

**SIAFU 35th Reunion, Gargunnoch House,
Gargunnoch nr Stirling, Scotland.
7-14 September 2007**

Thursday 6 and Friday 7 September 2007. Today I set out for Scotland. Ann and Charlie Royce, in a Thomas Transportation van, picked me up at 5:15 and we were off for Logan Airport. Easy and fast check-in at Icelandair. Beer and chicken fingers at Houlihans and eventually on to the plane. About 4+ hours to Reykjavík where we change for the plane to Glasgow, about 2 hours away. Arrive to a warm and sunny Glasgow. Ann and Charlie go on their way and I arrange my rental car (a Ford Fiesta through Hertz) and then wait for **Janie Alston** to arrive from Australia via Northern Ireland. She's right on time. Hardly seems like 35 years since we last saw one another. We fetched the car and got on our way. Took some doing but we found the Erskine Bridge and headed to **Balloch** at the bottom of Loch Lomond where we stopped for lunch at Balloch House, a nice pub. Were on our way again and arrived in the village of Gargunnoch about 3 p.m. Went to the pub but it was closed and we didn't see any Siafuers about so we continued on to Stirling. I wanted to get a cell phone so went to the Thistle Center, a large in-town shopping center well integrated into the fabric of the downtown. Went to the Vodafone store and bought a phone and some time—very exciting, my first cell phone. (Of course it took the rest of the week to learn how to use it even with the help of all the experts in our group.)

Our next stop was the nearby Tesco's to do some food shopping. Pretty much filled up the boot. Then back to Gargunnoch arriving about 5 or so. The only person to beat us there was **Greg Packer** who had met the housekeeper and had pretty much cased out the place. I, of course, knew the house from my week there in 2001. Not too long after, **Mary Cavanagh, Sue Batten** and **Francie Walls** arrived, followed by **Ray Hobson**. Had a drink and settled in. This time I had a bedroom on the first floor just beyond the dining room. The second bed would be used by Carl Lindbloom later in the week. (Carl was in my group going the next week to Auchinleck and, as we had extra room at Gargunnoch, was coming over early.)

Going to the pub in Gargunnoch seemed like a good idea for the first night so in we went. The village is about a mile away. The pub was very good in 2001 and remains so today. I enjoyed my steak.

Saturday 8 September 2007. Lovely sunny warm day. Two cars drove into Stirling, first stop the Tourist Office where we filled up with brochures. The others then walked up to the Castle while I went to the **Church of the Holy Rude** near the Castle to find the grave of James Wordie (Antarctic connection) in the churchyard. Had a pretty thorough look but could find nothing. The others showed up in time in the cemetery and we all wandered down the hill into the center of Stirling. Stopped at the 'Bean Scene,' a coffee shop that has wi-fi. I logged on with my laptop and sent some e-mails. Our next stop: Sainsburys to do some major shopping, then back to Gargunnoch House. Not long after I was on my way back to Stirling to do more shopping for that evening's meal. I did Beef

Bourguignon, an old standby. Just before dinner **Luci Edwards** and **Mike Madgin** arrived. We are now 9 (in a house that accommodates 16; we would have been 13 if Scott & Sue and Dave & Cheryl hadn't had to cancel.)

Sunday 9 September 2007. We all drive off to **Callander** via Doune to a bike rental place on **Loch Venachar** where we drop off Greg who will rent a bike for the week. We get directions and suggestions for a tour and set out along the northside of the loch and then south to **Aberfoyle**, then east to **Thornhill** where we stopped at a pub for lunch. From there, back to Gargunnoch. Mary, Ray and others cooked up a Leg of Lamb for dinner. Wine and more wine.

Monday 10 September 2007. Lovely day. Into Stirling and wandered around a bit, making stops at the bank and the coffee shop to send e-mail. Spent most of the rest of the day back at Gargunnoch, relaxing and enjoying the house. Also we were expecting **Jo Heathcote** to arrive for a night or two. (She never made it.) That evening Greg cooked up an excellent Chicken Curry. Then most of the evening watching slides in the lounge. (Of course, now slides mean our original slides digitized.)

Tuesday 11 September 2007. After breakfast some of us went into Stirling. To the Library to check e-mail (it has free wi-fi). Some shopping and looking about. We all found one another in Stirling and then took off in two cars to check out the **Falkirk Wheel**, quite an amazing engineering feat designed to do away with several locks that connected two canals. It was built as a Millennium Project and is quite a tourist attraction. We took a boat ride which involved being lifted up to the upper canal and later being taken down to where we started. We returned to Gargunnoch via some beautiful countryside west of Falkirk and south of Gargunnoch. Along beside the Carron Valley Reservoir and through Fintry and Kippen. Some occasional Scottish Highland cattle in the fields. **Jennifer Speirs** showed up to stay for two nights. She was with Francie and me from Nairobi to RSA and earlier had crossed Africa with another overland group. (She lives in Edinburgh.) Dinner that night was Spaghetti. Then another session of slides.

Wednesday 12 September 2007. More good weather. Took a group photo in our SIAFU T-shirts. Into Stirling, again to the Library, bank, Boots, and the Vodafone shop. Once back at Gargunnoch around 12:30 we all headed off to **Doune** where we had a leisurely lunch at the Woodside Hotel. After that we went up the road to **Doune Castle** which is a very nice small castle with lovely views from the top. Off again, now to **Dunblane**, where I went to the Cathedral to seek out a Scott Party stained glass window. It took awhile but we found it. Dunblane is a lovely small town. Once back at Gargunnoch House we found that **Carl Lindbloom** had arrived. His first chore was to get the crow out of the lounge! That night: Roast Pork.

Thursday 13 September 2007. Greg and I spent the day on an outing to **Dundee** which we drove to via Perth. I spent about 2 hours at **Discovery Point**, going through Scott's

Discovery and the exhibits on shore. A bit more on display, I think, than the last time I was there. Next stop: the museum in the castle at **Broughty Ferry**. Some Antarctic items there particularly related to the Dundee whaling fleet. Across the Tay and to **St Andrews** where we had lunch at a pub. After a spin around the town we headed along the south coast through Crail, Anstruther, eventually through Dollar and back to Gargunnoch. After drinks we went in convoy to the **Gargunnoch Inn** for our farewell dinner, joined by Greg's daughter and her boyfriend and Carl.

Thursday 13 September 2007. Our last bit of time at Gargunnoch House. After breakfast, we all pack and clean-up and think about where we have to go and what we have to do. By 9:15 we're all on our way. Carl and I drive Sue, Janie and Ray off at the rail station and head for Auchinleck House.
Our parting words: "Aussie in 2010!"