

# JOURNEY THROUGH THE EMERALD ISLE

BY PAULA G. CULLISON

The 'Luck of the Irish' was with us throughout our two-week trip. We were off to a good start with several months of planning and help from the Irish Cultural Center in Phoenix where I also did some basic genealogy work on my husband's maternal side.

Five nights in Dublin was all too short a time to enjoy this great city. We did attend a very popular local comedy at the Gaiety Theater entitled, *Breaking Dad*. Additionally, we attended a modern interpretation of *Twelfth Night* at the Abbey Theater, and a concert of traditional Irish music and dance at the Arlington Hotel.

We happened upon the Giro d'Italia Cycling Race and (along with 200 others) cheered the participants, as they crossed the finish line. It all went so fast; I could hardly catch my breath. The race which began in Belfast ended in Trieste. There were 198 cyclists from 22 countries. The winner was Nairo Quintana from Colombia, a first for his country.

As far as getting around is concerned, we found the public transportation system in Dublin to be excellent and the Hop On - Hop Off tourist bus always a good idea.

St Stephen's Green and Merrion Square, both close to the Mespil Hotel, were our favorite spots for some relaxation and people watching. Walking along the River Liffey and then crossing the Ha' Penny and other bridges, one can feel the spiritual presence of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, William Yates and other Irish writers.

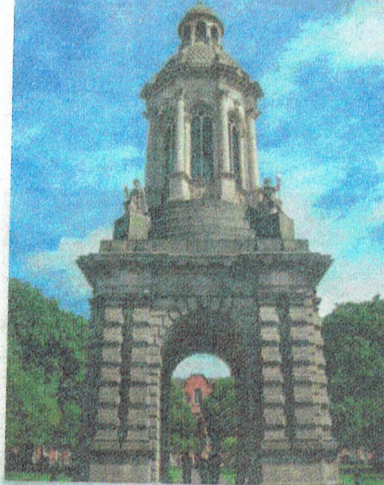
A walking tour of Dublin provided us with some history, especially the Uprising of 1916 when a group of Irish nationalists rebelled against the British. Over 1,500 died and the rebels were executed. However, about 6 years later an agreement was reached and the Irish Republic was established. An impressive monument to Daniel O'Connell, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century nationalist leader, prominently stands in the street named for him. The four winged-victories at the base represent virtues attributed to O'Connell: patriotism, courage, eloquence and fidelity. The height of the monument is 40 feet, including the bronze statue of O'Connell which is 12 feet. Nearby Parnell Street, named for the nationalist leader Charles Steward Parnell, is always bustling with locals and tourists alike.

Strolling on the Trinity College campus, where we viewed a few pages of the Book of Kells (created by monks in 800 AD), was another highlight. The illuminated drawings and the painstaking calligraphy of Four Gospels of the New Testament are highly treasured and a privilege to see. Fortunately, I had seen an extensive exhibit

of the Book of Kells at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1977. Although we did not have time for a tour of the 64 acre Guinness Brewery (aka St James Gate) founded in 1759, there can be no doubt that Dublin thrives on its Pub Culture. The Temple Bar area is a testament to that. ...Continued on page 25

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Not wanting to drive, we used the very comfortable coach bus services provided by Erin. The buses crisscross Ireland; tickets are very reasonable.

Our three nights in Cork were spent at the conveniently located Jurys Inn Hotel. We visited the famous Blarney Castle via local bus. We hiked to the top of the Castle, kissed The Blarney Stone, and then strolled around the lovely gardens. Later that afternoon, we took the train to Cobh harbor from where most immigrants left for America and which was the last stop for the Titanic. I took a photo of the statue of Annie Moore (17) and her two young brothers (Anthony 11 and Philip 7) who emigrated to the US from Cobh (formerly known as Queenstown) in 1892 on the S.S. Nevada. Annie was the first immigrant to enter the US from Ellis Island. Over 2.5 million Irish would emigrate from this port city. Using a google search, I learned that Annie married Joseph Schayer, a German immigrant who worked at the Fulton Fish Market in NYC, had 10 children, and died in New York in 1924 of heart failure at age 50.

A day trip to the Dingle Peninsula, with its awesome scenery (thatched roofed houses and castles along the way), was most rewarding. It is readily apparent that the cows and sheep have a good life in Ireland. The grass couldn't be any greener. When we arrived in Dingle, a Women's 10K was in progress, so we cheered along with the other supporters. Then we had the traditional fish and chips for lunch.

In Ennis, a Sister City to Phoenix we stayed at The Temple Gate Hotel, a former convent, which is absolutely gorgeous (rather heavenly!). The central location is perfect. We attended the opening of the 40th anniversary of the Fleadh Nua concert series (traditional Irish music). There we met the Mayor of Ennis, Mary Coote-Ryan, a charming woman who remembered many of their visitors from Phoenix.

Earlier that day we encountered (and joined) a demonstration for 'Bring Back Our Girls' in support of the Nigerian girls who were taken hostage by the Boko Haram. The demonstration was organized by the County Clare Women's Association. It was a good reminder that we must care for each other.

The journey continued when we headed for Galway. With plenty of pedestrian friendly areas (like Quay Street) populated with street musicians and home to numerous pubs, Galway is considered one of Ireland's most charming cities. Passing through the Spanish Arch, built in 1584, we took the 'Long Walk' along banks of the River Corrib in order to get a feel for the life of the sailors and fishermen who call this home. Galway Bay evokes a keen sense of romance and adventure.

We also took a day trip to visit the Newgrange area with its incredible and awe-inspiring majestic Cliffs of Moher, located in The Burren region of County Clare. The Burren area supports a mild climate resulting in a long growing season rich with diverse plant growth. It is also home to the Neolithic site of Poul nabrone Dolmen, a portal tomb which dates back to 3800 BC.

The awe-inspiring Cliffs of Moher rise almost 400 feet above the Atlantic Ocean at Hag's Head and just over 700 feet at O'Brien's Tower. We spent time enjoying the vistas and avoiding the steep drops. While there, we listened to Celtic harp music. It was a mystical experience.

There are almost 35 million American citizens of Irish ancestry. That is 7 times more than the population of Ireland which is about 5 million. Therefore, the interest in traveling to Ireland is quite high.

As we ended our journey, I thought of a lovely Irish Blessing: May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields.