

Pottering Around the British Isles and York Regional Trip Report by Musette and Bill Young



We've been back a week and have almost recovered. What a fabulous trip we had. Much of the thanks for the great time goes to June Tucker, who organized a whirlwind tour of the British Isles. We saw 1300 year old castles, 250 year old potteries, royal jewels, 1000 year old stone walls, some beautiful countryside, more traditional English breakfasts than most could stand, lochs (lakes) and locks (on the rivers), buses and ferries and underground trains, and a classic play that is in its 52nd year. All that, and more, in only 18 days!

We took over 1500 pictures. We'll get several hundred of those on Musette's web site over the next couple weeks, so keep checking back at <http://www.musetteyoung.com> and look at the

recent events section. Pictures from the regional in York are already there, and by the time you see this, there may be more.

Ireland

We flew into Shannon Airport near Limerick, Ireland on 3 July. After the first of our traditional English breakfasts at the Southern Hotel across the parking lot from the airport, we got on the road bound for Cork. We were a bit tired from the overnight plane flight, and working on about 20 hours in the same clothes, but we were all so excited and full of chatter, we saw everything we could on this part of the journey.

On the way to Cork, we stopped at the Blarney Castle and Woolen Mills. Most of us climbed the steps up the castle to kiss the Blarney Stone, which is said to give one the gift of eloquence. (You can be the judge after reading this.) We also stopped at Stephen Pearce Pottery near Garryvoe, and the visitor center at Cobh (pronounced Cove), which was the last point of departure from Europe of both the *Lucitania* and the *Titanic*. Lots of history there and an early chance to do some shopping.



On the 4th of July, we made our way from Cork to Dublin, by way of Waterford Crystal, Bridge Pottery in Bennetsbridge (bridgepottery.com), Nicholas Mosse Pottery, and an art center in County Kilkenny. We had an outstanding guided tour of Waterford, including a demonstration by a master cutter. The potters were not

available at the potteries, but we still managed to see a good bit of their shops and saw a video of the history of Nicholas Mosse's entry into the profession. In Dublin, several of us decided to enjoy some of Dublin's famous night life. We finished the night at a pub with live music – traditional Irish folk and drinking songs (as if there's a difference). A British couple overheard us talking, and noting that we were obviously not from the isles, asked if we were in Dublin celebrating our independence. We answered a hearty “Yes!” at which they said “So are we” and “Long live King George.”



On Monday, we had a tour of Dublin, including a stop at St Patrick's Cathedral. What a stunning building, though the commercialization was disappointing. We drove around the Guinness Brewery (Bill was begging for a stop, but we didn't have the time), and saw several monuments to local dignitaries, including James Joyce, Oscar Wilde (the monument in the park is affectionately known as The Fag on the Crag), and Molly Malone (of Cockles and Mussels fame; the monument is known as The Tart With the Cart). Another evening enjoying the Dublin night-life, then we were off the next day to the West coast and the town of Sligo.



On the way to Sligo, we stopped at Eric Crampton Pottery, which was really just a shop specializing in ceramic wares. We came to learn during this trip that pottery could mean anything from a gift shop to a full working studio. We also stopped at an old abbey that had craft shops, and a pewter making shop. One of the fortunate surprises of the trip, and a challenge for the bus driver, who had to turn the bus around on someone's lawn, was the Nicolas Hill pottery and meeting the potter who had just started out there named David O'Rourke. He has been in business for himself only a few weeks, but had apprenticed and bought the business, and had some very nice work.



Sligo is a nice, coastal town, but we did not have much time to sight-see there, as we got in shortly before dinner. Some of us went for a walk in town and saw some nice old architecture, but the hotel was quite a few blocks from the town center. One of the nicer aspects of the isles was the length of the days. The British Isles are enough further North than most of us, that daylight extended until close to 10:00 each night, especially in the northern parts of Ireland and Scotland.

Wednesday saw us on the road from Sligo to Portrush in Northern Ireland. On the way, we stopped at Belleek and toured the china factory. The next to last stop before arriving in Portrush was the Giant's Causeway, a stunning geological formation on the Irish Sea coast. The last stop before Portrush was Dunluce Castle, built on an island just a few feet

off the coast, and the site of fortresses and castles for over 1300 years. Portrush is a beautiful coastal town. Many of us spent a good deal of the evening walking around the town and along the beach. Wednesday was also Bill's birthday, and when asked what he'd like a shot of to celebrate, he answered (jokingly) Guinness. Ann (Jane's sister) obliged. I'd have loved to see the look on the face of the bartender!



On 8 July (Thursday), we left Ireland bound for Scotland. After a couple hour drive from Portrush to the port of Larne, we boarded the ferry bound for Cairnryan. We left our coach driver of the past few days, Tom, at Larne. He was a quiet Irishman, but a good driver and always very pleasant. And he likes his Guinness, so he can't be a bad chap, can he?

Scotland

The ferry ride was smooth (unusually so, according to our guide, David), and we were met on the other side by our driver for the time in Scotland, Bud. Bud was quite a contrast to Tom. Where Tom was quiet and very reserved, Bud was quick with a comment and wanted to take part in our activities. He had lots of knowledge of his country, and shared this with us very willingly. We also learned to appreciate his driving skills, as he had a trailer for the luggage attached to the back of the coach, and demonstrated on a couple of occasions that he could back that rig almost as easily as most of us would back a small sedan.



We rode from the port to Glasgow. After dinner in Glasgow, we had a walking tour of the city. Quite some interesting notes on the architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries. It was humbling to see the preservation of history, in spite of the wars, technological advancements, and other changes that have obviously taken place in Great Britain. And to realize that a large percentage of what we saw predated the settling of North America. We capped the night with a

brew at a “quiet” pub David knew (and the drink prices were about the least expensive we saw the entire trip).

On Friday, we traveled to the Scottish highlands. This was some of the most beautiful countryside we saw on the trip. We stopped at Loch Lomond, one of Queen Victoria's favorite spots, and ended the day



in Inverness, near Loch Ness.

We arrived in Edinburgh, the business center of Scotland, on Saturday. On the way, we stopped in the town of Ceres and visited the Griselda Hill Pottery, a pottery shop run by John Maguire, and an art gallery owned by John's parent. While in Ceres, we saw a wedding party, complete with Kilts and some very fancy hats. After dinner at the restaurant just outside Edinburgh, a bunch of us caught a bus into the city to see some sights before dusk. We caught the bus about 8:30 and got some fabulous views of the Edinburgh Castle as the light was fading.



We took a tour of Edinburgh, including the castle, on Sunday morning. After this, we dropped our guide, David, at the train station and made our way to York. We arrived about dinner-time, and after saying a quick hello to Sylvia, and checking into our rooms, we headed into the city. York is the second largest city in England, and has quite a history. Very close to the college is the old, walled Roman city. We enjoyed seeing the architecture there, the restaurants and pubs, and, of course, some shopping.

York – White Rose Regional

The next three days were the educational part of the regional. Monday started with a white rose on a tile, taught by Mark Clayton (from England), using Gare products. Pat Hinz, Duncan Ambassador from California, taught hand construction of a hut replica, using non-fired clay and acrylics. We had a beautiful dinner Monday evening, followed by a raffle and social hour. Tuesday started with Faye Murry, Duncan Ambassador from Connecticut, teaching china painting on lithophanes using Seeley products. The afternoon class was taught by Rachel Byass (from England), using Duncan products and slip to create a replica of a snowman stamp. We took a river cruise up the River Ouse (pronounce ooz). We had two more classes Wednesday. The morning class was taught by Larry Knight, Duncan Ambassador from Ohio. We did some playful penguins on a plate using EZ Strokes, a new Ambassadors Choice class soon to be released. Sue Lacey, Duncan Ambassador from England, taught a dandelion on a beaker (tumbler) using Concepts and French Dimensions. Wednesday evening, we took a “ghost walk” around the old city. York is purported to be the most haunted city in England.





Thursday and Friday were extra days of activity organized by the regional committee. On Thursday we went to Stoke On Trent to visit the famous pottery city, including Moorcroft, Wedgwood, and Spode. We got a very nice guided tour of Moorcroft. The Wedgwood tour was self guided, but still very interesting. We were unable to get a tour of Spode. We all suffered from a bit of information

overload by the end of the day.

Friday morning was free time. Friday afternoon we went to the coastal town of Whitby, which is known for its fish and chips. After the visit to Whitby, we made our way back to York with a stop along the way at Sylvia's studio, Pormor Ceramics.



London



On Saturday morning, after another traditional English breakfast at the college, we packed up the luggage and boarded the bus for London. We got caught in quite a traffic jam near Manchester which delayed our arrival in London by almost two hours, but we still had time to stop by Hampton Court. Many of us got a chance to walk around the gardens and through the famous maze.

We spent Saturday evening to Tuesday morning in London. We learned a lot about the underground system (the “tube”), saw some of the national museums and galleries, took a walk in Hyde park, had some excellent dinners, and saw Mousetrapp, a play that has been running for 52 years. One of the most fantastic, and humbling, experiences was a morning spent on the sixth floor of the Victoria and Albert Museum. There are



several large rooms, full of ceramics from China, Japan, Persia, and throughout Europe. Among the other highlights in London were a Jack the Ripper tour, high tea at the British Museum, a Beefeater tour of the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Cathedral, and a ride on the Eye of London, a huge ferris wheel that takes nearly half an

hour to make a full revolution and provides fabulous views of the city.



These few notes and pictures can't do the trip justice. We saw so much it will take us months to fully distill all of what we've experienced.