

Hi Samantha,

May 9, 2020 (March 2020 letter)

Since your plans to Ireland is still active, although delayed, I thought it might be useful and interesting to hear about our trips there. I'll include a few photos as well. It may be that you will cross paths with some of the people and places, so feel free to take advantage of those opportunities as well. I hope that the COVID-19 limitations don't interfere with your plans.

Our first set of travels were related to our friendship with Sally Shortall and research that we were doing on small and remote towns. At that time, Sally was living in Belfast, so this was our destination. It was a great introduction to the city and history since Sally and her two sons (twins Vangelis and Cillian) were great hosts and full of stories as we explored. Sally now lives in Newcastle (in England) but her boys are still in Belfast at the family home. They are students at university now and the house has plenty of room for guests. Sally is often there as well. The boys are about your age, but I'm not sure of the precise date. The picture was taken in 2011.



I will contact Sally to get an idea whether she will be in Belfast when you are there. If she's not, I'm sure you will still get an enthusiastic response from the boys. They are interested in Canada – and visiting here – so you will get plenty of questions regarding the situation here.

My trips to Belfast were in 2000 (with Fran) and 2001 (on my own). In 2015 Fran and I travelled to the Galway area with the ICRPS summer school. Fran also took a trip to Belfast on her own in 2011 after presenting a paper at Newcastle-on-Tyne in England. When in Belfast, Fran and I took an interesting boat tour of the harbour that included plenty of information about the industries—and the building of the Titanic. We also got a nice tour from Sally regarding the locations and events of “The Troubles”: the years of conflict between Irish and British people. This is another aspect of Belfast and Ireland that should be on your research and visiting agenda since it is very important to understanding the country—even today as it plays such an important role in the issues related to Brexit.

On my 2001 trip to Belfast Sally took me to some of the towns and sights outside the city. I particularly remember one to the Giant's Causeway. It is an interesting formation of rock that extends out into the sea (see photo).



In 2015 I spent 2 weeks at a summer school we organized for people interested in rural and remote places. Fran joined us part way through. Our Home base was Galway. We took trips to Kildare and explored one of the factories that produced malt for alcohol. We also took a trip to Dublin—with a standard tourist tour of the Guinness brewery.

One of our most enjoyable tours was to Connemara and Letterfrack village. This is a region west of Galway that includes many cultural, natural, and historical-related places to explore. Letterfrack was founded by Quakers and it still shows activities related to crafts. We visited a school for woodworking in the village that was very impressive for the things they were making. Check out their gallery to see some

of the imaginative, clever, and impressive things they do (<https://www.gmit.ie/letterfrack-campus/letterfrack-student-furniture-gallery-2019>). The items in the gallery are mostly focused on furniture, but I particularly appreciated the cleverness of some of their other items (see photo).



The village was selected by Marconi for the transmission of radio signals to North America.

We also visited the Burren National Park—a natural region near Galway with lovely hikes (see photo), took a ferry trip to the Aran Islands near Galway, and a bus trip to Ballinahown (known for its culture and crafts). Another field trip was to Athenry to check out its castle.



One of my favorite spots was the Inis Mór Island (Inishmore) of the Aran Islands because it had the ruins of the Dun Aonghasa—an ancient hill fort. The ruins are interesting, but I was most impressed with the cliffs on which they are located (about 100 metres high, and straight down. Most of us were strongly affected with the sight—and only a few had enough courage to crawl up to the edge to look down (see photo).



I suggest you check out the internet on these places—they all seem to be identified with some interesting information about their history and places to see.

Are any of these places on your tour? I would like to see the itinerary for the tour you are planning so that I can imagine the fun you will have and maybe pass on a few items related to the places you will be in. Does your tour include overnight stops? Where will they be?

Love