

Shearwater's Scottish Blog (or is that Bloch?)

International Shrimper Rally, second week, June 2015

Saturday dawned damp and overcast. As most people headed off to Kip for lift-out we felt rather flat, our planned trip around Arran didn't seem a good idea given the forecast, so, with an alternative in mind and having dropped our washing off at the excellent Fresh'n'Press, we set out to walk to the Victorian Fernery at Asgog. Much more had been done since our previous visit and the garden was luxuriant in the hands of the new owners. After lunch back on board, and the arrival of the paddle steamer *Waverley* (the locals regard it as the 'arrival of the drunks'), the sun appeared and we had a lovely, quiet sail to Kip, followed by a meal with Trevor Thomas and his crew.

Sunday was forecast to be wet, so we left the boat, caught the train and headed into Glasgow for some Culture along with Jon, Marie-Do, Keith and Jackie. First stop, to avoid yet more rain, was the famous Willow Tree Café in Sauchiehall Street (Sauchiehall meaning 'way of the willows' in Gaelic), where we hoped (and succeeded!) to get an overview of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's decorations, furniture, paintings and architecture. Here we parted with the others, who had to get back, and had an excellent cup of coffee on the stylish first-floor balcony restaurant. After an abortive visit to the School of Art – still closed after a major fire last year – we proceeded to the Lighthouse, which, after a steep climb, gave a great view of the city rooftops.

The river bus out to the Museum of Transport seemed like a good idea except that the 'season' appeared not to have started by mid-June, so we walked along the riverbank – supposedly 45 minutes' walk but it was clear that Glaswegians must walk very fast. It was well worth the trip, though, to see the many interesting exhibits, featuring steam engines, cars and model ships, not to mention interactive exhibits for the children (and the occasional adult!). Outside the museum the three-masted barque *Glenlee* is moored – once a goods-carrying sailing ship that rounded the horn 15 times before being converted to a sail-training ship and eventually saved from dereliction and turned into a Clydeside tourist attraction.

The forecast for the next few days was better, so on Monday morning we left for a passage to Holy Loch. Light head winds and a foul tide meant that we had plenty of time to view Dunoon and its famous pier as we headed north.

Three Lochs and a City – Ros & Paul Walland

The only other Shrimpers still around at this stage were Ruth and Tim in *Kittiwake* who set out ahead of us, also heading north, but they miraculously disappeared into the distance and we didn't see them again except as a dot on the horizon heading back south the following day.

As we arrived in Holy Loch Marina, about 1½ miles up the loch, the sun came out and we were met by Andy – a fellow Shrimper owner who lived locally and had seen us arrive! We chatted for a while and he offered to take us for a walk later in the evening. After a belated lunch/tea he and his partner Jan arrived and drove us a couple of miles into the hills to Pucks Glen. It was a fabulous walk, made all the better by our wonderful hosts who led us through a pine forest and up beside a tumbling glen to the top of the hill with spectacular views.

Sadly the beautiful late evening was somewhat marred back at the marina by our pontoon neighbours, a group of three South Africans who were intent on getting drunk and playing irritatingly loud music into the small hours. Eventually Paul could stand it no longer and knocked on their hull, inviting them to quieten down, which they did immediately without a murmur. Should have done that about two hours earlier!

Amazingly, they were gone by 6 the next morning but we had a slightly more leisurely start, sailing north with a following wind up Loch Long and into Loch Goil. Loch Long is the home of a submarine base and has a large area of restricted water closely guarded by two police boats and some quite intimidating blank-faced buildings. Having dutifully crept past on the other side of the loch, we turned into Loch Goil. The entrance is between two steep hills, one of which was a fantastic patchwork of trees and rhododendrons – very pretty, but demonstrating just how invasive rhododendrons are becoming.

We picked up a mooring close to Carrick Castle for lunch. Sadly we had to leave and return south, back to Holy Loch. As we left Loch Goil the *Waverley* passed very close, and there was mutual photography between us and her passengers lining the rail. The pay-back for a following wind in the morning was a head wind returning, meaning we could give the police patrol boats something to do as we tacked past the submarine base, going about exactly on the GPS edges of the exclusion zone. Eventually we gave up the unequal struggle and motored back the rest of the way.

Three Lochs and a City – Ros & Paul Walland

This time we were alone on 200 metres of pontoon, and after watching the log boat being loaded from the jetty we enjoyed another lovely evening walking along the beach, watching the sun-dogs and photographing the sunset.



Shearwater on a very long pontoon

The forecast for Wednesday was for rain and wind by lunchtime, so we left Holy Loch and motored in a flat calm back to Kip. The only other boat we saw – apart from a ferry – was a small trawler that crossed our track, leaving behind a long wake of weed and debris dredged up from the sea floor.

The afternoon was spent searching for history and ice-creams in Largs. We eventually found the museum, just as it was being locked up. However, the volunteer curator was only too happy to open up and sell us a couple of books and chat – in fact we had difficulty escaping to catch the bus back. Once back in Inverkip we walked up Daff Glen, following a path lined with wild garlic and climbing on past pools of deep pearly water set between cascading waterfalls, all set in peaceful mixed woodland. At one point there were enormous sandstone pillars supporting a railway line, and it was spectacular to see a train emerging from the treetops above us. Then back to the boat and shelter from yet more heavy rain!

Our last day dawned absolutely still and damp, so it was off to Glasgow again to finish our cultural experience. In St Andrews Catholic Cathedral we were introduced to St Mungo.



Reflections of St Mungo

Three Lochs and a City – Ros & Paul Walland

After walking through Glasgow Green to the People's Palace and Wintergardens we arrived at the Doulton Fountain, the biggest terracotta fountain in the world, where Queen Victoria towers over her Empire. Next stop was the Cathedral of St Mungo (Church of Scotland). Interesting how differently the two denominations interpreted his miracles. The St Mungo Museum of Religious Art was a great representation of comparative religion, probably the best we have ever come across, and much to be recommended.

Finally we made it to GoMA – the Gallery of Modern Art, where Ros was much unimpressed by modernism, so we retired for tea at the other Willow Tea Rooms in Buchanan Street. Once back in Kip we treated ourselves to a final meal in the Chartroom Restaurant while the heavens opened and delivered yet more torrential rain.

The following morning we tidied and dismantled the boat between bouts of rain, and met the lift-out crew after their coffee break for a fast and efficient transfer from water to trailer ready for the long trek home. Needless to say, we were travelling back with fond memories of a very varied few days around the Clyde, and a lot of wet gear!

Driftwood boat made for a competition but not submitted!

Hull from Holy Loch, spars from Largs and design based on the information board at Inverkip!



Ros and Paul Walland – *Shearwater* (6)