yogurt and milk. Coffee this morning is in a large infusion pot...L. will remember this hotel for these pots, most certainly! John comes in at 9:00. It is always like a little light coming on when he appears. We do not think he can know how warm a bond we feel, but L. has given him her own Tartan scarf, and perhaps that will convey our regard.

Before we go touring L. finds a very good hill stick in a sports shop belonging to a friend of John's and a grand sweater in Campbells. Nice choices.

Today John has plans to take us to Glen Affric. As we wend our way into this deep glen, L. knows that she has found one of those places, so very rare in any ones life, that feeds her spirit and her soul. This is a place that she will return to, of this she has no doubt at all. The Ancient Forest clothes the hills here and clings to the grey crags above the beautiful River Affric. The air is sweet with their breath and the river sings. The pools are black with peat and the salmon fairly send their vibes to L.'s rod-hand! John says, "I love Cannich, because I can feel the deer there" and L. says, "and I love Affric, because I can feel the fish here", and that is the wonder of such places for those who can hear their messages.

We eventually have to leave and have visions of steak & kidney pie. To everyone's distress the Struy Inn is not open for lunch on Mondays! With sad hearts we drive away but soon come upon a perfectly pleasant little hotel serving Bar Lunch and have a fine meal there. Afterwards we must say good-bye to John in Beaulieu and drive on to Brora for the night. He shows us a clever shortcut on the map and off we go, with waves and promises to call him along the way.

The drive, up past Dingwall and on along the Eastern coast is interesting and varied and the shortcut turns out to be a magnificent high road over a great hill, at the top of which is a spot called The Struie, a different spelling but a similar name. (No steak & kidneys, however, only the Firth of Dornoch far below.)

When we arrive in Brora, L. finds some lovely tweed slacks in Hunter's of Brora and T. meets with great disappointment, as they have none of the Plus Fours or jackets, nor anything they were reputed to have. He has been looking so forward to getting some for his stalking and now it seems unlikely. Very frustrating.

We go on to our lodgings, a stunningly beautiful B & B in the country beyond, only to find that our confirmation has never arrived and we have no room. The owner calls ahead for us and we now have a room in the Navidale Hotel near Helmsdale. Off again.

As we are driving toward Helmsdale, suddenly, along the side of the road, walking in a light mist, come three men and on the wrist of the third perches a large, proud brown Hawk. If we had not both seen this almost Medieval little tableau passing we might have doubted its reality. They all were dressed in the peat and heather tones of the country and carried hill sticks and walked solemnly, and the Hawk was very still.

The Navidale Hotel is wonderful, overlooking the Firth and clean and quiet, Things do have a way of working out.

We await dinner in the Lounge, where our orders are taken, as usual. And dinner is a marvel! We did not expect this perfect food: smoked local salmon and sweet tender local lamb cutlets. T. has crepes in Grand Marnier with orange. Exquisite. We have experienced Serendipity at its best!

There is a wonderful dog, half Afghan Hound, Half Shizoo. He should be a major neurotic with that blood line, but the owner says he's mellowed with age!

L. has a welcome shower in a nice, simple tub with a hose. As we read before sleep, we hear, outside, a very small sound. Is it an owl...or a little local ghost?

Wather 1993
From The Orkney View Magazine
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(By Zoe Johnston, Shapinsay)

The wather jist noo hids geen tae bruck
Wae wind an rain an sleety muck
The wind hid better blows and blows
And then hid sometimes even snows
The puddles stand in evry slack
An gutter's every wie ye wak
Thirs no point diggin extra drains
Fur hid jist rains an rains an rains
The sun, wae never see hids face
Hids mibe hiden in disgrace
This summers really been so harsh
An winter can't be any warse!

We are going to have an interesting time on Orkney!

Tues., 9/27

Last night's sleep was possibly the most peaceful in our history. The profound silence and serenity of this place is a wonder.

And at dawn, in the lower garden, 2 large hares and a mother Roe Deer and her twins come out to graze on the wet green lawn.

Breakfast is exactly the usual choice (if there were no grapefruit sections and prunes for the cereals, L. would become insecure!) and wonderful coffee in, once again, a French Infusion pot!

We take some pictures from the grounds and John calls to find out why L. has left him a message with a change of lodging and a new phone number. He has pictured us driving desolately through the night, searching for some little room to sleep in. If only

he could have seen this beautiful place!

We leave with some regret, hoping to come back one day, and we return to the Brora region to tour the Dunrobin Castle, which is one of the grandest in Scotland and also the home of Barbara Gilford's ancestors, the Clan Sutherland. It is truly a most marvelous place, filled with fabulous personal treasures and unbelievable paintings and tapestries. L. admits that it is far more grand than her own family's Dean Castle, but home is where your own clan hung their hats, after all. We take pictures all around the grounds and buy some souvenirs for Barbara. Then we set out for the North.

Today, instead of a man bearing a Hawk on his wrist we pass a man bearing a large white cross on his shoulder and another man following after him! Some sort of Penance? Curious.

We eat in a delightful hotel along the way in Lybster, T., who is eating his way across Scotland on an unbroken trail of Haddock & Chips has those, ofcourse and L. has a super venison dish and salad. Then on to John O'Groats, at the far north-east tip of Scotland. The wind is fierce beyond words and the sun dashes in and out of clouds and showers and rainbows come and go all across the hills. It is an amazing drive up in this part of the world. Every little house crouches down, its stack of peat nearby, somehow clinging to the land. Sheep graze unconcerned all over the hills and sea birds blow around like big leaves on the winds. There is an Oil Rig visible offshore and a lighthouse on the tip of the land.

From here we drive west, to Dunnet Head, which is even a little farther north. If anything, it is wilder here. The wind pulls tears from our eyes and pushes us all over the ground. L. takes some pictures, somehow and we go on toward Thurso, where we will stay tonight.

We stop by Scrabster, to reconnoiter the Ferry for the morning and then find the hotel in Thurso. After the Navidale, almost any place would be a letdown, but The Pentland, right in the center of town, is It for the night, so we move into our room and plan a very early night, with a Bar Meal at 6:00 PM and a quick breakfast at 4:45 AM. Good thing indeed that we are "morning people"!

We have a small Bar Meal for dinner, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding with some veggies and salad. We are unpacking almost nothing and laying out clothes for the morning, as 4:00 AM comes around pretty fast!

Wed., 9/28:

And 4:00 AM does come fast, but we have had enough sleep to get us going and the hotel provides a quick breakfast, in solitary splendor, in the Dining Room, where a small cheerful gentleman bustles about, bringing cereal (no fruit!) orange juice, toast and coffee. We load the car in the rain today, and L. prays to St. Bonine for help with the crossing.

The ride to the ferry slip is very short and we exchange our vouchers for tickets and take our place in the queue of cars for boarding. At 5:30 the parade begins and soon our little VW is safely tucked into the hold of the P&O Line's St. Ola and we have found a cozy corner on the 2nd Deck. L. does her first Shipboard Computing, but certainly not to be the last and investigates making calls from sea, to continue the tradition of calling Lisa from unusual places. This should certainly qualify!

And off we go to Orkney!

The ferry is large but the motion is rolling. L. gives sincere thanks for the Bonine, but feels dull and queasy. Some poor man has left evidence of his active distress on the carpet. T. feels fine and goes on deck for awhile. L. subsides into a corner to write and forget her body. She rouses herself to attempt a call to Lisa, only to learn that one can not call the States from this ship. But a call from Orkney should count for something!

At about 8:00 AM we disembark, L. feels fine again and we are greeted by the rain that has been pelting the ship all the way. Never the less we set off for Kirkwall, the largest town, which is where our hotel is found. It is a short drive and all along the way are signs for ancient ruins, stones, burial places and other evidence of Orkney's history, which stretches back and back into pre-history, to the Neolithic period. Overwhelming to people so involved in the ultra-techno present. We will have to prepare our minds for this place.

The Kirkwall Hotel is on the Harbor and pleasant, a little elderly, and seems comfortable. We check in, have some second breakfast and begin to walk to the Cathedral of St. Magnus, built in about 1137 AD. We spot some fine shops along the way for gifts and such and then we see it, the Cathedral that T. has dreamed of visiting since his first glimpse of it in a National Geographic Magazine in 1935! It is large, tall, imposing but somehow very friendly. At this great age, 800 years or so, it is as if it doesn't need to awe anyone and it stands squarely on its ancient Norman stones, welcoming all. Today it is also filled with BBC personal, racing around, up and down the aisles, arranging miles of cables and wires, lights, speakers and cameras. L. inquires about all this furor and we learn that they will film an evening service tomorrow but will film the rehearsal tonight. That's for us! We wander around, amid the wires and scurrying workers and take some pictures. In one of the columns repose the bones of St. Magnus himself! Also, all around the walls are burial places of various folks and on one it says: " She lived regarded and dyed regreted' (sic), which L. hopes someone will say about her some day!

We decide to tour a little Museum, trying to get a feeling and some understanding of the great age and remarkable activities of this area. There are some amazing items in the Museum, found all over these islands, and especially in an area called Skara Brae, where the oldest known settlement in Europe was unearthed by a storm in the 1800's. The history recorded here marches forward from age to age, documenting changes in the customs, possessions and rituals of the people. It is an helpful preparation for touring the burial sights and Skara Brae, which we will do tomorrow.

The shops produce wonderful items, both for gifts and for us! In one very small local craft shop L. finds the sweater that symbolizes this wild northern land, knit of wool from those unique sheep that only eat seaweed on the beaches of North Ronaldsay. It is a dark grey/brown, lanolin-rich fiber and carries the moods of this area in its weave. As L. waffles (swithers!) a little, a delightful little woman says "Go fer it dear! It's you exactly and ye only go by once!" Done! And it wraps L. in a rough, warm Northern embrace.

That poem copied from the Orkney View has turned out to be more prophecy than we knew: the rain only slows to start again, so we live in our rain jackets and rubber shoes. It does add atmosphere to the grey stones of the Kirkwall buildings but all of our pictures will be dark and dim here.

A shower is welcome and a rest. Dinner in the Bar, and L. tries the local Steak & Kidney Pie, which would be very good...but she has eaten in Struy!

And off to the BBC rehearsal. We walk through the dark wet streets and as we approach to great rose-red sandstone Cathedral, the lights in the small stained glass windows, high up on those massive walls, are lit from within. There is an odd effect, however, for the technicians are testing lights in there and the colors and intensity of each window keeps changing and varying in a very surrealistic way! We enter through the great doors, lit by blinding klieg lights and stepping over cables and find, in the center of the long Nave, a small cluster of towns people, a large number of BBC people, several Cathedral personnel and a pleasant gentleman from TV Scotland, all trying to get arranged to begin the Rehearsal. We are waved up into the ranks. Everyone sits down, and after some briefing from the Top-Tech of the BBC and a pep talk from Mr. TV Scotland, the Choir Director of the Cathedral, a young and smiling man, begins to "coach" us in the not-too-fine points of singing in a Cathedral. There are columns everywhere, a vast high ceiling, the organ is far far away up the Nave, the Choir is even farther and echoes and time-lags all conspire to muddle and diffuse the sounds. Any Choir Director who can keep smiling while standing at the epicenter of that cacophony has L.'s deep admiration. But suddenly, as though by a magic touch, we are singing, O Come, O Come, Emanuel, standing in this venerable, ancient place, where Vikings and Celts, common folk and Kings have sung and prayed and stood before us. L. is suspended between deep joy and tears of astonishment, that T. is able to live this moment, in the place he has revered for all these years, and that she is here to share it, too.

The people all around us are delightful and we chat between singing and laugh at our own mistakes and there is a feeling of warmth and pleasure that L. suspects is not new to this big, rough, red-stone Home of God. And just ahead, in another pew, the very same little lady from the shop points to the sweater, smiles broadly, and mouths the words "It looks lovely!"!

We return to the hotel in a glow of delight and sleep well, as the big windows looking out on the busy little Kirkwall Harbor shut out all the sounds of the ships coming and going in the night.

Thurs., 9/29:

The rain is still falling this morning. Now we begin to wonder what Orkney actually looks like in sunshine! Does anyone know? Every single person seems anxious to assure us that the weather was just lovely "until now"! But still, it is a friendly and wonderful place. We will have to return one day to see its brighter face.

We want to see some of the Neolithic ruins and standing stones today, rain or not, so we go after breakfast, following a carefully marked map. We find the Maes Howe Burial Tomb very easily. This is the sight of the burials of the very honored dead of about 5000 years ago. It was entered at a later date by Vikings, who left their "graffiti" and runes all over the walls. We are the only people touring this wonderful place today. It is cared for very meticulously and a Guide takes us carefully into the great stone walled mound and interprets the runic writings.

From here, chilled and damp, we go on to the Standing Stones Hotel, where we have coffees and chat with the owner, a very cheerful fellow who asks, surprisingly, what the weather might be in Tennessee just now! Why?? It seems that he and his wife are going to visit friends there next week. Last year L. had noted that every Scot going to or coming from the States seemed to have California as his/her goal or departure point. This was rather refreshing.

On, now, to The Ring of Brodgar. This is a great circle of standing stones which at one

time were placed closely side by side on a hill along a little road between two large lochs. All along this road and across the surrounding fields stones can be seen, standing in pairs or small groups or in solitary grandeur, some as tall as 15'. There are so many around that some farms have used them as fence posts, a fact that causes L.'s mystic sensibilities to quiver. She can hardly dare to get too close to some of them, they seem so powerful and austere. The Ring is a mysterious place and it would be an experience beyond imagining to stand there on the night of a full moon, under the Northern Lights! We walk the perimeter path and L. collects some small loose stones to carry home and some to give to John. These must be talisman of strength. Certainly they are very old. The whole area is grey and green and wet and chill today and somehow that suits the mood of our first visit to this mystic spot.

The only sign of (visible) life in The Ring are many black snails. We have a small book of Scottish Superstitions. It states quite clearly that a black snail crossing your path is a sure sign of impending rain. Must have been at least one at the Ferry Pier on the way over to Orkney!

We drive further on into the country to the Skara Brae, the superbly preserved Neolithic village. This is an exceptional treasure, but L. gives in to the icy wind and rain and opts for the warmth of the VW and Vivaldi on the BBC while T. trudges off to do the tour. Brave or foolish? It's a matter of perception. Certain points of L.'s anatomy are smarting from a slip and fall in the mud along one of the paths at the last stop and her sense of adventure is a little dimmer than usual, so she waves good-bye and says "when we come back...". When T. returns, chilled to the bone and weary she has no regrets about her choice.

We go back to the hotel for a Bar Lunch and then to some of the shops to complete some unfinished errands, including two face cloths, as no hotel so far has had any and we like to have them. (Note for the future, bring face cloths). Then we hole up in the room for the rest of the afternoon, repacking for the departure in the morning, reading, writing postcards...and drying off and warming up! We are growing moss.

Dinner in the Bar. L. has a really delicious Stir Fry Beef with Black Bean Sauce, T., surprise, Haddock & Chips! Our server is a young woman from Orkney. The local accent is very soft and lilting, with many "sh" sounds and many smiles. These are warm and friendly people who are also proud of being Orcadians.

There is going to be a band playing in here tonight, but as we are two floors up we should not hear them too loudly, although by the looks of the speakers.....!

We set the alarm for 5:30 AM and go to sleep to the distant sounds of the band, even through two floors of solid old building!

Fri.,9/30:

We have the early breakfast that these hotels always offer to travelers, pack the car, say good-bye to Kirkwall with every intention of returning (maybe in sunshine?) and drive away in a gale! More rain than ever and fierce winds. Good thing the ferry is large. At Stormness there is a delay in loading, but we do eventually drive on and go up to a lounge to read and to write this Log. As we reach the half-way point between Orkney and mainland Scotland, a brilliant ray of sunlight strikes the distant cliffs of an island, illuminating the surf breaking against the rocks and a waterfall plummeting from the heights. The sun has been waiting for us here. It is, we must admit, a very welcome sight.

When we reach Thurso it is not clear but not raining, at least. We set off for distant Inverness, which is actually only 110 miles away. We take the main roads and forego the more scenic high hill roads, as the weather is not conducive to touring and we want to return the little VW to the Hertz office before too late. We stop for lunch in a little restaurant in Brora and there, on the menu, is: Chicken Maryland! Neither of us want to try that...!

As we follow the A9 onward, there they are, now going in our direction, the two men carrying the cross, but the other one has shouldered it now. They are still steadily trudging, but surely the rains and chill must be awful for them. Maybe that is the point! L. wonders where the men with the Hawk might be; T. says "Back in the Middle Ages!".

We reach Inverness at about 2:30, fill up the gas tank and find the Station Hotel. Pandemonium! The little traffic circle in front of the hotel, ostensibly for the guests' cars and the loading and unloading of luggage, is crammed with taxis, double parked vehicles and circling buses. L. enlists the considerable talents of a Porter named Kevin, a weedy, wee man who apparently is stronger than Hercules! He heaves and hurls the big duffels around the halls and into and out of lifts and at last into a very pleasant room, #207, tucked off on a corner of the hotel. This hotel is beautiful and elegant, classically Edwardian and comfortably stuffy. We had wandered in here last year and L. wondered if it would be snooty. Now we will find out.

She also wonders if T. will ever be seen again: he has driven away, off into Inverness, to return the VW while she checks in. The fact that the Hertz lot is only about 300 yards away and right behind the hotel is not significant: T. gets lost. Easily. But L. keeps the faith and soon enough he comes into the room, reporting that there was no one at Hertz to receive the car. L. makes a call and a woman shows up eventually to pick up the keys and take our little blue buddy away. We have liked and appreciated its economical and quite comfortable aspects. It's a little like saying good-bye to a good traveling companion.

L. tries the shower and pronounces it THE best shower she has ever used! It really is a marvel and the temptation is to stay under there, in the warm and powerful flow, reviving and removed from the very tough re-entry from the bucolic deep country of Orkney and of the Coast, into the relative bustle and blare of Inverness. But she eventually emerges, much refreshed.

John calls from the lobby and down we go to welcome our friend and to regale him with our Orcadian adventures and pore over maps of where we have been. He has been adventuring too, in the Genealogical Library, researching Boyds and Hemphills for L., who finds this one of the kinder things anyone has done for her. He has picked up some threads and we all make plans to go there tomorrow, but after we go everywhere else we want to go, as we might easily get involved there and never leave all day!

When we go into the huge, rather stern looking Dining Room for our dinner, we find the effort here, rather than on decor, is on the food. The hotel is known for its cuisine and we have a marvelous meal. The venison and its sauce are far superior to any we have had. We chat non-stop throughout the meal and out into the Lobby, where we talk until 9:30 and part, planning to meet again at 9:00 tomorrow morning to go adventuring in Inverness. It's good indeed to have John back with us again.

The room is comfortable, although the sounds of the city are louder than we have experienced. Still, we will be here only two nights and then it's on to the remote Kinloch Lodge, where silence should not be difficult to find!

And tomorrow it will be October!

Sat.,10/1:

This is the day for Inverness. We have slept well, despite the city noise, which is noticeable here. We breakfast in that huge dining room, to the accompaniment of the sounds of American accents: there is a Tour Group staying here. Pleasant, jolly folk. We give fervent thanks that we are not, however, among them!

John arrives around 9:30, our guide to this delightful small-town city. We set off on foot to explore and to fulfill certain errands: T. wants Plus 4's: John knows a wonderful little shop, tucked away up a little alleyway, whose elderly expert Proprietor has the very ones! L. needs film, whiskey for Robert, other items: John finds them all, including L.'s sudden and unexpected Christmas gift from T.: a glorious jacket, beautiful beyond her belief. Rejoicing! Lunch in the Bar of a perfectly grand hotel along the River that runs right through town. Inverness is as charming as it had seemed to be last year on our quick visits there and now, with John to show us a huge Second Hand Book Store, a wealth of exciting shops and, to top off the day, The Library! John & L. squint at millions of Boyds and Hemphills on Microfiche and L. reads about them in books on the very soil from which they sprang. She is deeply moved and pleased, as well as grateful to John for this opportunity. She needs days, weeks perhaps, in this room, but along the way, peering at the tiny names on the screen, John has an inspiration: one Hemphill has the middle name of McGowan...: what if Goin's name was corrupted, as so many were, upon his arrival in America, back in the 1700's. He and L. are thrilled with this possibility and L. plans to try to research this further. She also feels that Ireland may be her next source of information and John agrees very enthusiastically to accompany her there, some day in the future. That is surely a true friend! Then they peer at countless numbers of Hunt's, more than could be imagined, including Johns in their millions! Amazing clan, those Hunts!

We stay until the Librarian, ringing a little hand bell, sends us away. Back to the Hotel, for more contented chatting in the lobby until dinner, which is wonderful, of course and then we talk until quite late, loathe to part, but with promises to call in the morning and that John will come up to visit us later in the week at Kinloch Lodge. We go late to our beds and go to sleep at once, even with the sounds of a small war around the Bar next door!

Sun.,10/2:

This is the day that we go North. We both make use of the World's Best Shower, which Tom agrees is the proper title for that marvel of delight. We have breakfast in the grand dining room, pack, talk to John, promising to call each other, and go down to the Lobby to await events. We meet up with David McKay, a delightful young man from Washington State who will join us a Kinloch Lodge, then with Mike & Frank and finally with two more of our party, Joe & Buckey from Las Vegas. The luggage goes into the trailer behind Frank's car and everyone piles into two vehicles and away we go on the next stage of our adventure.

As we go north we see the increasing similarity with Labrador, but here, all over the tundra, the bracken is turning golden with the coming of winter. The mountains grow taller and the land wilder and more wonderful. By the time we reach the Lodge, which seems to be in the back of beyond, we are enchanted by this land and have come under the spell of Ben Loyal, the craggy great mountain, Queen of the Scottish Mountains as it is known, but its presence is decidedly masculine to us! It looms over this wild place and the comfortable lodge alike and we can sense it even as the darkness falls, up there

in its wreath of cloud and snow. It is raining down below, but Ben Loyal is turning white!

We are thrilled that Hugo will cook for us again, but he is very late arriving, so supper is a pick-up meal and we turn in, tired and a little unsure as yet about the mix of people and the week to come, but glad to be moved out of duffels and into drawers and shelves again! Our rooms are delightful and L. has brought the parts to make a "shower" for the tub. It works...or at least it does on the trial run!

Sleep is much more peaceful, here in this remote and beautiful place, away from the sounds of cities.

Mon., 10/3:

The First Day, that slightly confused, complicated, sort-it-all-out day that every Camp or Lodge presents to the newly arrived hunters or fishermen. Finally everyone is fed and dressed and ready to hunt, observe, hike, whatever the plan. T. & David go with Adam Henderson, the fine young Stalker of this estate and Joe & Buckey go with Mike to be deposited at another estate down towards Helmsdale. Frank, being less than well just now, is sleeping, Hugo is cleaning up and L. prepares to go hiking. She rounds a corner of the hall and meets up with Yvonne, a delightful woman from: Orkney! They sit right down to have a nice chat and then Yvonne, who does the cleaning for the Lodge, goes to work on the rooms and L. sets off, in the company of Jonathan Edmonds, a very nice young Englishman who is "supposed to show you around a bit" but who is also an enthusiastic hiker and loves this area, having summered here since he was about 4 years of age. As they hike, snow showers rush by, a small blizzard sweeps in from the sea and heads right for the area where T. is probably hunting, stags and hinds swarm all over the hills, Ben Loyal and Ben Hope, on the other horizon, are white-tipped and shining in the morning sun. It is a place of absolute beauty and purity. The Kyle of Tongue, the deep bay that cuts inland from the sea, is blazing blue one moment and slate grey the next as the snow showers and clouds scud over it. They hike a little road and then cut across what looks like dry heather and bracken but turns out to be bog. All lodges have drying rooms, just for this very reason: it is a land of much water in many forms, standing, falling and waiting to fall!

L. puts together some lunch from leftovers. Hugo likes the fact that she will take care of herself but also will ask for what she needs. L. thinks that's her good fortune, as some cooks take strong exception to anyone in the kitchen. Here, as last year at Corriegarth, we all tend to "hang out" in Hugo's kitchen. Yvonne and Hugo join her and they all have a lovely chat and drink tea and enjoy each other's company. This the kind of moment that we always really remember in later years, the little off-hand warm encounters that form the real heart of a fine adventure.

L. is off again, this time to hike along the Kinloch River. It is absolutely beautiful, with lovely pools and a small, dancing falls, blazing in alternating sun and cloud shadow. She only returns when she has used up her film and because she has promised to wake Hugo from his nap: dinner depends on that!

As the day goes on, L. waits for T. & David to return from their hunt. Darkness falls. She talks with John, who asks about the hunters: no news yet! Finally, at almost 8:00 PM, they appear. David has shot a nice stag! We all cheer for him and L., who has lit the heater in T.'s room, knowing that he will be very chilled and tired, takes his wet clothes to the drying room and when T. & David re-emerge, everyone sits down to dinner. Pork Roast, Leaks Au Gratin (wonderful!), Lemon Soufflé for desert...Hugo's great food once again before us!. We toast David's fine Stag.

We go up to bed about 9:30. T. is very tired, but he is excited to continue the hunt tomorrow, when he will go out with Adam alone.

Tues., 10/3:

Today T. will hunt, David will rest, others will go with Mike to other areas. L. considers a hike to Tongue for novelty. The day starts with showers for us, using L.'s invention, the tub-shower made with bits of hoses and connectors, and it works wonderfully!

T. and Adam are away at about 9:30 and L., craving a little solitude and a lot of exercise, plans a walk to Tongue, or at least in that direction. She sets off in a light mist which becomes various intensities of rain as she goes. The road winds up and around and down, with views of Ben Loyal and of Ben Hope coming and going in the mists and clouds. As her legs loosen and her muscles awaken she feels her spirit respond to these wonderful hills and mountains and glens. There are lochs and lochans, another lodge along the way (Loyal Lodge, where lives The Count, to whom no one refers in a complimentary manner!) and countless fascinating mushrooms, plants and sheep, sheep, sheep. A pair of geese launch from a pond and a distant hawk circles, hunting. And on almost every ridge, a little head with canted ears and bright, watchful eyes observes her passing: the sentry hinds, keeping their watch.

As Tongue comes into sight she is walking in a deluge, not amused. A B & B sign, combined with that of an Art Studio, beckons. She spends a very pleasant 3/4 of an hour chatting with Stephanie S. Mackay, the Proprietor and looking at lovely little watercolors. They have coffee and cookies and the sun breaks out and beams upon the two pigs named Pamela, the peacocks, sheep, ducks and all. L. bids her a grateful good-bye, much warmed and rested. As she reaches the road again, the rain returns and only gives her a few breathtaking moments of blue sky and sunlight, just in time to see both Ben Loyal & Ben Hope, snow blazing, on her left and right. No walk in her life has given her a more beautiful moment to remember, though many have been wondrous indeed. She has walked between 7 & 8 miles today and is more than ready for lunch!

L. & Yvonne sit down for a little chat in the kitchen. The topics today range around the Mystic and the Paranormal. Yvonne being from Orkney, that most mystical place of legend and myth and of ancient stones, is certainly sensitive to and familiar with such things. They trade experiences and opinions. The summation of their rather intense discussion is that, as opposed to seeking psychic gifts, a combination of common sense and intuition is the very best tool they both have!

The word at the Lodge is that Tom & Adam were stalking a stag when 5 German hill-walkers popped up over a hill, right into the herd! Gloom. And lots of speculation about who said what to whom. About 2 hours later L. hears T. return: "Success!" he says; "Did you get Germans or a stag?". A stag...and the Germans were lucky at that!

During the stalk, at one point, Adam reached for a handhold on a rock above and as he pulled himself up he suddenly sprang back as though shocked by current. Tom thought he must have spied a hind watching them in the next glen, but no, Adam had very nearly placed his left hand squarely on an adder, the highly toxic snake of these regions! Indeed, a kind of a shock to the nerves!

L. puts on boots and we go down to the shed to see the butchering which we consider an important ritual and most interesting. (When she shows up at the sight, L. perceives the usual subtle reaction: "Uh-oh. Hope she doesn't faint or get sick or something...". Little glances and uneasy silences. It always takes a while for the stalkers and others to

realize that she genuinely appreciates and is interested in this process. As David so rightly says: "We are witnessing a man practicing his art.") Then, as a great favor, Adam drives us in the Land Rover up into the Deer Park, where the huge and heroic breeding stags dwell. They have been born and bred on this estate and they look like a beautiful forest moving over the fields. They follow the Land Rover and L. shoots a roll of film and we are awed by the majesty of these, one of which Adam terms "a perfect Royal".

Tomorrow T. will rest and then hunt the following day again. Fishing is a possibility for us, if we can go with Mack, the delightful fellow Mike has brought along to oversee fishing and guns and to help Frank.

Dinner tends to be so late here that we retire upstairs immediately afterwards. This group is not especially convivial to sit and chat with and so we tend to wander off to seek a little space anyway. David has proven to be as pleasant a lodge-companion as he first appeared, however.

Wed., 10/4:

This morning L. lets T. sleep in without his usual wake-up call, until 6:30. He sits over coffee in the room for a long, leisurely time and then we wander down for breakfast, which is really the nicest meal here, eaten in relative peace and a pleasant atmosphere. Dinner tends to be a little less easy to enjoy as the personality mix doesn't really make a festive table!

We have decided to leave on Saturday, rather than Sunday. This will ease the logistics of getting everyone and everything down to Inverness on Sunday in time to catch the train to Glasgow at 1:00 PM. L. plans to make reservations at an hotel for Saturday night and is pleased to have a little more time to shop for some last minute gifts.

The phone in the Lodge is a nasty beast that swallows 10p coins and beeps incessantly and cuts off the call in mid-word. Very frustrating. The oddest thing is that it is easy to call the States and almost impossible to make a call within Scotland from here!

We take a walk after breakfast, down to the grand stone house near the Kyle of Tongue. The basic building is ancient with a new roof and interior structures. It is absolutely solid, and certainly would not be standing in this harsh land if it were anything less.

After lunch Frank drives us into Tongue. A stop at the grocery store and the Post Office fills the entire list of errands, as there is really nothing else there! The crafts shop that Yvonne thought was just outside of town is no more. We do stop at the Art Studio on the way back and buy a painting from Stephanie, as L. had promised. Today all the friendly animals are happier and drier...and so is L.!

The afternoon is perfect for reading by the fire. L. retreats upstairs for a hot "shower" with her hose invention and to read and nap and listen to the classical music program that Radio Scotland offers, which also mixes in some fine local folk and indigenous music and makes a lovely break in her days.

This paragraph is from an issue of Country Life Magazine, and was part of an article about stalking Red Deer and Roe Deer, by R.W.F. Poole:

"For most people, stalking means the Scottish Highlands. I have problems with the Highlands: a crook knee for a start, and I no longer enjoy getting sodden every time I poke my nose out of doors. There are plenty of midges at home, and there is no sense of adventure, for me, in roughing it in some blighted bothy. Also, I get little pleasure from spending a day on a hill staring at the tacketed boot soles of a man whose entire

conversation for the day consists of: "Doon!", "Take him noo!" and "Mished!"

Every hunter in this Lodge can identify with at least some part of that little gem. T. was telling L. about crawling along behind Adam's boot soles, staring alternately at them and at tiny little bog plants. He suddenly had a vision of the hot spring bog in Wyoming, where L. had first introduced him to bog botany, and he had a fit of giggles at the bizarre similarity and difference!

What had been a day of some sun deteriorates into a wild windy and rainy evening and some hunters are still out. Thank goodness T. is safe and warm by the fire, we both agree. But tomorrow, back in the hunt!

Tomorrow, too, John will come up to visit. Since Tom has to hunt in order to have another chance on Friday, if necessary, L. will go touring with John. They both want to see the area to the west. It is a treat that L. looks forward to, as she yearns to see more of this wild place and she misses our friend very much, too.

Hugo gives us a lovely honey-baked ham and a spectacular steamed pudding for desert. L. does her nightly disappearing act, slipping away, with a small portion of desert, right after she finishes dinner, as the style of conversation at the table is not comfortable for her. Happily, her room is a cozy and friendly little refuge and T. comes upstairs not too much later.

He will hunt again with Adam tomorrow. David has gotten another nice Stag today, and we hope for the same for T. tomorrow.

Thurs., 10/6:

Today is T.'s last chance to hunt this area with Adam. If he cannot get a good animal today he will go on to the estate where some of the others have hunted with success. And L. will go touring with John along the north coast.

T. & Adam leave, with many wishes for good hunting and L. waits for John. When he arrives they have coffee in the kitchen with Hugo, who has looked forward to seeing John again and L. shows him just a little of the lodge.

This is L.'s account of her Day along the North Coast with John:

We set off, maps and camera and coffee in hand, to "escape" for the day. As we drive west and north along the shores of the Kyle of Tongue and of Loch Eriboll and then toward the north-west corner of the country, the houses become small and hunkered down against the fierce winds. Those winds are putting on a demonstration today and when L. tries to take pictures she finds that taking them from the car is the safest and best way, as the gusts are approaching, almost certainly, 80 knots and she cannot stand nor hold the camera steady! There are wild little lochans and bays and huge stony mountains and lower hills, devoid of all but the most dedicated birches and bracken. Many of the houses have ugly little caravans (trailers) literally tied down beside them. Why? There is a fish processing plant along one shore. There is a bright red phone box on each shore of Loch Eriboll. That must be the hub of civilization here. They are shining little red jewels against many shadings of grey and white. In time we arrive at a tiny cluster of buildings, including the Smoo Cave Hotel. A sign: Bar Meals! "Let's try it", says L.; "I'm no snob, but...!", says John. L. maintains that such places can be diamonds in the rough. In we go, to see what it offers. There is a tour bus there and all the folks are eating and smiling and seem to be surviving the meal. We look at the menu: homemade steak pie...hopeful! Homemade soup, coffee. We

order and find a little table by a small window, looking out onto a windy world. John & L. never run out of conversation it seems, so we chat away and wait for lunch. When it arrives, preceded by the clatter and bustle of a kitchen in the background, it is a wonderful surprise. The soup is a lovely puree of vegetables, perfectly seasoned and rich. The meat pie is accompanied by fries and fresh peas and is delicious, lacking only a kidney! When L. inquires about this missing link, the Proprietor agrees that this would be a nice addition but: "Many folks don't like 'em", as L. has heard often. She proposes bringing her own kidney next time! The tour bus folks depart, still looking pretty healthy, and we eat in companionable quiet and coffee is set on a separate little table, as a finish to the meal. Yes. A rough diamond. And a place to return to; L., swaying in the terrible wind, takes a picture to remind us of this good little place. (At the bar sat a fellow, apparently drinking lunch, who, with his wife, works at another restaurant in the area. The name: The Oasis! Absolutely astonishing, here in this far-from-Saharan location. And we note with interest that he is here...not there. Wonder how their food is?)

Onward, and soon the Smoo Cave its self is before us, or rather the parking area for the walk down to the cave. Smoo is derived from the Viking word, Smuga, which means hiding-hole. There are steps built into the cliff and down we go. At the bottom there is a tidal run that would enter the cave but is fortunately at ebb now. We cross a little walkway and go along the far wall of the cave, into the huge chamber. Some inner passages and chambers are lit with electric lights to allow a peek into the deeper heart and it is very large, dripping both limestone and water and echoing with the sounds of a rushing cataract somewhere. Over another small bridge and we are into the outer limits of a water-hell of sound and fury: a blow-hole, which is at present a drain hole for a small fierce stream, racing down from the hills and falling headlong into this deep pit, where it whirls and implodes and bursts apart in a rage of froth and roaring. It is a fearsome place and surely the Vikings and the unknown peoples who used this cave before and after them must have held it in some reverence and regard. The air is saturated with its voice and spray and so too are we. We retreat. We climb to the upper regions again and go to observe this hole from above. On the fence that keeps the foolish from going too near it there is a tiny sign: "Please Do Not Throw Anything into the Hole"! As if, in it's raging and churning life down there it would take any notice of an object, an animal or even a small building tossed into its maelstrom! It is a sign worthy of a fine and subtle humor...or none at all! But one has to wonder what this hole would be like in a high tide, with each incoming wave adding to the spectacle and actually "blowing" as a blow hole should do. Undoubtedly is must be a wonder! Another time, another time...; now we walk out over the hill fields toward the sea, to look back into the cave from the angle of those who first saw it ("Yes, this'll do...phone box there, a pub or two...")and later used it for habitation, hide-outs, smuggling and all the things caves are likely good for. The wind out on this high cliff is so powerful and so determined to blow us away, out over the water, being a south-east wind off the land, that we can hardly stand here at all. L.'s camera is blowing around, wavering and weaving; she believes that many of the pictures will be only of wind: a grey, furry blur, perhaps?

We go on, to a very well presented Visitors' Center, where we learn a little of the history of the area and some odds and ends about the geology and botany and the sea-life of this desolate coast. John says "There is nothing between here and the Arctic, really..." and L. gazes north, sensing that Polar pull that has always called to her spirit.

We are near to the Ferry to Cape Wrath, but even if it were running today, who could deal with the water in such wind...and we are running low on time, so we turn back and begin the drive to the Lodge again. The sun is belatedly attempting an appearance, so there are rainbows, coming and going all around, over the Sea and the spare rocky hills.

They pick out tiny sheltered bays and surf-dashed promontories and paint otherwise ordinary little cottages with coats of many colors. L. wonders what she might like to find at the end of one: perhaps, rather than a pot of gold, just more of the same: fleeting rainbows, flying spray, iron-grey hills and tiny red phone boxes, echoes of ancient people and a good friend to share it all: and much, much more of this day in this far and northern-leaning land.

We wind down the coast again, seeing new things on the reverse journey and watching patches of sun dappling the hills. One massive headland, far ahead, suddenly bursts into brilliant life as though lit from within by an enormous ice-white bulb! It is there and then it is gone, once again a grey and grizzled stone, but for an instant it fairly sang with a voice made of dazzling light.

We return by way of the Causeway over the Kyle of Tongue, to take a picture from that angle, blowing wildly about of course, and when we return to the lodge John & Hugo & L. sit again in the kitchen for awhile along with Jonathan and then John must leave for Glen Convinth. L. never enjoys seeing him go, but this has been a fine and memorable day of exploration and companionship. It will be a day to return to in memory in the months ahead of us.

This is T.'s account of his Hunt with Adam today:

Adam & I set out at 9:30 and slowly drove up the glen in the Land Rover, towing the trailer containing the Argo. We often stopped to spy for acceptable Red Deer Stags. By noon, when we stopped for lunch, Adam had picked out 4 likely prospects. The nearest one to us was a well balanced 8 pointer with a large number of hinds. We left the vehicle and started climbing to the high country where the stag & his hinds were located. The gale that had been rocking our vehicle really rocked us as we climbed ever higher! The early walking gave way to a crouched shuffle which became crawling on all fours as we closed in on our quarry. We were spotted by a sentry hind and the whole herd took off up wind into the teeth of the gale, for even higher country: Stalemate! Adam scouted their departure area and decided that he thought he knew where they had gone. We started the whole stalking process over again, climbing ever higher, into the teeth of the gale. This time the stag and his hinds had placed themselves in an impregnable position where the only way to approach them would force us to cross a 50 yard wide open meadow, with no possible cover. No crawling, no creeping, no scuttling: we opted simply to stroll across to see what would happen. The deer panicked immediately and headed off to an even higher area and the last one to leave was the stag, who sky-lighted himself on the horizon, as he profiled for us and strolled away. I was physically whipped by then and would have been happy to turn back, but Adam wanted to give it one more go. Again we crept and crawled and this time had enough good cover, by following a Bern, that we were able to get to within 150 yards of the stag without being seen. As always, Adam spotted him first and he was lying down, looking right at us. I slowly worked myself into shooting position and in whispers, discussed the best options for a shot. Adam felt that we should wait him out and that I should shoot when he rose from his bed. I felt that I could see enough of his chest facing me to make a killing shot where he lay. Adam agreed that I should try and I put the crosshair on his chest just below the base of his throat. The wind was howling fiercely, from my right to my left. In order to compensate for the drift of the bullet I held about 6" to the right of the spot I expected to hit. At the shot the stag lurched to his feet, his forequarters obviously not functioning and he took several sideways steps with his hind legs, fell over and never moved again. Adam & I both leaped to our feet, and capered about and then quickly went to the stag to be sure that he was dead. After gralloching him Adam had me stay with him as he hiked off down the mountain to get the Argo. It was a long, long walk. After about a half hour wait, I could hear the chug of the approaching Argo

and soon saw him coming up the corrie. It took both of us to load the stag into the rear of the Argo and off we headed for the road. Spirits were high on the way back to the Lodge and I could hardly wait to show L. what I had done! It was one of the finest hunting experiences of my life. Only my stalk last year with John can compare.

T.'s condition is not adequately described by the word "tired", but he is very happy. He and David & L. go to the shed for the butchering and we are invited to Adam's house for a visit at 7:00. We walk down together and we are greeted by Adam's sweet wife, Ellen and his two daughters, Ruth and Rachel and Ellen's father. In their neat little cottage, we are treated to a concert by Ruth, who is 13 and a very talented Piper. As she plays the Pap of Glen Coe, and 3 other wonderful melodies, we all feel the real power of the pipes, the drone humming deep in our guts and our souls, all of us having Scots blood. It was a rare and singular honor, both to be invited and to be given such a serenade. L. recalls her own pride in Lisa's lovely cello playing and recognizes that same feeling in this family. We accept a ride back up the now pitch dark hill with Ellen, in time to sit down to Hugo's glorious Roast of Beef, Yorkshire Pudding and perfect Profiteroles for desert.

This has been, to say the least, quite a day!

Fri., 10/7:

The sun makes a serious appearance. At last! And we propose a hike out to "David's Castle", the great ruined tower keeping solitary watch on a high bluff over Tongue. It was a stronghold of the Mackays, with which Tongue seems to be primarily populated, and he is one also. He pronounces his name Mackay, while here it is Mackeye. Frank drives us into town and drops us at the little footpath that leads out across the fields and up the small mountain to the tower. He claims that we will need several hours; we know better! It is a lovely walk, along the track, over the highest stiles that we have ever seen, over a small footbridge and on up the slopes. We pass through a lovely little birch forest, encounter sheep, ofcourse, and make the final run for the top. L. takes David's picture as he approaches his family's tangible history. He becomes a little quieter, as we all do in these moments, with a sort of reverence and respect and a little awe. L. has felt this little "silence" in herself in Ayrshire and Collodon. We perch there on the heights for awhile and when a couple appears, far below, we propose readying the boiling oil and boulders. We can also see very clearly why this watchtower was built, in the 1300's, on this very spot. The view from every side and angle is perfect for "watching"! We pass this couple, unaware of their narrow escape, on the way down. Being so much younger than we are, they are racing up the hill and are at the summit and then up the very stones of the tower! Maybe they are in more danger from themselves than from our "virtual boiling"! We reach Tongue quite a while before Frank is due back, so we go to the Post Office for a snack and to call the Lodge to see if he has left. There, to our surprise, a young man who in no way resembles him, introduces himself as Adam's brother! We also meet another Mackay, a chatty, nice little round woman, who goes out to meet David. We munch and wait and David visits the Police Station to leave a card for the Constable, as David is a Deputy at home and this practice is a common courtesy among Law Enforcement people everywhere. When Frank returns, bringing Yvonne as she had no ride home today, we go back to pack, shower, nap, read, write notes to some of the staff in thanks and otherwise generally reorganize our lives in preparation for leaving tomorrow. L. goes for a final walk along the river that she has never fished. A tiny shower sprays her and the hills, departs on the arch of a rainbow and under this arch she finds a hind and a salmon, leaping from the river pool. Good-bye Kinloch. Thank you for this nice parting gift.

The final hunter, Don, who is here with his wife (another Linda), has taken a nice stag

today, and as he is an hunter (as opposed to killer) he is pleased with his stalk and his good shot.

To differentiate, The Killer prefers to pay huge amounts of money and to hunt within a fenced Reserve for Record Book Trophies. The Hunter lives for the stalk, the hunting and also rejoices in a good stag, but taken fairly in challenging conditions. There are both Killers and Hunters in this mix at Kinloch Lodge.

Dinner is the usual very odd mix. The other Linda, who goes by her middle name of Rose to avoid confusion on this trip, is wearing a strapless wine-velvet gown. Joe is wearing his camo baseball cap as he does at every meal. L. is wearing her great grey-brown Orkney sweater. She proposes that if she had a lens wide-angle enough she could get both Rose and Joe in one fascinating shot; Rose takes this as an absolutely serious remark and sighs that yes, we will not be together at this table again; L. subsides into silent contemplation of the vast variety of the humanoid and goes to help Hugo with desert. This dinner has been the peak of perfection, gastronomically, with a succulent roast lamb, perfect vegetables, an ethereal desert of kiwis and cream and meringue. L. makes the first cut, to make a wish, but she has so many wishes whirling through her brain that she mentally throws them at the knife and says "Pick one!".

David comes into the kitchen, sees Jonathan and Hugo bustling about and says "Oh, I just love being waited on by the British Aristocracy!", laughing/ L. says "Just don't get used to that! Home is not that way!". He agrees heartily.

Bedtime. Gone tomorrow. We will miss some things and some people and this beautiful country.

Sat., 10/8:

This is departure day. L. is up at 5:00, to wash her hair and finish packing. She wakes T. at 6:00 with the customary coffee and they begin to plan the day. John will meet us in Inverness as soon as he is able this afternoon and we will have a final dinner together in the big Dining Room of the Station Hotel. final until our next time, proposed as 1996, known now as TLS: The Long Summer. We hope and intend that this will be so.

We have our final porridge and coffee, toast and orange juice in Hugo's kitchen. L. makes the coffee and pours out the juice. She and Hugo have developed certain little rituals this year as last and find them fun and even helpful, when he is very pressed for time.

T. & L. ride with Mike, and David comes along to do some shopping in Inverness, but he will return to the Lodge for the night and ride with them on the train in the morning. Joe and Buckley ride with Frank and the trailer. Mack also goes with him. We go over the Struie, that lovely high road, and down to Inverness in about 2 hours. When we arrive at the Station Hotel, to our surprise and delight, we are remembered by everyone on the staff whom we encounter and even Kevin, the mighty small Porter, inquires about T.'s hunt ..."and yourself, Madame, was your time a pleasure also?!" We even have Room #207 again. Noisy as it is, it is warmly familiar. We wait for the trailer bearing our luggage and when it arrives, T. hauls all to the room and we have lunch in the Lobby. Have we ever been away? Oh yes, we have indeed and the far northern Highlands always leaves the spirit just subtly altered by its powerful presence. We have indeed been away, but now we are back in welcoming surroundings. We go off into town to finish shopping errands and to see it once more before we leave. The sun is lighting the crowds on their Saturday shopping rounds and all is bright and colorful and

cheerful. L. loves this small city and has no trouble at all finding everything she is looking for.

We return to the room to rest and clean up and go to the Lobby about 4:00 to wait for John. He hurries in, handsome and bristling with the new beard that is rapidly developing these days. And we begin to catch up on the past days, especially T., who asks John to order "a wee dram, please", in order properly to attend to the account of his stalking. They sit together, becoming lost in the age-old ritual of recounting the hunt, the kill, the most primal of all stories, first told at the fire before the cave. They bend toward one another, intent upon this wonderful tale, Tom reliving his pain and pleasure, John living through him the profound thrill of the ancient art that he so loves. L. watches them, takes a picture to record this very intimate moment, but it is in her mind and memory that it will live most vividly.

We have our last dinner together of this trip, salmon, venison, roast beef and Yorkshire Pudding. Up in the room we give John some things, ammo that T. has left, books he has loaned us. Tomorrow he will take T.'s rack to mount for him, as a gesture of kindness and friendship.

We part with plans to meet in the morning. L. Lies listening to the traffic sounds, but hearing the song of the Kinloch River and the roaring of the stags.

Sun., 10/9:

John joins us after breakfast and he & L. take a little "wander" down to the River and along the far shore. As they walk in the soft morning light the bells of Inverness begin to ring and the sound rises on the mist and blends with the river's voice. There are autumn flowers and bright leaves falling and suddenly a new voice: the Cathedral bells, ringing the Changes, that most complex and wonderful mystery of sound! As they climb to the Castle grounds, the city and the river are displayed below them and the bells' song is one of farewell and of returning.

Back at the hotel, we have a light lunch from the little food service in the lobby and then it is time to take the luggage to the train. We load all on 2 trolleys and begin the wait, the most difficult part of a difficult parting. John stands quietly beside us and we all have too many thoughts to express. David comes in with Mack and waits in line behind us. It will be good to have his company on the train. He plans to stay at the same hotel in Paisley tonight. The train is late, more waiting. Then it is here and we go to the far end, to a first class car and barely have time for good-bye when we are pulling away, leaving John on the platform, alone.

The ride to Glasgow is pleasant in David's company but L. Is still in the Highlands. The train, however, is moving on and before too long we are in the city of Glasgow.

There is little to gain from recounting the last evening or the next day, except to record one small miracle; When we arrive at the Airport on Monday morning there, to L.'s amazed delight, is the same kind United Agent, Irene Douglas, who upgraded us to Connoisseur Class. Believing that "Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained", L. Greets her and reminds her that last year she had saved the "wee lad's" life by that kindness. Oh yes, she exclaims, peering up at T., It's you! And she does us the same wonderful favor again, giving us 7 1/2 hours of hedonistic delights and leg room! L. Mentally composes a letter of commendation and we settle into comfortable seats for the return journey. All is well, better than well, but as the plane lifts off and rises over the soft green hills L.

looks northward, to the Highlands, and sees so many beloved images, beckoning her back.

Addendum:

This is John Hunt's account of observing a red deer stag behind his little house, on Oct. 12, 1994, two days after our return home. He had been hearing this stag roaring each night for some time:

"I found the stag, he was exactly where I thought he would be and what a handsome beast. He was following his hinds down from the hill to graze in the fields behind the house and to the right. As he ambled down he chivvied his hinds to keep them together, occasionally stopping to sniff and taste the wind. I was tucked in a small bunch of birch trees from where I could see all of the animals clearly. The hinds stopped to graze about eighty yards away from me, the stag patrolled them with great vigilance, making sure that none strayed. He is a large beast, I would say at least eighteen stone, with a strong head of ten points and a deep straight neck. I would say he is about six or seven years old. What a roar! From eighty yards it was deafening. I timed one roar to a count of eight. As I watched he became agitated, he sensed something, he started to walk very stiffly with his head held high. I turned the binoculars in the direction he was looking and there, not a hundred yards away, was the source of his aggravation, another stag, just a small fellow but big enough to pose a threat. He stopped, threw his head back and gave out a mighty bellow and then took off after the intruder who never made a challenge. Several times the big fellow chased him off quickly, returning to his hinds to check that they were all present. On one occasion while being chased the small stag headed straight for me; through the binoculars it felt as though I was going to be trampled as they charged in my direction. I dropped the glasses from my eyes just as the small chap jumped the low fence ten yards to my left and a yard in front. The big stag stood at the fence ten yards away from me, totally unaware of my presence, his nostrils were flared as he grunted and snorted at the intruder, his eyes were fierce, he had repelled a possible challenge to his supremacy. I felt a lump in my throat. I have never been so close to such a glorious animal under such dramatic circumstances. I really did feel overcome by emotion. God, I love these animals, I wish you could have been there. He stood for a good thirty seconds, looking into the trees to make sure his challenger did not return and I was just ten yards from him. I will never forget tonight for as long as I live. When he was sure all was safe he went back to his hinds and I left him to court his moonlight brides."

The Moonlight Brides

Shy hinds of the misted mountain, guarding your Monarchs' lives;
Watchers upon the heathered heights,
Phantoms that fly in the Northern Lights,
Daughters and willing wives.

Delicate dancers at dawn, who follow the starry trails;
Brown as the bracken upon the hill,
Fleet as a feather, statue still,
A vigil that never fails.

Brides of the Mighty Masters, betrothed at your day of birth;
Touched by the spirit of mystic spells,
Born in the land where that magic dwells,
Sweet sisters who own the earth.

LW
1994

Linda A. Worthington
10/14/1994