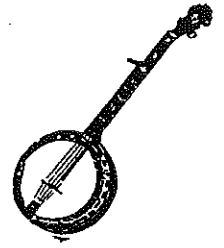




The Folk Club

of Reston-Herndon

...Preserving Folk Traditions



Vol 6, No 7; July, 1992

A FOLK SINGER'S TOUR OF IRELAND

or

How I Survived Seamus Kennedy's
Third Annual Fun Pub Crawl
And Lived to Tell About It

by

Jim Rosenkrans

Readers of this newsletter and other folk music publications such as Sing Out! are no doubt aware of the continuing controversy about what constitutes "folk music." Although everyone has their own opinion, no one has ever disputed the fact that Irish music qualifies. So when the opportunity arose to join Seamus Kennedy on a ten-day pub crawl/folk music expedition to Ireland, I jumped at the chance.

Seamus emigrated to America from Ireland about twenty years ago. He is one of the few highly successful folk singers in this area, and he is always booked far in advance. Along with a powerful baritone voice and impeccable guitar technique, he has a quick wit and a commanding stage presence. He is not soon forgotten.

We landed at Shannon International Airport early on a rainy Wednesday morning after a red-eye flight from New York. Although we had been advised to bring plenty of rainy weather clothing with us, this was the last of the bad weather we saw for the entire ten days we were there. The local people told us that the weather had been bad for weeks before our arrival. We replied that we had brought the good weather with us - the bad news was that we were going to take it back with us when we returned!

After leaving the airport, we stopped at Dromoland Castle for tea and scones on our way to Galway, where we spent two nights. Everywhere you go in Ireland there are castles, or more commonly, the remains of castles. Most of them were built in the 13th and 14th centuries. Most of them were destroyed by Oliver Cromwell during the mid-seventeenth century. Although some of these have been or are being restored, most probably never will be.

Many songs we think of as Irish are actually of American origin. I had been under the impression that these songs were unknown in Ireland, but this was not so. Galway Bay and Danny Boy were both written by Americans, and they were well known everywhere we went. Perhaps this was because tourism is Ireland's second largest industry (agriculture is the largest), but I don't think so.

In Galway, we separated into two groups, one of which took a bus tour of the Connemara countryside. The rest of us took a boat trip to Inishmore, the largest of the Aran islands. There we hiked about two miles up a moderate grade to Dun Lingus, an ancient fort on the edge of a cliff. Part of the cliff has fallen into the sea, taking a section of the fort with it. The site was completely undeveloped, and there were no guard rails. Galway bay itself was not particularly scenic.

From Galway, we drove to the Cliffs of Moher, which are the highest in Europe. The next stop was at Lisdoonvarna, where there is an annual festival featuring traditional music and matchmaking. We made a pit stop at the Matchmaker Inn. Needless to say, I was relieved in more than one sense when we left that place! From there, we crossed the river Shannon by ferry, and drove through Tralee on our way to Killarney. Our bus driver related the story behind the song "Rose Of Tralee."

We spent two nights in Killarney, in County Kerry. Kerry is the butt of Irish "stupid" jokes. The shops all carry "Kerryman" joke books - testimony to the ability of the Irish to laugh at themselves - for a price. While there, we visited Muckcross House, took a scenic boat ride, and rode horseback into the Gap of Dunloe.

That afternoon we drove around scenic Dingle peninsula, passing through Castlemain (of "The Wild Colonial Boy" fame) on our way and back. On the return trip, our bus developed a fuel line leak and had to stop in the fishing village of Dingle for repairs. We regrouped in Murphy's Pub (there's a Murphy's Pub in every town in Ireland) while it was being repaired. Here, I sampled Murphy's stout for the first time. I mean, it would have been almost sacrilege to have ordered a Guinness there, wouldn't it?

We drove from Killarney to Cork, stopping in Macroom on the way. This town's castle was the home of William
see P3



Folk Club of Reston-Herndon



5 July - 15 August, 1992

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5 July	6 July	7 July 7:30pm Folk Club Showcase Performance Jim Sandy	8 July	9 July	10 July	11 July 6:30pm Eileen Joyner, Homeless Benefit, Fairlington UMC NOON, Ray Kaminsky and Terri Bocklund Vale United Methodist Church, Oakton Va
12 July 6:00pm Hickory Grove at Village Green Great Falls	13 July	14 July 7:30pm Folk Club	15 July	16 July 7:00pm Hickory Grove at Fort Ward Pk, Alexandria	17 July	18 July
19 July 6:00pm Hickory Grove at Downs Park Pasadena, Md	20 July	21 July 7:30pm Folk Club Connemara (\$8/7)	22 July	23 July	24 July	25 July
26 July 7:00pm Hickory Grove at Ft Hunt Park, Mt Vernon	27 July	28 July 7:30pm Folk Club Showcase Lottery Draw	29 July	30 July	31 July	1 Aug
2 Aug	3 Aug	4 Aug 7:30pm Folk Club Showcase Performance	5 Aug	6 Aug	7 Aug	8 Aug
9 Aug	10 Aug	11 Aug 7:30pm Folk Club	12 Aug	13 Aug	14 Aug	15 Aug

Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. Macroom's castle is being restored at this time, and we could not enter it.

Cork, the second largest city in Ireland, was just an overnight stop. For a change, we went to a Karioki bar that evening. Larry Conneen, who plays bass for Kevin James, sang Mack The Knife. On leaving Cork, we passed Murphy's brewery, but (sadly) we did not stop there.

We stopped at Blarney castle after leaving Cork. I kissed the Blarney stone. Our next stop was Middleton, where we had a tour of the Jameson Distillery (and a sample of their product). From there, we drove to Waterford, where we spent the night. That night we spent dancing at the Metropole Pub. The next day we took a walking tour of Waterford. The highlight of this tour was Reginald's Tower, which was built in 1003 as a lookout for Viking raiders. It was here that we met our first - and only - Leprechaun of the tour! We toured the Waterford crystal factory before departing for Kilkenny. We arrived in Kilkenny in the early afternoon and toured the Kilkenny castle.

The proprietor of Delaney's Pub in Kilkenny, one Seamus Delaney, had met several people in our tour while he was visiting the US several years ago. These people had entertained him and his group while they were here, and he has returned the hospitality every time this tour group has visited Ireland. Our impending visit was written up in the Kilkenny People (p. 2, "The Yanks Are Coming"), and it was also announced on the local radio.

And what a welcome it was! This had to be the most unforgettable evening of the trip - the kind of stuff that the memories of a lifetime are made of. There was an all-star band which was made up of the cream of the musicians from several area bands. The place was packed to the point where it was hard to move about. Our group broke up and mingled with the townspeople. The Lord Mayor and the local Senator were there. The newspaper dispatched a photographer and a reporter to cover the event. There was no one in our group who was not genuinely moved by this event.

The doors to the pub were closed at 11:00 PM according to the local law. At this time, the event was declared to be a "private party." The party kept on rolling. Seamus Kennedy and I were the last to leave at 4:00 A.M..

Not surprisingly, I have little recollection of the drive from Kilkenny to Dublin. With a population of over one million, Dublin provides an urban and cosmopolitan contrast to the rest of the country. Traditional music was harder to find here, as most of the pubs feature discos and

the more contemporary western music. Nevertheless, we did manage to locate a few traditional music pubs.

The two days we spent in Dublin were more unstructured, as we tended to break up into many smaller groups and do our own thing. One group rented a car and drove to Newgrange, where there is a remarkable burial chamber dating from the third millennium BC. In common with the more widely publicized Stonehenge, this chamber also has a small aperture which aligns to illuminate the burial chamber only on the Winter solstice.

Other sights in Dublin included the Book of Kells, an illuminated gospel dating back to around 1000 AD, a trip to the Irish Parliament (where they were debating dog ordinances), Saint Patrick's cathedral where Jonathan Swift preached, and a tour of the Guinness Brewery. Across the street from Trinity College was the statue of Molly Malone, who "... wheeled her wheelbarrow, through streets wide and narrow . . ." We learned that she is known locally as "the tart with the cart," a somewhat pointed reference to some moonlighting activities she was engaged in.

On our last full day in Ireland, we drove from Dublin to Shannon. That evening some of us attended a medieval banquet at Bunratty castle (optional, at extra cost), which included entertainment. I did not like the mead which was served, but fortunately there were pitchers of wine at the tables. A pub called Durty Nelly's (sound familiar?) was across the street from Bunratty castle, but it was jam packed and I never got there. Later, back at the ranch, the hard core stayed up to 2:30 A.M. swapping jokes.

The flight home was pleasant, but I just want to block out everything from the time the plane touched down until I got home. The JFK Customs has a deservedly bad reputation, the flight to Dulles was over booked, and one of my bags was misrouted (fortunately it only had my dirty laundry). This was a small price to pay for the rest of it.

As the title indicates, this was the Third Annual Seamus Kennedy Irish Pub Tour. At least three of the twenty-four people (there may have been more) on the tour had been on all three of the trips. A considerably larger number had been on two of them. And at least four of us first-timers have decided that we would go again next year. At this rate, it won't be long before it becomes a closed corporation!

Every year there has been reunion, and one is planned for July 12 this year. The repeat travelers and the reunion make this trip more than a just routine sightseeing trip - it is a happening. It is really three tours in one: sightseeing during the day, closing down the pubs during the evening, then partying with Seamus until the wee hours.

The realities are: \$1,600 (\$1,800 if you don't want/have

Ireland, from p3

a roommate) for the trip, and a minimum of \$500 for spending cash (the pubs are not included, and of course you have to buy souvenirs for the folks back home).

New Format for Open Mike

Beginning on July 14 the Folk Club will experiment with a new format for the open mike. Each Tuesday we will have the open mike sign up as before, only now there will only be 10 slots (vice 14). Each of these ten people will, however be given 12 minutes to do their thing. This is about 3 songs - two l_o_n_g songs.

An additional change is in who and when one may sign up. If you get to perform on a given week, you are required to wait until at least 7:15PM the following week before you sign up. This, hopefully, will give a break for those who cannot be at the Tortilla Factory really early to sign up.

On showcase nights we will have eight people plus the showcase person who will

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

Check your Label - Are you expiring? "19920701" is expiring with this issue. Don't miss an issue - Don't miss the benefits of the Folk Club. Please send in your membership check (\$12.00) to keep your membership active!

be given a "double" (24-minute) set.

Our "break will be a bit longer, too, to allow for a bit more socializing each week. Give us your feedback on these changes!

Showcase Performances

July 7 the featured performer will be **Jim Sandy**.

On the first Tuesday of every month we feature a Folk Club member in a showcase three-set performance. To become one of these "showcase" specials all you have to do is 1) be a member of the Folk Club, 2) fill out a lottery slip by the last Tuesday of the month, 3) win the drawing and 4) practice, practice practice!

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