

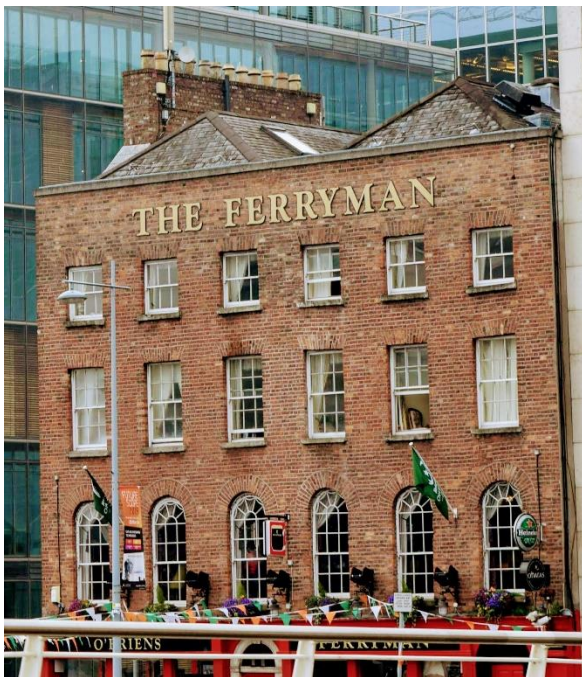
## IRELAND - Blog 4 - April 24th

Sean Patrick O'Rourke greeted us in the lobby promptly at 9:30 and whisked us away in a grey Mercedes. Sean outlined where our tour would take us and as we headed south, out of Dublin he pointed out points of interest. We passed through the financial district where most of the world's richest high-tech companies like Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook are headquartered. Why here? a major tax - break. Even though they are saving trillions, they still try to cheat the Irish, so billion-dollar fines are not unusual.

We passed through the southern part of Dublin along the coast with regular views of the many Martello Towers. We saw the statue of Sean Patrick O'Connor who was the first Catholic elected to parliament in Ireland. He secured basic civil rights for Catholics. Sean told us about Constance Markeviezc who was one of the 16 leaders of the 1969 rebellion, who was not shot because she was a woman. She was a feisty woman, rather than a beautiful women (even though Kevin thought she looked hot) who led a garrison located in Saint Stephen's Green.

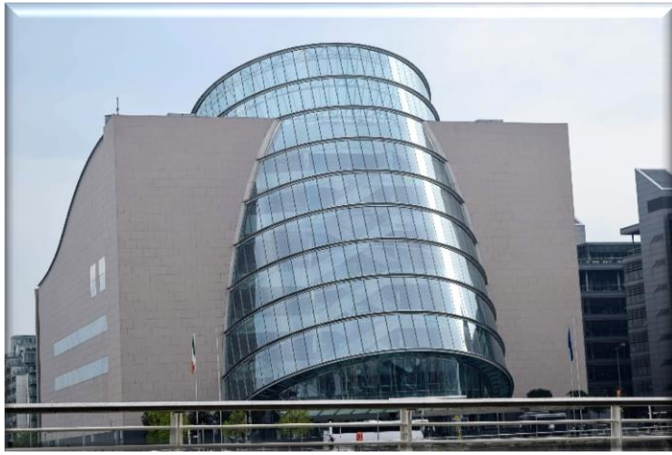
There was one other leader who was not executed because he happened to hold a US passport. (Raymond DeVallera). We learn more and more about this revolution every time we head out to explore.

If we are remembering correctly this rebellion only lasted 6 days, and was followed by 2 years of conflict ending in a civil war; which led to a negotiated treaty creating of an independent republic of Ireland 26 counties in the south and 6 in the north. The 6 counties never left England. They continue to be a protectorate of the UK.



There are a lot of examples still in and around Dublin of "Georgian" architecture. I loved :The Ferryman.

2 restored listed Georgian buildings, were used when restoring "The Ferryman" which overlooks the **River Liffey**. It was built in the 1780's by Lord Cardiff and is now a home to tourist who stay right in the heart of Dublin. There is a traditional style Dublin Pub and we were told many "the Guinnesses" are poured there every night. It was a great little building – surrounded by the new modern day architecture.



Sean pointed out the “monstrous building” which was literally built over the site of an ancient Viking City dating back to 1028 and they recovered from that site over 2.5 million artifacts.

Also, he told us that in 1742 there were large organs in the three Dublin churches which were used by Handel to practice his new music piece “The Messiah”.

Sean then pointed out The Bord Gais Energy Theatre, on the riverfront which fell into disrepair until a Catholic priest purchased it and converted it into a church. Father Griffin took great risk in doing so as Catholic were persecuted for religious practices, amongst other things in those days. The building is once again a theatre.

Sean also told us about the ha’penny Bridge - named after the cost of crossing over the bridge (medieval tolls). There were several statues and buildings around the city that have “irreverent” names associated with them (which Judi loved). The Hags with the Bags; and the Millenium Spire referred to as “the Stiletto in the Ghetto” or the “the Rod to God”. Sean was a plethora of knowledge. We loved him.



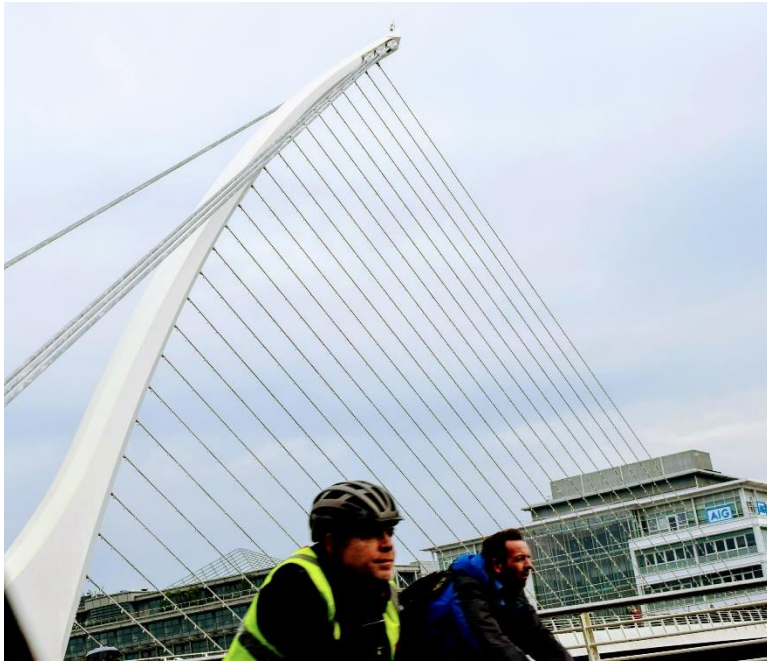
Really liked the old pubs (and there are tons of them), with the plants on the eaves of the roofs.

It was another rainy day so trying to get shots from the car windows was a bit rough.

Another very interesting tidbit - The Bachelors Bar - quotes from

famous writers are all across the front. It was awesome and Sean told us it was his son who had painted them. Judi’s favorite from James Joyce - ***“A man’s errors are his portals of discovery!”***

We had passed the Famine Memorial many times but what we didn’t know was that the statues represent real people’s stories. One of them shows a man, carrying his daughter - she died on that very spot.



Again, though we had seen the Samuel Beckett bridge- shaped as a harp - I think it went in one side and out the other that the harp was the national symbol of Ireland.

As we passed through the formerly seedy area of the docks it was obvious that the new Irish wealth and prosperity has been invested in a major cleaning up of the area. There is still a lot of public housing in the area (though not enough as far as Sean is concerned) and

major social concerns still remain.

Our major destination of the tour was to visit the Malahide Castle. This photo shows the family



cemetery and the remains of the church that was originally on the site. Malahide Castle had been owned by the Talbot family for nearly 800 years up to 1975 when the last Talbot, Rose moved out. The estate had over 250 acres of gardens, grounds and buildings. From humble beginnings it developed into a fortified castle and then into a family home. We also enjoyed being met by a beautiful peacock, and loved the

visit into the butterfly garden. (talk about a steamy environment)



The tour of the castle was very well done and it would be something that I would recommend to other visitors. Everything was explained in detail, and we were able to see so many beautiful pieces of furniture, marble fireplaces etc. Here are a few of the shots I took.



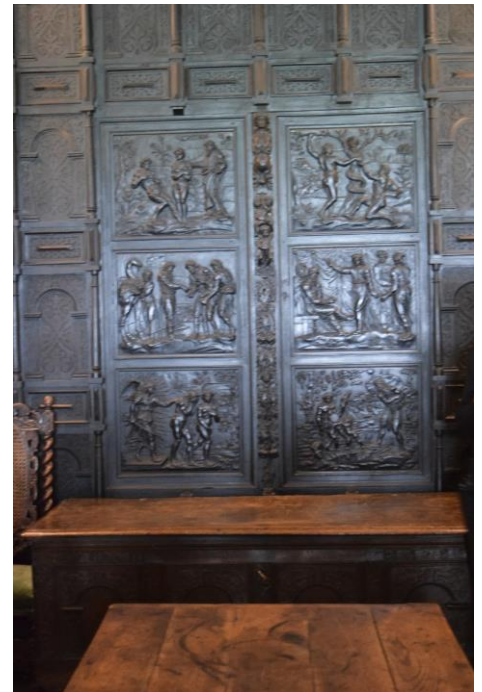
As i mentioned before when I return I will be putting my photos up on our website so you will see lots of the photos that I took in the castle. [www.kjritceynews.ca](http://www.kjritceynews.ca)

One thing Judi wanted to do was go on the “Fairy Trail” so that Zen, Kira and Tolkien would know that the little fairies do exist. We just made a brief stop there and it was so magical.



This photo is for you my darling grandchildren. Nana and Grandpa miss you so much. Love you to pieces.

As we were travelling along the roads, Sean pointed out that by law all signage in Ireland must contain the Irish language first, which tells you more about the actual place and then English beneath it, which really tells you nothing. Most Irish names refer to historic roots, or in the landscape, more topographical descriptions, forests, animals, lakes etc. I have heard this beautiful language and if I lived here I would go to school and learn it and speak nothing else unless I had to.



As we continued on it became obvious that yesterday's tour to Glendalough did not include a visit to the village itself or it's St. Kevin's Monastery .

We had chosen to visit a distillery while there and didn't realize how it would cut out the other things in Glendalough. *(Judi) - I would not use this tour company again. You have six hours, if you eat it is counted, the drive to and from is included - left very little time to see the things we were suppose to see. Had I known, I would not have gone to see the gardens - have seen so many around the world, and the hills etc. on the property almost killed Kevin, probably would not have gone to Martello tower, as there is one in Halifax, seen one you have seen them all.....(this is my inner voice speaking). A lesson learned. My advice - before you go, figure out what you want to see. Our travel agent has done a marvellous job for us but we didn't help her*

*at all. Next time to Ireland Nicole I know where I would like to go and you are the best, you will make it happen. Don't forget Sean.... he is our 100+ travel guide.*

Because of this “bad experience” yesterday, Sean offered to take us to visit the “Monaster Boice” which features an 800 year old Monk’s Tower and the tallest Celtic Crosse in Ireland, all other Celtic Crosses have been crafted after this cross. This stop was a magical gem located in the countryside surrounded by an incredibly well-maintained cemetery. Sean explained that the Yews trees which were in abundance in the cemetery had a purpose. The land had sunk over the years, and there were bones appearing on the surface which archaeologists identified as human remains. This would be expected given the land movement. The yews trees were planted because they are poisonous to animals and it kept them from digging up the bones.



The Monk’s circular Tower, rose 15 meters (40 feet) was made of stone but no mortar and the were supported by their own weight for 800 years. Though it was bitter cold, Judi braved the elements to look at some of the old gravestones - she loved it and I did find it interesting.



On the way back to the car park Judi took a photo of a sign that Sean had pointed out to us when we arrived. Even in the backwaters of the country you have to be extremely careful. Thank you Sean for an amazing trip. (Ray and Deb if you are looking for a great guide, please get in touch with Sean. I will send you his info).



From the Monastery Tower we headed to Howth. This is a picturesque fishing village and it reminded us of the small Nova Scotia fishing villages. Sometimes I do miss living in NS. The smell of the sea, the fish, the singing/squawking seagulls - yup a bit homesick. I envision myself living in an area like Mahone Bay, or Lunenburg.....



Sean recommended “The Oar House on the Pier” for lunch and it was amazing. I had the best Dublin Bay shrimp I have ever eaten, Kevin had Hake Fish and Chips - amazing and huge. He told our guide that there was a parasite in the restaurant who wanted pieces of his meal (I think he meant me.) Also, of interest, was that in the Oar House they could not serve beer, only wine. They have been trying forever to get a

beer license, but no go. There was an ugly electrical box that was right in front of the window where we were sitting. The server told us that it had just been put in and did indeed wreck the window view. The plan is to turn the restaurant back to front so that there would be a harbour view. Good plan.



After lunch Sean took us up to the Howth Summit. “On a clear day you could see forever” (I think that is a song). However, it was a tad foggy so we couldn’t see forever, but the gorse was in full bloom and as Sean said “take a deep breath” -- it was amazing, it smelled like coconut.

Kevin, who is more beautiful.... the gorse darling. GRRRRRR!



We were heading back to the “Mercedes Limousine” when there was a break in clouds and we got a 60 second amazing view. OMG! Oops, the photo was taken too far away. It was beautiful you will just have to take my word for it.



On our drive back to Dublin Sean gave us lots more of very interesting information. He was telling us a bit about the Irish economy - originally 80% was based on agriculture but in recent years it had diversified to IT and tourism. As mentioned before though, the IT folk are really not helping the Irish economy other than providing jobs as they are cheating on their taxes.

Sean dropped us off at the top of Grafton Street as Judi was still looking for a way to get her photos onto this notebook. All has now been figured out and we have the means to do up our blogs the way Judi likes to do them.

Tomorrow we are up at 5:00 a.m. in order to get to the station to catch a train to Waterford. Looking forward to another great day. Forecast is rain, but heck we are in the land of the green and to be green you have to get lots of rain.

Kevin and Judi