

Anita's Travels

Part 1: Dublin to Derry

In this issue our intrepid **Membership Lady, Anita Renfrey (nee MacFarlane)** reports on her recent tour of Ireland and Scotland in company with members of our kindred society **Clan MacFarlane World Wide**.

Thursday 19th June.

In Dublin I joined up with Clan MacFarlane Tour and met some members in the foyer of our hotel. They were easily spotted as they were wearing Clan MacFarlane World Wide T-shirt and I wore my Clan Macfarlane in Australia version.

We were late to join our conducted tour of Trinity College due to late arrival of planes and road works in and around Dublin, but were still able to view the 9th-century (c800AD) **Book of Kells** copy of the four Gospels of Jesus Christ.



Beautifully decorated. I was told chapters had been discovered bricked up in an alcove of inside an old Monastery Church, during structural renovation. The book was smaller than I had imagined.

We were on time for the tour of Guinness Store-

house. It was explained to us how the roasting of the barley by fire gives the nutty caramel flavour! Then we moved up to the Gravity Bar for my complimentary drink. I watched how half is poured into glass set aside then topped up to give frothy head. Dublin Guinness apparently has a different taste from other country breweries; something to do with the water of the River Liffey. I had my drink -- but I think I'll stick to Port!

Friday 20th Dublin to Londonderry.

Newgrange, situated on River Boyne, was our next stop, to view a Passage Tomb (**Left**) which was built during the Neolithic or New Stone Age about, 5000 years old. This monument was built by farming communities using stone and wood implements, and is still water tight after all these years due to the roof being built of over lapping slabs of stones to make a dome. On the shortest day of the year, December 21st, and days before and after, the sun shines through a window above the door, the rays hit the back of the chamber, which is thought to



be a burial site. Winter Solstice, to the Neolithic farmers, marked the start of a New Year, a sign of rebirth and promising renewal life to crops.

On the way to Londonderry, near the village of Slade, the air conditioner on our bus failed and, being a hot day, we had to stop and await a replacement vehicle. Meanwhile, we either strolled through the village or went to the local pub -- not a hard wait. Due to the delay we missed an intended visit to the **Ulster American Folk Park**, an open-air museum at Castletown, just outside Omagh, in County Tyrone. However, we were told later that had we carried on regardless the bus could have caught fire.

Saturday 21th June

Monreagh Heritage & Education Centre, Donegal, was our



next stop to take part in the Gathering of the Clans Festival. Here we were proudly piped in as the honoured guests, and each member of the

group was presented with a certificate by the Lord Mayor, Mr. Campbell who, incidentally, had an uncle who lived in Whyalla, SA.

Later I wandered around the village and watched how Flax was prepared to be woven into linen -- such a long process. I was kept warm by the bakers' fire, and saw bread made with flour, home-made butter and water very -- much like our Aussie damper bread. A leather worker was making a harness for a donkey using double flax thread waterproofed by bees wax.

We had Irish stew for lunch, laid on by the ladies from the local church and were entertained by an elbow piper, squeezebox and one of our party on the fiddle. There had been a Church in the village near the same site since 1644, (New South Wales hadn't been discovered). A lovely Choir of lilting Irish voices entertained us some more. I was interested to see warming pans displayed in the church, I wondered if during winter they were used to keep the congregation warm! Scottish Country dancing was followed by some young champion Irish dancers.

In the **Ulster-Scots, Scots Irish, Heritage and Education Centre**, to my surprise I found that there are two Londonderry's in Australia, both in West Australia. Cape Londonderry the most northerly point in West Australia bounded by the Indian Ocean was named by explorer and rear admiral Phillip Parker King, eldest son of Phillip Gidley King Governor of N.S.W. The other is Londonderry, a ghost town east of Perth about 14km south west of Coolgardie, (**Next Page**)

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where gold was discovered in 1892, it is told that the mine at Londonderry Hole, yielded about 8000 ounces worth £30,000 then when the gold petered out the place was abandoned.

We met Sir John & Lady MacFarland who were visiting with their 4-year-old grandson. Later, Emmett McCourt author of *Feast or Famine* gave a cooking demonstration of recipes collected from around the villages and towns of North West Ireland. These meals were displayed on oak and blackwood logs which had been found preserved in a local peat bog. I was sorry to leave such friendly people.

At **Monreagh Heritage & Education Centre** we each received booklet which contained valuable information on how best to research Irish Family History Records – Irish Births, Deaths & Marriages – including links to the most useful Genealogy Websites – along with other useful hints.

Sunday 22nd, Dunmore House

Sir John and Lady McFarland welcomed us into their home for morning tea, and invited us to wander through their house, and garden, where Agatha Christie used to sit and write.

Derry-Londonderry situated on the River Foyle, has a McFarland Quay, where the Navy and Tall Ships, (Clippers Round the World Race Fleet.) were to be berthed during the Maritime Festival.

The Guildhall which is now the Town Hall has stain glass windows which tells the history of walled city and a statue of Queen Victoria which was damaged due to an explosion that blew off her head and some fingers. It is reported that she was “not amused.”

Later in the afternoon at the First Derry Presbyterian Church, we attended a talk on the history of “The Troubles”. Apparently it all started back in the time of Queen Elizabeth I. circa 1600 when, instead of paying her loyal courtiers; she gave them parcels of land in the north of Ireland, which came to be known as the Plantation of Ulster. Later, planters from Scotland arrived with their families bringing with them Presbyterianism

The early Plantations in the 16th century tended to be based on small “exemplary” colonies. The later plantations were based on mass confiscations of land from Irish landowners and the subsequent importation of large numbers of settlers from England and Wales, later also from Scotland.

The final official plantations took place under the English Commonwealth and Cromwell's Protectorate during the 1650s, when thousands of Parliamentarian soldiers were settled in Ireland.

In 1689 William III of Orange, and Mary II., this time the Presbyterians were inside the walls

defending the city. The Siege of Derry involved a pre-emptive lockdown of the city gates in December 1688 and a violent defensive action lasting from 18 April to 28 July 1689, during the Williamite War in Ireland. The city, a Williamite stronghold, was besieged by a Jacobite army until it was relieved by Royal Navy ships. The siege is commemorated yearly in August by the Apprentice Boys of Derry parade (Wikipedia).

Presbyterians were discriminated against by the Anglican elite that controlled the levels of power. 1700 saw many of the Ulster Scots or Scots Irish emigrating to United States.

1719 The Toleration Act eased the restrictions on Presbyterians but they still weren't equal, and in 1800 were prevented from holding public positions, many Presbyterians focused on private enterprises.

Monday 23rd, Old Bushmill's Distillery

We had a guided walk through the system of whiskey-making area, via fermentation mash, distillation, to the pure liquid gold! I sampled the produce, including a very nice honey, and whilst my friend had a cup of tea, I had another and danced a jig as I got on the bus (the sun was shining and it was happy hour in Australia)!

At the Giant's Causeway Rocks there are some 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, the result of intense successive lava flows, cooling and shrinking, over 60 million years. Much, much too big to bring home!

My next brave act was to cross the famous Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge it was a fantastic view, but on the way back I think all the whiskey samples caught up with me! It was a wonderful experience and I marvelled at the ingenuity of those who constructed it.

**Harland & Wolff Shipyard, Belfast.**

Our final visit was to the shipyard where the ill-fated ocean liner *Titanic* was actually built. The Arrol gantry took me into the shipyard to watch, hear and smell the iron panels being riveted together, voices calling, and men in crib rooms, having tea. Throbbing thunder of the engines. I saw interior photos of the ship's crystal chandelier and beautiful wood panelling – it was a floating palace.

Tuesday 24th. Farewell Ireland.

We depart Ireland (50 shades of green) on the 7.30 ferry across the Irish Sea to Cairnryan, Scotland. It was a wonderful trip. **Anita.**

(Part Two will appear in our December Lantern).