

Blog 14 - Dingle Peninsula- May 4th

Wym picked us up at 9:00 and surprised us with a lovely gift. We had mentioned that we were looking for an Irish Crest to put on our vests. He had been on a tour the day before and he found some in one of the stores and he bought us each one. What a lovely gesture!



He really learned a lot about us the other day because he surprised us again by taking a “slight detour” to the “Kerry Woolen Mill”. He knew I loved knitting and he thought that I would be interested in seeing the mill. It was a great place, a very small family run shop with such beautiful yarns and some lovely knitted sweaters etc. The saleslady was a gem, there wasn't too much that she didn't know about wool, and knitting. She gave me a beautiful pattern for an Aran sweater that she had made

and that was wonderful. I saw the cutest knit hats with a ring of sheep around the bottom. She tried to find the pattern for me, but wasn't able to. I bought a beautiful green tone scarf which reminds me of the lovely Irish countryside and a pair of lovely socks. Thanks Wym, loved this stop.

Wym mentioned that his mother, who is now 94, was very much involved in knitting and actually lead a group of women knitting the Aran sweaters. He is going to see if she might have that pattern.



Slieve Mish Mountains over looking Dingle Bay on the south, extend for approximately 19 km from east to west. They run from the mainland just south of Tralee along the centre of the neck of the Dingle Peninsula, before ending in a series of low foothills and deep river valleys which separate them from the Mountains of the central Dingle Peninsula further to the west. The mountain range is relatively narrow, extending only about 7 km from north to south.

The mountains form a high ridge of sandstone which was deeply incised by glaciers in the last ice age,

Wym pointed out some boats that were along the bank which were from around the 1800s. Currach - they were a wooden framed boat that was felted and tarred. It was a little awkward



and needed 8-9 people to man it. There is a much lighter boat used now - the Galway Hooker it is called. "A currach is a type of Irish boat with a wooden frame, over which animal skins or hides were once stretched, though now canvas is more usual. It is sometimes anglicized as "curragh". The construction and design of the currach are unique to the west coasts of Ireland."

The Galway hooker is a traditional fishing boat used in Galway Bay off the west coast of Ireland. The hooker was

developed for the strong seas there. It is identified by its sharp, clean entry, bluff bow, marked tumblehome and raked transom. Its sail plan consists of a single mast with a main sail and two foresails.



We made a stop at Inch Beach. This was an amazing beach. Wym was telling us that often cars will drive out onto the beach, forget to watch the tides and get stranded. I can see that happening. It was very windy and the breakers were high enough to attract a surfer or two.

Inch beach is a 5km long sand spit jutting into the sea between the outer Dingle Bay and inner Castlemaine Harbour overlooking magnificent Iveragh and Dingle Peninsulas.



Lots of interesting discussion about the history of the area, some of the shenanigans of the local folks (a couple of notorious priests) as we drove along the peninsula. Quite a discussion on the story of the Monseigneur and Annie Murphy. The Red House that the diocese had build for him to get away from it all, and the "male discretion" that was formed. Wym presented this in a very amusing format. Loved it.

We were able to get some great views of Skellig Island from this side of the peninsular since it was such a great day. Wym showed me a YouTube to watch about Skellig today, since I had



asked him what the attraction was for people to go over there now. He said the Star Wars stories still draw them. He said he would show us where the films were actually done when we were a little further along on our trip.

If you follow a map you can see the areas that we passed through. One of these towns was Annascaul the home of Tom Crean Pub. Tom was known for his participation in an Antarctica exploration.



Sometimes Google just can say it better: *“At the age of 15, Crean left his home of Annascaul on the Dingle peninsula to begin a life with the Royal Navy. Nine years later, he set out on his first Antarctic expedition with a certain Robert Falcon Scott. The rest is history.” The Irish giant, Tom Crean, passed away in 1938, but in his pub, The South Pole Inn, he remains a presence. His rugged face, with pipe in mouth, adorns worn wooden walls while shelves are weighed down with books and*

magazines attesting to the man who put Annascaul on the explorer map.”



Annascaul is the town where the delicious, award winning black puddings are made. I have been enjoying this delicacy at breakfast. Kevin won't touch it so I steal his. This brought on another discussion about not being able to use blood in the making of the blood puddings because of health issues.

We stopped to take a picture of the remains of an ancient viaduct. What was interesting was the fact that it has stone at each end but steel in the middle. The

ancient and the new.



We learned about the “glacial erratics” which really reminded us of the moonscape topography of Peggy’s Cove. *“Glacial erratics are stones and rocks that were transported by a glacier, and then left behind after the glacier melted. Erratics can be carried for hundreds of kilometers, and can range in size from pebbles to large boulders.”*



We also were wondering about the white patches on a lot of the rocks and we found out that they were a



form of lichen as well. We were also able to see one of the many rock outcrops that have form over the years. Quite amazing. You can’t see it very well, but it is on the above photos.



Along the same route we were able to see the beach where Ryan’s Daughter was filmed. (photo below). Wym told us that Robert Mitchum spent 6 months in the area and the local pubs owners knew him very well. They actually had to assigned him a driver as he had smashed up was too many rental cars.

I am hoping that I got these photos in the correct order. Wym is going to read the two blogs of his “guided

tour” with us and help me fix things up if they are wrong. Being a teacher, he wants to be sure that I get 100% for my effort.

The scenery along this route was stunning and we stopped for lots of photos. I have or will send a link to the photos, because I just can’t put words to this kind of beauty.

The area where Star Wars was filmed is really just a flat of land as they had to return the area to the way it was before the filming. I can’t find the photo of the “flat top” but this will give you an idea of the type of topography. Perfect for this type of film.



We past through Dingle to go along the Sleah Head Drive. This is the most western point of Europe. Next stop New York City!

We drove on this very narrow road and pulled off onto a view point where I was able to get a perfect picture of the “Sleeping Giant” and a little further along the Blasket Islands. Gosh it was so beautiful along there.



Wym pointed out promontory forts to us which are rounded structures above a steep cliff, only connected to a small neck of land, therefore using the topography to reduce the ramparts needed! I thought I had a fairly good photo of one, but it was too fuzzy.





One pull-off has a large memorial built to honor all who have lost their lives to the sea. It was here that my seagull friend insisted on modelling for me. A car full of young "rich" Asians pulled up next to us and one of the girls was crazy. She bent over backwards on the wall above the cliff to take a selfie. It's a wonder she didn't go head first over the rocks. Idiots.

I didn't take a photo of the shrine. I have some lovely shots of the Three Sisters Mountains as well.



In a lot of my photos you can see stone outcrops with various lines etched on them. This is a form of ancient writing known as Ogham. I have a wonderful brochure on the Toicaki people. The Ogham Alphabet is Ireland's earliest form of writing dating from the 4th Century A.D. It is said that Ogham was invented by Ogma, the Sun-Faced God as he studied the flight of cranes in the Western sky, and deduced from their formation, the letters of the Ogham Alphabet.



A local artist, goldsmith, Brian de Staic has created a jewellery line where he creates unique pieces and inscribes whatever a person wants on it using the Ogham alphabet. His work is known all over the world and it is absolutely exquisite. One pair of earrings I loved were of the Polypody Fern, but since I had already purchased some rather significantly priced jewellery on this trip I had to pass.

I did find another pair of sterling silver earrings that were shaped like a tablet with the Ogham Alphabet on them and they were lovely too, and the kind of jewelry that I would wear. I was passing on them as well, but Kevin said he wanted to buy me a pair because they would mean something to me forever and would be a lovely memento from Ireland. I love them and they spell out my name in the first known alphabet of Ireland.

We stopped at the Dingle Distillery which was a big disappointment. It was a run-down garage type building, in major transition. We were abruptly told that the last tour was booked up and there was nothing they could do to accommodate us. There are also no tastings or purchasing at the distillery. I did sneak a photo of the stills though.



By now we were all hungry so Wym took us to a lovely restaurant The Boat Yard. Again, fresh fish every day, a great menu, an outside patio, and delicious food. I was actually starting to get a little tired, but didn't want to say anything because I was so enjoying the day

There are lots of hiking areas in the region and also pilgrim trails which I was interested in. Ireland's own El Camino. We stopped at a Gallaus which is one of the oratories along the trails. Places where people stop to pray.



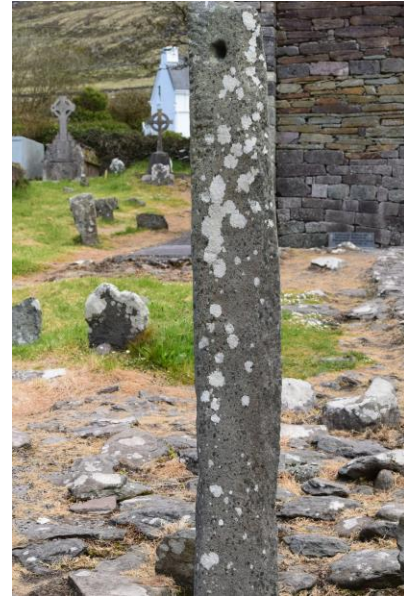
This would be something else that I would like to do. I know that I will never make the El Camino.

Another interesting stop: A pre-Christian church ruins and cemetery where we saw more Ogham carvings, a sundial, a contract stone and Wym pointed out lots of the intricate carvings in the stones. Amazing. The contract stones were really interested.

A contract stone is a tall slab with a hole in the top. There were no written contracts - each party put their fingers into the holes and touched and sealed the deals. It was a symbol of trust which was stronger than paper. Your word is your bond.

It was interested to take a look at Cathair Deargain - the ruins of a typical family "compound".

Inner and outer circular stone walls, outer to keep the animals in and inner to keep the family in. This photo shows only a section of the "building site". It was quite large with many rooms.



A couple of other interesting photos. This grinder was the machine used to thresh the gorse. You don't see too many of these around.

The shot below shows you the carvings around the doorway.





My favorite shot of the day. This almost looks unreal, but I honestly did take this photo.

We made it to our rooms and crashed. We leave Killarney tomorrow and onto another adventure. If you are ever going to Killarney, only go with Killarney Guided Tours and ask for Wym. There are three guides, Wym, his brother-in-law Gerald and another lady. The best touring company.

K & J