



Summer in Caithness



It has been a busy summer exploring more of Scotland. We purchased a wee caravan camper, and spent a few nights exploring a bit further along the coast. Here is the view from our campsite at John O' Groats.



More hiking along the north coast.



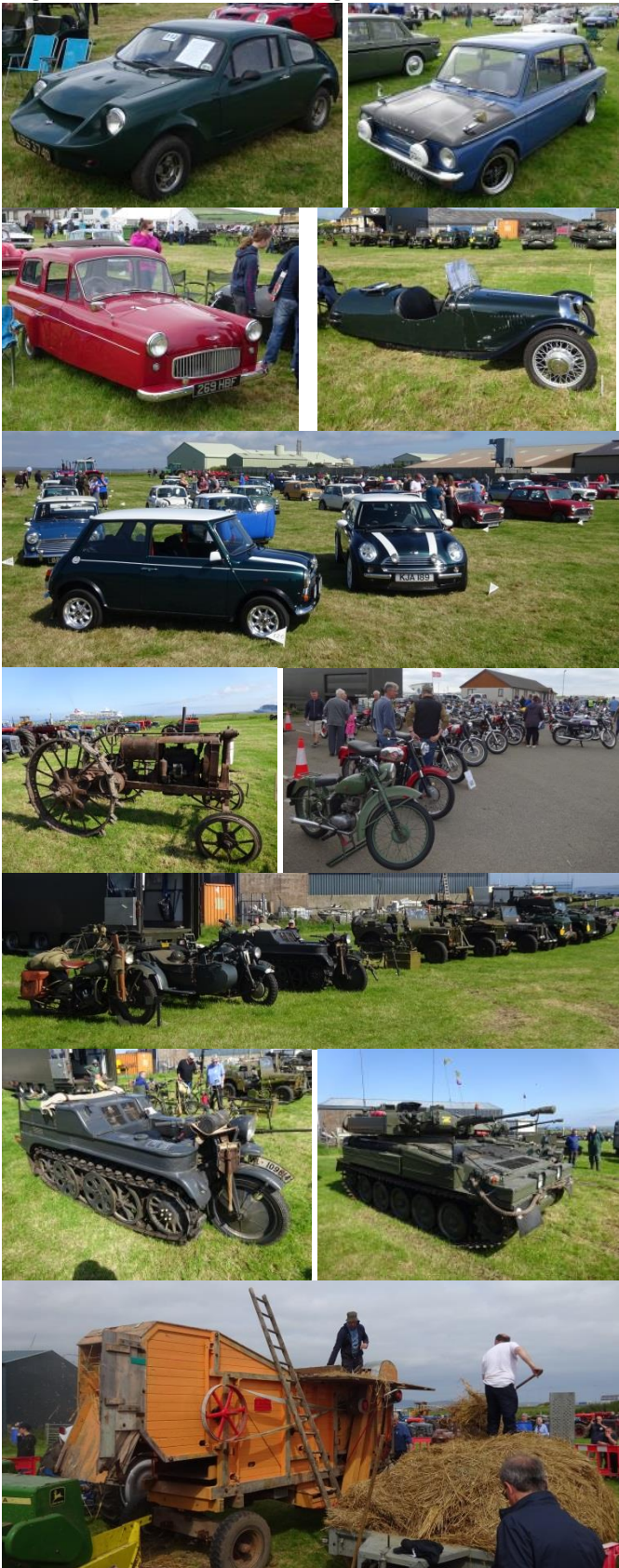
Here we are with our vintage MG racecar and our 1950s costumes at vintage car shows at John O' Groats, Caithness and Kirkwall, Orkney.



In Orkney there were some other interesting vehicles: Mini Marcos, Hillman Imp, a pair of 3 wheel Morgans



and a fleet of mini (old and new), over 230 tractors plus motorcycles. Then there was a military display to recognize the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hatston Aerodrome. Also an old threshing machine and some smaller engines of various makes. Huge show.



At Burghead, along the north Moray coast, we found the remnants of a Pictish fort from about 400 AD. In the photo you can pick out where the ramparts are now grass covered mounds, and the flat area was the open ground contained by the protective walls.



Next is the Burghead Well, which dates from the Dark Ages. It is cut right into the rock. There is a flight of 20 steps leading to a small chamber with rounded corners which has a narrow ledge leading all



the way around a spring-fed pool of water. Belief is that due to the effort expended, this was more than a simple water supply, but may have had more spiritual significance. Shown next to it is the Sueno Stone, at 21 feet tall, the largest of the many Pictish carved stones in the Highlands. Intricately carved on all sides, it is now protected from weathering by a glass chamber.



Lest you think that there is nothing of cultural significance to do here in the far north besides ceilidh dancing or snail watching (or watching snails ceilidh dancing).....here are a troupe who recently presented an outdoor performance of music and prose at Dunnett Forest. The audience traveled through the forest with the performers to different settings uniquely appropriate to the performance. It was one of the most unique things either of us had ever seen in the way of musical entertainment.



Here are some flowers we have discovered on our walks, in increasing order of rarity: the hillsides

abloom in golden gorse, Scottish heather, the heath spotted orchid, sea rocket (rocket is what they call arugula here), the rare butterfly orchid, and the rarer Scottish primrose, which in the whole world, only grows on the north coast where we live.



More Highland hiking photos





This is a sheep gate in a dry-stone wall farm boundary wall.



We spent an afternoon panning for gold on at the site of the 1860's Scottish gold rush.



As my pace of life has slowed, living here in the far north, I notice things that I would have breezed right past in my old life in Indiana. For example.....snails. Snails are not something you see much of in Indiana, or perhaps it is just that most people would never notice them in the hectic pace of life. Now, I see them all the time during my walks. And I am amazed by their diversity and variety of lovely colors. Here are a few examples that I have snapped photos of.







This big blue one had a two inch diameter shell and was near four inches from antennae to tail.



A bit of a snuggle in a cozy wee leaf.



The baby above was 1/3 the size of a penny.

And the truly tiny one resting inside the larger shell below was less than 2 millimeters in diameter.



Ceilidh dancing.....I think that this is the snail version of the Circassian Circle.



I have often talked about how welcoming the Scots have been since we arrived here. Recently we heard a story from World War 2, of a German who may well have been one of my relatives, on my grandmother's side. Heinrich Steinmeyer was held at the Cultybraggan POW camp in Scotland for several years. It was common practice for prisoners to be released for the day to do work on local farms. He was made to feel so welcome by the Scots, that when the war ended, he opted to stay and work in the village, surrounded by the beautiful hillsides. Eventually, he returned to Germany, but he never forgot how the Scots made him feel welcome. Upon his death, he left his entire life savings to the village, where it has been used for a variety of community projects.

*"Did not strong connections draw me elsewhere, I believe Scotland would be the country I would choose to end my days in." .....Benjamin Franklin*