

Trip to Ireland January 9-17, 2007

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

- Beth flew to BWI from Hartford, met up with Jeff Martens, and we drove to Jeff Shilling's house. Had lunch at Pakistani restaurant, went to Jeff's office and friend Liz took us to the airport.
- Left Dulles 7:18pm and flew to Ireland via Frankfurt (but I thought I said I didn't want any stops. No, you said you didn't want to go through Iceland)

Wednesday, January 10, 2007



- Arrived Dublin 11:20 AM and took a bus from airport to Belfast, 2.5 hours to Jury Hotel, Belfast
- Walked around Belfast, down the Golden Mile, ate at The Botanic Inn; Beth had Irish stew and cider; The Jeffs had Steak and Guinness pie with Guinness.
- On the way back to the hotel, Jeff S and Beth went to see Peter Pan which was a great performance at a great price. May McFettridge kept us in stitches.

Thursday, January 11, 2007

- After breakfast of Irish soda bread with eggs and OJ (Beth), we took the bus to the Antrim Coast. There were torrential storms (two fishing ships were lost at sea), with waves crashing over the road. We planned to visit the Giant Causeway, but weather made us decide to skip the stop. Instead we got out at Coleraine and had lunch at the recommendation of a fellow bus rider. Beth had poached salmon with seasonal veggies (endive?), rutabaga, carrots, and mashed [potatoes, that is].



- Took the train to Derry, with coastal views, rough seas.
- Derry was a highlight - visited City Hall, thinking it was a church and then pieced together the history. Visited Bogtown with murals and Bloody Sunday monuments.
- Took the bus back to Belfast, where we had Fish and chips with cider/beer and chocolate bombe at Lloyd's



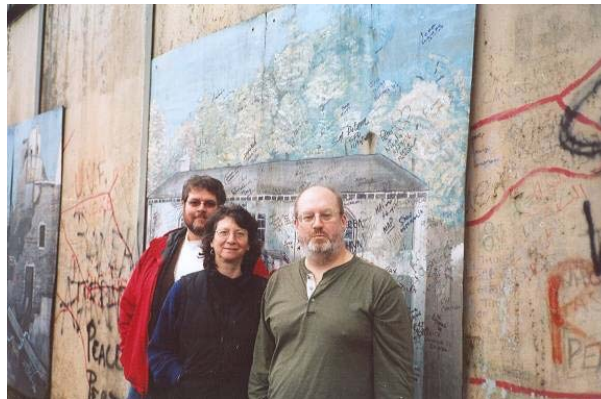
Friday, January 12, 2007

- Happy Birthday to Jeff S. After a breakfast of Ulster Fry (Beth) at the bus station, we checked out of the hotel and took the black cab to see the murals in the Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods. It was striking.

- The Protestant murals were militaristic.



- The Catholic ones honored martyrs. Note the Irish flag being flown in Northern Ireland, with the high fencing beyond the garden of the martyrs on top of the Peace Wall.
- We saw the Peace Wall, an ugly barbed-wire topped wall that separates the neighborhoods which are locked down from Friday evening to Monday morning.



- Visited Sein Fein headquarters, with its mural with Bobby Sands. Great anti-Bush murals near by. David Irvine had just died and helicopters circled City Hall.



- Visited City Hall, with amazing ceilings and architecture.
- Took the bus to Dublin where we checked into the Earle of Kildare Hotel, which was conveniently located to all the main attractions.
- We walked around to the Temple Bar area and had dinner (Mussels and squid for Beth) and listened to traditional music (guitar and banjo) and had cider/beer.

Saturday, January 13, 2007

- Ate a full Irish breakfast at the hotel and then took a bus to Galway, where there was rain at first but then we were free to explore the area. Had lunch first (seafood plate for Beth) and then walked to the



Spanish Arch. The river was running strong and there were daring kayakers who were indeed wearing PFDs.

- The Jeffs were enamored with the hookers.



We walked to the harbor where we overlooked the most scenic prison any of us had ever seen and we were adopted by a lively character on a bicycle. We scouted out the rivers running into the sea here, and discovered a series of locks.

We also eventually found James Joyce's muse Nora's home. It was closed. We did a wee bit of shopping (Beth bought Claddough earrings, others bought post cards? and shirts for the boys?)

Grabbed some bagels for dinner and took the long bus ride home, but not before loading up with some wonderful pastries (almond, brownie). Left Galway at 5:30 and got back to our hotel around 9:30. There was live music in the pub, so we listened for a while.

Sunday, January 14, 2007

- Another Irish breakfast at the hotel, where we discovered that Jeff S had contrived a cold. Undaunted, we took the LUA to the Guinness brewery for an informative tour and tasting. Well, at least some of us could taste. There was a panoramic view from the top and interesting displays on coopers and transportation options. And the origin of the Guinness Book of Records and advertisements.
- Stopped at a sandwich shop and bought sandwiches on Shamrock bread - Irish smoked cheddar, pesto and interesting combinations.



- To the Book of Kells, at Trinity College. A long wait and convoluted exhibit for such a small and restricted view.
- To the National Museum of Ireland which was astounding, with hordes of gold discovered in hidden caches in bogs, along with bog men and various clothing, Viking items, canoes, etc. This was a total gem.



- Beth rushed to the National Gallery of Ireland to look at the Vermeer (*Lady Writing a Letter*) and the Caravaggio (*The Taking of Christ*) before meeting up with The Jeffs at a terribly disappointing Museum of Natural History.
- We then strolled around St James Park (which we could not enter, despite our interest in mingling with potential drug dealers and muggers) and we walked around the Dublin Castle. Found a great place to eat - O'Neils - at the recommendation of our hotel and had ample portions (Beth had lamb stew) and watched American football on TV.

- Returned to hotel and Beth listened to awesome live music, full of folk tradition, reworking of *The Land is Your Land*:

*This land is your land, this land is my land
From the western highlands to the western islands
From the hills of Kerry to the streets of Free Derry
This land is made for you and me.*

Pete Seeger would have been proud. The evening ended with the heart-felt singing of the national anthem, with raised fists for freedom for all of Ireland.

Monday, January 15, 2007

- After another Irish breakfast that included blood pudding, we took a bus to Newgrange and took a guided tour of the area. The skill, engineering, and labor to produce the passage tomb were amazing. The sensation of being inside with the lights off and the solstice sunrise simulated was eerily awesome.



- Lunched in Drogheda, where Jeff M was hit by a car, barely. Ate at the Westmoore Hotel (Beth had stuffed leg of lamb, rutabagas, carrots, mashed [potatoes], and roasted [potatoes]). We walked around, saw the head of the patron saint of the town, and various churches.
- Took a bus back to Dublin and had dinner at our hotel (excellent seafood chowder) and then packed for our departure the following day.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

- Had our last Irish breakfast, pulled our suitcases back along the streets and across the river to the bus station, where we took the Airlink to the airport. After a slight delay, we left Ireland, touched down almost twice in Frankfurt, and arrived in Dulles around 8:00PM, where we successfully took a cab to Jeff S's car parked at work and headed home.

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

- Beth flew back to CT, arriving home around 10:15AM.