

As usual with one of our trips there is a plan not much of one but it is a plan and plans can be changed. Here is the outline of our plan so far, we depart Liverpool on the 10th July and head north for Scotland towards Glencoe a place that we love, you will see by our previous blogs that we have visited Scotland a number of times actually more times than we have blogs, the scenery is simply stunning and we never get tired of the awe-inspiring views.

The week prior to our departure we have been checking the weather forecast to try and decide if Scotland is the route to travel or should we head off somewhere that might be a bit less wet but after looking at various places the forecast does not look much better, we may have had the hottest June but so far I think we have had the wettest July. After much deliberation we decide to head North and worry about the weather when we get there, if nothing else the rain will keep the midges away.

Day 1 10th July

The plan is to be up early and depart by 9.30am (like that's going to happen) even though we loaded Gloria with the majority of stuff required for the trip the day before, as expected our departure time was more like 10.45am and then we had to make a detour to the post office so our actual departure time was probably after 11 o'clock. We either have to fully pack Glo the day before or lower our departure expectations.

Finally we are on the M62 with Barb behind the wheel twenty minutes later we are on the M6 heading north, the journey along the M6 was uneventful apart from the standard of driving, it's just appalling, I know it was bad before but I am sure that since Covid everyone has just said stuff it anything goes, I suppose the lack of traffic police is also a contributing factor. Our first stop is one of my favourite service stations well they prefer to call them Westmorland Farm Shops, my other favourites all belong to the same family. Anyway we arrive at Tebay services and Farmshop and it is absolutely rammed we just about found somewhere to park, obviously as the car park was full inside the service etc, etc, etc was even busier, well I suppose multiply cars by passengers and there is the answer. Now I am not sure if you have visited any of the groups service areas but they are probably the best maintained service areas you will visit they are quality. Now we all know that quality comes with a price and boy does it come with a price here, £4.75 for a sausage roll but compared to other well known bakery's these sausage rolls are not just in a different league they are in a different stratosphere. I know it's a strange thing to say but Tebay and its sister sites have a different atmosphere than other service areas they just

ooze quality from the premises, the staff and the products, when I leave I always feel that I have been legally mugged but I enjoyed it and keep going back for more, oh and we only had a tea and a coffee. Do you think that I could get a job as marketing consultant for them, well perhaps not, if you are on a motorway and see their sign call in for the experience, how can I get so excited by a motorway services.

Right enough of that let's get back on the M6 and get some miles covered and uneventful miles they are that is until we get to Glasgow and the M8 it's chaos road works everywhere, heavy rain, lanes closed, optimistic 40mph signs, it's more like 4mph oh and cars everywhere with drivers that cannot make up their minds which lane they want to park in. Gloria is brand new, not cheap and this is a place I would rather her and us not be, this is a bit daft really as I have driven expensive cars in probably worse situations but with Gloria it seems different she is like a new member of the family. The frustration of this traffic jam is heightened by that fact that we could have gone a different way but we had chosen a stop over at Dumbarton castle well not staying in the castle it's more like the castle car park. When we get there we are the only van there, Gloria is reversed into a space so that we can look out over the river Clyde, not going to be any back door shots here as it's positively peeing down and it's not stopping. It's not long before we are joined by a number of other vans until there are no spaces left with more vans and a caravan arriving and having to leave. That's about it for today, tomorrow we are heading north towards Glencoe but we are not going the straight forward route as we have traveled the A82 many times before so we are taking a bit of a detour along a road that is listed as an A road but a minor A road as there is no alternative. Minor A roads in Scotland are interesting to say the least so let's see what happens tomorrow.

Day 2 11th July



We are awake early and look out to find that lots more vans had arrived last night and the small car park was full of them some of which were not so much parked but abandoned, even the caravan that we thought had departed was unhitched and parked up. After picking up the carry out food

containers and cans that had probably been chucked out of a car by, oh let's not get into a conversation about the low life's that do it. What makes it worse is that there is a bin 4 yards away, anyway campervan and Motorhome owners will not get the blame. After a visit to the local supermarket for some shopping, yes I know we have only been away for one night but some idiot forgot the milk, that would of course be me. Next it's a walk around Dumbarton unfortunately like other small Scottish towns we have visited on previous trips the high street is decimated with lots of shops closed with to let or for sale signs that look like they have been there for some time. The high street shops are being effected in all of our towns and cities but I think that with a small population, young people leaving the towns, rent prices and the arrival of Asda, Morrisons and Lidl have taken their toll, what did surprise me was that there are 4 banks in close proximity that have actual people behind the counters, which is great as there are lots of them closing with no thought for their employees. People still like to deal with people especially when their money is concerned they do not want to be told to press number 8,5,4,7,2 on their phone then to be told that they are in a queue and that your business is important to them but there is still a twenty minute wait, then to find that the person that you speak to and explain your problem is in the wrong department but they will transfer you to the correct one, if you are lucky you get through to another department reiterate the previous conversation only to get the same response only this time they cut you off during the call transfer or they might just have cut you off, has that happened to you?

Back to Gloria for the next step in the journey along the A814 now I understand that this is a three digit A road but who ever gave it an A rating of any kind must have been in the pub for too long, the only thing that I can think of is that it got it due to the absence of any other road. There are parts of this so called A road where two vehicles can not pass each other without stopping and manoeuvring around each other, this makes for slow progress for our next stop at Helensburgh. On arrival we park in the car park of the Brand New Leisure centre which is great to see the investment that has been made and the car park is free, please take note Liverpool 1, if your not sure what I mean about Liverpool 1's car park, pay it a visit but make sure that your mortgage is in place first. Unfortunately the shopping area is suffering as previous towns but we do manage to contribute to the local economy by purchasing two ice creams, sorry Gelato's for a mere £9.50 sorry I thought you said £9.50, yes sir I did, well that makes the parking charges at L1 look sensible.

As we return to Gloria one of our Nuclear deterrent submarines is sailing through the Firth of Clyde escorted by two large tug boats, presumably it has come from its base at Faslane which is not far away. It seems strange to call it a deterrent as it is loaded with Oppenheimer's deadly toy, I suppose it's a deterrent as the others who ever they may be have their own submarines carrying the same deadly cargo sailing around our seas and oceans. It seems strange to me to say that submarines sail as sink and float under controlled conditions, or is that just being silly, what ever they do let's hope and pray that there is never any need to turn keys simultaneously and push big red buttons, surely no one can be that stupid. Enough of that thinking time to travel along this 3 digit A road and find a proper A road, just after leaving Helensburgh we get to the beginning of the Faslane Royal Navy base which not surprisingly is surrounded by high fences topped with razor wire all monitored by CCTV they have more cameras than the BBC. I have been to Faslane once before a long time ago when my brother in law was a sailor in or is it on one of our nuclear submarines, but I don't remember the base being this big, it's massive and you drive past its perimeter fence for ages, it makes me wonder how much of Oppenheimer's horrible stuff is in there, it's a pretty scary thought.

Eventually we get to the more sensible A83 towards Tarbet and Loch Lomond, we stop at the Loch Lomond car park and wonder if we should park up there as we have stayed there before but since then the rules have changed you now have to get an overnight parking permit and the number of vans is limited. Decision made let's head up the A82 towards Glencoe and see what spots we can find to park up, we have previously stayed at a couple of different park ups on the A82 but these now have No overnight parking signs, I am not sure what would happen if you stayed as I would think that it is unlikely for anyone to drive up there in the middle of the night to check. We decide not to bother just in case, now I think about it I am not sure why we didn't. Anyway a bit further up the road is the Glencoe mountain centre and you put 5 quid in the honesty box and stay overnight, there are free toilets open all night and showers cost £1 can't complain at that and by the look of it a lot of vans thought the same, the only downside is it's not very level. Depending on the weather tomorrow we may go on the cable car to the top of the mountain, more about that if it happens tomorrow, until then that's about it, it's bed time or is it time for a little glass of red beforehand?

Day 3 12th July



Lots of other vans arrived last night and the last ones to arrive ended up parked on the steepest parts of the car park, even using levelling ramps did not help much. We did think about having a drink in the bar but it closed at 8pm and at £6 a pint it seemed a bit daft when you have a fridge full of the stuff in the van. Let's get through this bit quick, tea, couple of drinks, bed, great uninterrupted sleep, wake up, shower which was as hot as a hot thing could be and definitely lasted than the stated 3 minutes, done. As I said yesterday we might take a trip on the cable seats up to the top of the mountain, however as the top is covered with clouds there is not much point so that will not be happening, we are doing well here just saved 48 quid in just over 12 hours. We will probably not make that definitely contribute more into the local economy during this trip but it won't be happening until we reach somewhere to spend it and that is not going to happen today. Why I hear you say or possibly I don't, anyway we are not yet ready to head for any place of civilisation, today is going to be a chill out day.

The original plan for today was to head off along the road to Loch Etive and finally capture the James Bond and M photo that I have been trying to get for years but have always been defeated by the weather and today it looks like the weather is going to win again. The road to the Loch is only a few minutes away so we go and have a look to see that if we wait for a while the weather might be kind do you expect it was no correct it wasn't. Well we are here now and we have never driven the full length of the road as it's a dead end, it's approximately 13 miles to the end and obviously the same back but it is a narrow single track road with passing places on which Motorhomes and campervans are not in their happy place added to this the views even on a rainy day are stunning it's just beautiful and you don't want to drive fast so that you can enjoy the vista. That makes the 26 mile round trip last at least a couple of hours, we travel past the JB & M photo opportunity and continue slowly enjoying the view only spoiled by the occasional rally driver heading in the opposite direction. We have passed a couple of spots on the way that will make a good park up for the night so after we have got to the end of the road, had a spot of lunch we decide that

we will find a park up on the way back, park up relax and see what the weather decides to do. It didn't take long as there is another bit of off road parking about a mile away and that will do nicely.

Please remember that if you are wild camping that you obey a couple of very simple rules, don't park where you shouldn't, be considerate about others, don't be a nuisance and make sure that you leave no trace of you being there and if other none considerate let's call them people have left a mess please tidy it up if you can. It is our countryside it is for everyone and we should all look after it, if everyone behaved like that wild camping would be much more acceptable, lesson over.

The rest of the day is spent chilling out and whenever the rain stops and it brightens up try and get some photographs, I did get a few but they are mainly just snap shots as the rain only stoped for very short periods. Tomorrow we retrace our steps along the 12 or so miles back to the main road and who knows I might even be able to get my elusive photograph but looking at the weather forecast I doubt it. When we do get to the A82 we will definitely turn left but as yet we are not sure where to, at some point on the trip I fancy revisiting Applecross and driving up or down Bealach na Ba "Pass of the cattle" and it is aptly named, I think that going up is better than going down and certainly less painful on your vehicles braking system, we have done it both ways a couple of times, why you ask, well because it's there oh and the view from the top is fantastic. The downside is that it is a 4 / 5 hour drive from here and that starts when you get to the A82, also when you get there, there is not a lot to do, according to Trip Advisor the number 1 attraction is Bealach na Ba, we will chat tonight check an actual map and let you know tomorrow, I will not bore you with anymore of our chilling out time today but we will be back tomorrow.

Day 4 13th July



This morning there is a small chance that we may be able to do some outdoor stuff however after it took as long to boil a kettle and sip the first coffee of the morning, Mr rain came along and descended on Gloria with big

blobs and lots of them, that's like saying that it rained hard. Going off piste for a moment I don't think I have mentioned before that before we left home and as the plan is to spend more time off grid in Gloria, we purchased an Ecoflow Delta 2 portable power station, the purchase had been on hold for a while as we had been waiting for Gloria to arrive. It arrived a couple of weeks and this is the first time we have really tried it out, what is it I hear you ask, well firstly this is not an advert for them it is just what we think of it and we will still need to try it for longer to let you have our full opinion. Anyway without getting too technical because I couldn't, IT is a portable battery pack with lots of usb ports to charge your stuff, it also has has 4 x 240v sockets, depending on which model you have they have different power (watts) output. Hopefully the one we have will fulfil our requirements. The idea is that subject to a couple of things you can have free electricity well free if you exclude the purchase price which we justified by selling our petrol generator that we did not use. In my very basic explanation it is a clever 12v DC battery pack that has a built in inverter, the idea of it supplying you with free electricity is that you can charge it by solar panels, plugging it into your car/van while driving or this stretches the free bit, if you are a site you can use the ehu to charge it and this only takes 50 minutes from 0 to 100%. So far while off grid it has powered, kettle, coffee machine, hair dryer, straighteners, toaster, we will have to see how we get on with it but so far so good we will let you know what happens.

Right back to this morning rain has obviously stopped play so we stay put and have some breakfast while watching some very hardcore hikers set off for their days yomp, personally I can not find anything remotely enjoyable about getting soaking wet while hiking and not being able to see any of the views due to the rain and clouds, oh well each to his own I guess. Gloria is made ready for travel and we set off on the return journey, I wonder what the chance is of it stopping raining for a few minutes when we get to the JB&M photo spot. As on the way here the 12 mile trip will take about an hour, one thing that the rain does improve is the water falls and as the rain gets heavier the force of the water in the falls becomes more impressive, on the other hand it does not improve the vision through the windscreen even with the wipers on overtime, flipping heck it's wet. We still have to stop whenever possible to look at the river in full flow creating white water as it flows over the massive and impressive rocks that have been there for thousands or millions of years. We give way to more oncoming traffic than we need to but that gives us the opportunity to stop in the passing places to admire the views through the rain. We get to the photo spot and park up, the rain gets lighter and I am able to get a couple of shots but not the

“Barbara, Paul and Gloria” shot as in the “James Bond, M and a DB5” that I would like, one day we will be here when the weather is right. We get back onto the kore sensible A82 and head towards Glencoe, on route there are a couple more JB photo stop offs, even in this weather the car park is full and people are going to get the photo even if they get soaked, my camera ain’t going out in that rain, we wait for a while and the rain stops, grab camera and get up to the viewing point smartish and grab a couple of shots while others take selfies on their phones, rain starts time to retreat to Gloria while protecting camera from the weather. We arrive at Glencoe and park in the signposted Motorhome/ Campervan car park, I had forgotten that walking up into the village that there is nothing there just one overpriced minimart, that was a proper waste of time and we got wet. Rather than carrying on up to Fort William we found a campsite about 3 miles outside the village that has space and is the most reasonable within miles and as Gloria needs things emptying and other things refilling we are stopping there for the night but before we get there it’s time for a quick pint. The campsite is much better than we expected and we have a pitch overlooking Loch Leven and the mountains beyond, peaceful, excellent facilities and a sensible price including EHU what’s not to like. What makes it even better is that the sun has come out so we can actually site outside for the first time on this trip, I guess that you won’t want to know what we had to eat or who won the UNO competition so that’s your lot we will wrap this up until tomorrow.

Day 5 14th July

The weather had lulled is in to thinking that the sun was going to stay out for a bit today and if it did we thought that we may stay on the site for another day and finally be able to get the table and chairs out and sit outside and who knows we may even have a bbq. Who were we trying to kid, it’s pouring down again which means that we are going to pack up, move on and see where we get to. As the weather is so bad we are only travelling in short hops to see if the weather bucks it’s ideas up, as there is no point in travelling further North wasting fuel if it’s going to be peeing down all the way there, we may as well head east and then head home over a couple of days on a different route. First stop is going to be Fort William which is less than an hour away, we have been here on a number of occasions and we know that there is a large car park which has dedicated Motorhome parking bays, how forward thinking are they in Scotland they do not see Motorhomes and Campervans as a nuisance they see them as a mobile tourist who will boost the local economy and help it grow not just survive. I could go on with my thoughts about the lack of forward thinking,

well any kind of thinking that England and Wales have regarding mobile tourism and the revenue it brings, they can not seem to understand that people have invested a considerable amount and in some cases a very considerable amount of money in them and are not going to cause any trouble, make a mess or be a nuisance to the places they visit, what they will do is spend their money, I understand that there will be a small minority that will be a pain but that is only a small number that are inconsiderate but we will always have that in all parts of our lives.

Ok rant over, we have parked up and wander into town the high street we'll the street is buzzing with life there are people of all nationalities looking, shopping, buying stuff and visiting restaurants and pubs, oh and while I am at it, there are a considerable amount of Motorhomes from all over mainland Europe in the car park. It is great to see so much activity after what has been a tuff few years for us all. It's also great to see that there are banks that are open with real people inside that you can talk to, yes I know I am off on one again don't worry I'll stop now, we have a wander around find a present for our cute baby Lucas and get some lunch. When we get to the car park and approach Gloria there is a traffic warden sticking tickets on things and photographing the vehicles like there is no tomorrow, I think she is trying to clear the national debt, I hope that the ticket we bought was still within time and yes it was. She was not just issuing ticket for time infringements but also not parking within bays which a lot of Motorhomes had done even though there were designated bays, oh well there you go Motorhomes bringing more money into the economy. Right we are off, our first planned stop was going to be Ben Nevis for a cable car ride but guess what it's peeing down and you can only see half of the mountain due to the low cloud, that's another tick on the that ain't happening list. Next stop is going to be the Neptune's staircase which is a dramatic flight of eight locks on the Caledonian canal, they raise the canal by 19m over a ¼ of a mile and were designed and built by the amazing Thomas Telford, he and Isambard Kingdom Brunel are a couple of my hero's, every time I look at the things they built they never cease to astound me. Anyway we ain't going there either as it's still peeing down, luckily we have been there before and it's an amazing sight watching the boats going up and coming down the locks and even more amazing that it was built between 1803 and 1822 and is still going strong today, just a stunning price of engineering. Next stop is only a mile or so away but I don't think that this is going to be a positive result either, this is another photograph I have been trying to get for a number of years, it is the well photographed Corpach shipwreck on Caol beach, it has been photographed many times but not by me, yet that is, I will get the shot

hopefully later in the year on our next visit to Scotland, even if it means taking a massive detour, it sure ain't happening on this visit.

Right that's it "Fed up from Liverpool" gives in and admits defeat, let's go and find a park up for tonight, Barb has all the details and the directions and we head off, the directions have us turn right of the main road which is a little strange as that is heading inland and the park up is supposed to be coastal, this begins to look like one of Barb's magical mystery tours and it turns out to be just that. Okay let's regroup and find out where we should be going, after a bit of hunting on "Search for sites", just to go off on a tangent for a minute, if you are new to wild camping there are a number of apps that will show you different park ups and which are reviewed by real motor homing wild campers, again not an advert but we find this one suits requirements best, well when you choose the right location details. We retrace our steps back to the main road and it's not long before we find the correct location, it's a large lay-by come car park on the A82 on the shore of Loch Lochy yes that is what it's called, when we arrive there is plenty of space as there is only one other Motorhome there and that is from the Netherlands, we pick a flat bit and park up with the back of the van facing up the Loch for the best view and possibly a back door photograph, if you haven't got a van the idea is to open the back doors and take a photograph from inside the van showing both the doors and the vista, anyway that's not happening either thanks to you know what.

As the evening goes on we are joined by another 6 vans, popular this van and park up lark and they are not just UK vans, we have visitors from Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, unfortunately no one is venturing out for the usual chat due to the weather which now is not just pouring down but also blowing a hooley down Loch Lochy. That's about it for today we need to have a chat and figure out what our game plan is for the next few days, until tomorrow that's your lot.

Day 6 15th July

Wow we have woken this morning and it's not raining, we are in shock and we might actually be able to do something, we quickly get packed up and ready to go, we are retracing our steps again and heading for Ben Nevis, we stop on route for breakfast and a coffee, we still arrive at the nevice range centre by 10 o'clock, the weather is holding up so we ready ourselves to attack the summit, long pants and walking boots are the order of the day to tackle Scotland's highest peak. Now hold on a minute, I don't want you getting carried away thinking that we are walking up there, there is not a chance, of course because it looks the weather could get worse and we are

not equipped to hike up there, even if we were it wouldn't be happening, so it's a Gondola ride for us.

We have a look at the weather and even though the low cloud is hiding the mountain top, we best get a move on just in case it gets worse, tickets purchased (ouch) we climb aboard our personal gondola and head upwards, it take about 15 minutes to get to the top station and the views from the gondola are fantastic. There are people with one way tickets who are going up in the gondolas with their mountain bikes hanging on hooks outside the windows and when at the top they are going to launch themselves down the mountain on their bikes, Phil our son has done this on this very mountain which has now confirmed my suspicions that he like others are completely crazy, you may have guessed that we have return tickets.

When we alight the gondola there is still a walk to either the summit or as I am going to call it the first summit, the top is still covered with low cloud and it is suggested that people to not venture up there unless fully equipped with stuff, as we don't have the stuff we head of for the first summit which is also a bit of a hike. However it is a hike well worth making as the views even today with the low cloud and suspect weather conditions, while we are there we start chatting to a family from Northern Island and a couple of ladies from the USA, the conversations range from wow what spectacular views to where everyone has traveled, we take group photos for each other and then as the weather starts to close in, it is time to head down and a bit pronto. It's time for a cup of tea before we head to the gondola station and the ride back down which thankfully we are not doing on mountain bikes, 15 minutes later we arrive back at the lower gondola station, fantastic we have managed to achieve one of our missions for this trip. Then before we head back to Glo there is time for a bit of the Disney experience you know, the merchandise shop, which unfortunately did not have a Ben Nevis T shirt in baby size for Lucas as one would have definitely be going home with us. Ok it's time to get back to Glo and continue on our route which as yet I haven't told you about, last night we discussed our options and decided that due to weather forecast not looking any better for next week we have decided to start heading southward towards home, we need to be home by Wednesday so doing the trip this way will save us having to make a 6 or 7 hour drive in one go. We are going to head through the Cairngorms and then down to Pitlochry with a couple more stops before arriving home. First stop is to the Dalwhinnie distillery not that we really need another distillery tour, seen one seen them all, we are saved the tour as even though it's Saturday which being the weekend I

would of thought would be their busiest time, they are not running any today also as the prices in the Disney experience were eye watering it was time to get back to Gloria for a cup of tea in the car park, the Ecoflow is out again to power the electric kettle for free rather than using our gas supply, it does the job without any fuss and still has 90% of power left. Next it's on to our stop for tonight which is another large lay by on the side of the A9 overlooking the Cairngorms mountains with the plan of having a bbq but mr rain is back and put paid to any such idea, so we have had to improvise, hopefully we will be able to have a bbq tomorrow otherwise lugging this bag of charcoal with us will have been a complete waste of time, let's see what happens tomorrow, until then that's your lot again.

Day 7 16th July

Guess what happened last night, no not that, it rained yes I know that you are surprised but it did, however this morning it looks like it might be brightening up so we pack Glo ready for departure towards our next stop Pitlochry hoping that we will be able to enjoy the amazing scenery of the Cairngorms, we head off and just after saying how beautiful the scenery is, low and behold mr rain came down and boy did he come down in buckets, never mind looking at the scenery it was more like trying to see beyond the bonnet. This is getting silly hottest June ever, heat wave warnings in mainland Europe and is persistently raining here and has been for the last 7 days, what is going on. Due to the weather and a traffic jam through the road works we arrive a Pitlochry later than planned, we find a car park suitable for Glo and thanks to the forward thinking of the town the parking is free on a Sunday right result, take note Liverpool 1, as if they will. Pitlochry is only a small town, as far a shopping goes it's just just one street which is the main road in and out of the town but that said it smacks a big punch, not one shop closed up lots of people from slots of different countries and it has a real buzz about it which is great to see, hey and there is also a bank that when open again tomorrow will have real people serving customers, great. It is only spitting but I do wear a wet jacket just in case while the shorts remain on, ok it's just shops but we will settle for anything in the current climate. After an up one side and then down the other side of the road with a bit of window shopping and a couple of shop visits, the only purchase is two scones for later, it's a good job that the Americans are keeping the tills busy.

Back to Glo and off we go to our next destination which is a campsite on the outskirts of Perth which is about an hours drive which doesn't include our stop at a certain supermarket beginning with T for a couple of essentials for

our bbq this evening so red wine, beer and couple of barm cakes and a bar of chocolate for Barb. Next stop campsite which charges £31 for a pitch with ehu but as we have our Ecoflow we do not need hook up so the cost is £25 which given the costs of alternative sites is a bargain, we are booked in quickly and after is Glo is replenished with fresh water and another job which is on the blue job list we are on our pitch which level so nothing to do, just in time for Barb to watch the men's tennis final. I am absolutely definitely going to get the bbq out for tonight's tea, I am sure it's not going to rain as the wind is blowing an absolute gale. One thing is for sure I do not need to find anything to fan the bbq with as the wind is trying to turn it into a furnace and the charcoal is glowing, first thing on is a red pepper to char grille, I head back to Glo for some meat things, I return to the bbq to find the pepper gone, it has been blown down the field, I told you it was windy.

Carnivorous requirements nearly ready for consumption it's time for the Michelin starred microwave rice, but we have no ehu, simple no problem we well I, just plug the Ecoflow into Glo's electric input and hey presto Glow is powered by 240v, I am liking this Ecoflow thing. After our bbq we start chatting to our neighbours one of which is from Warrington accompanied by their friends from Somerset now that's a trip up to Scotland. They haven't tried any wild camping as yet and ask us some questions about how we get on with it and what they should look out for, we share our experiences our mistakes and most importantly how to keep safe while travelling. Time to tidy up and have a relax and make the most of the lack of rain, there is still no chance of a wonderful Scottish sunset not just because we have headed east but also due to the low cloud, it does go darker earlier over this side of the country but it's still light more than half an hour later than at home, yesterday there was more than an hour difference, it's also only dark for a couple of hours. There are a couple of other things I need to tell you about but they will wait until tomorrow as after chatting to neighbours for to long it has encroached on blog time but for now that's it, more tomorrow.

Day 8 17th July

Amazingly it's not raining and it's also not blowing the gale it was blowing last night but that probably means that it is about to rain. We didn't do too bad this morning as we had planned to leave the site a 11am and we managed to depart at 11.10 now that's good for us, quick comment about the campsite it's called Noah's ark caravan park or Perth caravan park and it's a town site close to houses and a main road into Perth but don't worry about that as it is not noisy. It has the facilities you require and is fine for a

stop over but I wouldn't like to spend a weeks holiday there. Ok first stop is the Falkirk wheel which is about an hour away, well it would have been if there had not been road works and a long traffic jam, anyway we get there a bit later than planned. After a look around we enquire about the time boat ride to the upper level and are told that the next planned trip and rotation is in just under one hours time but that it fully booked as are all year trips until 5pm, looks like we are not being rotated and the next planned rotation is now 40 minutes away we decided to pop back to Gloria and have a sandwich and a cup of tea while we wait to see wheel in action. As we are about to go, the wheel starts to move, well we may as well stay and watch the rotation, I have taken a video but I don't think that I will put it on line as it does go on for a while, it is slow but very impressive bit of kit, it is the only rotating boat lift in the world, it has replaced 11 locks, the 1800 tonne structure lifts boats 35 metres using modern technology along with Archimedes 2000 year old principles all this and only using 1.5kwh of power for each rotation which is the same as boiling 8 kettles. When the rotation finishes what is in it, a 65 foot barge, a couple of cruisers nope it's one man in a canoe, which I did find quite amusing. Right ok that's it done, for the next stop we are heading off to see the Kelpies that we have seen them a couple of times before but only when we have driven past them. It's only a short drive but when we get to the entrance there is a queue of coaches waiting to get in, given that the queue is not moving and it has started to rain we decide to move on and revisit them next time.

Our next destination is our overnight stop which is a pub stop over which is just over an hour away, we have tried to phone but there was no answer so we are going wing it, turn up and hope that it's ok, after reading previous reviews we should be ok. About 90 minutes later we arrive at the pub and Barb pops in to check and returns with a positive result. Its 4pm and if we head into the pub now it could end up a bit messy, we set Gloria up for the overnight stay, I start writing this which as it's a date night and there is a pub is involved there is no chance of it getting finished tonight and obviously it didn't. We agree that we will head in at 5pm as we have our table booked for 6pm, that will give us time for a couple of apéritif's prior our gastronomic delights. Our table is ready and pub grub is delivered and wow it was good and very reasonable, we were slightly on the good step as we shared a starter the fastest whitebait I have ever had and we shared a dessert, might have been on the naughty step but hey it was good. We return to the bar for a couple of digestives, well a pint and a g&t. Then as it's a date night we return to Gloria, don't let your mind go to the naughty step, this was a first date so it was a kiss on the cheek and a goodnight and that's your lot.

Day 9 18th July

It's back into the pub this morning for breakfast, with not an alcoholic drink in sight well we could see them behind the bar but that is definitely where it is staying. This trip was originally going to be a 10 day trip but as the weather forecast is telling us that it is going to rain all day there seems to be little point and we plan our route home. First stop is Dumfries and like a pair of twits we only realise when we get there that we were here in January Doh! Its not really worth looking around a town and it's shops that we saw earlier in the year. Let's move on to our next stop off which is Carlisle, the journey was not a good one the weather was absolutely awful and slowed progress, I could comment on the driving standards be I will leave that until we get home a write the epilogue.

We arrive in Carlisle and Barb has found a car park which has actual designated Motorhome bays, yet another bit of forward thinking from this council that others should take note of for the good of their village, town or city's economy. Its raining considerably and it's time to wear a wet coat but the shorts are staying on, we head off into the city and when we arrive I realise that we have put too much in the parking meter as we won't be staying long, yes it's another city with lots of closed up shops unfortunately the city experience is worsened by the weather. I am not sure if it's the weather or that I am rapidly going off cities, as it's making a bit depressed, it may be that we have been out in the countryside for most of the last 9 days. One thing is for sure it's time to leave and head for the next of our two planned stops before the final leg of the journey home.

First stop is going to be Gretna Green, not to go shopping but to take some photographs to send to my niece as she is getting married there in October, again the drive takes longer than expected due to the weather conditions. When we arrive, instead of just getting the photographs to send to Lin we end up at the parking area for the outlet village, first mistake was thinking that the rain that had now stopped would not return while we are walking round, with hindsight T shirt and no coat was not a good idea, probably nearly as great an idea as walking round an outlet village while getting wet, just to show the difficulties that shops are experiencing, even here there are a fair few empty closed up shops. Why do we do this when we know that all is going to be there is shops and coffee shops, note to self for future trips, not go to major shopping places as I don't like it and want to escape as soon as I arrive, unless there is a camera or Apple shop.

We just need to pop up the road to the Gretna wedding place to get photographs of the weddingy stuff and the Anvil, photos of the weddingy stuff taken but where is the Anvil, can't find it, I am going to have to go into yet another shop and ask where it is. It turns out that the original Anvil is now in the Gretna experience, it's like a bit of a museum type thing, for some unknown reason the experience is closed so I go back to the shop as it has a fake one in the window, job done I head back to Gloria and Barb.

Next stop Tebay services yes I know a gluten for punishment but you can't go past without stopping for a coffee and two more stamps on my loyalty card and I can have a free one, I will make this quick, we get there, have a bit to eat, get loyalty card stamped and head off home with Barb driving, the weather is bad for the rest of the drive and we arrive home at about 5.30pm. Then it's time to take the essentials out of Gloria put the kettle on, obviously that's it done for this trip but there will be the usual epilogue which mightn't be ready until possibly Friday depending on the time it takes to empty the rest of the stuff from Gloria and then wash and clean interior ready for her next adventure, oh and having our little darling Lucas for a day, but until then that's about it.

Epilogue

Been a bit of a delay sending this out but stuff sort of take over when you get home, let's see what happened first we coved 980 miles on our trip and given that a lot of it was up and down some fairly big Scottish hills and a lot of stop start on narrow roads, Gloria managed to return 33mpg which I that was quite good, others may be able to do better but I suppose it depends on how hard you press the go pedal. What else have we discovered, firstly we think Gloria is a car magnet as wherever we park someone would park next to us this even happened when we were at Ben Nevis when some idiot with a Range Rover and trailer parked so close that the passengers could only just get out, the really stupid thing was that the car park is the size of three football pitches and was nearly empty. He was that close that while he was still getting stuff out of the vehicle I returned and moved Gloria her a couple of feet to the left so as to leave ample room for them to open the doors. I have mentioned previously that a lot of the towns and cities high streets are suffering from lack of business, I do feel that they are missing an opportunity to invite more customers to their shops by welcoming Motorhomes and Campervan's by offering overnight parking with facilities. I suppose they could charge as long as they don't kid themselves and try to charge a ridiculous amount that would stop people staying as there is

plenty of free parking available in Scotland without any issue. Places like Pitlochry have allocated larger parking bays for Motorhomes were as others issue parking tickets when a Motorhome overhangs another bay when there is no other alternative, that's a great way of inviting potential customers to spend their money, short sighted, stupid and annoying, oh we didn't get one but we did see a lot issued. While on the subject I find it difficult to understand why more public houses, restaurants and the like do not invite stop overs it can dramatically increase their profits, this thinking was confirmed by the last pub we stayed at when they said that they welcome as many as possible as it has a dramatic increase in their profits.

What else do we know, well we do know that we love Scotland and will keep returning hopefully in better weather and I can finally get the Bond & M photo and enjoy the sights of the mountains and valleys towards Loch Etive, which is beautiful even on wet and cloudy days. Right let's wrap this up, we had a great time, next time the trip will be longer in time and longer in distance, I would say that after the weather we have had on our last couple of trips, is that you are planning on going north for a trip just check that we are not going there as we seem to be a bit like rain magnets. I suppose that until next time that's about it other than saying enjoy your travels, see as much of the of the world as you can and when you do make sure you see as much as you can, enjoy the experience wherever your travels may take you be it near or far, whatever you do travel safe, that's it until our next trip, wherever it may be.

