

Our Ireland journey offers new experiences by Tim Allen

The next day our destination was the Aran Islands. This would be my second visit there, but we were headed to a different island (there are three) from last time. On that trip we had taken off from Doolin, and the boat brought us to Inisheer, the smallest of this Irish-speaking trio of islands. This time our destination was Inishmore, the largest and accessible from our departure point not too far from Galway City.

We all were somewhat back on an even keel; a good night's sleep was available after the overnight on the plane the night before and for some, an afternoon nap. Since I hadn't been to this island, I wouldn't be much of a tour guide.

On our way, we stopped at a popular shop called Standin, which has all different types of Irish souvenirs, from sweaters to trinkets. Kudos to our bus driver, Martin Hogan, who was in contact with the van driver from Shannon who had picked up Terry, Beth Ann, and Alison Aldrich. They had missed our departure date because of heavy rains in Burlington, Vermont.

We met them in the shop. It was great to see them. It is fun to make these connections happen. Here we are in Ireland and we're meeting American buddies on the side of the road. Hugs all around and enthusiasm were the order of the day.

A great ferry ride got us to the island where we hired taxis to take us to the famous fort named Dun Aengus. A highlight of the visit was our picnic lunch in the ruins of this fort built on a cliff by the ocean. It is similar to the Cliffs of Moher and the beautiful day gave us a great mid-day visit. The hike up to it paid off with the vistas overlooking the Atlantic. Next parish.....

The Restaurant Search Committee

from the night before had scheduled us for dinner at 10:30 p.m. at a fine restaurant. Our field trips around New England and the mid-Atlantic states to watch our daughters play lacrosse had provided us great opportunities for team dinners. Here we were again in familiar positions around a full and vibrant table – just in another country. About 20 of us enjoyed a couple of hours talking, eating, and laughing. It was a familiar and comforting scene.

Unlike the night before in the Galway pub, we had almost everyone on this trip; that is, except for our non-lacrosse friends: Sr. Judy Kappenman, Maryann Burritt, and Joyce Bosworth. They displayed maturity and sanity: they had retired for the night. That was unfamiliar behavior to the lacrosse team and their parents. Eating late at night. Why not? It's a team thing, especially when on vacation.

Sunday morning we left Galway because of a great deal we got to stay at Ashford Castle. There's never enough time in Galway, but the tour beckoned and we were off to more great places.

A short visit to the Connemara Marble Shop preceded a Martin Hogan special tour of a peat bog. I particularly liked this stop. He pulled the bus over and told us about peat bogs and their importance in Ireland as we stood with spongy ground underneath our feet. These are the tours I like most in Ireland with the informality and spontaneity of Ireland as it was, as it is, exploring the earth, the soul, the people.

Next we made it to our noontime goal: Kylemore Abbey. This is a beautiful castle-looking type place. On a lake, it is always pictured with the lake in front of it. It is beautiful, spiritual, mystical. Like a place you'd like to see.

A former school for girls, it offers beautiful gardens which we walked through, a nice lunch and, is, overall a great spot to visit. Walking around the gardens, Mary and I had a little time together, a chance for us to catch up. We had both been here before, but it is always a special place to visit.

But the real goal of the day was to get to Ashford Castle. We had traded our third night in Galway (plus a little cash) for the chance to stay in a castle. On the long drive in, we saw the castle, the lake, a bit of the setting. We were greeted at the bus by hotel personnel and led into the lobby. It was a bit of what I expected.

Soon we were exploring our rooms, the hotel, the grounds. The place was spectacular. No wonder Pierce Brosnan got married here. And to think that it sits in the village of Cong, the home of the screening of *The Quiet Man*.

Later, Mary and I took a boat tour of the lake. There was a traditional Irish musician/singer on the boat and before we knew it we were dancing with the other passengers. It was a great choice for an activity, but how could you go wrong here anyway? Golf, hiking, walking into town, the spa: there were many choices and all of them good.

Dinner was followed by entertainment in the Dungeon Pub. A songstress played the harp and sang beautifully, but not as beautifully as our singers. Soon Sister Judy was on stage, with support from Mary. The night concluded with our own version of Celtic Women: Jenni, Kathie, and Beth Ann belting out 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling'. Easy to sing this one on this trip. All eyes were constantly smiling.

A Cork family is proud of one of its own

Gay Reilly grew up as one of fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls. She describes her childhood home as “active, engaged and energetic.” Recently she sent us information from North Carolina about one of her brothers, Eamonn who died at age 85 in August 2007. This large, sports-minded, and talented Young family came from Dunmanway, County Cork.

In fact, Eamonn was representative of the second generation of athletic greats bearing the name Young. Jack and Ned began the tradition in 1905; Ned’s playing career spanned 25 years.

Their father Jack served as headmaster of St. Patrick’s National School. He had won an All-Ireland senior football medal with Cork in 1911 and played for years. The children attended their father’s and their brothers’ games. The girls were active and athletic as were the boys, but not “exceptional in this male dominated environment,” according to Gay. They all played tennis on the family

court. They also all spent summer days swimming.

But it was the boys who went on to pursue organized sports of hurling and Gaelic football in earnest. Their brother, Dr. Jim won five All-Ireland senior hurling medals. Eamonn became the most famous Cork football player in history.

In 1941 he won a Railway Cup football medal when he helped Munster defeat Ulster. What is remarkable is that same year he also won a National Hurling League medal. He was a member of the 1945 All-Ireland winning side.

Bob Honohan of the *Cork Independent* praised Eamonn as the “greatest footballer ever to wear the famous red jersey.” Not only was he a great player, but he also served as a trainer/coach, and he promoted the sport by writing weekly articles for the *Kerryman* and the *Gaelic Weekly* for almost twenty years on every aspect of GAA.

In addition to sports, following the lead of their mother, the children were all piano players. For their fa-

ther’s school programs, she taught the students the songs, choreographed them, and made the costumes.

Gay praised her mother as “an exceptional woman.” Anyone who knows Gay Reilly would say the same of her daughter.

Eamonn served in the military where he rose to the rank of commandant; he served the cause of peace in the Congo and in Cyprus. After his military career, he studied for his degree and began a dynamic and innovative teaching career in a national school, as had his father.

Over the years, he also won many county and provincial squash titles. He loved mountain climbing and regularly took soldiers with him to climb and run in the Galtees; such missions became known as the Galtee patrol.

Gay reports that she is proud of all her siblings for their accomplishments, but that Eamonn is “special” perhaps because he ranked next to her in the family.

Gaelic football club looking for support: an open letter

My name is Mike Carney and I am the coordinator of the emerging youth Gaelic football club in Western Massachusetts. The purpose of this letter is to enlist your support in the (re) introduction of the Gaelic games to the young people of the community through the cooperation and collaboration of our Irish cultural clubs, societies and centers.

For the past two summers the Boyle and the Sons of Erin have collaborated in developing a Gaelic football program for boys and girls (ages 5-16) in the area. The program has been successful in that we have offered clinics, training and competition to over 100 young people. We have competed, not only here, but also at

the Irish clubs in New Haven, and Canton.

Also, this past summer a number of our players participated in the North American Continental Youth Championships in Philadelphia.

While we have spread the game around the immediate Pioneer Valley, our goal is to develop the games (specifically, Gaelic football to start) throughout the larger western New England region, wherever there are Irish organizations whose goals include the cultural education of youth of Irish descent. A secondary goal is to develop our competitive programs so we can put forward teams to play in all of New England, especially New Haven, Canton/Boston and Stamford.

Relatively speaking, ours is not so big an area that we cannot coordinate training, clinics and competition locally. First and foremost, we need to gauge the interest of those included in this mailing. From there, we can plan to get together and look to bind ourselves into a sporting organization. Those of us who have been involved are more than willing to travel to introduce the youth of your club to the games, through developmental clinics, while it is incumbent on the clubs to provide field space and the kids.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to express interest or, if you have questions on this program. 413 427-3534



Pictured: Miss Fogarty with a friend; some of the children who entertained at Christmas with an Irish Touch

**ONLY A FEW SPACES ARE LEFT!
THE IRISH CULTURAL CENTER'S
10TH ANNIVERSARY
11-DAY IRELAND TOUR APRIL 19-29, 2009**

A few seats remain on our special 10th Anniversary, "Journey of the Soul" tour to Ireland!

Our adventure will take us to new and wonderful places where we haven't been before and also to a few of our favorite places. On this tour, you will experience Ireland in springtime—when the baby lambs frolic on the hillside and gardens burst with color. This is a wonderful time to visit the Southern Coast, as the days are longer and the coast is warmed by the Gulf Stream.

We will visit dramatic landscapes between mountain and sea—experience areas rich in culture, history and archeology and visit some of Ireland's most colorful villages. Let the Irish language, songs, dance and music captivate you as we follow the scenic coastline, participate in a medieval banquet in a 15th century castle and experience traditional Irish entertainment at Kate Kearney's Cottage in the Gap of Dunloe. Optional visit: Great Blasket Island with local historian Danny Sheehy.

Highlights: Kilkenny, Avoca, Wicklow Mountains, New Ross, Cobh, Middleton, Blarney, Kinsale, Bantry Bay, Killarney, Gap of Dunloe, Dingle Peninsula, Cliffs of Moher, Limerick. **Hotels:** Kilkenny River Court Hotel (2 nights), Trident Hotel (Kinsale-2 nights), Killarney Towers (1-night), Benner's Hotel (Dingle-3 nights), Absolute Hotel (Limerick-1-night). Call Kathy Gallivan at (413) 536-9709 or the Irish Cultural Center (413) 265-2537 for more details. Website: www.irish-cairde.org to see April "Events". **Call soon as our prices won't be locked in for long!**

Continuing history of the Irish Center: many lectures offered

In addition to the importance of language classes, probably the core of the Irish Cultural Center is our offering of lectures and book readings. Amazingly, we have offered over fifty programs in just ten years, rivaled in numbers only by the films we have shown. (I'll write about those in the next issue.)

Topics have ranged from Celtic spirituality to sports; from goddesses and the little people to Patrick and Michael Davitt; from the peace process in Northern Ireland to the evacuation of the Blaskets. These last two topics have been addressed several times by different speakers.

We have listened to stories and poems; we have heard the history of Ireland and learned the impact of immigration on our own country. We heard Eva Paus praise Ireland as the Celtic Tiger as she demonstrated how Ireland's success story can act as a model for developing countries. Dave Hannigan looked at the other side of the coin with the negative changes brought to his home country because of the affluence of the 1990s.

We have learned how to research our ancestors and have been inspired and moved, entertained and cheered.

Speakers have come from Ireland: Dublin, Galway, Dingle and Ballyferrier. They have come from Springfield, Chicopee, Boston, New Hampshire and New York, as well as many places in between. We have heard from professors, journalists, priests, poets and politicians, as well as Consul general Isolde Moylan and her successor David Barry.

We have hosted some speakers multiple times: Father Pat Fenton of St. Mary's Church in Dingle visited us several times to share liturgy and his reflections on Celtic spirituality. Tom Moriarty spoke on Patrick and the spread of early Christianity. Damien Murray lectured on several aspects of Irish American Nationalism. Catherine Shannon from Westfield State College spoke once on the life of John Boyle O'Reilly and returned to speak of the Clinton peace efforts in Northern Ireland.

Peggy O'Brien from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst spoke

twice: first on the *Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry*, and on a return visit on her book called *Writing Lough Derg*. Kevin O'Hara, author of the *Last of the Donkey Pilgrims* read from his book, and returned to share some of his stories of growing up in an Irish Catholic home in Pittsfield. These are included in his next book with a publishing date in 2010.

We have benefited from a close relationship with Boston College in hosting both Robert Savage and Thomas Hachey. We have also taken advantage of the opportunity to hear some of the Burns Scholars, including Maria Luddy and Tom Garvin.

Cole Morton launched his book *Hungry for Home*, the story of the evacuation of the Blaskets at the Elms. Other authors who have shared their writings include Michael White, R. Todd Felton, Andy Mendlowitz and Kevin O'Rourke.

We are proud of this record of fine speakers we have hosted. Any one who attended one of any of these presentations is enriched.

Christmas program delights one and all



Pictured: Mary Franz as Miss Fogarty; additional photos on page 6

On December 6 Our Lady's Chapel was filled with worshippers who attended the tenth annual Christmas with an Irish Touch liturgy. Kathleen Gilhooly and the Our Lady of Hope choir led the singing; George Bresnahan and Tom Moriarty did the readings both in Irish and English.

Monsignor Chris Connelly offered inspiring reflections on both the readings and the pride of the Irish immigrants, quoting from a new book by Jay Dolan.

After the liturgy we gathered in the Dooley Dining Hall for refreshments and a delightful entertainment. Kathy

Gallivan did a reading of Christmas customs, Sr. Judy read a poem by Patrick Kavanagh, Kathleen Gilhooly sang *Silent Night* in Irish.

Mary Franz delighted the audience as her portrayal as Miss Fogarty who is much put off by the remarks of her neighbors on her Christmas cake.

The children from the summer camp treated us to song and dance led by Mike Rancitelli and Mary Ellen O'Brien. And we all joined together to sing Christmas in Killarney, led by Mike Rancitelli and the children on their whistles.