

## Blog 11 & 12– May 1st & 2nd (Cork to Killarney)

Woke to another day of brilliant sunshine! 2 in a row. At 7:10 our phone rang to say that our cab had arrived. 2 HRS. EARLY. The driver and the hotel receptionist figured it out while we enjoyed our final breakfast at Hayfield Manor. 100% marks for this hotel.

Our drive came back at 9:10 and we were surprised to have the same driver who had picked us up. The train didn't leave until 10:25 so he took his time driving us and also gave us another history lesson which we enjoyed.



Upon arriving at the Station I took a photo of Engine # 36, in the foyer of Kent Station. It is one of the original engines manufactured for the G.S. & W.R. railway. Bury, Curtis and Kennedy of Liverpool made it. It weighs just over 22 tons and in its lifetime covered over 350,000 miles. It was withdrawn from service in 1875. It is on display on original G.S. & W.R. cast-iron rails.

I also found another piano on display so of course had to photograph it. No, I did not play it, nor will I play any other piano I see.



Our train ride was very comfortable as usual and it seemed to fly by. Our first stop was in Mallow where we transferred change trains.

The next leg of our journey took us into Killarney (about an hour). The scenery was more pastoral along this way. We will be staying in Killarney for the next four days where we have booked tours of the Ring of Kerry, a free day to explore and then the Dingle Peninsula. These tours, will

really depend on good weather as they are about the scenery, not the things located in the places. Kevin is looking forward to visiting the Dingle Distillery.

After we got settled into our rooms at Brook's Lodge we decided to do a walk about as the weather had turned nice. The Lodge itself is lovely and located on a nice quiet street rather than the busy "hotel corridor". Nice wooden staircase in the front lobby area, and beautiful shiny white marble floors. Our room is huge and very comfortable.



Killarney is a lovely little town and has lots of restaurants, pubs, woolen shops, Ross' castle, St. Mary's Cathedral and great places to sit back and take in some Irish music which we hope to do tomorrow night. The Killarney National Park we have been told is a lovely place to have a walk about.

We were hungry though, so decided to go visit the Celtic Whiskey Bar & Larder. Their advertisement says they have

wonderful soups and chowders plus a 1200+ bottle whiskey collection.



Well, I have to say that we were very impressed.

We did enjoy a lovely lunch and then decided to do a bit of tasting. We thought if we each choose 2 whiskeys we had not tried we could share and enjoy our time there.

The bartenders (two of them) were very knowledgeable about whiskey and were more than willing to share some of their expertise with us.





Afterwards we strolled around the town for a bit to get the lay of the land before heading back to the Lodge. We thought we might go out to listen to music later, but that never happened and we just stayed in our room and relaxed - after all we are on vacation.

### **BLOG 11 - May 2nd - The Ring of Kerry**

A rather disappointing day as far as **seeing** the Ring of Kerry was concerned. We started out with a lovely breakfast and then at 9:30 we were picked up by our guide Wym. He was excellent and turned this day into a historically interesting one for us both.



It was foggy and pouring rain most of the day, so obviously we did not see much along the Ring of Kerry. There were glimpses of its beauty when the fog lifted and the rain stopped. That enabled me to get some photos and they certainly gave me an insight to what it would have been like on a good day.

We did manage to get a glimpse of the MacGillycuddy's Mountain Range. (reeks). MacGillycuddy's Reeks (Irish: Na Cruacha Dubha, meaning "the black stacks") is a sandstone and siltstone mountain range in County Kerry, Ireland. Stretching 19 kilometres (12 miles), from the Gap of Dunloe in the east, to Glencar in the west, the Reeks is Ireland's

highest mountain range, and includes most of the highest peaks and sharpest ridges in Ireland, and the only peaks on the island that are over 1,000 metres (3,300 feet) in height. Quite impressive!

Wym filled us in on the surrounding area as we drove around. Mostly pastoral, lots of small family farms - dairy farms, beef and also lamb. The properties are very well kept and of course they are beautiful and green.

A few of the highlights of the day:

Killorglin is a small town located on the Ring of Kerry and The Wild Atlantic Way about 15 kms from Killarney. It was the first town on our tour. It is lovely and located on the River Laune which is known for salmon and trout fishing. The population of Killorglin is 2085. Wym told us that the town has been holding a big fair (The Puck Fair) for as long as can be remembered. Earliest notes were around the 1600s. Not sure if I got this story correct.

The fair is known as the time the goat acts the human and the human acts the goat. So, every year they crown a goat as King - they crown a 12 year old local school girl as Queen. Though originally either a cattle fair day or a horse fair day, today its just a big "local fair" where hundreds of people gather. The continuation of crowning the goat Wym feels is to show disrespect to the authorities - poking fun at the leaders/royalty! This was a photo "on the move". We didn't stop, nor did we want to because of the rain. I would love to come back to Ireland and stay in some of these little towns and learn more about the local history and characters.

### **THE INFAMOUS GOAT.**



The Skellig Coast was very beautiful as well. The town of Knightsbridge is the entrance gate to Valentia Island which has many interesting landmarks.

Because of its proximity to Skellig Island (the site of the Star Wars movies) and the town where all the actors stays, this little town has become a busy little community. Millions of tourists and trekkies

flock to this small area to see the location of the filming, the places where all the actors/actresses stayed and to enjoy the Skellig Experience. Knightstown!

The foggy little harbour reminded me a little of Peggy's Cove home in Nova Scotia. Even the smell of the "sea" was wonderful to breath in.



After many years, through the help of a grant obtained by a local priest a bridge has been built over to the Island. In the photo above you can see the fishing boats and in the background, the white domes which is where all the tourists end up. "The StarWars (Skellig) Experience. The place was packed with buses. Our guide just called it "another tourist trap" and we by-passed it. Neither of us are Star Wars fanatics so we were happy with this decision.

To digress a little. Skellig Island was the original site of the Star Wars movies. However, and I am not sure when the filming on the island was stopped but it was because the heavy filming equipment etc. did a lot of damage to the area. So, a set was built on the mainland, down the coast toward Dingle and all the filming was done there.

Aerial shots were done for subsequent films. I am assuming that only the original film was actually shot on Skellig but I am not positive. I couldn't get a good photo, but Wym said I might have better luck tomorrow. (Zen, Kira and Tolkien, you will be able to show your friends a picture of Skellig Island).

Over the years the authorities on Skellig Island have limited the number of boating/ferry licenses to 15 boats to keep the total numbers coming to the Island under control. This means that only about 130 people a day can go to the island, however if the island authorities feel that the weather isn't fit for landing, they stop the crossings. Lots of people want to go over, just to say there were there, but I am not sure what else is actually on the island.

I saw a sign for The Kelly Bogtown Site, but again Wym said it was just another tourist trap - so glad we had his guidance. Instead, he gave us the history of the bogs and then took us on a "real" tour. He explained how the bogs were harvested, how the peat was used in the "years

past" and "present" and also how the harvesting of the bogs has been abused for centuries. He veered off the road onto this path (gulp) to show us the real thing. I didn't think we were going to get off this trail as he had to back us out. A tense moment. He said we can ask permission if we are caught. Loved it.



I have never seen so many bog areas. Lots of raised mounds where they had cut the peat out around it, but left these areas intact.

Along the way Wym pointed out some of the indigenous plants of the area. I managed a few great shots of "sea pinks", Kelly's Spurge; the true Irish Shamrock Plant, and the Irish fern, which is the national flower. The shamrocks I took a little later in the day. We also saw some beautiful "bluebells", and another yellow flower whose name I will have to look up or if I remember, will ask Wym tomorrow.





These shots will be beautiful for my PowerPoint presentations and to use as teaching tools.

From here we went to Blackwater Beach. Breathtaking. I loved the horseback riding along the beach. The shoreline area is covered in sandstone (red and brown) and some green pieces as well which indicate a high level of copper sulphate. It was lovely.



The horses that we saw were an interesting shape. They were part horse and part pony. Wym called them midheavies. Their legs look like the Clydesdales but the horses were smaller. Looked like a lot of fun galloping along in the water. That is something that I have never done before and is sort of still on my bucket list..



I think I have this story correct. These horses were often used by the travellers, tinkers, gypsies to pull their caravans. Wym pointed out the sandpit camps where they would set up camp. They would use the sand to make vessels which they would later sell to the local settlers. However, the pans were rough finished and to smooth them out they would tie the pans under their wagons and drag them along the roads. Quite a "grinder" A great story.

We saw the village of Cromane, where supposedly you get the best mussels in all of Ireland. I will have to see about getting a taste of them.

As we moved along Wym also pointed out several building projects along the way that were never completed. These skeletal building are referred to as "the folly's". I was really interested

in the stories behind these building - started by the wealthy from the 1800s or earlier and unable to be finished because of lack of money. Wym had great stories on most of the structures and we loved hearing them.



On Valencia Island, pronounced Va-Lin-Tia, we stopped to see where the first transatlantic telegraph wire was laid. There were three attempts to attach the cable before they were able to get a solid hook in. The striped conduit in the photo is the cable.

History was made in Newfoundland with the first official telegram between two continents on Aug. 16, 1858. The first message was a letter of congratulations from Queen Victoria to U.S. President James Buchanan. The line only lasted three months.

Our next adventure took us down this "very narrow and twisting one vehicle road" to see the

Valentia Lighthouse at Cromwell Point. This lighthouse was a guide to vessels from the Atlantic Ocean and lead them through the northern entrance of Valentia Harbour past Harbour Rock.



Originally the lighthouse was staffed by a Light Keeper who lived there with his family however since 1947 the light has been automated with a PT attendant looking after the station. In recent years a modern LED light has been installed. Here is a photo of the old and the new.



The shore line around here was beautiful and I loved snapping some great photos of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Some years ago, a Paleontologist was walking along the cliffs when he witnessed a shifting of a large section of the coastal rocks. He made an amazing discovery.

*"Tetrapod imprints are thought to date from Devonian times – somewhere between 350 and 370 million years ago. This site is of international significance as it represents the*



*transition of life from water to land – a momentous turning point in evolution and provides the oldest reliably dated evidence of four legged vertebrates (amphibians) moving over land. The Valentia Island Tetrapod footprints are the most extensive of the four Devonian trackways in the world."*

We were literally standing just across from where this discovery was made.

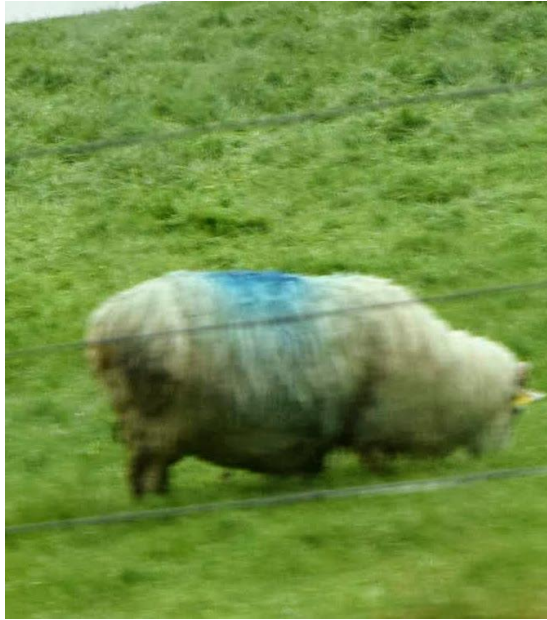


We continued our journey with lots more of information about the area. Love this personalized tour.

By this time, it was almost 1 o'clock so we drove to Waterville where we had a lovely lunch at The Sea House.

The town is famous for a couple of things. A links golf course which is very expensive and famous around the world - but I think this might be the course that someone built just for his friends. Need to check this story out. Of more interest to me was the Charlie Chaplin story. It seems that Charlie came to Waterville and was looking for accommodation for the summer. He tried a couple of places but there "was no room at the Inn". No one believed him when he said he was Charlie Chaplin. He went to the Butler Arms and was told the same story by the desk clerk.

However, the manager came out from the back, and recognized him, ran after him and gave him a room. From that year on Charlie came back to the hotel every year and stayed there. His daughter Geraldine also came with him and eventually built a beautiful house on the water where she still lived until just last year.



As we travelling along our journey today, I noticed that all the sheep in the various fields were painted different colours. (spots of colours.) This is an identification process as many of the farmers share pastoral grazing lands which are free to them from the government. In order to identify their own sheep, they are painted different colours. Some of the lambs have numbers as well to identify them to their mothers.

As we were leaving Waterville, Wym pointed out the Stone Row on the left-hand side of the road on a slight hill.

*The Eightercua Stone Row in Waterville 1900 BC is a Megalithic tomb of four stones in an East to West direction aligned with the September solstice.*

*Scéine wife of one of the leaders of the Milesians*

*invaders to Ireland is buried here.*

The pouring raining made it impossible for us to go see them. Seems I don't have much luck when it comes to seeing and touching mystical stones - same thing happen at Stonehenge.

Another interesting bit of history and this one I loved. The families had their own distinctive knitting stitch. The woman were famous for their knitted jumpers, and the distinctive "family stitch" was also an identification symbol. When the men folk, fathers and sons would go out to sea to fish, often there were accidents and drownings. The fishman sweaters would have the "family stitch" and these sweaters would help the families identify the bodies of their loved one. Over the years many of these family stitches were combined and hence the Aran sweaters. Now when I look at these sweaters, I realize how very important they are to the history of Ireland. There are certainly a lot of shops selling these works of art and I would love to have one, but in Penticton we really don't have the weather for a sweater this heavy. However, I might just knit one. I would love an explanation of the various stitches though.

The teeming rain was not letting up, so we pretty much viewed things through the car windows from this point on.

**Kells Bay.** This is the most magnificent bay to visit in the summer. Crazy tourists park their cars all over the place, blocking roads sometimes, or drives as they frolic in the ocean waves. Sure didn't look very inviting today.

Wym told us this very interesting story:

*A burning passion for the world of ferns is what, in 2006 , led its owner Billy Alexander to buy Kells Bay's then-dilapidated Victorian hunting lodge and its 44-acres of wildly overgrown gardens. In particular it was the garden's remarkable collection of Australian tree ferns*

*(Dicksonia antarctica) – thought to be the largest collection in the Northern hemisphere – that Alexander found so utterly seductive that he decided to buy the property.*

*Some were as old as the garden itself, having been planted by the Blennerhassett family in the second half of the 19th century. But to Alexander's amazement, so conducive is Kells Bay's exceptionally mild, damp microclimate to their cultivation that over time its oldest tree ferns had become naturalised and beneath their leafy canopy grew thousands more baby tree ferns for future generations to enjoy. For a fern-lover like Alexander, the opportunity to take on this magical garden he describes as "a sleeping giant" – proved irresistible despite the obvious challenges that it presented.*

This was such an interesting story. Lots of the local jewellers have the "fern jewellery" for sale. It is very beautiful and you can find it from the Walmart price range to the Tiffany price range. I hope to find some of it tomorrow, but probably can't afford to add anything else to my jewellery collection. (what do you think Kira?) Miss you sweet pea!

I had to stop and take some pictures of the biggest rhubarb I have ever seen.



In the photo it doesn't look that big, but if I was to stand next to it, it was almost as high as me. It can actually grow to over 8 feet. As I learned in the "poison garden" at the Blarney Castle, these huge plants are poisonous. However, the edible variety is available because of a virus in the root of the rhubarb plant that stops it from growing and therefore makes it edible. You can just see both plants in this photo. The large cone shape in the photo is just before the plant explodes into birth. I have been eating the best rhubarb I have ever tasted in my life and Wym has given me a recipe for it. This is my kind of guide.

We continued our drive through Churchtown, Caherciveen and onto Sneem. Along the way we passed over lots of courtesy bridges. One way. First there, first on.

Sneem is very picturesque. The name means little knot. There is a lovely river there that does look like a knot at the bottom of a waterfall. Though it was pouring I thought we should brave the



elements and go see the view from the bridge. It was worth it.

Sneem was one of the "tidy towns" where the town enters their town info to a panel of judges who decide which town will receive money for a "make-over". Sneem actually was one of the winners. It was all because a local priest talked them into entering the contest. I hope this is correct info. Gosh, so much taken in and my brain feels

like it is exploding. I love this country - off course I am a Walsh - Patrick Joseph Walsh being my grandfather. I would love to get dual citizenship.



A former President of Ireland actually lived in Sneem and in those years Sneem became the meeting place of many famous dignitaries. (DeGalle, Hussain, Herzog (Prime Minister of Israel)).

There are statues erected to their honor in the town square. The Chinese delegation gave them a panda statue shown in the photo on the left.

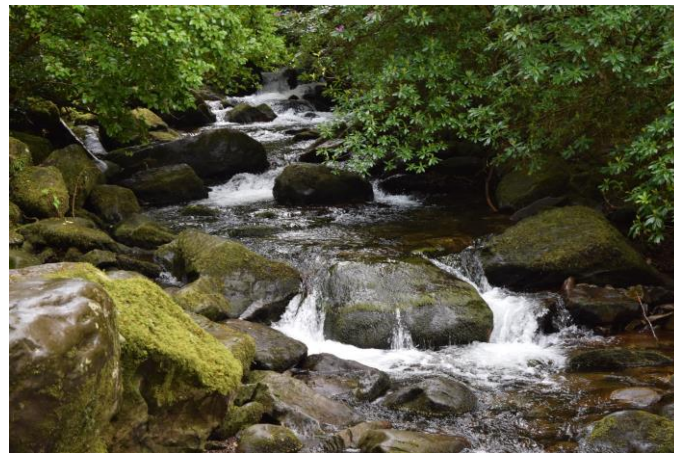
From Sneem we started our way back towards Killarney. The sun did come out for a few minutes but the fog and rain pretty well blocked out all the scenery.

One of the few gaps in the weather allowed me to get a few nice photos. We stopped at the Lady's View. The view here is probably the best known of Killarney and is a major attraction for visitors. Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting visited here during the royal visit in 1861. They were so taken with the

view that it was named after them. It was from this vantage point that they were able to watch the Queen's progress and be ready for her when she stopped.



Our next stop was Torc Falls. This was the most beautiful walk through a section of Killarney's National Park. The sun had actually come out and we were able to walk to the falls. About a 5 minute walk along a path of beautiful moss covered trees and the babbling brook. It truly was the most beautiful walk I have taken.



Lots of great photos. Kevin also enjoyed the walk and we just took our time so that he could experience the beauty of

this spot.



After we left this beautiful, peaceful spot we headed to Muckross House.

The Muckross estate dates back to the 17th Century when the first member of the Herbert family, who were originally from Wales, came to settle in Killarney. The present day Muckross House was built for Henry Arthur Herbert and his family. It was completed in 1843. Our guide, Wym was a high school teacher and he always enjoyed telling his students that this house had 52 chimneys - one for every week of the

year. I wonder if this question ever appeared on his history exams - and I wonder how many students would be able to answer it.

When the Queen stayed here her room overlooked the lawn and the beautiful lake. Quite the view she had. Even on a lousy day you can see what it would have looked like on a beautiful sunny day.



The house is open to the public and I have had a look at some of the photos on line. It would have been a great place to visit, but that is another tour.



The long drive leading up to the house was quite impressive. One means of travelling through the National Park is by horse drawn carriage. I am sure that if you hired one of them and rode up the drive you would almost feel like you were part of the Queen's entourage.

We did have a tour around the house to see the sunken rose gardens and the rhododendron gardens. Not much to see this time of the year.





It was pelting down rain all the time we were doing this walk about and we were cold and wet so back to our warm vehicle.

On the way out of the house we saw a herd of the Killarney Red Deer. Lots of them around the estate. Learned a bit about the hunting practices of the area. If a deer comes onto your private land it becomes deer roast the next day. They do have hunting licenses but not a deer quota per se.



Wym made it a great day and we certainly have lots of information in our heads about the area. Too bad about the weather today but there were a few photographic high points.

After a bit of a rest we headed out for a wee walk. The sun was out and the wind had died down. We strolled along the two main streets and stopped into a couple of the shops. Beautiful Irish sweaters and woolens. The choice of Irish wool is unreal. I

could pack a suitcase with the wool. (What do you think Annabelle)?

Had dinner at Sin Sceal Eile where I had a delicious dinner of Cromane mussels. Sorry they were tasty, but very small. Nothing like the PEI mussels.

Kevin enjoyed Shepherd's Pie and I managed to get a culinary idea for when I get home.

A nice leisurely stroll back to the Lodge and we called it a day.

K & J

