

HIGHLAND HISTORY, H I G H W A Y S H I D E & O U T S

*A quick tour of Scotland
in the Mercedes G-Wagen plus
a dram or two on The Whisky Trail*

BY INNES IRELAND

Scotland is like a large national park that was carefully made up of all the best parts of the world, such as Puget Sound, Baja, 17-Mile Drive near Monterey. I was surprised to find that many roads are narrow and rarely traveled, great for spirited driving, some like the Oregon logging roads. The vistas are exciting with something special about to be revealed just around the next corner. Sometimes there would be fields of sheep with twisted horns watching over bouncy new lambs, other times huge fields of daffodils or Highland cows with bison faces and shaggy coats. Suddenly we would come to a loch, and each one was special in its own way: some were peaceful turquoise while others were black and secretive. The moors were rugged with their scratchy coverings of peat and heather in rich browns and purples; it is no wonder Scottish weavings are done in such harmonious colors. The food was always good and I ordered haggis in Aviemore. When I asked Innes what it was made of, he said he couldn't tell me before I had eaten it. When I had finished, he said he couldn't remember. And, for all their history of being bloodthirsty crazies, the Scottish people were charming and cheerful.—Dorothy Clendenin



THIS TALE FOLLOWS no set pattern but wanders about as surely as the Scottish roads I chose for our journey. It combines a 4-wheel-drive Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen, a hint of the beauty of my country and an inkling that whisky is more than just a headache. This last element arose because I suggested to my photographer, our Managing Editor Dorothy Clendenin, that we might blend a G-

Wagen driving impression and a Scotland Sports Car Country with a tour of the whisky distilleries of Speyside. In all of these, I reasoned, I couldn't think of a guide more suited than myself.

The most simple approach to Scotland is through London, taking a connecting flight either to Glasgow or Edinburgh. The hardened motorist who wishes to drive should take the M1 motorway north,

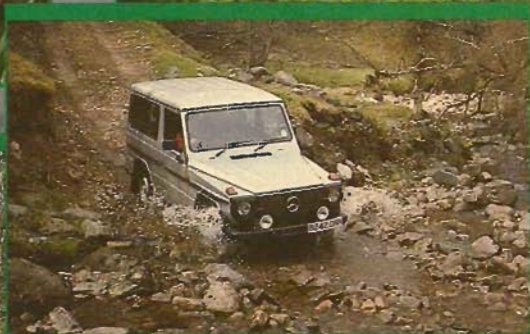
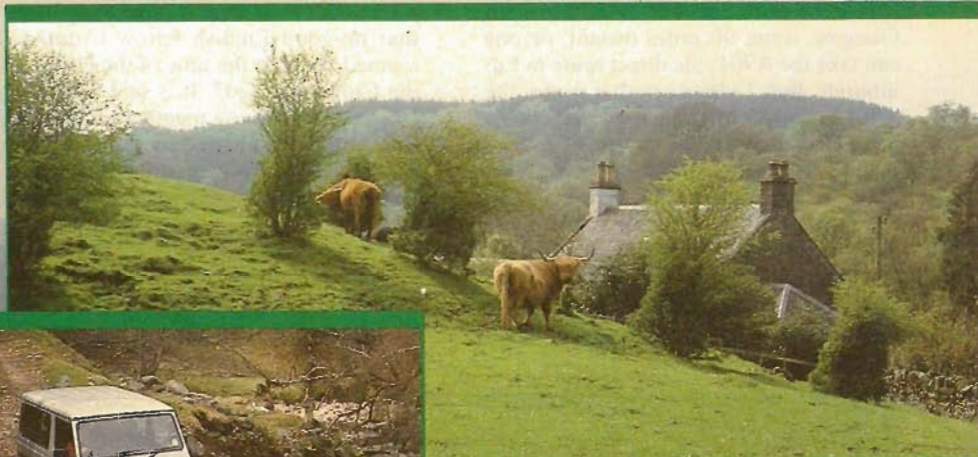
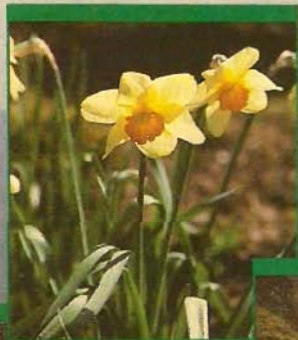
changing to the M6 about 80 miles out of London, which is what we did. This runs all the way to Carlisle, with its 12th- and 13th-century castle and cathedral, giving a glimpse of the Lake District to the west.

At this point the historian may wish to investigate Hadrian's Wall, the massive stone affair that once ran across the country from coast to coast. Built by the Romans about AD 120 in an expensive but

feeble attempt to keep the unruly Scottish hooligans in their own domain, many sections of it are well preserved.

North of Carlisle the motorway peters out to become the A74, and in a few miles a sign lets you know you are in Scotland. No, you don't need to dig out your passport! The romantically inclined can leave the main road here briefly to look at the old smithy at Gretna Green where for 200

PHOTOS BY DOROTHY ELENENIN



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years young lovers eloped, intent on marriage despite parental objections. The village blacksmith was empowered to perform the marriage ceremony without asking too many questions and many were the couples who sought their union in these humble surroundings.

Northward, the A74 heads toward Glasgow, some 90 miles distant, or one can take the A701, the direct route to Edinburgh. But, I chose another route, the A708, a narrow, twisting road that climbs up a long glen on its way to St Mary's Loch, parts of it great fun in a good-handling car, passing the Grey Mare's Tail on the left: a 200-ft cascade that is one of the most impressive waterfalls in Scotland.

A few miles on there is a splendid statue erected in memory of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. He was a simple, unedu-

cated fellow but wrote some of the most beautiful lines of poetry about the wind, the flowers and his beloved hills.

Directly opposite is Tibbie Shiels inn at the head of St Mary's Loch where Hogg used to get together with another famous Scottish writer, Sir Walter Scott. Apart from writing the Waverly Novels and stuff like that, Scott was a bit of a do-gooder, being one of those who rediscovered in 1817 the Crown, the Sceptre and other fanciful objects used to crown Scottish kings since the time of Robert the Bruce. These oddments were stashed away when that no-good English fellow Cromwell roamed about at the time of the Union of the Crowns in 1707. It is said Scott and Hogg would carouse together for days on end, aided and abetted by the venerable Tibbie Shiels who owned the inn, which shows that Scott wasn't such a bad fellow after all.

On to Selkirk, past which on the A7 lies a grand sight, the Meeting of the Waters where the combined flow of the Ettrick and the Yarrow join that famous salmon

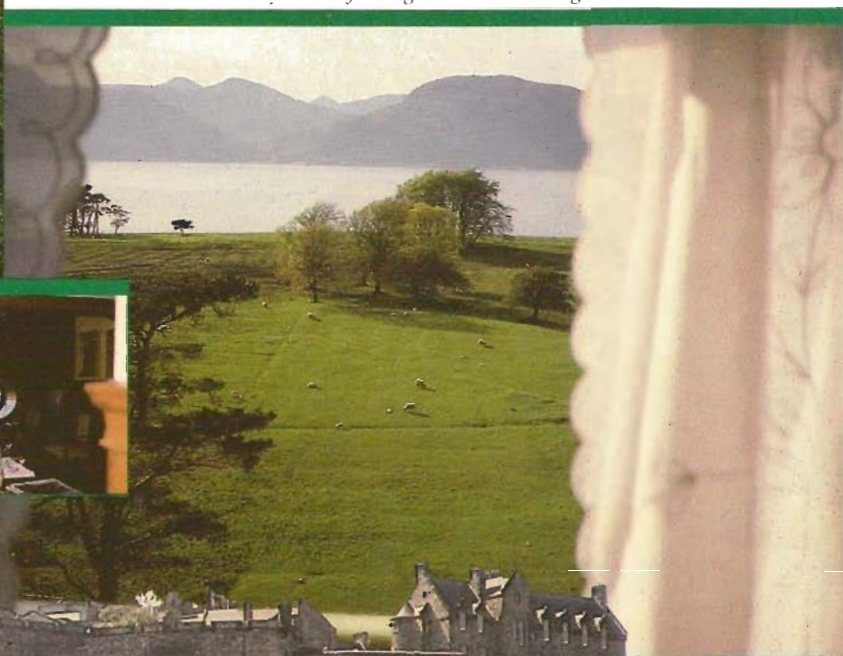
river, the Tweed. Branching off here on the B6360 will lead to Abbotsford House, the mansion that was the home of Sir Walter Scott from 1812 to 1832. Open to the public, it is still inhabited by the writer's descendants.

This whole Borders area, Galashiels, Hawick, Kelso, Innerleithen and Jedburgh, particularly famous for its woolen goods, is within easy reach of Edinburgh, ideal for a day's outing. In the past, the Borders had a violent history, but when the locals weren't beating their neighbors over the head with clubs and axes, they were busy building abbeys, sanctimonious lot that they were.

Dottie and I followed the Tweed toward its source, coming to the town of Peebles with its ruined 13th-century church and a 15th-century Friary. Here we sought refuge for the night in the enormous Peebles Hydro Hotel, which lords it over the town from its hillside perch. Its charges were not so grand as its appearance. We took dinner sitting by panoramic windows overlooking the river to the →



Ardsheal House, a hideaway worth finding. Below, Edinburgh Castle.



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green hills beyond. Dottie marveling at the duration of the twilight once the sun sank below the horizon. It was a clear night after a perfect day, the light changing ever so slowly, deepening to a dark purple in the hills while still the sun threw light to the sky.

Next morning we headed for Edinburgh, more enchanting and gracious than Glasgow. There we stopped on the esplanade of the 1000-year-old Castle standing so proudly on its rocky crag looking down grandly upon the city, with magnificent statues of famous soldiers guarding the place. There is much to guard, and among other things of interest are the Scottish Crown Jewels and Mons Meg, a 15th-century cannon. Brave was the lad who put tinder and spark to that lump of iron!

From there the Royal Mile stretches downhill leading directly to Holyrood Palace, the Queen's residence when visiting

the city. We rumbled gently over the granite setts of the street passing the High Kirk of St Giles, often referred to as a cathedral, which it is not; the church of Scotland does not have cathedrals. Save for a brief period in the 17th century when the wretched English stuck their interfering noses in our business, this building is, and always was, a kirk, its origins going back to the early 12th century.

Much of Scotland's history as an independent nation is contained within this Royal Mile, for over the centuries kings, queens, princes and other noble folk have walked and ridden its length seeing it much as it is today; great men and ruffians alike have also passed by en route to their executions but I doubt if they were admiring the architecture.

The palace, home of the Stuart kings, is set in the parkland of Holyrood—also the site of Holyrood Abbey—with Arthur's Seat, an ancient volcano, rising 822 ft above. Both palace and abbey were burned by the English when they had nothing better to do in the mid-16th century and only the palace was later rebuilt on the orders of Charles II. He was a bit of a dandy whose tastes were decidedly

French so the palace one sees today would be more at home on the banks of the Seine. Mary Stuart, our beloved Queen of Scots, lived at Holyrood and it was from her apartments that her Italian "secretary" Rizzio was dragged screaming to have a knife stuck in his ribs by some of the local gentry who thought he was more than just her secretary. They used to repaint the bloodstains every year, which added a touch of color to the place. I recall seeing them as a boy but now there is just a plaque marking the murder spot.

A contemporary chum of mine, the Duke of Hamilton, the premier Duke of Scotland, is the Hereditary Keeper of the Keys to Holyrood and whenever the Queen is skulling about he has to be in attendance. An unlikely lad for the job, more interested in cars than keys, he used to race a 250F Maserati when he was just plain Lord Angus Clydesdale before his father fell off his perch. His pa was the first person to fly over Mount Everest (1931, I think) and it was to him that Rudolf Hess surrendered in the early days of World War II. Angus still has the map Hess used as he aimed his plane for the Hamilton lands on that last day of his freedom. The →



Strathisla Distillery.

