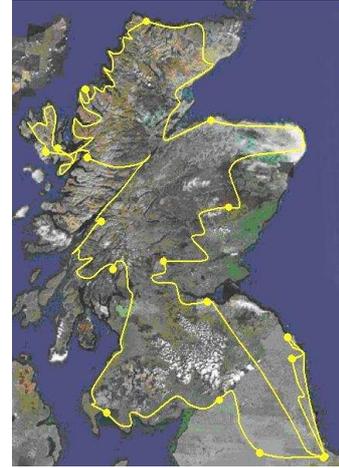




Wedding Gathering in Teesside, UK + Enjoy Scotland

23. April to 22. Mai 2007



Background

This trip was not planned at this stage (so soon after Morocco) and in this season (too early for camping). We just took it as an opportunity following an invitation to join a **Chinese Wedding Gathering** of our family in Teesside (near Middlesbrough)!

Goals and Strategy

- **Just go with our 'Hotel Berlingo' and see as much as possible of Scotland in 2 weeks!**
- Enjoy a few days with Toni's, Peggy's brother's family.
- Just take things as they happen and do what is possible with the weather of the day!
- Minimum luggage and equipment to survive and also avoid unnecessary cost.
- Having learned from our Morocco trip, we made a small table enabling us to prepared and have meals while sitting on the front seats of the car. It was Peggy's wish and it was good she insisted!

Results

We had a good time with the family for a few days; visited some old friends and we saw and enjoyed a great part of beautiful Scotland.

We really enjoyed the trip!

Lasting impressions

- The ever changing sceneries of Scotland, with all these hills and islands and sweet and salty lochs.
- Ever-changing vegetation from barren rocks, over grassland, flowery bushes (gorse), to forests and beautiful farmland with scattered lovely farmhouses.
- Lambing season. Mother sheep with their lovely lambs everywhere (the black-faced were the most cute). We also enjoyed the wildlife, especially birds of all kinds!
- The erratic weather changing the glass clear sceneries every few minutes from dark to bright, from grey to colour!
- Walking without being bothered by anybody (after Morocco) but watch the weather and beware of the bogs! Peggy suffered (and even panicked) from the midges the last few days in Scotland.
- Driving very slowly hundreds of miles on single-track roads just enjoying and being sheltered in the car from wind and rain.

Facts

- Total trip: 30 days 7245 km
- Teesside - Scotland - Teesside 15 days 3331 km
- Nights spent: 29 (all in car) 18 wild 1 in camping 10 family/friends' car parks
- Costs CHF 820.- for fuel CHF 192.- for ferries
- Weather: More or less dry and pleasant until we got to Trossachs on 3rd May. Then almost every day some rain and the sky more often than not threatening with rain. Lot of wind and rather cool to cold.
- Health: Fine.
- Equipment: Hotel Berlingo, bed on planks (mattress, double sleeping bag in duvet, pillows), camping table/chairs (used 3X), small table for inside, gas cooker, kitchen gear.

Accommodation

As usually we slept very well in the car. We had anticipated that we would spend most nights at camping sites and the odd night at B&B. As it turned out, we always found great spots for wild camping and since the weather did not usually permit outdoor relaxing, we did not see the need to stay in camping sites. Bed & Breakfast is quite expensive, usually from 25£ per person upwards. Camping for us, would be at £10 normal, up to 20£ upmarket and 5£ self-service (just a meadow and a loo).

Weather

The weather was unstable at best, cool to cold and it rained almost every day at least once as we had expected for Scottish weather! We had no health problems, not even a dribbling nose! Another time we would however take some heavy rain gear and boots to undertake some long walks. But to dry wet clothes could be a problem with our mode of travel.

Food

While with the family, we were overfed with all sorts of food and so after each visit, we enjoyed to eat light for the next few days. We had every day our normal breakfast and a sandwich-type lunch or a light snack e.g. fish'n'chips (nowadays more often than not of disappointing fast food standard) or haggis (a lovely and tasty scottish speciality). For dinner we had usually a BBQ or some simple cooked dish preceded by a "sophisticated" salad. We did not go to restaurants for dinner since we usually stayed the night at very lost places.

Sightseeing and Walking

Sightseeing is extremely expensive when it comes to entrance fees for museums, castles, parks and even churches. We just refused to pay 5, 7, 12 or even more £ each to just satisfy our curiosity. The only museum I was determined to see, the train museum at Darlington (first passenger railway in history), was closed for refurbishing! There are still enough other places just as interesting to see free of charge. Although we had a few nice walks, we did not really undertake big tours as the weather was too unstable and we were not properly equipped for touring in rough weather.

Highlights

Fortunately we did not experience any severe incidents! In the following just a few events or aspects which stand out in our memory (some of them are described in more detail in the diary):

- The first day we drove along the Rhine and really enjoyed getting back into the atmosphere of last year's bike ride! The night we spent on the shore of the Mosel with a grilled Schweinshaxe.....!!!
- 1h after disembarking in Dover and driving on the A2 (on the left), I missed the turn to the M25 and finally ended up at the Westminster Bridge instead, panicking because I did not have a city map to show me how to get back to the M1 heading North. When I asked a lady for the way and admitted that I did not have a clue of where I was, she answered: "be assured you are in England!"
- Experiencing Hongkong Chinese of different integration degrees, between living almost a whole life and just a few months in England was very interesting for me. There are the global commonalities and then the subtle but deeply rooted differences making the world look 180 degrees upside down. I get that with Peggy sometimes, after 35 years of marriage!
- To meet my old friend Dave Petifer in Northumberland, whom I had worked with in the early 1970-ies and whom we had not seen for well over 23 years. There was a lot to talk with him and Jean. It was also good to see our old friends in Norfolk, Cliff and Doreen (their dogy Jude), to renew nice feelings and memories.
- To be and sleep at the top of Scotland, at Durness, the Hotel Berlingo rocking all night in the heavy storm. It reminded us of the North Cape in 1981 (but no mid-night sun, of course).
- Visit to the Talisker Distillery on Skye to see that this great stuff (single malt) is made of nothing else than beer before the distillation process. I bought myself a bottle! Later found out that the same costs 5 pounds less in CH!
- Gorse bushes in yellow blossom everywhere, making green hills beautiful in the sunshine!
- We enjoyed every place where we slept, while on the way! Our grey mouse car did not rouse any suspicion wherever we parked and so we could enjoy the greatest views while having dinner and breakfast in the car. Some class-minded campings even refused to take people who sleep in a car, good on them!
- The Hadrian Wall (North England) is really worth a visit! There is not just the wall, but the walk between Twice Brewed and Housestead is very nice. Of course we were reminiscent of our beloved Chinese Wall.

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my gratitude to Peggy who as usually did wonders in managing our household logistics!
I would also like to extend my thanks to Peggy's family and our friends who received and treated us
gipsies very kindly:-)

28th April Start: **Thornaby-on-Tees** End: **Newton-on-the Moor** (near Alnwick) Today: 130 km

As the 'wedding gathering' had been postponed to the 1st May, we decided to make a little tour to Northumberland beforehand, to visit Dave Petifer, an old working colleague of mine at Hasler's telex department in the 1970's.

Easy drive to Newcastle on Tyne with a nice town center with monuments, old walls, churches and castles, nice pubs, interesting bridges and the compulsory (unexciting) Chinatown. We enjoyed walking around for 3h and then left for Newton-on-the-Moor where we enjoyed the very warm reception of Dave and Jean who have moved recently into an old converted chapel that they continue to turn and decorate into a real bijou of a home!



29th April Start: **Newton-on-the Moor** End: **Holy Island**

Today: 83 km

At breakfast time we received and appreciated Dave and Jean's recommendations for planning our itinerary to and within Scotland. Then had the long-awaited bitter in the village pub.

Left at 15h for a coast and castle drive, passing Dunstanburgh Castle (1h walk - pic) and the impressive Bamburgh Castle until we got to Holy Island with the Lyndisfarnie Castle after driving over a long and exciting causeway. Since the causeway is blocked at high tide, we returned before dark to the mainland to park and spend the night on the "tide waiting" car park. Real pity, that the weather was very grey that afternoon.



30th April Start: **Holy Island** End: **Thornaby-on-Tees**

Today: 182 km

After a quiet night we enjoyed our breakfast in the car on our new table with great view to Holy Island and the clouds breaking up to let the rising sun warming the atmosphere. The rest of the day we had steel blue sky!

How different the colours now!

We enjoyed visiting Alnwick with its beautiful castle along the river and the biggest second-hand bookshop of UK located in a former railway station! Later we moved on to see the impressive Warkworth Castle which again topped a lovely river crossed by an elegant medieval stone bridge



We also took a little time to climb the attractive dunes of the nearby Warkworth Beach (pic).

On the way back to Teesside we strolled around Tynemouth with its esplanades and the impressive ruins of its Abbey (pic), the late afternoon sun giving it all a dramatic touch.

After crossing the Tyne Tunnel we got back to the family in Thornaby just in time to enjoy the apéro in the garden followed by a yammie buffet (guai lo style:-).



1st May Wedding Gathering at **Ingleby-Barwick**

Today: 0 km

*Good luck to
Ah Po & Stephen
!!!!!!!!!!!!*



Today we celebrated the new couple **Ah-Po** and **Stephen** with a great BBQ-party in their garden and then again with a sumptuous feast in a very happy atmosphere.

2nd May Start: **Thornaby-on-Tees** End: **Granton** near Edinburgh

Today: 280 km

We left at 9.00 for our trip to Scotland before anybody else was up:-).....

Easy drive to Durham, where we parked above the river opposite the impressive cathedral (pic). Then visited the cathedral and the lovely town before passing the Angel of the North (pic) near Newcastle. The A68 then led us in bright sunshine through magnificent landscapes over rolling hills across to Scotland at Carter Bar (417m).



We reached Edinburgh at 15.30, just early enough for an extended stroll though the truly attractive city. Of course we also walked through Prince's Road (pic) and then across to the castle and down the Royal Mile.



In the late evening sun we then drove down to New Haven (with the Queen's yacht Britannia) and on to a lonely parking near Granton with a great view over the Firth of Forth which we reached in the dusk and where we stayed for the night as we had been denied access to a nearby **camping, not allowing people to sleep in cars!** Very well so! From then on we had no remorse any more for doing wild camping!

3rd May Start: **Granton** near Edinburgh End: **Stathyre** (in the Trossachs) Today: 122 km

Had a good night, except for some initial disturbance by young people using the car park as a racing track! The day started grey and rough again, so we had our morning treat in the car again - with great warm coffee! Then drove slowly along the Firth of Forth to admire the elegant and impressive railway bridge across the Firth!



In Falkirk we visited another technical marvel: the Millennium Wheel of Falkirk, with which ships master the drop of the canal of 40m in 1 step of 5 minutes instead of 5h with the 11 original gates!

The promised splendid view from the Stirling Castle over the battle-fields (Braveheart) was unfortunately obstructed by dense haze but after we left and headed towards the Trossachs with many lovely lochs between green hills the sun came out at last and we decided to stop early at 14h to relax in warm sunny weather. It turned out to be the last chance!



After a 'cleaning session' for our Berlingo Hotel we had a great BBQ and a good time with our neighbour, David from Glasgow and his boy (canoes).

Hahaha, at 19h, rain started all of a sudden and thereafter we had genuine scottish weather for the rest of the trip!



4th May Start: **Stathyre** End: near **Balmoral Castle** Today: 275 km

Great sleep! Got up at 9.00 after 12h in bed! Had a long chat with David who gave us some hints for the journey and who did not seem to feel the morning cold. So we were nearly frozen when we left at 11h!

Nice drive along Loch Earn to Perth. There is nothing wrong with Perth, but like most towns towards the North there is not much of an attractive atmosphere. Cold stone buildings looking very sad in grey weather.

This also counted for the next few places Pitlochry and Braemar where we merely drove through. Even went as far as Blair Castle but returned as we were asked to pay entrance before seeing anything worthwhile.

The wild, lonely countryside however is charming in any weather and so we continued to enjoy our drive through valleys and high, dark moors (dry erica bushes) and then crossed the highest pass of UK (932m, in the clouds) before Braemar.

From here on we started to look for somewhere to sleep and we found a lonely spot near Balmoral Castle beside a small road in a forest beside the river Dee. Peggy slept soon after we had devoured a tasty roast chicken from Tesco!



5th May Start: near **Balmoral Castle** End: **Burghead** Today: 378 km

Great sleep already becomes a habit! After the morning routine we continued driving over small roads through incredibly nice country-side over hills in gorse bushes, valleys with sparkling rivers, dark and bright forests, farm-land with nice houses and cattle and wild-life such as pheasants, rabbits, hares and deers until we got to Huntly. Then we crossed a plane to reach the interesting but not overly picturesque fishing town of Peterhead!



As it was extremely windy we soon left for Fraserburgh (pic) where had a portion of soggy, disgracefull fish'n'chips. Then at least we enjoyed a tidy beer in a bar with true local Celtic fans, before we continued along the beautiful coast of the Moray Firth passing Banff, Spey Bay (missing out on the well-known Spey Whisky distilleries) and Lossiemouth from where we started to look for somewhere to sleep.



This was not too easy as camping was forbidden at all nice places until we found a good spot in the neglected harbour of Burghead with a great view to the sea!.

6th May Start: **Burghhead** End: **Durness** (Top of Scotland)

Today: 371 km

The car had been shaking the whole night in the storm but the sky was bright until we reached Inverness when it started to rain heavily. So we just drove through the deserted town on a Sunday morning.

Although it remained stormy the whole day with sun and rain relaying each other every 2 minutes (we knew then that when the sun shines it is going to rain soon!)

Nevertheless we very much enjoyed the drive along the Moray Firth, passing-by Dunrobin Castle (pic) up to Helmsdale where we turned to cross over the highland (pic with stone circle) on our first single-track road to get to the North shore at Melvich.

As we drove West the shore became wilder and so did the storm and the rain. There were a few villages not worth staying at but we stopped here and there to watch the dramatic scenery.

Shortly before Durness we pulled out to a vantage point car park where we had dinner with first class view, but the storm was so strong, that we left this very exposed place to stay the night on the main car park in the middle of Durness. Campers and camping where surely not permitted, but who would get out in the heavy storm to care (except for us to go to the nearby toilet:-)!)



7th May Start: **Durness** End: **Cove** (on head of peninsula of Loch Ewe)

Today: 279 km

The storm continued but the sky brightened up and again we got sun and rain alternating every 5 minutes. So instead of a walk to the Cape Wrath at the tip of Scotland we just took it easy and continued strolling the whole day with our car over the lovely 1-track winding roads (slopes up to 25%), through and over hills (pic - Stac Pollaigh), along the sinuous coast, stopping where and when we liked. Also went for a walk at the Measach Falls.

As we got to a dead end near the tiny village cove at the tip of a peninsula, we decided to stay at this great point for the night (pic). No problem at all, we even had a good chat with an Englishman who was staying on holiday at the nearby farm and who showed us the nearby war memorial for the Russians who died on the Murmansk trip in WW II.



8th May Start: **Cove** End: **Nowhere** (on Skye facing Scalpay Island)

Today: 271 km

After 8.5h un-interrupted sleep and a great breakfast in rising sun we drove back to main road just to turn back to the other tip of the same peninsula, to the Rudha Reich light tower.

Great drive and scenery again with all these sheep and the baby lamb we tried to cuddle. As they did not let us, we had to keep to cats and the like.

Later we continued along uncounted mountains and lochs and even over a real steep pass (pic – pass of the cattle).

Eventually we crossed the bridge over to the Island of Skye where we looked for somewhere to sleep and sure enough as we took that small road leading around an uninhabited peninsula we found a good spot overlooking a great bay towards Scalpay Island. For dinner Peggy cooked a lovely hamburger stew in the car on our kitchen-table:-). We still had enough wine and so we enjoyed our meal as usually!

The weather had been very scottish standard again today but somehow we had managed to follow the holes in the threatening clouds most of the time.



9th May Start: **Nowhere** (Skye) End: **Nowhere** (Cuillin Hills near Glenbrittle)
Great Skye day today!!!

Today: 195 km

After a short visit of touristic Portree we passed the famous Old Man of Starr (pic) in heavy rain and then during short rain gaps we managed to visit the Lealt Falls (pic - Peggy on the way back) and the Kilt Rock Fall (pic). There are many nice waterfalls around as there is plenty of water obviously:-).



For the next highlight, the Quairaing Rock Formation we are very lucky to benefit from a longer break in between showers enabling us see and even to enjoy a "mountain walk" to these very impressive Rocks! Just when we got there it started to rain again and that stopped me from undertaking some foolish climbing adventures:-)

Later on, in bright weather we enjoyed to drive to another highlight, which we found, by accident when we continued on a small road passing Dunvegan castle and the small village of Claigan.

At the very end of the road, being curious, we just went for a walk and ended up at the fascinating Coral Beach. Real corals and colours like in the South Sea!

Later we visited the impressive iron-age fort, the Dun Beag circular tower that we thought to be the last visit of the day!

Later we changed our mind because the car park at Dun Beag was too exposed to traffic and so we continued to the Cuillin Hills and found this great spot facing the hills after a U-turn at Glenbrittle. After a lovely dinner-picnic, just before 9.30, the sun suddenly broke through under the layer of clouds and lit the mountains in front of us in bright red! By the way – there was no mobile phone signal here!



10th May Start: **Nowhere** (Cuillin Hills) End: **Nowhere** (Mam Ratagan–Loch Duich)

Today: 179 km

Rainy night, good sleep, nice morning. After leisurely breakfast we went for a 3h walk down to the river to follow it up to the foot of the hills. It turned out to be a great walk for seeing nice cascades surrounded by the rough mountain slopes.

Then at last I enjoyed the long awaited visit to a whisky distillery – Talisker, the only distillery on Skye. There I learned for 5£ where the smoke taste of the island whiskies comes from and that single malt whisky is nothing else than distilled beer!

After that we had a good shower at a small camping before we continued to Armadale to see the lush vegetation in the warm microclimate of that part of Skye.

We left Skye with regrets and realised that now we were on the way back!

Of course there would still be many nice places to see such as the Eilean Donan Castle (pic) and the vantage point we found after a long while looking for somewhere to spend the night overlooking Loch Duich was just perfect!

Although it was rather cool we had some of the best, grilled rump steaks and angus beef burgers ever (and still enough wine too) while enjoying the view and the loneliness of Northern Scotland!



11th May Start: **Nowhere** (Loch Duich) End: **Glasdrum Wood** (at Loch Creran)

Today: 225 km

Hilltops are white (snow to 800m). Enjoying the warm coffee, believe me!

Easy drive to Loch Ness with the well-known Urquhart Castle. After the exciting Northwest we are disappointed by the "normality" of this landscape. Quickly, we return Southwest visiting the gates of the rather busy Caledonian canal at Fort Augustus and Gairloch with a very interesting history since Napoleonic times.

Later stopped at Fort Williams where we hung around for some time hoping for the clouds to lift to see Ben Nevis, the highest mountain of GB. I had even hoped to climb up but with the heavy clouds hanging down its slopes we contented ourselves with a 2.5h walk to the Cows Hill (pic).

In the night we found a nice spot at the Glasdrum Forest Reserve where the Creran River becomes Loch Creran. We watched father and son fishing unsuccessfully for 2h (pic).



12th May Start: **Glasdrum Wood** (Loch Creran) End: **Nowhere** (Argyll Forest)

Today: 215 km

The sun wakes us after a good night. After enjoying breakfast I go by myself for a walk along the marked trail with signposted notes about the nature's highlights, while Peggy stays behind locked in the car because she had been stung by a few "highland midges" which swarm around in the humid morning air of the forest.

Later we enjoy the lovely drive to Oban passing-by the Dunstaffnage Castle. Oban is a lively town with a strange monument – the McCraig Tower. This rich gentleman was so impressed by the Colosseum in Rome that he had his Colosseum built by job-less people in wintertime! We honoured this by having a tidy Tettley's Velvet in a bar!

Before leaving the coast for good (we then thought) we wanted to have another look at the islands and the Atlantic. So we made the detour to Easdale. Only when we crossed a beautiful old stone bridge did we realise that we had moved onto an island.

Easdale was lovely and interesting as its quarries produced millions of slates shipped all over the world. Today there is a nice tiny brewery producing great Oyster Beer!

Nice weather but still too early for BBQ so we continue driving with some detours on small roads via Loch Awe until the weather gets very bad as we pass Inveraray.

Now it gets dark and I start to get concerned about finding a good place and so we take another detour over a small road right into a small valley in the Argyll Forest. We park under beautiful but dribbling oak trees and pass a quiet night. No BBQ because it rains and because of millions of midges. No radio either!



13th May Start: **Nowhere** (Argyll Forest)

End: **Stairhaven**

Today: 215 km

Rather nice morning in this magnificent forest but we drive off right-way after waking up because Peggy is panicking in view of the swarms of midges in the sunlight!

So eventually we have breakfast beside Loch Lomond (pic) - where we could easily have stayed the night – without midges!

Then we moved on to Glasgow, where we parked at 9 o'clock on a grey Sunday morning, right across the footbridge near the city centre. We strolled around, admiring the many stately buildings with interesting decorations making Glasgow an attractive metropolis. Meanwhile the shops had opened and the city got quite crowded.

As it was still early, we decided to go back to the coast via Kilmarnock, the touristic towns Prestwick and Ayr to look for a good place for the BBQ we had to postpone last night. With our good nose we found a lovely place at the beach of Doonfoot near the broken Greenan Castle (pic). It was great to walk to the castle on the low-tide rocky ground to relax the full tummy. Then we enjoyed the drive along the lovely coast (Scotland seems to be nice everywhere) to Stranrear where the ferries leave for Ireland. Again Stranrear is ok but not so special to spend a night if not needed!

Bingo again! As we had suspected we found a great spot again for the night in Stairhaven overlooking Luce Bay as far as the Isle of Man! Beautiful evening in the sunset beside the calm beach. Could watch a grey heron fishing for a long time right in front of the car. Later we were invited by our only neighbours from France (St Julien near Geneva) to have a coffee in their camper. Was amazing to realise how blind they travel in UK by not mastering English very well! But then they happened to be great veterans on travelling in Morocco and so we had quite a lot to tell each other! That day I was frustrated because I still had not managed to get my **Haggis** experience!!



14th May Start: **Stairhaven** End: **Birdoswald** (Fort of Hadrian's Wall)

Today: 231 km

Great morning. Drove to Port William and then across the peninsula when we saw the old Drumtrodden stones. Then visited Dumfries, the last Town in Scotland. Apart from being a nice town I will keep it in memory for having had **Haggis** at last. Even **twice**! First as a lunch dish in a pub lounge followed by a decent bitter at the bar and then as a fast food version deep-fried! I really liked the texture of this mix of "sheep's 'pluck' (heart, liver and lungs), minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and traditionally boiled in the animal's stomach for approximately an hour, looking like sausage! Peggy promised that she would make it – even better!

Just before crossing the border to England we paid a visit to famous Gretna Green. There is nothing really to see for visitors except the huge commercial centre in the middle of nowhere selling all sorts of things for wedding presents. Then we visited Carlisle, the first town in England and we almost had the feeling that we came back to another world. There is an old fort and an impressive cathedral which we did not enter as "a donation of 4£ is not compulsory but expected" – bullshit! So we continued to the Hadrian's wall where we found a good place to stay at the Birdoswald Roman Fort.



15th May Start: **Birdoswald** (Hadrian's Wall)

End: **High Force** (Waterfall)

Today: 85 km

Great sleep in spite of heavy rain. Enjoyed to look around the well-preserved foundations of the Birdoswald Fort before any visitors turned up then left to look for the best section for a wall-walk.

So we found the Twice Brewed Pub (beside Once Brewed) where we parked and left off for our walk in the rain. Fortunately it stopped raining and we even enjoyed a fair bit of sun illuminating the attractive and quite dramatic views of the wall and the hilly landscape between Steel Rig and Housesteads a stretch we walked in both directions in about 3h.

Truly satisfied we had a thankful (for parking) bitter at the Twice Brewed Pub.

Lovely drive over and around hills through empty space and small villages until we reached the next highlight in the evening: the High Force waterfalls of the river Tees. We parked near the lovely Low Force Falls and then walked into the late evening to the impressive High Force Falls (biggest of UK) and back to stay the night with dozens of rabbits racing around our lonely car!

We were no more far from Teesside and I had anticipated that Peggy would want to drive back there to join the family tonight. No, she rather wanted to enjoy the great relaxing quietness amongst the rabbits having a lush cold dinner with what was left in store:-)



16th May Start: **High Force** (Waterfall) End: **Ingleby-Barwick** (Teesside)

Today: 76 km

A last long sleep followed by our standard breakfast amongst the early rabbits.

Then we enjoyed the short visit of the small town of Barnard Castle with a nice town centre, a lovely bridge over the Tees (pic) and a closed castle.

Darlington was nice but to my big disappointment the railway museum was closed for refurbishing. Note that, Stevenson's first ever passenger railway run from Stockton-on-Tees to Darlington!

Getting back to the family in Teesside was like getting back home! Very warm reception and then Chinese family life again:-)



17th May Staying at **Ingleby-Barwick** (Teesside)

Today: 0 km

Hanging around while Ah Yuen is packing for her and Toni to return to Hongkong the next day.

At lunchtime Peggy and I left with Toni to look for a pub (our last chance with him) and there we had a couple of lovely bitters..... Then we had a great treat of fish'n'chips, which later back home was followed by all sorts of titbits until, at 10pm, we joined a Chinese Hotpot Dinner (Tah Pin Lo) at Ah Po's mother's place.

The youngsters seemed to be more attracted by the Karaoke than the food and so the evening went and on until very late. Finally getting back home we were faced with another challenge! The cake was delicious and we all went to sleep in peace!



18th May Start: **Ingleby-Barwick** (Teesside) End: (near) **North Somercotes**

Today: 256 km

Got up at 7, still tired! After long parting and farewell hugs we left at 10am, keen to do some more sightseeing!

So we chose to drive through the lovely valley of Bilsdale in the Yorkshire National Reserve, also having a look at the impressive ruins of the Rievaulx Abbey while taking care not to harm the many pheasants crossing the roads. Then we did not enter Sutton Bank Park as it appeared a bit too touristic for our taste!

On the way to York we then admired the huge White Horse depicted on a steep hill (pic – the horse looks perfect from far distance!).



York is known to be a nice city with a beautiful old town. The fish'n'chips however were once more disgraceful!

So we left with no regrets at 3pm towards Kingston-upon-Hull where we crossed the Humber over the enormous bridge with a great view.



After Grimsby and Cleethorpes it took us a while to find somewhere to stay. Our nose directed us to a perfect spot again, beside a very quiet, beautiful beach near North Somercotes with warnings not to touch any metal objects – it was an army exercise ground – Dona Nook. In the dusk at 9.30pm, 4 small vans suddenly appeared and men got out who broke down the fence of the lonely house beside and drove in! We were scared and pretended not to be there. But as none took notice of us we went to sleep quietly after a while!



19th May Start: (near) **North Somercotes** End: **Wretton**

Today: 169 km

Beautiful morning and beautiful drive along the coast with a relaxing stopover at the beach of Mablethorpe, a lovely holiday resorts. Later we crossed Ingoldmells with a Las Vegas like amusement area and Skegness with square miles of crowded mobil-home parks. We crossed and left this area as quickly as possible, which was not easy in the traffic jam on this Saturday morning!

Arriving in Norfolk we went to visit the lovely old town of King's Lynn with the history of a great port in the old days. The very interesting museum shows the life of the local hero, Captain Vancouver, famous for the development of America's Northwest coast.

In the late afternoon we arrive at our old friends, Cliff and Doreen's place and as usual we spend a great evening with them, talking until very late about all the things that move our spirits and souls in common.



20th May Start: **Wretton**

End: **Southwold**

Today: 128 km



Beautiful morning which gave us the opportunity to go for a nice morning walk with Cliff, Doreen and their lovely dog, Jude before we parted at 11am to drive on to Norwich, through lovely landscapes with nice houses. We spent a couple of hours in old Norwich with a magnificent cathedral (pic), many old churches, an old castle and a lovely walkway along the river Yare.



Eventually we reached Southwold, a lovely coastal town with a platform into the North Sea like the towns along the Channel giving it a similar atmosphere.

For the night we settled in the leisure boat port area of the river Blyth where we had a nice stroll in the setting sun while we realised that this was going to be our last night in UK!



21st May Start: **Southwold**

End: **Calais**

Today: 330 km

We started early to make sure we would not get trouble with any port guards and so we enjoyed the nice morning drive to Aldeburgh where we had breakfast in the car on a huge and mile-long dam along the sea where many overnight camping-cars were still parked! As the weather turned to continuous rain we just kept driving slowly towards London and the crossing of the Thames over the Elisabeth Bridge, the turn, which we had missed 4 weeks earlier. Then we continued to the nice town Rochester with an impressive castle (pic) after paying a visit to the Charles Dickens pub named after the local hero.

Just to fill the time to the ferry's departure at 19.30 we drove to a great vantage point between the cliffs below St Margret at Cliffe near Dover. Unfortunately we did not have enough time for a walk to the light tower but it was a great place to end our visit to UK! The crossing with Seafrance was routine and on the other side we easily found our place to sleep, right in front of the town center of Calais, opposite the ferry terminal.



22nd May Start: **Calais**

End: **Ipsach**

Today: 986 km

We enjoyed our last breakfast with direct view to the ferries!

The drive home was routine. We drove again through Belgium in grey weather at first, which at the approach of Luxembourg made way for bright sunshine for the rest of the journey. We enjoyed the beautiful drive through the Eiffel where we took a short rest near Dahn before we crossed over to Karlsruhe to the motorway taking us back home by 20.30. That night it was a strange feeling to sleep in a bedroom after 4 weeks:-)



THE END