

A BIT OF IRELAND - JUNE 1994

The game plan for this outing was to attend a SOHO Science Working Team meeting in England, spend a long "weekend" in Ireland, and then a day back in Portsmouth seeing how the testing of our MDI instrument on the payload module portion of the spacecraft was going. And we followed the plan. The decision to do this came only a couple of weeks before we did it which meant a fair amount of footwork by Dawna in terms of booking a lousy flight using United Frequent Flyer coupons and then getting it improved as space became available on better flights; finally ending up on the nice non-stop flight booked for me by Lockheed.

Sunday - 1: Caught the 6:30 PM plane from SFO to Heathrow. Twas crowded but we did all right in terms of a bit of eating, drinking, and sleeping.

Monday - 1: Arrived Heathrow a bit before noon, got a Hertz rental car and drove to Portsmouth. Phil Scherrer was with us. The meeting was at the Hilton near MMS-UK, where the spacecraft is being assembled, so we stayed there as well. Rested a bit, walked a bit, and then went to an Indian restaurant for dinner. Quite good. Relatively early to bed and a good night's sleep.

Tuesday - 1: Meetings for me. Dawna explored the Portsmouth ocean front area including an old/famous/restored ship as well as some junk stores. The weather was beautiful, which also meant the meeting room was stuffy. Meanwhile Dawna called Norma Rapley and they agreed that we'd have dinner with them that night although it would be a surprise to Chris who was flying in from Milan. So, we drove the 40 miles or so to Guildford, got a bit lost, but found their house by the agreed upon time - 8:30 PM. Chatted with Norma until Chris arrived more than a half hour later. Then we had a fine dinner of salmon, champagne, and talk and talk. They were sort of celebrating an anniversary (a day late). Eventually got back to Portsmouth and to bed - about 12:30AM. Bit strenuous for the second night in England but what the heck. Was fun to have a two-on-two discussion with the Rapley's, especially because it gave us a chance to really learn about the new (3 year minimum) position Chris is about to take on in Stockholm. Yes, we've now got another spot to visit with a semi deadline as to when to do it.

Wednesday - 1: Maya Zayer and Dawna went to Brighton, primarily to the Pavilion. A long but enjoyable drive in yet another beautiful day. I did the meeting bit, of course. That night a bunch of us, including Len Culhane and Mike Levay and Igor Zayer (the later two were doing the instrument testing while Phil and I were doing the meeting) went to dinner. Spot was a pub on the waterfront. Dawna had halibut (fresh but over cooked) and I had ribs (sorta their specialty and pretty good).

Thursday - 1: Dawna and Maya went to Chichester and Fisbourne while I went to the meeting. Phil, D, and I then went to a different Indian restaurant for dinner on our way to the airport. Was quite good. We two were staying at an airport hotel in order to catch an early morning flight the next day and Phil was staying there because it was convenient for him to ride up with us and also

gave him a chance to take the tube into London for a couple of hours before his afternoon flight home.

Friday - 1: The vacation started at 5:30 AM when we got up and caught the 6 AM shuttle bus to the terminal and the 7 AM flight to Ireland. Arrived Shannon, picked up our rental car (small/junky Opal but it did the job) and headed out. We had made very few plans so were basically playing it by ear based on reading literature that we had brought with us and/or picked up at the airport tourist desk. First stop was near Bunratty castle where we tried for some hot chocolate but failed. From there we went to the Craggaunowen Project which is an old historical site that has been restored into an outdoor museum. Contains things from the pre-historic (bronze age and iron age) and early Christian eras as well as things more modern (1500's, so still quite old). Very well done and also let us stretch a bit by walking around the grounds. The weather by the way was overcast with even a bit of drizzle - nothing like the weather had been the prior days in both England and Ireland.

From there we rolled over to the western coast, had a light lunch (seafood chowder) at a fishing/tourist village and a beer. Based on descriptions provided by the bar man I chose a pint of Smithwick which turned out to be excellent and my standard throughout the trip. We then headed up the coast with the prime attraction being the Cliffs of Moher. Spectacular and also enabled us to do a tiny bit of walking. Drove further north through barren country side with limestone slabs and rock flowers and lots of sheep. All very Irish and the weather even provided a bit of sunshine. Along the way we stumbled onto a steer that was walking on the road where he was going to get hit but he couldn't figure out how to get back through the fence and into the fields. So Dawna stopped at a farm house and alerted the owners that they should go rescue the guy. Went to a place (Moran's Oyster Cottage on the Weir) that had been recommended by Willie for an early dinner. Dawna had their specialty - oysters (garlic & fried) and I had smoked salmon. Both were good, with mine being excellent. It is like a super Lox but not as salty. And as always (so I'll not repeat it from here on) we had brown bread and beer. The bread is heavy, good, and served with every meal - even breakfast. Got a room at a B&B just down the road and hit the sack early; being tired from a short prior night and a long day. There are many B&B's throughout Ireland and our modus operandi became to tour until we were bushed and then find one that was down a side road from the main road and thus quiet. They are marked on the main road so this is easy. Cost was typically 13 pounds each, so \$39 for the two of us including breakfast. Breakfast was juice, cereal, eggs, bacon, sausage, tomato, coffee, and bread/toast; but we usually declined on some of the items.

Saturday - 1: Breakfast at 8 AM and then rolling by 9. Prior to breakfast I studied the literature enough to generally plan the day. First stop was a walk around Galway. The cathedral was excellent and the town was OK. Then toured the Cornamona area to the northeast of Galway. Rugged countryside, peat bogs (which were really neat to see after having heard of them all our lives and to watch the people "harvesting" the peat), ocean views, and enormous rhododendron bushes - in bloom. Good fun just bumming around. Had a late lunch at a seaside town (Clifden). I had Irish Stew and D had mussels. Both were quite good. Stopped at a shop to look at craft things and have a cup of tea in the middle of the afternoon and by early evening we were back in Galway and heading south. Drove past Shannon airport, through Limerick, and tried to stay

in/near Adare because it was supposedly such a pretty village. But things were booked up because there was a young persons horse competition there that weekend, so ended up a bit further south in Rathkeale. Ran into a nearby village (Newcastle West) to see about a bite to eat but didn't see any restaurant worth trying and the pubs were bulging at the seams as the Irish-Italy World Cup game was about to start. Would have been fun to get involved but also a zoo so we went back to our B&B, opened a bottle of California wine, sat at the dining room table, ate some crackers and cheese, and watched some of the match. Grandma was watching it as well and she and Dawna chatted about lots of stuff. Saw Ireland make the goal which ended up being the only goal of the game and was everyone in Ireland proud of that the next day! And were the flags ever up for the game(s) all week!

Sunday - 2: Breakfast. Then went eastward a bit to see the largest stone circle (46 m) in Ireland; sort of a small version of Stonehenge. On the way there we stumbled onto a really picturesque village on a river with a mill that had an enormous waterwheel. Also some nice churches in a couple of villages, although they were difficult to drive by since people were parked all over the road in order to attend them. Anyway, speaking of driving, Dawna did the majority both because she enjoyed racing around the small roads in our small car and because it enabled me to read maps, literature, road signs and generally play tour director. The stone circle was such that you could walk all about it and there were even 3 calves napping in the center for effect - D had to pet them, of course. Having spent most of the morning "getting nowhere" we headed south. Stopped at the tourist office in Tralee, and then did the Dingle peninsula. The day had started with drizzle and even rain but by now it was cloudy with Sun breaking through. Great country side!!! But continually windy.

Got to Dingle a bit before 2 PM and figured we best have some lunch so went into the first seafood restaurant and ordered. Turned out that any place which serves liquor has to stop serving anything between 2 and 4 PM on Sunday and we just made it under the wire. I had the catch of the day (some strange named fish) which was not really anything special and Dawna had a smoked seafood assortment that was outstanding. She let me have samples. I order a half pint of Murphys because I thought I should try one of the other local beers and didn't care for it at all - very heavy/syrupy. But at least I was clever enough to only order a half since it was something new. Unfortunately I wasn't able to order a second half of Smittys because it was past 2 PM. Walked around the town (nothing special) a bit and then did a circle drive around the extremity of the peninsula. Great!! In addition to the good views we saw a very old (8th century) Christian hut (Gallarus Oratory) that was really something. It has a rectangular floor 8 X 5 m and the top is 5 m high and all is of stone with no mortar and the stones curve in to close at the top; and it is still water proof. We also saw many beehive huts where monks lived a long time ago. While driving around there was a time when we had to sit while a chap moved a small heard of milk cows down the road in front of us in order to get them from a field on one side of the road to the barn down the road, and another time when a few chaps were moving a large herd of sheep down the road right at us. These crazy critters actually bumped into the car as we sat there with sheep streaming by us (and into us). Oh, yes, the sides of the road at times were covered with wild fuchsia! A great area but we finally had to stop exploring it and drove back to Tralee. Before getting there, however, we saw a sign on a country pub that said "traditional music on Sunday afternoons" so we stopped. Place was packed with locals (many children) and the music was going strongly with

people playing a small recorder like instrument, a squeeze box, and a fiddle. Had a beer and listened until the smokiness finally drove us out; then down to Killorglin. This time we stayed at an "inn" that looked out on the river. Basically a dozen room B&B. Walked around the town a bit, couldn't get motivated to eat anywhere, picked up some bread and slices of turkey at a grocery store, and had a not very good snack in our room at the inn. Didn't even have a bottle of wine this time.

Monday - 2: Drove east to the Killarney area and then south along the lakes. Took a bit of a walk along the side of a stream to see Torc Falls and then up the hillside towards the top of the falls. Nice views back at the lakes. A bit further along did a half hour walk at another scenic spot. Saw a very spectacular wild fuchsia, among other things. Continued driving along the lakes stopping for views as appropriate and then headed eastward again. Stopped at a nice village called Macroom and walked around a bit and then onward to Cork. Parked, hit the tourist office, walked around, saw typical city things, decided we preferred the country side, and drove onward. Got to the coastal village of Youghal where the books list a fancy restaurant. But it wasn't going to be open for a couple of hours and we didn't feel like waiting that long just to see a menu and decide if it was for us. Walked the town, great medieval walls, some of which you could walk on. Wandered into a very nice old church and looked around. For the first time ever we couldn't see where to put a small donation so D asked one of the people who was doing some repair work and he showed her/us, plus he told us about the church - it was rebuilt in 1350; so old by our standards. He was a friendly fellow so we discussed dinner spots with him and decided on one further down the road. At the end of our discussion he handed us his card - and he was the minister, just looking grubby because he was helping with the repairs. Continued to Dungarva, found the prescribed restaurant after a bit of hunting and had dinner. It was an Italian place and we both had the baked salmon. Quite good. Found a nearby B&B and hit the hay. It was stormy out by then.

Tuesday - 2: Drove to Waterford, went to the factory, didn't take the tour but did look around at the exhibits - quite nice and a lot of crystal sport trophies. Also made some purchases which will replace items of ours that broke during the earthquake a few years ago. Quite good prices even considering the shipping/insurance costs. Decided we had seen enough fishing villages, that they would be less enjoyable in the rain, and that other attractions had upped themselves on our priority list - so we headed back inland a bit driving to Cashel via back roads. This is a 300 foot high rock/plateau which has had palaces, churches, castles, etc on it "forever" and is in differing states of originality and restoration. Nice. Walked back down from the hill and first tried for lunch at a fancy place that used to be a church, but they only serve dinner. So, went on a bit further and found a nice pub and had a quite enjoyable lunch. I had cottage pie (ground beef under a re-fluffed potato and all baked) and Dawna had Irish stew. Plus the usual good beer. From there we went cross country to Kilkenny where they have some rather high class craft stores with local artists; all across the street from a very well preserved castle. In fact the craft stores are in what used to be the stable area but it is restored very nicely. We didn't have time to go to the castle but the crafts were quite nice and we bought a few things. Then headed to the Dublin airport via major roads. Lots of country side to examine. When we got to Dublin we attempted to skirt the city a bit and then found signs to the airport which we religiously followed and it seemed to take forever and to go around in circles; but we finally got there. Car undamaged and we checked it in. Thus

endeth the Irish outing. Plane was a bit late leaving and then held up for air traffic but eventually we got to Heathrow. Got our Hertz car and headed south. Drizzle and fog and thus not a fun drive but made it to our pub/bed in Horndean before midnight. We were staying at the pub I've stayed at a couple of times previously which thus seems almost like home.

Wednesday - 2: Kippers for breakfast for me - one of the treats of staying at this pub. Then I spent the day working with the instrument and Dawna went to Horsham and had lunch with Mary Culhane. Nice day out and she had a great time driving across the pretty countryside via back roads. My day went fine and I was glad to have made the effort to see how things were going. It also turned out that this was the last day of this phase of testing and they were having a social event at the Company's Club; so we participated. Good chance to chat with people and everyone played skittles - which is somewhat like bowling but on a lane small enough to fit into a large room. Nice open bar as part of the activity and I may have had more pints than I "needed."

Thursday - 2: Kippers for me and then off to the airport. Heavy traffic but a beautiful day out. A real pain going through half a dozen "checkpoints" between walking in the front door of the terminal and getting on the plane but we eventually made it. Full plane but we had a window and middle and the person on the aisle was reasonable. Fine flight. Watched one of the movies, did a bunch of work, and took a bit of a nap. Last couple of hours was spectacular as we came down the Pacific coast and were able to see each of the snow topped volcano mountains as we flew by such as Rainier (?), St. Helens, Hood, Shasta, etc. Then it was beautiful flying right across the top of SFO. Arrived Cupertino about 4 PM, and stayed awake a few hours unpacking, reading the mail (paper as well as electronic), and things like that. Then to bed! Nathan arrived later that evening and Sabina came on Sunday; so we didn't have much time to get bored

Other Comments re Ireland: It was weird to have tractors on all the roads and certainly added another challenge to the driving. There were rocks everywhere and as a result many, many rock fences. In fact the green country side looked like a checker board because the fences intersected at a few hundred feet and when one glanced at a hill side some of the checker board spaces were filled with sheep and others weren't. We didn't even have a camera with us so no pictures; and there were a some times when we would liked to have taken a shot.