

A lost and unknown Diary of the Late Gordon Wiseman detailing a holiday back in 1973!  
This was recently uncovered by his widow, Elsie, during 2005.

The pictures shown through this article are all from postcards of the day, back in 1975, and may not look anything like today, 2006!

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### Scotland Tour – 15<sup>th</sup> July 1973 – 29<sup>th</sup> July 1973

Left Birmingham on M6 at 9:45am for Scotland.

On arrival at Bannockburn, we had a look at the Robert Bruce Memorial and also had a our first cup (plastic) of tea since leaving Brum, charged 6p & thought “well, this is going to be an expensive holiday, 6p for half a small cup of tea”, but this was not the case as we later found out. Arrived here at 4pm. Left Brum in very wet weather and on arrival in Scotland it was glorious sunshine.



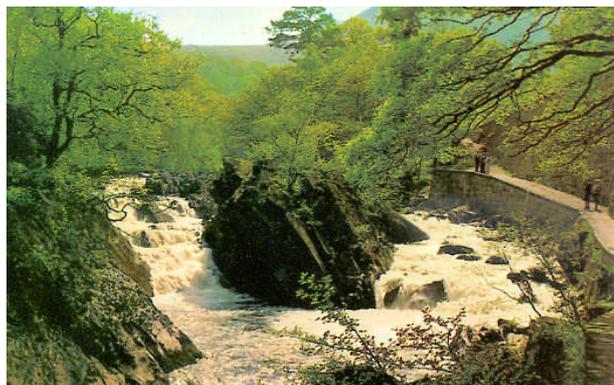
After a brief spell here to stretch our legs we carried on to Callender where we spent the evening looking around the small town. We got fixed up with B&B. Elsie and I stayed with a Mrs McLean whilst Alan & Mary stayed with a Mrs McPherson (not Janet out of Dr Finlay’s casebook) next door to each other in a row of four cottages away off the road, up a dirt track, about 3.5miles out of Callender.

Here we have a Postcard of the Centre of Callender, 1975.



In Callender we had our first taste of Haggis and chips, which was very nice.

Just on the outskirts of town we came across this beautiful scene of a series of small waterfalls, where Alan & I bathed our feet in the cool crystal clear water, walking along the stone to a small waterfall.



We went back to the digs at about 10pm, Alan & Mary to the first house whilst we went next door. We chatted to Mr & Mrs McLean & son and found during our conversation that Mr McClean & son worked for the Forestry Commission and lived in the tied cottage and that it was the most prevalent industry around the West Coast of Scotland. We all partook in a couple of cups of tea and biscuits and was surprised how light it was at 10:30pm at night and even at 11pm one could still make out shapes with artificial light. Eventually we retired to a nice clean bed and a good sleep.

On Monday we awoke reasonably early so went for a walk through the woods which were situated on a hill behind the house, for about half hour, then returned to a nice breakfast of bacon, egg, toast, oat cakes and marmalade, followed by a chat to Mrs McLean then settled up and left to visit the local woollen mill, where Alan bought Mary a genuine tartan kilt.

Whilst standing in the mill, a chappie who was in charge of a visiting party came up and vigorously shook me by the hand having mistaken me for the “gaffer”. I asked him if I looked that affluent? Anyway, we both had a good laugh and went our separate ways, looking over the mill.

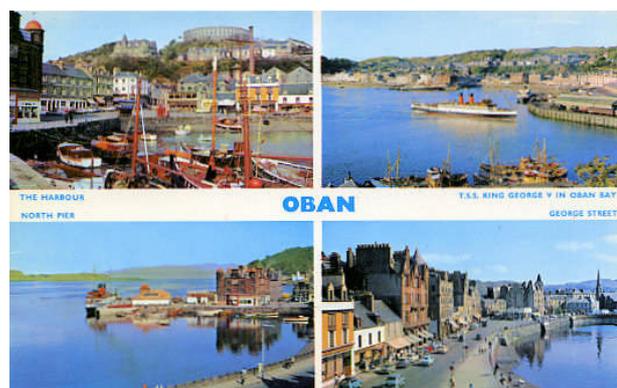
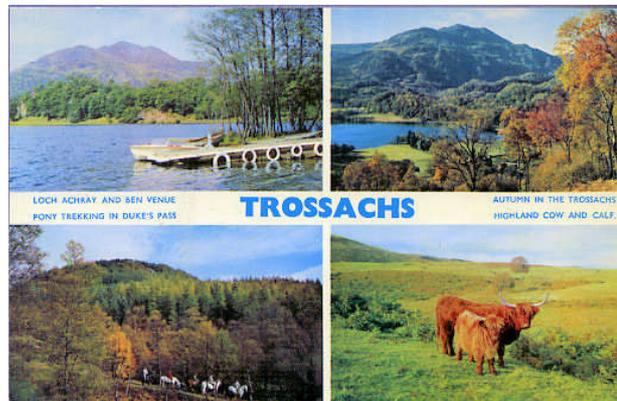
Eventually we left for a visit to the Trossachs – what some beautiful scenery! We stopped and admired the countryside all around us, watching the different species of birds, fed one tame bird with some cake crumbs and he kept coming back for more!

We then moved on to arrive at Loch Katrine and had a walk round part of the Loch, sucking ice cream then tea and biscuits. We followed this with a trip around the Loch on board the “Sir Walter Scott”, a coal burning 2 funnel “ship”, lasting about one and a half

hours. We couldn’t get over the blue colour of the pine trees surrounding the Loch and the big splendid old type of Chateau looking residences dotted around the Loch, just visible in the clearances.

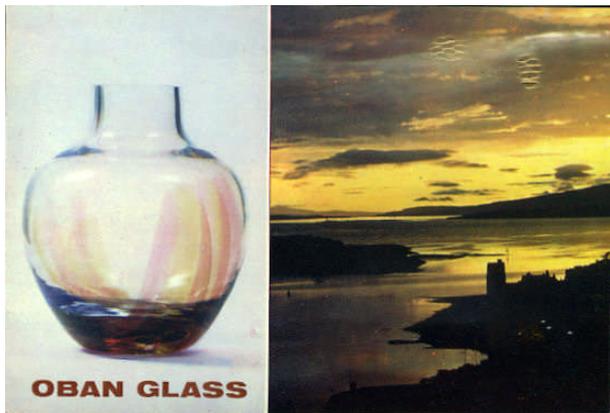
After we landed we decided to press on to Oban where we experienced some difficulty in finding “digs”. After numerous enquiries at houses displaying the B&B signs we were lucky to find a house situated high up overlooking the harbour, with a family room containing 2 double beds and this did provide us with some awkward moments but everything turned out OK. This was our first encounter of a sheet and continental quilt on the bed and thereby swore that we would have to acquire the same on our return to Birmingham and Tamworth!

First morning in Oban we had breakfast consisting of bacon, fried bread, scrambled eggs, cornflakes, fruit juice, granary bread toast, marmalade and tea. After partaking of this banquet we proceeded to enjoy a good long walk in our quest to find a good sandy beach, but this was easier said than done! We were later to find that sandy beaches along the West coast of Scotland are as rare as mean Scots, something we never found on our 14



day tour!

Having not been able to find such a beach, we sat down by an old ruin belonging to the McDougalls, and ate apples, oranges and melon, then proceeded to have another walk, eventually calling into a pub and quenching our thirst with a nice cool shandy before visiting a woollen mill. Here a man was weaving Harris tweed which would eventually be made into women's coats. This appeared to be a tedious job, one that didn't appeal to either Alan or myself.



We visited a glass works where we watched glass being taken in its molten state from the furnace on a long bar before being turned and shaped into a vase with the occasional blow down the tube to shape it. The finished article seemed very expensive for what went into it's manufacture and whilst we looked round we didn't buy anything, as it was also early on in the holiday so we didn't want to start buying and carrying things around as the car was pretty full anyway with luggage at this point!

Next we went to the harbour and watched the ferry to Mull leave having taken on cars and goods. We then proceeded to look around Oban where Elsie went into a Sweet and gift shop and came out with a jar of mints which she had been asked to pass around in the shop and when it had gone round the guy said "You can have the rest", so we sucked and sucked all that day as we went along!



### Sunset over Oban bay



The sunset depicted on the postcard is the same view we had from our bedroom window in Oban, having seen some lads fishing from the harbour wall just before the darkness fell. They caught a fair number of mackerel which they probably sold locally.

After walking along the esplanade still looking for that illusive sandy beach, we came upon Dunollie Castle.

## **The Esplanade, Oban**

The circular building at the top of the hill, visible on the skyline of the picture, is McCraig's Tower, which was unfinished due to insufficient funds to complete it. It commands a reasonable view of the bay.

Just after we left Oban a fire occurred at an hotel, with the loss of 6 lives, with the hotel in question just visible at the right hand end.

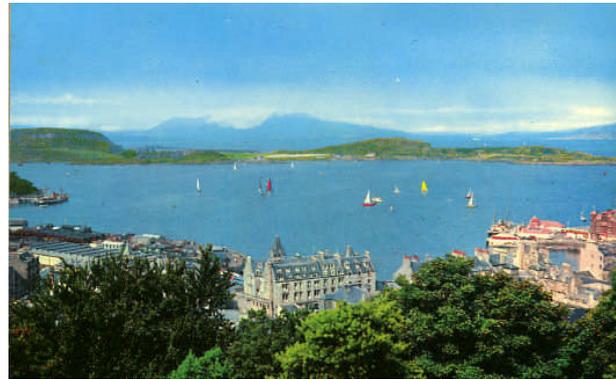
Oban is a compact little town and not my idea of a holiday resort which is what it is supposed to be, judging by the number of B&B properties.



## **The Isle of Mull**

We went on a tour of the Isle of Mull whilst on our way to Iona, going on a coach tour of the island having disembarked from the McBains Ferry. It was supposed to be a conducted tour with the driver identifying the local landmarks, but he turned out to be one of the "dumb" Friends of the RSPCA, as he didn't speak!

The roads round Mull are very narrow and in places we had to pull into passing places to allow other vehicles to pass.



Houses are few and far between and what children there are go to school on the mainland.

## **Sandeels Bay, Iona**

In the picture, we're looking from Iona across to the hills of Mull which can be seen in the background.

To get across to Iona, we had to take a small ferry with the trip lasting about 4 minutes, being peaceful and calm, on clear, clean, greenish water, onto a small sandy beach.





Postcard to the left shows “The Cathedral Rocks” which are at the North End of Iona.

Postcard below shows King George V on Iona Sound with the Nunnery and Village in the foreground. The ferry can be seen on the left of the sound with the visitors queuing up on the quayside.



**Iona** is a small island populated by few people living in smallish houses. The Abbey, which is in good shape, is inhabited although one hardly ever sees a Monk! We did speak with a monk although he was dressed in everyday clothing rather than the usual habit.

On arrival at the island, we didn't experience the uncanny atmosphere we had been told about, in fact, except for the quietness that seemed to prevail, everything appeared normal.

### **Iona Village**

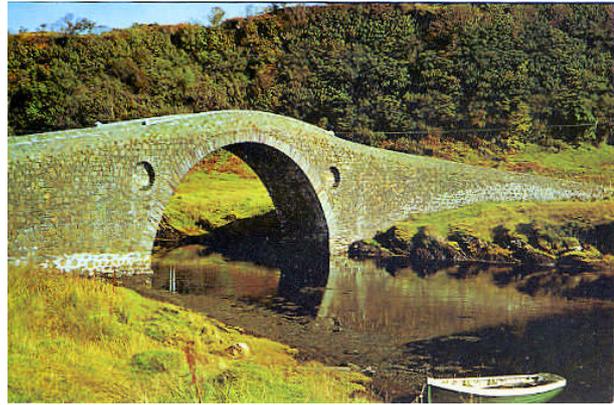
Looking East across the Sound to Fionnphort, where visitors crossing to Iona embark, and in the picture the ferry can be seen crossing. We spent a couple of hours here on the Island and then returned to Mull, where on the way back to the ferry we stopped to partake of a “fresh salmon tea”, which we thoroughly enjoyed, at The Clansman.



Postcard of Ferry crossing the Sound.

It was the last night in Oban so we took a trip to Easdale, where we crossed over the only bridge in the world to span the Atlantic Ocean. The top of the bridge is so acute that whilst momentarily on the summit, all you see is sky! Once over the bridge, you pass a couple of houses and then you look over a wide expanse of the Atlantic, which we were lucky to see at sunset – beautiful! Whilst here Alan collected some slate and today (1975) he had it in his aquarium at home in Tamworth. As small as the places are, Iona and Easdale, they still sport the “Gift Shops”, full of mementoes.

Postcard of Easdale Bridge



## Isle of Mull

Postcard: Isle of Mull

When we disembarked from the ferryboat “Iona” having completed our trip round Iona, we caught the coach for the trip to the other



end of the Island of Mull.

This island would be OK for living the life of a hermit, neighbours living miles from one another. I wouldn't like to run short of provisions whilst living here in the grip of a ferocious winter. It's just the place to send anyone with a contagious complaint!

## Back in Oban

Thursday, we rose at 7:30am and partook of breakfast at 8:30am which consisted of Grapefruit juice, corn flakes, followed by bacon, egg, tomato and fried bread, granary bread toast and marmalade and cups of tea. We then went for a last look around Oban, going first of all to the Woollen mill, which was most interesting, then to a bake house, which was a farce as all you could see was a small portion of the delivery room, through a glass screen, so we then went and found a coffee house and had a ‘cuppa’ before setting off for Fort William. We didn't stop long here and continued on to Fort Augustus due to the incessant rain, and here we saw Ben Nevis, but not the summit as it was enveloped in a lot of cloud. We also saw the Scottish Commando Memorial.

I forgot to mention that on the way to Fort William we crossed some stretch of water (Loch Leven maybe) on the Ballachulish Ferry, saving something like a 20mile drive round the Loch. (Alan - this ferry has since been replaced with a bridge – see website <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/balachulish/balachulish/index.html>)

We arrived at Fort Augustus in torrential rain, which seemed popular up there with the people possessing webbed feet, couldn't find any B&B and so carried on. We hadn't got far when Elsie spotted a bungalow with a B&B sign outside and so we pulled in, liked what we saw and decided to stay the night.

We freshened up and went for a walk in the country, skirting Loch Ness, but we saw no monsters! We strolled for about 3 miles and then went back to the digs where we met 3 other people, who, incidentally, came from Perry Barr in Birmingham, so we had a good chat along with a cup of tea, cake and biscuits which the landlady kindly provided. The 3 people went to

stay in a caravan beside the bungalow, although still staying B&B, whilst we sat talking to the landlady for a further 30mins or so, and then we retired to our beds. Although it was 11pm we could still see out as it was still quite light.

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This is the end of Gordon's writings, although they only cover the first part of the touring holiday around Scotland that we had back in 1973.

The scrapbook this has been taken from was only discovered by his wife, Elsie, whilst tidying up and sorting out his belongings in 2005! No one knew of its existence prior to this date.

It appears that he started it and kept it secret until he finished it, but for reasons known only to him, he never completed it.

It's hoped to complete the "Tour" in the near future with the help of the remaining people, their memories and photos, etc.