

Ireland - 2019

29 Aug 2019 - Thursday

Chicago

This trip has been planned forever, and it always seemed so far off, then all of a sudden, we are on our way! Cliff drove us to the White Rock rail station, dropped us off at 8:30 am. Other than a 5 – 10-minute delay leaving Mockingbird station we encountered few delays and yet it still took us until 10:05 to reach the airport. When we planned our 8:30 departure we thought our flight (to Chicago) left at 10:30. Lucky for us it was actually scheduled for 11:30. Barely had time to grab a quick “breakfast” (at Subway) before we were boarding. Even then, we went on with group 7 (we were group 4!).

Our first trip on a 787... and our first delay. It got temperamental regarding the A/C unit. We all sat in the increasingly stuffy cabin. After a few “we are rebooting it” statements from the captain, followed by a few more “the repair guys are on the way” announcements they had all of us (with all of our carry-on’s) deplane. At least it was cool in the terminal.

We finally got back on and departed around 2:00. I think they purposely set the temperature low because it was cold!

We (Kathleen) found a good price on Air Lingus so we had to claim our bags at O’Hara, ride the bus (because the train is down for an upgrade) over to terminal 5. It’s kind of a dump... not a lot of great choices for restaurants either. Chicago really needs to do a major upgrade, but I don’t think they have any plans to do anything soon. Waiting now for an 8:30 pm departure.

30 Aug - Friday

In Dublin

Had an uneventful flight. We were on an Airbus 330-300 and had managed to get two seats by ourselves (it was a 2-4-2 cabin configuration). Offered shepherd’s pie or chicken with rice for dinner but had to pay for wine. Breakfast burrito in the “morning”. We both managed to sleep a lot so didn’t feel too awful when we arrived (early – aided by a ~100 MPH tail wind).

There were a surprising number of “Non-EU Citizens” (i.e., Americans) arriving when we did – had to queue inline for Immigrations, but that was about it for the bureaucracy on arrival. Got our bags and were on our way!

Kathleen has done her homework for us so quickly found our way to our bus and jammed in with many other tourists for the 30-minute ride downtown. It dropped us across the street from our hotel (Holiday Inn Express on O’Connell Street), where we were pleasantly pleased to find that they had our room ready for us.

We decided a nap was in order so slept from about 1:00 to 4:00, showered, and began to feel human again.

Walked south to the river and wandered around for a while before settling in at an attractive pub with some tables on the sidewalk (one of which was open) – Oliver St. John Gogarity. They have three different kinds of Smithwick’s beer (usually... the kind Kathleen likes – now “Red” – was not on). I was overwhelmed by even having to choose and got the wrong one. My Guinness was delicious though. So much so that Kathleen immediately ordered one from our waitress (I had purchased ours at the very busy bar).

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The people-watching was fascinating.

They had a live band inside which was a perfect background. It was a popular bar on a busy corner. Apparently tour guides like it because we saw two large groups emerge and hustle off to their next destination while we were there.

Our waitress had heard our tale of woe about the Smithwick's. We ordered two more Guinness's, but she found the Smithwick's Red on tap somewhere and brought that for Kathleen (at no charge).

The pup served food and had a restaurant on the 2nd floor. There was another on the 3rd floor, and another restaurant next door. It all looked and sounded good, so we decided to stay and eat there. Had mussels at the table outside, then went upstairs to have dinner (both agreeing that we hadn't had a good meal since leaving Dallas).

We didn't care for the available seating (or the noise) on the 2nd floor, but the 3rd floor was full, so we went back down. They were great – explained that they had other options – all serving the same menu from the same kitchen – and got us a fine table in the corner at the “next door” restaurant.

The food was good (Salmon and Duck), we enjoyed a nice bottle of white wine and really enjoyed the live music (one in the bar on the 1st floor, and later another somewhere in the room where we were eating. They have a good sound system and monitors all over the place so you can watch the performers too. After the performance in the bar wrapped up, they switched to the solo performance in our area. Quite a talented guitar player with a great voice too.

We finally headed back to our hotel in the pleasantly cool evening air but stopped off at the Irish (aren't they all?) pub next door to our hotel for one more beer and more great Irish music and some Irish step dancing. There was music everywhere – all of it good!

Aug 31 – Saturday

In Dublin

Slept fitfully, got up at 7:30, cleaned up and enjoyed a fine breakfast offered by our hotel. It was fun being in the company of people from all over the world.

Kathleen brought her laptop down and we made our meal choices for the dinners we will be attending as part of her course in Belfast.

Had looked on-line at train tickets for Belfast but they seemed expensive so decided to walk to the Connolly train station to talk to somebody there. Cool but sunny day, nice for a walk. Got there and realized we had been looking at the cost for two tickets – a better price than what was available at the station. So pulled into chairs at an empty coffee shop and bought them on-line, then stopped at the ticket machine and printed them off.

Walked down to the river and over to EPIC, the museum of Irish Emigration. Really interesting, lots of A/V information. Glad we sprang for the recording and headsets.

Came out tired and hungry. Checked out several restaurants on our way to St. Stephens Green. Picked one but they had stopped serving (it was by now 3:00). Finally found a pub and went in. It was a fun

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local place. The fish and chips were really good, and I enjoyed hearing about Rugby as we watched Ireland play Wales with some very enthusiastic local fans.

Walked the short way to St. Stephens Green and found the bench with a plaque in memory of the Magdalene Laundries. Ducked into a gazebo to wait out a brief rain shower then sat on the bench and enjoyed watching the people and the sea gulls fighting for food.

Walked around some more... found the Dublin Castle (near City Hall): quite a place. They have tours – something to do when we return from Belfast.

Bumped into the theatre playing Riverdance. Had seen video's in the Emigration museum and was reminded how much I enjoyed them when we did see them, so jumped on the chance to see them live in Dublin! Booked for when we return.

Stopped off for some wine to refresh ourselves, then off again to find the part of town that (according tour map) has a bunch of houses featured in the "Doors of Dublin" poster... but we did not find them. Just a bunch of dreary-looking apartments.

Started looking for dinner late and started running into restaurants that were full. Finally got into Flannigan's on O'Connell street down from our hotel – a steak house, but we had chicken and salmon.

Decided on a night cap at Murry's [the bar next to our hotel] but it was a zoo. We decided to give the outside seating a shot and were happy we did. It had a heater overhead, so we were quite warm. Had to go in to get our drinks but that was not a problem.

The Irish Football (a cross between rugby and soccer) Championship game was scheduled for Sunday, and Dublin was hosting Kerry so there were lots of fans in town.

Sept 1 – Sunday

In Dublin

Had some time to kill before our 12:00 train to Belfast, so after we had packed up and had breakfast we just walked around (found the Leprechaun Museum!) until it was time to go back to the hotel, check out and walk to the train station.

We ended up in one of the "2 seats facing 2 seats separated by a table" seats on the train. We had one person across from us but he got off at the first stop so we both had plenty of legroom.

He did explain the big game being held in Dublin... Gaelic Football. Kind of a cross between Rugby and Soccer. The game was being played in a stadium on the north end of town. The Train Station (and the streets) were jam packed with excited fans from both teams.

The train was just a bit over two hours and the time passed quickly. The Belfast Central station was underwhelming – much smaller than I expected. They had a bin full of city maps – but it was full of maps of Dublin!

Used our phones to get our bearings and walked the short distance to the Malmaison Belfast, a four-story old hotel somewhat past its prime. Asked for a quiet room (it is located on Victoria street – busy

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road) and got a room on the top floor in the back corner. It is quiet but lacking in shelves or coat hooks. Had to work a bit to find a place for everything – wanted to settle in for our 11-night stay.

It was not (yet) raining so we tried to follow the instructions given to us by the hotel (and trying to follow the small maps ripped out of the back of their “Visit Belfast” booklet) but got a bit lost. Found lots of stores, but had a hard time finding a pub or a restaurant. Did eventually bump into a quaint bar [Duke of York Tavern] and pulled in for a few Pints.

Remarked on the police presence here. We only saw one police car in Dublin (on our way to the train station, probably “out in force” for the game). Here the local police station (down the street from our hotel) looks more like a prison, and we have seen armored police cars and very many marked and unmarked police cars. It is a striking difference.

After our beers we set out again to find someplace for dinner and eventually did find the area recommended by the hotel. We both had to struggle a little to figure out what to select – restaurants have moved on from our simple tastes. For all that my Duck Rouge was fabulous!

We also walked over to the PRONI [Public Records Office of Northern Ireland] building (near the Titanic Museum) so Kathleen would know exactly where she was going for her first day of training. It was good that we did this as it took us a while to find it. Now that we know it is only a 20-minute walk.

Sept 2 – Monday

Belfast

Up early. We had purchased breakfast with our lodging so ate our continental breakfast in the restaurant off of the lobby. Mainly ham and cheese with toast, some fruit, juice and coffee (although they offered the usual array of cereals and things we don't care for).

I walked over to PRONI with Kathleen and back to the hotel in occasional spats of rain. After I showered, I walked to the massage parlor I found on-line (Orchid Thai – 55 Upper Arthur Lane), made a reservation for 11:30 and then walked the short distance to the “Visit Belfast” Tourist Information center. They had lots to offer but all I needed were some maps and I was soon on my way again.

Walked around the “Linen Quarter” south of the City Hall until it was time for my massage. That was great: 60 Pounds for 90 minutes – very similar to what I was used to from Dallas, except they have a shower.

Went to a Pizza Hut at the Victoria Mall for lunch, then came back to the room to do some TxSGS tasks to get ready for my 5:00 call.

All the technology is (so far) working well. The GoTo Meeting call worked just as well as it has been working in Dallas!

By this time Kathleen was back and waiting for me in the bar. We had a few glasses of wine and compared notes from each other's day.

Went back to the same area as last night for dinner but went to the Chinese restaurant next door. Food was good (Kathleen's chicken was better than my beef). We were both tired, so we brought the remains of our bottle of Merlot back to our hotel room, finished it and called it a night.

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Sept 3 – Tuesday

Belfast

Day 2 of Kathleen's 1st course (Intro to Irish Genealogical Records) and another solo day for me.

Had breakfast with Kathleen (I ordered eggs and ham today and enjoyed it a lot more) and let her walk over alone. I'm cleaned up (did my exercises for the 1st time), caught up with this journal and ready to walk over to see the Titanic museum. Will bring rain gear – rain is pretty much in the forecast for the next week.

I spent most of the day at the museum. It had lots of information about the boat, the people who sailed on it and the sinking. But it also offered a lot of information about the people who built it and their lives. It was time well spent. And the fish and chips in the cafeteria was really good!

Included in the tour was a tender (the Normadic) that is in dry dock in front of the museum. Built by the same company that built the Titanic [Harland & Wolf] at the same time, it was designed to ferry people on to and off of large ships at ports where the pier could not be used. It worked out of Cherbourg, France and loaded the last passengers to board the Titanic before it sank. It has been used for a lot of other purposes since then, but it has been restored and is the last surviving White Star Line ship in existence.

The rain held off until I got back to the hotel.

Kathleen and I enjoyed drinks in the bar and dinner at a steak house (in the same square near the Cathedral where we have eaten every night since we arrived. Really good steaks! Sat next to two ladies from Denmark. It was obvious they were a bit challenged by the menu – Kathleen reached out and helped them figure out what to order.

Sept 4 – Wednesday

Belfast

This is the last day of Kathleen's first class. She is going to skip the tour of the Archive so we can go to Linen Library instead.

After breakfast she went to PRONI and I caught up on email, then took the 90-minute Hop On/Hop Off bus tour of the city. Glad that I did as it was informative on many levels. I did not realize that there are still neighborhoods separated by "Peace Walls" with gates that are closed at night. The people living in those neighborhoods prefer to keep them.

Met Kathleen at the hotel, had fish and chips [Fish City] for lunch, then walked over to the Linen Library Museum. Went through the card files of Birth, Marriages and Deaths looking for relatives and photographed the ones of interest (Kathleen has access to the images but there is no index).

Went through the City Hall (across the street) – it was interesting – had displays about the history of the city (and free bathrooms).

Had drinks before dinner, then went to the get-together/social for Kathleen's (and mine, I guess) conference. It was OK until the music started at 8:00 which made conversation very difficult, so we left.

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Had hamburgers for dinner, a last wine at our hotel bar, then off to bed.

Sept 5 – Thursday

Belfast

My first touring day. Got up a bit earlier, had breakfast and walked with Kathleen to PRONI. Sat through a one-hour welcome/intro, then Kathleen went to look up records and I joined my fellow tourists on the bus, which was a full-sized bus).

Went first to Mount Stewart (home of the Marquis of Queensbury) in county Down to view the gardens and tour the house.

Next up was Echlinville Distillery where we had lunch then toured the distillery.

Finished up at the Grey Abbey (an old monastery).

Returned to Belfast where I met up again with Kathleen for Dinner at the James Street pub near City Hall.

Sept 6 – Friday

Belfast

Another tour day, this time with Kathleen! We paid for breakfast at our hotel but have to pay a 2 Pound upcharge for a “hot” breakfast, which I have chosen to do – Eggs and Ham (they call it bacon).

Walked to PRONI, met our group and boarded the bus to the Hill of O’Neil (where I took the picture of Kathleen sitting in the arch in front of the bus). I am learning how important it is to understand the history of clans and plantations here if you want to trace your family back. This building is on an ancient site that more recently served as a barracks for the British Army. It is now a public museum (although the Headquarters/Jail itself located next to it is for sale).

Drove (well, road the bus) to the Ulster American Folk Park, an interesting collection of old buildings that had people inside re-enacting various historical roles. Learned that old homes were very smoky! Heard an interesting overview in the immigration museum that is also in the park. Very informative! Also had lunch (sandwiches) – ate in the cafeteria.

It has been raining off and on but held off while we were walking around. Saw the recreated migrant ship (modeled after typical vessels from about 1820) and walked through the recreated American buildings too.

Headed next to Monreagh, a museum of Scottish immigration (plantations) situated in the house formerly inhabited by the minister of the church next door. Another interesting bit of history well presented.

Saw a demonstration of how Flax was processed in the yard behind the house. Very labor intensive! Hard to imagine how hard (and long) people had to work to create linen during this period of time.

Also got to tour the church and hear an extensive recitation of the history of the ministers who have led the congregation through the years.

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Finished off with dinner at the Ponderosa restaurant (the highest pub in Northern Ireland). I had rump steak (OK) and Kathleen had chicken strips (too much breading). Unlike yesterday's dinner we had to pay for our drinks.

Long ride back to Belfast. The evening got a lot more exciting when we returned to our hotel. Conleth (with PRONI) had found a cab company that would take us to see where Kathleen's family lived on Sunday for a flat fee of 105 Pounds for four hours. We stopped at the front desk (table?) for some help with making the call (our cell phones are still US based for calls) and found out that one of Kathleen's cousins had responded to the letters she mailed before we left the US and had called several times during the day.

Kathleen called back from our room (no charge for local calls) and spoke to Liam. He, a brother and a sister are interested in meeting her are making some plans for this weekend or early next week. Kathleen was really pumped by the call and is understandably excited about meeting them.

Sept 7 – Saturday

Belfast

Went down to get breakfast before our 8:00 tour departure and discovered that the restaurant did not open until 8:00. They did give us some coffee and rolls though! Walked over to the Ramada Hotel, ate our "Breakfast" and boarded the bus.

Stopped at the Londonderry Arms Hotel in Carnlough (at one time owned by Winston Churchill) for scones and coffee and a brief walk on an old part of the city wall overlooking a small harbor.

Drive some distance [up the Antrim coast, through the Glens of Antrim] to the town of Garvagh to tour their public museum (kind of like a collectables store without price tags). The city was also holding some kind of outdoor event (lots of classic cars and food booths) so traffic to the museum was crawling and it took us a while to get there. Our driver was amazing in his ability to back into a narrow alley so we could get off and walk to the museum.

Had a brief panic while assembling to re-board the bus because one of our group was missing, but he emerged from an ice cream shop across the street, somehow carrying his cone and managing two walking sticks.

Had a great lunch at the Royal Court Hotel in Portrush before Garvaugh: A carvery with beef, ham and turkey and lots of vegetables that we both really enjoyed.

Finished the day touring the Giants Causeway. Weather was good (cloud cover and some sun) and had lots of waves crashing ashore. The long walk down was well worth the effort. We mostly just sat and soaked in being so close to the sea.

I managed to lose my prescription sunglasses. Someone on the bus saw them sitting on the drinking fountain outside the bathroom, but by then we were on the bus and on our way. I did leave my name and contact information. Conleth said he would call them on Sunday and try to get them to sent to him before we leave for Dublin.

Got a late text from Cousin Liam... we are to meet at 7:00 pm Sunday evening in Belfast, and will go down to family farm on Tuesday afternoon.

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Sept 8 – Sunday

Belfast

It was good to sleep in a bit, and to enjoy a leisurely breakfast (Kathleen ordered Kippers!). We spent much of the day set up a table in the empty bar. Kathleen wanted to get her family information pulled together so she would be ready to meet with the family. I spent time catching up with this journal, some TxSGS tasks and email.

We got out early afternoon. Walked down to the St. Georges market and wandered around the booths which were a mixture of hand-crafted goods, souvenirs and food. Ate a light lunch (chicken crepes and pizza), then went out into the cloudy, cool but dry day and walked down to the Crown Saloon. Still amazing, and quite busy (no booths available) so we pressed on up towards the Cathedral. Admired many buildings and churches along the way. Could not enter the Cathedral (there was a service in progress). Wound our way back to the Duke of York Tavern and sat outside with many locals and enjoyed a pint of beer until a light drizzle began to fall.

We were done with our drinks anyway so marched on. Ended up eating fish and chips at Fish City, then went back to the hotel to get ready for our 7:00 meeting with Kathleen's cousins. We grabbed some chairs and a couch in the hotel lobby outside the bar and waited...

Liam, Patrick and Mary arrived a little after 7:00, and we had a really enjoyable discussion, mostly about family but also about local and world affairs. They descend from Kathleen's Great Grandfather's sister (Hughes sister Ann), so they definitely are family to Kathleen (3rd cousins). Lucky for Kathleen their family married a un-related Murray (no relation to Kathleen). If they had a different last name Kathleen would probably never have contacted them.

They are picking us up at 10:00 on Tuesday.

Sept 9 – Monday

Belfast

Decided to skip the tour to Dublin (although we will join them for dinner). Kathleen went to the archives while I entertained myself: indulged in a two-hour massage (a bargain at 80 Pounds), then walked over to tour the HMS Caroline, the only remaining WWI ship that participated in the battle of Jutland.

Had a TxSGS conference call at 5:00 pm. I'm really impressed with how well I am able to use GoTo Meeting to participate from here. Really is no more different that how it works from Dallas.

Had dinner with the Dublin tour group at the Northern Whey, and unassuming bar/pub we have passed without a second glance several times since we arrived. Doesn't look like much from the outside but it was spacious and quite nice inside. Out "Korean Chicken" dinner was battered fried chicken in a Korean-ish sauce. Not bad but nothing special.

Sept 10 – Tuesday

Belfast

Had breakfast and met Liam just before 10:00. He drives (poorly) a Jaguar. I noticed right away that he didn't have much respect for lane markers and had to say something early on when it appeared that he was going to drive onto an island in the middle of the road.

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Somehow arrived at Mary's house without hitting anything. It is large, decorated in heavy Victorian styled furniture. We chatted over coffee and sweets while waiting for Patrick to arrive.

First up on the tour was the site of "the old farm" where Hugh and Ann were born. We rode up there in Patrick's "jeep" (a Range Rover). It was parked next to the two Mercedes Benz's and a BMW behind Mary's house.

The old house and out-buildings have long since been torn down and replaced by a modern two-story house owned by an architect. But the way to the house is a narrow, bush-lined, unpaved road that justified leaving the Jaguar behind.

The setting is beautiful. They have planted grass all around the house as well as a large number of trees and a small garden behind the house. Beyond that are farm fields, mainly dedicated to cattle. The original well is still there (although it is beginning to collapse). The steps in the stone wall in the yard remain, although the path itself is no longer visible (or used!). Apparently, the fields were crisscrossed with them.

We picked up the Jaguar and drove next door to Patrick's house for more refreshments (sparkling wine) and met his wife. His house is similar to Mary's – substantial in size and décor. We photographed some old pictures (as we had done at Mary's), and he gave Kathleen a CD with old pictures of the farm [which turned to be videos of the old farm taken by the present owner when he acquired the property].

Then we were off (in Liam's Jaguar) again for a whirl-wind tour of local sights. Apparently, they are related to about half of the surrounding residents.

By this time, it had been more than an hour since we had anything to eat so we stopped for lunch at a nice restaurant overlooking a local harbor. As with the drinks on Monday evening they insisted on paying.

The we were off again, this time to see two cemeteries (very many Murray graves), all three pubs (all now closed) and more farms.

Ended up at Liam's house (big, Victorian, etc...). Met his son (who dropped by to pick up his three sons), and ate, drank and talked some more.

Kathleen's knowledge of their family history and their farms was simply amazing. She knew as much (and in many cases, more) than people whose families had been living there for generations.

Mary tried her best to talk Liam into letting her drive us back into Belfast but he wouldn't hear of it so we endured another somewhat tense ride back to the hotel (only one near-accident).

Kathleen was thrilled and somewhat overwhelmed by the day's events (much as I had been when I encountered my family in Norway for the first time). It was a really fun, fulfilling day.

Sept 11 – Wednesday

Belfast – Last Day!

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Hard to believe that this long awaited and much anticipated event is about to end. Kathleen headed back to PRONI to wrap up her research and I boarded the bus (barely – they were just about to depart – there minutes early!) when I came out of the archive after ducking in for a quick bathroom break.

The day promises to be lovely – cool, partly cloudy.

Stopped for coffee and scones on our way to Enniskillen (took close to two hours to complete the trip), then boarded our boat for the ride out to see the ruins on Devenish Island. We had a couple of rain showers on the bus ride, and another while on the boat, but arrived on the island in brilliant sunshine. The ruins were interesting – the tower was fascinating (even if it wasn't possible to climb up to the top!). Some of the remaining tombstones date back to the 1600's. Learned a lot on the heading back. The lake is now infected with Zebra Mussels and a rapidly growing water plant. There doesn't seem to be any way to eliminate them.

The Enniskillen Castle is well preserved but not really very interesting to visit. Much of its history is tied up in the two military units that were raised there. Lots of uniforms, guns, swords and medals that were (for me) boring. I think many of the group agreed – they were queued up for the bus an hour before we were scheduled to depart.

These tours have been well organized and generally interesting. It's nice to get private tour guides and have meals in rooms when we arrive. And William is an amazing tour guide on the bus. He has an amazing memory and seemed to have some bit of history for every town, farm or monument that we passed. I am really grateful to have had this opportunity to see Northern Ireland.

Dinner was a bigger event than past nights because all of the tourists and researchers were there (Café on the Square). Our salmon was really well prepared.

Sept 12 – Thursday

Started out in Belfast

Kathleen wanted to go to PRONI to get a copy of a court case, so she went over (in the rain) after breakfast. Had to wait for their later than usual 10:00 opening. We had tickets for the 10:30 train to Dublin but had purchased "flexible" tickets that allowed us to travel any time Thursday (without the benefit of reserved seats) so decided to catch the 12:30 train instead.

I waited in the room until Kathleen returned, then walked the ½ mile to the train station where we boarded the nearly empty train after a short wait.

Bad news on the court case though... somehow Kathleen only got one page of the case she wanted. The rest was for another unrelated case. Surely somebody at PRONI will get a copy for her.

Dublin

Decided to take advantage of the Light Rail (Luan) to get to the hotel... hadn't ventured on board during our first visit. Had the usual confusion about purchasing tickets but soon had it figured out and enjoyed the short (two stops) ride back to the Holiday Inn Express, our temporary home for the next two nights.

Had drinks at O'Neils and considered their carvery but decided that Italian sounded better and settled at Pacino's, which turned out to be an excellent choice.

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Sept 13 – Friday

Dublin

Tour day with our driver (Martin Dillon) who escorted us through a lot of history. Newgrange (old tomb), Monasteroice (early Christian settlement), Village of Slane, Hill of Tara, Bective Abbey and Trim Castle.

It was a treat to hear a bit about Irish culture and history, and there is no way we could have found our way to all of these sites in a single day. Newgrange was really impressive: very large – hard to imagine having been build 5000 years ago, and the fact that the inner tomb is still standing (original – never restored) is testament to their skills as builders. The other sites we visited were interesting in their own way but not in the same class.

We were really lucky with the weather – warm and sunny all day. The sky made for some good pictures!

Went back to Temple Bar and ate at the Oliver St. John Gogarty pub – got into the nice restaurant on the 3rd floor and had yet another marvelous meal (duck!).

Finished off at Murray's pub near the hotel – met a nice couple from near Austin (Dusty and ???). He had just gotten his DNA results back and they were here because of his Irish heritage. Gave him my card – he may contact me for some genealogy help.

Sept 14 – Saturday

Dublin

Started out taking the (shorter) tour of Dublin Castle (just the state apartments). Brought home the fact that the wealthy British had lived in Dublin while the parliament was still seated. They all left when it was abolished.

Went up to the GPO for another really interesting tour that revealed a lot about the various factions struggling to control Ireland at the time of the uprising in 1916.

Had lunch at a Chinese restaurant with a HUGE menu. Neither of us were really happy with what we got: a really spicy and salty fired pork for me, some kind of chicken and vegetable dish for Kathleen with tough, stringy chicken. We decided to walk the considerable distance to the Gaol.

This too was interesting (if poorly organized at the start. They couldn't seem to decide exactly where they wanted us to wait). It was also depressing, due to the number of executions that had taken place there.

Lucky for us we had a performance of Riverdance to look forward too! The theatre (the Gayity) is smallish and (apparently) well known. They have a nice pub where we sat and washed away the disturbing images from the Gaol before going in for the outstanding performance. It was over in a blink!

We had checked out of the Holiday Inn and into the Grisham on O'Connor street earlier in the day and returned to a motley throng of Kerry fans who were washing away the bitterness of the day's loss to Dublin. [The game the week before ended in a tie, necessitating this play-off]. The entire lobby was jammed with fans, all drinking and talking and having a grand time of it. We did manage to get a drink but chose to take them up to our room for a little peace and quiet.

Sept 15 – Sunday

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Dublin

Last day! We feel like we have been gone a long time!

Walked down to the train station to begin our tour [we had booked a Wicklow Mountains, Avoca – where Bally K was filmed - and Glendalough Rail tour], but when we approached our tour agent we learned that the tour boat (which was supplying the majority of the people on the tour) had arrived late (or, more correctly, was arriving late), so we would be (eventually) going by bus instead of train for the first leg of our trip.

We talked it over and decided to cancel rather than wait around then be part of a rushed tour. The agents were very nice (in fact, they offered it to us as an option first). In fact, we got notice of the refund within an hour!

Quickly re-planned our day and started out touring a coffin ship moored near the EPIC museum. It was a replica but gave you a very good idea of what the 7 – 8-week trip must have been like. This was a well-run ship – it always sailed with a doctor on board, and none of the 2500 or so passengers it carried over the span if its operation died aboard the ship.

We enjoyed a nice lunch at a pub, then set out to the Tenement Museum at 14 Henrietta Street. We took the train but mis-judged how long it would take, then got off a stop beyond where we should have and got thoroughly lost trying to find it. Arrived at 3:30 for our 3:00 tour. The staff was great – sent us down the street to get a cup of coffee and re-booked us for the 4:00 tour.

It was really interesting – gave a very good idea of what life was like when the wealthy family who built it occupied it, and what it was like years later when it was converted into small, cramped apartments. Life there in those years was not pleasant.

The train ride had made it seem very far away from the hotel, but it turned out to only be a 12-minute walk back. We cannot figure out how we got so disoriented trying to find it!

Finished the last evening of our trip over a nice dinner at the hotel. Looking outside at the people walking past in the rain that was falling made us feel very pleased with our decision.

Sept 16 – Monday

Dublin, then Home

Caught the airport bus just outside our hotel at 7:30. It was already crowded when we got on and became increasingly so as we made our way through the congested city center and out to the airport.

Air Lingus has automated check in terminals but the one we tried would not work. Neither did the 2nd one. We had success at the 3rd one though.

Went through security, did a bit of shopping, then headed into the American Customs Pre-Clearance area. This will allow us to skip going through customs in Chicago. But it also entailed going through a second luggage screening process (although we did not have to pass through metal detectors ourselves). All rather mysterious.

We both got to bypass the emigration queue because of our “Trusted Travelers” status which was nice.

Ireland - 2019

As was the case on our flight over we are seated in two seats together in the 2 – 4 – 2 section of the plane for our nearly 8-hour flight to O'Hara. Have a 4-hour layover before our Dallas flight which will see us getting home (via light rail) about 10:30 pm. Cliff texted us while we were having dinner last night and offered to pick us up at the White Rock Station which is really nice!