

A Memorable Day in Scotland

It was a very nice June morning that Linda and I waited at the Rutherford House in Edinburgh, Scotland for a certain local resident to meet us at 9:30 AM. The person we were waiting for was Iain Murray, who has lived twice in the great historic city, first in the 1970's, and then for the last seventeen years since the Murray's return from Australia in 1990.

For a few who may not know, Iain Murray is the co-founder of the Banner of Truth Trust, as well as a prolific author, theologian, and Christian historian. He also is an excellent preacher, an example of godliness, and a humble and gracious gentleman.

We had not expected to see Iain and his wife Jean at all during our trip, as they had been scheduled to be in New Foundland and the U. S. while we were in Britain. But to our surprise, not only did we see them once, but twice-- once with him in London when he preached the graduation service for London Theological Seminary on our first Saturday there, and then with them both in Scotland. We had heard that Mr. Murray would be speaking at the graduation, so that morning, we headed up to Bedford, the scene of the home and ministry of John Bunyan, which is approximately 1 hour northwest of London. Then we hurried back to the seminary in the afternoon to hear Mr. Murray preach from Acts 4:33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." The message centered on what preachers are to preach- the resurrected living Christ, and the means by which true preaching will be blest- the power of the Holy Spirit and the present grace of God upon the preacher. It was truly a fitting and earnest message for the hour. As the time came to a close, we did not expect to see Mr. Murray again, as he was to leave the country three days later. So we said goodbye and headed to Wales that evening.

What a surprise it was, then, to receive a phone call six days later from Iain, who told us that their trip had been cancelled due to temporary sickness Mrs. Murray had been experiencing. So he was calling to say that she was already better, and they desired to have us spend some time with them when in Edinburgh. How thrilled and thankful we were for this special treat. So on Tuesday, June 19th, Mr. Murray picked us up to enjoy the day with him and Jean. What a very special time it proved to be.

Our day began driving through the busy and challenging streets of Edinburgh in Iain's small station wagon, making our way to the offices of the Banner of Truth Trust, the Grey House, which has been the home of the Trust since 1973. We had the enjoyment of meeting John Rawlinson, the general manager, and his staff. We viewed the collection of all the titles the Banner has ever published, the various offices, and the new titles which had just come off the press. One of the special enjoyments was the guest book, which is the only copy they have ever

had for visitors. It was a delight to read the first two visitor's signatures who came to the Grey House-- Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Professor John Murray, the Scottish theologian who taught for so many years in the U. S., first at Princeton Seminary, then at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. As we left, Iain presented us with a gift copy of a new Banner title, *The Letters of John Newton*.

We then drove a few minutes away to tour the Banner's warehouse, viewing the massive storage of thousands of books in the large facility. To see the main location from which literally hundreds of thousands of wonderful books have gone forth to the ends of the earth was a very special thing to us. Great are the works of the Lord, which He has established to the ends of the earth.

Soon we headed out for the east edge of Edinburgh, at the foot of the mountains which surround part of the city, making our way to the Murray's home, nestled in a quiet area below the lovely hills which rise up in wonderful green beauty. Upon arrival, Mrs. Murray welcomed us with a cup of tea and a visit. Soon I made my way upstairs to Iain's main study, which spreads out across the entire upper half of the house. You can well imagine the enjoyment I had in being there with him, viewing the books and talking. But, alas, we could not tarry long, as we were soon making our way out of town for lunch and some sight-seeing.

We drove west through town into the beautiful countryside for approximately 30 minutes, arriving at a country inn, where we settled in for a leisurely lunch and very enjoyable visit. As we enjoyed roast duck and fresh fish, we talked of Iain and Jean's first meeting, their early years, their marriage engagement, and first ministry experiences. Their being at Westminster Chapel in the early years stood out as the highlight of that time period for them, as Iain served as Dr. Lloyd-Jones's associate minister for nine years during the 1960's.

We also talked about their children, the 5 of them now grown and married, living in Britain and Australia. We talked more about Dr. Lloyd-Jones, personal stories, books, other Christians around Britain, and the state and need of the church in Britain today and tried to answer Iain's question about our perspective on the state of evangelicalism in the U. S. currently.

After lunch, we headed to nearby Dirlleton Castle, which has marvelous ruins and a breath-taking view of the rich farmlands down below. From there, we headed to another famous castle, which overlooks the historic Bass Rock, often known simply as "The Bass".

The History of the Bass

The Bass Rock is situated in the Firth (Channel) of Forth, about 30 miles from Edinburgh, one mile off the mainland, rising 313 feet, with three sides of sheer cliff, and a tunnel piercing the rock to a depth of 105 metres. The gentler slope to the south forms a lower promontory where the ruins of a castle stand dating back

to at least 1405.

The first inhabitant on the Bass Rock was Baldred, a monk of Lindisfarne sent out to the Lothians in the 8th century to convert its heathen inhabitants to Christianity. He used the island as a retreat for prayer and meditation. The small chapel above the castle was built around 1491 and dedicated to Saint Baldred in 1546.

Long after Baldred's death in 753 AD, when Romanism had prevailed in Scotland over the simpler and purer Culdee faith, he was numbered among the saints, like many of the other old Culdees, whose memory still survived in the districts in which they had proclaimed the gospel.

Queen Elizabeth of England attempted to take the rock in 1548 and again the following year but both attempts failed. In 1581, James VI was so impressed by the rock he tried to buy it from William Lauder, the last of the family, who died without an heir. In 1630 his widow fell into debt and after a siege of the rock by her creditors, she finally acceded ownership. By 1649, the Bass was in the hands of Sir John Hepburn of Waughton, and following the Civil War in 1651, it was surrendered to Cromwell who kept a garrison of 18 men on the rock.
The Covenantors

After the castle was converted into a state prison during the reigns of Charles II and his brother James VII, a number of Covenantors were imprisoned there at a time of tyranny and persecution. The Covenantors rebelled against Charles's obsession for a change from Presbyterianism to his Roman Catholic style religion. After a violent struggle against the crown, the Covenantors were finally defeated at the Battle of Sheriffmuir when 1,800 of them were brought to Edinburgh to stand trial. A section of Greyfriars graveyard was used as their prison when hundreds were deported and over 130 executed.

About forty were incarcerated in the dungeons of the Bass Rock at different dates, varying from a few months to upwards of six years. Most of them men of culture and learning, of unimpeachable loyalty and charged with no offence but that of preaching the gospel and worshipping according to their own consciences.

These included John Blackadder, who died on the rock in 1687 and his body was rowed ashore and taken by cart to the Churchyard in Kirk Ports where he is buried. Among the other Covenantors imprisoned on the Bass were Alexander Peden, Thomas Hogg, James Fraser of Brea, Robert Traill and John McGilligen, all of them ministers.

The barbarity of life on the Rock is almost beyond belief for us today. The governor, who would have been the commander of the Scottish army, levied a charge on the prisoners for everything they eat and drank. Those unable to

support themselves were kept on a diet of dried salt fish and only the guards had barrelled fresh water. The prisoners depended solely upon rock puddles for water so putrid that for a little more palatability they sucked it through porridge oats. In bad weather they starved until calmer seas allowed boats to land provisions, and at the whim of the governor, a hated prisoner was confined in the lowest dungeon which was deathly cold from continuous sea spray.

Alexander Peden wrote: "We are close shut up in our chambers, not permitted to converse, diet, worship together, but conducted out by two at once in the day to breath in the open air. Envyng with reverence the birds their freedom, provoking and calling on us to bless Him for the most common mercies, and again close shut up day and night to hear only the sighs and groans of our fellow prisoners. I return to thank you for your seasonable supply, an evidence of your love of him and your affectionate remembrance of us. Persuade yourself you are in our remembrance, though not so deep as we in yours - and grace be to all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in that sincerity. So prayeth you unworthy and affectionate well wisher in bonds." - A. P.

Peden, one of the foremost Covenanters of his time, lived through at least 4 winters on the Bass, and came forth as gold in his loyalty to the gospel. Those who did not perish in its vile and stinking cells suffered and died later from lung infections, fevers or rheumatic type ailments as freed men. One who did survive was the minister Gilbert Rule whose imprisonment was brought to an end by the Revolution of 1688 and later was appointed Principal of the University of Edinburgh.

One obviously cannot get to the Bass except by boat, and now it is a sanctuary for birds; as you look upon it with a telescope or binoculars, you see thousands of white birds covering it. So to see Bass Rock and to know what occurred there so long ago for the cause of God and truth was deeply moving and humbling. I found myself bowing my heart and head in prayer: "O, Lord, I come to Thee, ready and desiring to renew my love and surrender to Thee; make me Yours once again and cause me to love Thee with the love that those Covenanters had and to live for the truth with the loyalty they had."

Upon leaving the area of the Bass, we headed back toward Edinburgh, passing Haddington, the scene of the ministry of John Brown, preacher and commentator. We headed back to the Murray's home for a full Scottish tea, which consisted of all kinds of special breads, crackers, pastries, cookies (bisquits to the British) and cheese, served along with your choice of coffee or tea-- WITH milk of course. As we shared the time, more conversation flowed about different subjects.

By now the time was 6:00 PM, and Mr. Murray drove us back to old Edinburgh to the Royal Mile St, where we were to attend a mid-week prayer meeting at the Carraba's Christian Center, an evangelical church in the heart of the city, which

was first founded in the 1800's, and was dedicated at its first service by D. L. Moody. We enjoyed the time of prayer very much with the Scottish brethren we met there. By 9:00 PM, we were headed back to the Rutherford House, finding it hard to go to sleep. Who could sleep after such a day? - a day to be remembered for a very long time - a memorable day in Scotland.

-- Mack & Linda Tomlinson