

Adventures with Patsy



Ireland

Patsy Wood

I will never think of Ireland without thinking of the stone fences and lush green grasses. Many times we traveled where there was also ocean water along the grass area and many times sheep grazing. Everyone in Ireland that we met was so gracious.

You just can't visit Ireland without kissing the Blarney Stone! We traveled from our hotel to the Blarney Stone Castle in a horse-drawn carriage. The Blarney Stone Castle remains in its original state, which is not in the best shape anymore. We had to climb four stories of very steep, narrow stairs to get to the

top. When you got to the fourth story, you were to lie on your back and there was a person on each side of you to steady you while you bent your head back (with a gap in the floor that you bent your head over) to kiss the blarney stone! I did this and came within about 2 inches of reaching the stone to kiss and chickened out!! It is said that you receive a 'gift of gab' if you kiss the stone - I figured I had enough 'gift of gab' and could do without more!! And just imagine how many other germs must have been on that stone! The two people helped you get back up to your feet, and then you walked down the four stories of



very narrow stone steps.

We became very accustomed to seeing sheep and cattle in paddocks which varied in size from 10 to 50 acres. Ruins of old churches, castles, and other buildings and cemeteries were everywhere. We visited a town called Adare and saw many thatched-roof homes in Adare.

The ice cream was delicious there, and we learned they have no skim milk in Ireland. We ate lamb several times and one meal we enjoyed in a family's private home. We sat around their dining room table and had the best visit, and they told all about their family, traditions of the Irish people, and had the most personal experience there. No matter where we ate, the dining rooms were always set with several pieces of silverware and cloth napkins. There was no plastic anywhere. The food was delicious, and nearly everywhere the meal had two kinds of potatoes. The meat was served over mashed potatoes with roasted potatoes on the side.

We traveled to the stunning 700-foot Cliffs

of Moher for awe-inspiring views of the Atlantic Ocean and the Aran Islands. We walked on trails around the Moher and saw many areas where the Atlantic puffins were nesting.

On our way to Cabra Castle, where we spent our final night of the tour, we stopped at a cemetery. It was a beautiful and well-kept cemetery. Two of the people in my group found the grave site of a priest who formerly served in southwest Iowa, and they had attended a couple of the church services he had been in!

This castle was amazing! The night we stayed there, a wedding was taking place. From the castle entrance, they rolled out a long red carpet to the parking area where an old-fashioned limousine drove up, and a gorgeous bride in her wedding dress got out and walked the red carpet up into the castle! In the entrance of the castle, there was a dog bed and a large Irish Wolfhound. He was so laid back, and occasionally we'd see him walking on the lawn.

I absolutely love all of the old castles and

historic buildings that were built so long ago and are still standing. I can't imagine how they built a four-story castle with no cranes or the equipment we take for granted today. Magnificent to say the least!

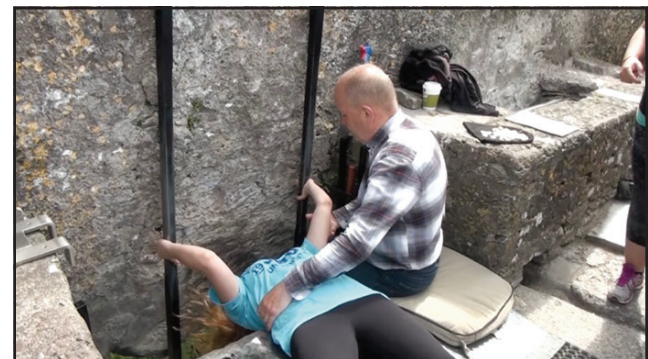
The Irish have learned to conserve energy. On the toilets, there are two buttons... light flush and heavy flush.

Some of their phrases were fun to hear. Instead of saying it was 6:30, they said it was half six; at the airport they say, "present yourself" instead of "come to the counter." Bakeries are referred to as yeast shops; pharma-

cies are chemists; take-out food is "take away food"; for rent is "to let."

We visited Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland and saw the "Samson" and "Goliath", the cranes at the shipyard that built the "Titanic Experience."

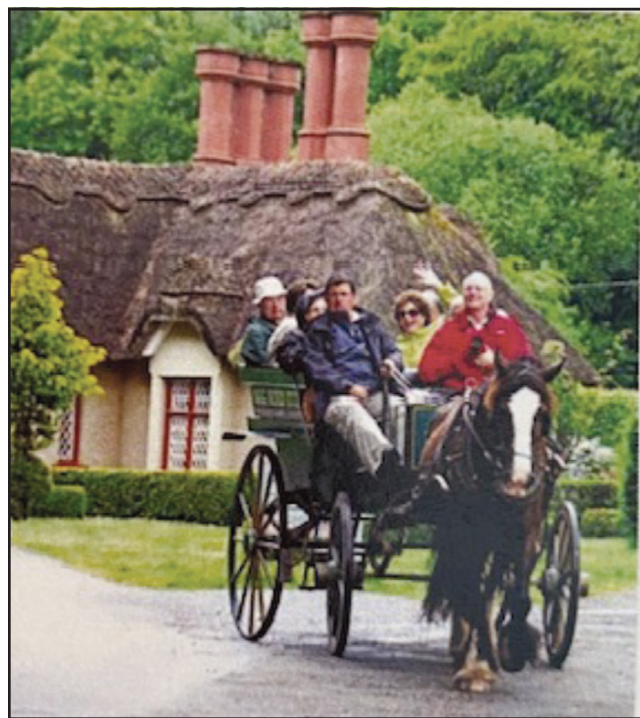
We visited a farm and were shown how sheep were sheared. Later, when we went to the airport to leave, one of the questions we were asked before we boarded was if we'd visited any farms - none of us fessed up to a farm visit :) We didn't want to have any delays in getting onto the plane!!



Miscellaneous

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