

## **IRISH JAUNT 18 May – 23 May 2000**

### **Thursday 18 May 2000.**

Up at 6:15 am, finished packing, and set off to Victoria Coach Station to go by bus to Ireland. I was there in plenty of time and then seeing someone with a passport I realized mine was still at Julia's. It was 7:30. Bus leaves (I thought) at 8:30. I got a cab and in growing rush hour traffic head back to Gowrie Road. Get there about 8 am. Grab my passport and head back through traffic. Get there at 8:25, just in time. But I was wrong: the bus left at 8 am. So what to do? I got on the tube, hot and sweaty, and got to Euston Station where I bought a ticket to Holyhead. £55! Train left at 10:05. I had to change at Crewe with 1 minute to spare. Arrived at Holyhead, well before the bus. When I saw it arrive I put my luggage aboard and climbed in. Soon I was on the ferry. Very nice. Few people. Immediately had a fish and chips lunch-dinner and later a pint. Three hour trip, Very calm and sunny. Once at Dublin port we boarded the bus again which took us into central Dublin to the bus station, right on time. Jonathan was there to meet me and soon we were driving towards Co. Cavan, via the scenic route. Through Phoenix Park, by the former Shackleton flour mills, eventually after 1-1/2 hours we're at Lakeview House, a marvelous place, somewhat like Jane and Michael's. Beautiful views. We have a drink then a light dinner and not long afterwards we're all in bed.

### **Friday 19 May 2000.**

Up about 7:30. Have a welcomed shower then a light breakfast. Sunny day. Jonathan and I set out at about 8:30 for Banbridge in Northern Ireland where there's a Crozier statue. Two-lane roads, narrow, no traffic, fields and hedgerows. No border or frontier, though some guard stations from the past. Stopped in Newry to buy film. Stopped at a tourist information center and got some brochures and bought a print of the Crozier statue. Had coffee and a bun. Got into Banbridge and found the statue in the middle of a round-about. Four polar bears at the base. Crozier's house is opposite, now a firm of solicitors. We then headed back, stopping at Cabra Castle, a grand golf club, where we had a sandwich and a pint and later stopping to buy wine and have an ice cream. Arrived back at Lakeview House. Stuffed envelopes for the Antarctic crew while Jonathan mowed the lawn of the church. Patsy O'Donoghue showed up at 6 or so. He and his sons own a bus company about a mile away. Small Mercedes Benz mini-coach. Jonathan, Patsy and I head into Dublin and to the airport. Quite busy. We find our group—Zaz, Bob, Headland, Bob Burton, Pippa Hare, Jan Piggott—in a restaurant. Once they've finished we head into Dublin where Zaz and I are dropped off at the Georgian House Hotel in Baggot Street. Not too bad. Wendy Driver will meet us later. Zaz and I go out for a walk to try to find O'Brien's, the pub where David Shackleton works. Finally find it. Very busy being a Friday. Have a pint and talk with David for a bit. Then wander back. I, not having had dinner, look for a place for a bite. Find a very nice little bistro. Zaz has a salad, I tagliatelle, and we split a bottle of wine. Back to the hotel. Soon after Wendy Driver arrives. We chat for a bit, then to bed.

### **Saturday 20 May 2000.**

The bus shows up about 10 or so with Jonathan, Pippa and Jan. The two Bobs must have met us at 35 Marlborough Road where we headed for the unveiling of a plaque there. We go into the house afterwards. Shackleton lived here for 4 years when around 8 or so. We then head out of Dublin, our first stop being Kilkea House in County Kildare. This is where Shackleton was born. A lovely setting. The owners—Richard and Claudia Greene—welcomed us. Had sherry in the living room. Went upstairs to their son Robert's room which they assume was Ernest's room. Then had a lovely lunch with the wine that we had brought and sumptuous rich desserts. A fine time. Then off again, to Athy where

we visited the museum which has a Shackleton exhibit including a Nimrod sledge harness. Took out and put on my harness. They have several display panels on Shackleton, also quite a good video of about 10 minutes. The Lord Mayor dropped by and presented Zaz with a bouquet of flowers. Stopped in Ballitore where the Shackleton school was and where a Quaker chapel/museum remains. Back into the bus and on to where Jonathan's brother, Arthur, lives. He's a well-known gardener and has recently done up an old brick farm building where he lives. We had tea and later a drink. Off again and eventually, about 8:30, arrived in Cashel where we would spend the night. Stayed at Bailey's, a nice B&B (£25 each). We all went up the road to the Cashel Palace Hotel for dinner. Wendy stayed there. Very grand Georgian house. On the way back, Bob Headland, Jonathan and I stopped at the pub next to our B&B and had a round of drinks. Very crowded. We were the oldest there! To bed, I sharing a room with Jonathan.

### **Sunday 21 May 2000.**

Jonathan and I got up early and spent about an hour walking around Cashel, starting with the castle which we climbed up to and around but couldn't get into. Also went into the cathedral. Cashel's a nice town. Back to the hotel (Bailey's) for breakfast then into our bus and west for a long run to Anascaul, County Kerry. Arrived at the South Pole Inn, Tom Crean's pub, where we were welcomed heartily by the new publican. Had a pint on the house. Later, Mary Crean O'Brien, Tom's daughter, and Robert, her son, showed up. Nice lady; in her 80s. We all had lunch upstairs, partially in the room where Tom and his wife lived. Had local scampi. The pub has a few Antarctic photos on display, a not very good model of 'The Discovery', and a curious cupboard door which when you open it, the sounds of a blizzard comes on and you look through what appears to be a frosted glass window, as though you are in the hut at Cape Evans. The pub has a little booklet on Crean (out of copies), T-shirts, polo shirts, cigarette lighters. From the pub we drove a mile or so away to Crean's grave which is in the far corner of lovely cemetery, overgrown but in a fine rural setting. On top of the tomb still sat the porcelain flower arrangement under glass that Teddie Evans sent on Crean's death in 1938. We returned to Anascaul, then headed east on a long trip until 8:30 or so when we arrived at Birr, an attractive town. Jonathan, I and Zaz stayed at a B&B (Spinners) associated with the restaurant at which we all ate soon after. All others stayed in a B&B in the town square. We had a fine later dinner with lots of wine.

### **Monday 22 May 2000.**

Up by 8 and downstairs to a good breakfast. Jonathan, me and Zaz. Lovely day.

After breakfast I was looking through the guest register and a few pages earlier there was an entry for a Robert Ginna of Jaffrey, New Hampshire! An ocean away, here was a small bed and breakfast that had hosted two fellow townsmen a week or so apart! I mentioned the fact to the landlord and he thought a moment and then recalled Bob's visit. He said when I saw Bob again I should be sure to mention the "ladies of Spinners." He went on to explain: The evening that Bob was a guest, there was a "hen party" of young women—the female equivalent of a stag party—and they were very boisterous and noisy and remained so well into the wee hours. Bob took direct action, complaining to the landlord which stamped the event in his memory until resurrected by my remarking on the register entry.

Went to the nearby Birr Demesne which opened at 9 am. Lovely gardens of the castle. Highlight was a gigantic telescope built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, largest in the world until the 1930s(?). I on my own then had a walk around the town of Birr which is quite nice. Met up with everyone at 10:45 then headed towards Jonathan's house in Cavan, arriving about 1:30. Daphne had prepared a marvelous lunch, which we ate beside her lovely gardens. Sunny and warm. All the others left on the bus around 5 pm. We relaxed, I had a

brief nap, later a drink and a light supper. Some chit-chat with Jonathan, Daphne and David. Jonathan and I walked up the hill to check on the horses. To bed around 11:30 or so.

**Tuesday 23 May 2000.**

Up at 5:50 am. Shower, light breakfast, then off to Dublin with Jonathan. Arrive at the bus terminal at 8:15. Bus leaves at 8:45. Onto the Ferry. Uncrowded. Nice crossing. Back to London and Gowrie Road.