

Ireland (Dublin, Athy, Banbridge, Inniskillen) October-November 2008

From my website

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23 October - 1 November 2008

Excerpts from my diary:

Thursday 23 October 2008. Up at 7 am, packed and headed off to Boston about an hour later. Parked in the under Common Garage and walked to Loring Wolcott and Coolidge to have Hugh and Bill and myself sign the papers for my line of credit to purchase the condo, the future Antarctic Circle library.

Drove to Everett and Torill's apartment, the old Charleston Chew factory. Very nicely done. We drove to a nearby Japanese restaurant where we had a leisurely lunch. Back to her apartment where we hung out for an hour or so and then back into her car and to the airport at about 4 pm. Checked in for my Aer Lingus flight leaving at 6:30 for Dublin. Uneventful flight; uneventful food. Two empty seats beside me which helped. Arrived in darkness at 5:30 am.

Friday 24 October 2008. Dark until about 8:30. Took the bus (#167) to the Central Bus Station (€6). Bought a ticket for Athy (€10) and left my bag at 'Left Luggage' (€8). Walked over to O'Connell Street then north past the Gresham Hotel which I decided to by-pass for breakfast. Continued on to look for Groomes which Bob Ginna had mentioned but couldn't find it. So I turned around and headed across the Liffey and up Grafton Street to St Stephen's Green and to the **Shelbourne Hotel** which David Shackleton suggested. Very grand. Had a long relaxing breakfast and read the Irish Times. Certainly the most expensive breakfast I've ever had: €29! Two poached eggs, a helping of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, blood pudding, potatoes, broiled tomatoes, toast, orange juice, coffee. Afterwards walked down Kildare Street and took in the Yeats exhibit at the National Library—very extensive. Then to the National Gallery for a leisurely look around. Then walked through Trinity College and sat in the sun for awhile. At a little before noon I set off for nearby Poolbeg Street and stopped in at **Mulligan's**, a famous Joycean pub where I was to meet Regina Daly who had flown in from New York this morning as well. Ordered a pint and waited. Right at noon, Regina walked through the door and she had a pint as well and we caught up on news. Although this unmodernized pub has a lot of character it serves no food so we headed off to the **Stag's Head** in Dame Lane in Temple Bar. On the way we walked into the Bank of Ireland to see the magnificent banking hall and the coal fire in the entryway. Another pint. Regina had fish and chips and I had a ham and cheese 'toastie' which was just what I needed.

Afterwards we headed to the Central Bus Station and not long after were on our way to Athy, most of the time in terrible traffic.

Arrived about 6 pm and encountered Joe O'Farrell as we approached the **Athy Heritage Centre**. He was headed for **O'Brien's** and we followed.

Inside were Bob Headland, Bob and Jackie Burton, Zaz and some others. I said hello to Frank and his daughter, Judith, who both seem the same as a year ago. Had a pint and relaxed. The others head over to Joe's Chinese Restaurant for dinner. I stay and chat with Frank and soon Regina shows up after having got settled at her bed and breakfast. She orders in a pizza.

At 7:30 we go across to the **Opening Reception** of the weekend at the Heritage Centre. Lots of wine and conversation. Among those there (other than those mentioned above): Stuart Leggatt, Frank and Seamus Taaffe, Noel Shackleton, Arthur and Carol Shackleton, Huw Lewis Jones, Kari Herbert, and more.

Jonathan, Carol and Arthur and I head to Abbeyleix and Arthur and Carol's house (*Fruitlawn*), picking up **fish and chips** on the way. Once there we drink wine and enjoy ourselves.

Saturday 25 October 2008. Not a great day, rain off and on. Drove to Athy getting there at about 10:30 just as things were starting. (All the speakers throughout the weekend were very good, I thought.) Lunch at the The Bay Tree (a BLT) across the road with Jonathan, Regina, Paul Davies and Fergus (surname escapes me). To O'Brien's at the end of the day and then out to Frank Taaffe's for drinks. I photograph the stencils and inscription of Seamus' *Aurora Australis*.

From there to the Clenard Courtyard Hotel for the banquet. About the same as the past two years. Enjoyed the salmon. There was traditional Irish music afterwards, then back to *Fruitlawn*. Carol and Arhur had house guests (Desmond and Mary). Drinks and then to bed setting our clocks back an hour.

Sunday 26 October 2008. Back into Athy after another nice breakfast at *Fruitlawn*. First talk was Huw Lewis Jones which was very good. Polar photography. Sandwiches and a beer at O'Brien's. After the afternoon session back to *Fruitlawn*. I started preparing 'Fish Karen.' Daphne Shackleton stopped by on her way from somewhere for dinner and then on her way to Lakeview House afterwards.

Monday 27 October 2008. It looks like a nice start to the day. Up and after breakfast we head back into Athy and board the bus for a tour of 'Shackleton Country' led by John MacKenna. To Kilkea, Castledermot and Ballitore (where we stopped for coffee and carrot cake).

Back about 1 pm and on to Naas to pick up my camera which I had left at *Fruitlawn* and which Carol took to a friend's house in Naas. Drove on and eventually arrived in Mullagh at Lakeview House.

Had a very food chicken dinner that night and admired the new garden room. Some new arrivals—Tinker had three **pups**.

Tuesday 28 October 2008. Another cold morning. Jonathan and I set off for the north. First stop, the Tourist Office outside Banbridge where we have coffee and more carrot cake. The building is very nicely designed with a sculpture garden as well. Into Banbridge and to **Holy Trinity Church**. We are shown the Crozier plaque by Trevor the

sexton. It's quite impressive in marble. Took many photographs. We then went across to the **Crozier Memorial** in the center of the road and photographed that, also **Crozier's house** which overlooks it.

From Banbridge we went to Enniskillen with occasional snow falling. A nice drive. We went directly to the Castle Museum where we found a retired police officer (Clive Johnston) who showed us around. There is an Oates display—information on a panel—plus a **brass plaque** that once hung in the Town Hall.

He took us to meet the curator who showed Jonathan information on his Ricardo relative who was in the regiment (6th Inniskilling Dragoons). We then walked up to the main street and found a butcher where we bought a rack of lamb for that evening. We were soon on our way back to Mullagh with a stop in Cavan to buy walnuts and to look for a penguin mask at the party shop (alas, they were out of them but ordered one for me). Back at Lakeview House I cooked the rack of lamb using the Food Network recipe that I looked up on the internet. Not too bad.

Wednesday 29 October 2008. It snowed today in London for the first time in October in 74 years. We got it too with big flakes and in the end about three inches on the ground. I stayed inside most of the time keeping warm and relaxing, mostly in the recently built **Garden Room**.

Went with Daphne to have a look at her latest project—renovating and expanding the **Mill House** for rental occupancy. It's down on the road near the entrance drive to Lakeview House.

At around 4:30 we drove into Dublin to attend a book launch at the National Library. A large crowd was there to celebrate the 50 year history of the **Irish Georgian Society**. Jonathan bought a copy and had Desmond Guinness—the founder along with his late wife—sign it.

Headed back to Mullagh stopping for an Indian meal in Navan.

Thursday 30 October 2008. Cold and gray and blustery, then some blue sky. Daphne off early to fly to Gatwick to visit an elderly relative in Brighton. Stayed in most of the day except for a run into Mullagh with Jonathan. Bought some antihistamine so my allergy is now much better. Jonathan cooked up spaghetti that evening for dinner. Not long after Daphne arrived back.

Friday 31 October 2008. Halloween. Blue skies. Into Kells with Daphne to shop. Stayed around Lakeview House most of the day. That evening some friends came over for dinner: Andrew (a decorative plasterer), Michael and Valerie, and Adrian and Glascott. I snuck upstairs at 12:30 and they continued on for some time.

Saturday 1 November 2008. Up at 7 am. Packed and after breakfast headed off with Jonathan to the airport. Another uneventful flight, arriving in Boston at about 4:30. Rang Torill and not finding her in, took the T to Wellington Circle and walked to her apartment—a longer distance than I thought. She was there and we went off to a bistro in the old Charlestown Navy Yard for dinner. Once back in Everett, I retrieved my car, said good-bye to Torill and headed home to Jaffrey.