Walk though the United Kingdom and Ireland. 2026
9/21/2026 through 11/15
Week 7 11/2- through 1/8

During this week we collectively walked 397 miles and had 17 participants. Sources for photos and other images are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. A magenta line ⁓ on the map for the week shows how far we walked that week. **Note: This document is copyrighted by K. Scharer, 2026, except where other copyrights are noted.** PAT is free software. Copyright © 2010, 2013 by Ian Macky. Note the map contains the Republic of Ireland in grey and Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, in green.



We arrived in Dublin from our flight from Bristol, England on Sunday evening so we were ready to explore Dublin Monday morning. As the capitol city of Ireland, Dublin offers much for us to enjoy: beautiful churches, a vibrant central city, lots of places to dine, small enough to walk through, and some very special shrines that draw thousands of Catholics each year.

When King Henry VIII declared Catholicism a crime, it affected Ireland as well. Despite that, it often surprises people to discover that St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin is not a Catholic church. Although originally a Catholic Church, it was confiscated by the English government and made into an Anglican Cathedral in the 1500's. Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior. Berthold Werner, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior.





Originally, St. Patrick's was a Catholic parish church that stood beside a well that had been consecrated in 450 AD in celebration of Patrick's coming to Ireland. 1n 1192, the parish church was elevated to the status of Cathedral despite there being another Catholic Cathedral nearby, Christ Church. There is some suggestion that the plan was for St. Patrick's to replace Christ Church as Cathedral since Christ Church was run by an order of priests as opposed to St. Patrick's which was served by diocesan priests. However, Christ Church fought that idea. They didn't want to lose their status as a cathedral. Donaldytong, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exteroior Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, nave. So, a decision was made that St. Patrick's would serve as the





diocesan cathedral of Dublin while Christ Church would be the National Cathedral of Ireland. Of course, with the reformation, both of these cathedrals became Anglican.

Until last November there was an issue between the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and the Roman Catholic Church over Christ Church/ Holy Trinity Cathedral. Now called Christ Church, Holy Trinity has been in the possession of the Church of Ireland for nearly five hundred years, but according to Roman Catholic Church it was still the primary Catholic Cathedral in Dublin. It was elevated to that status in 1192 and until 2005, no Pope had formally either revoked that status or designated another church as the Catholic Cathedral of Dublin. So, the Vatican clearly was not willing to withdraw the status of Holy Trinity as a Catholic Cathedral. Instead, St. Mary's Church was elevated to the "pro-cathedral" (meaning in effect *acting* cathedral), in 1886. However, Pope Leo XIV elevated St. Mary's to the status of Cathedral last November, thereby nullifying Holy Trinity's status as a Catholic Cathedral. We visited these two cathedrals first because I thought it would be beneficial to understand the history .



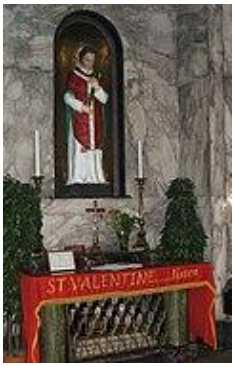


NateBergin, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior.

St. Mary's was the next place we visited, and we attended mass here. Planning for St. Mary's building began in 1803. By 1814 a competition for plans for the new church was held and construction began in 1815 and was finished by1825. The interior of the new Cathedral is Renaissance in style while the exterior is Greek Revival in style. When St. Mary's was built it was not meant to be a Cathedral. Therefore, over the years there were various plans and suggestions for a new one but they never reached the point of construction. And since Pope Leo just elevated St. Mary's to Cathedral status, it is unlikely a new cathedral will be built in the near future. Jean Housen, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar at right.

Then we went to visit the Shrine of St. Valentine and the Icon of Our Lady of Dublin in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, also called the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church.





blackfish, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right, St. Valentine shrine and the icon of Our Lady below, left. There are few hard facts around St. Valentine (known as St. Valentine of Rome), but we know he really did exist, because archaeologists have unearthed a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to St. Valentine. He is believed to have been a bishop or a priest. At the end of the fifth century, Pope Gelasius chose February 14th to celebration St. Valentine's martyrdom. It is a frequent site for pilgrims since some relics of St. Valentine were sent to the church in the early part of the 19th century.



Now many come to the Shrine for a long and happy relationship. On February 14, there is a special blessing of rings during Mass for those about to be married.

Also, in this church there is an icon of Our Lady of Dublin (left), from the 15th-century. Pollution has darkened the carved wooden statue of the Mary holding Infant Jesus. The years when coal was used for heating contributed significantly to the



darkness of the wood. It seems to be the favorite statue in Dublin. Apparently the statue was originally at St. Mary's Abbey. It is not known where the statute was during the Reformation However, it re-surfaced in 1915 and a shrine for the icon was built near the main altar of the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church, shown left. DubhEire, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons. It is also known as the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Shrine of Saint Valentine. The church was built in the 1800's on the same site as the abbey for the Carmelite order from the mid-1500's that was a destroyed during the reformation, so it seems fitting for the statue to be there now.

Stephen Bergin steve_, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, Front façade of Trinity. Our next stop was at Trinity College, left, specifically to view The *Book of Kells*. This book is an illuminated manuscript of the Gospels, meaning there are many artworks included to illustrate the Gospels. It is in Latin. If you remember during the first week of our pilgrimage, I mentioned this book when we were at St. Colombo's monastery on Iona. It is possible that others from other Columban monasteries also contribute to the Boof of Kells. The bok is from about 800 AD. I have included four pages to show the beautiful illustrations. Unattributed, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, first page. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, three other pages.











Please take a moment to enlarge each of these pages so you can see the incredible illustrations and calligraphy.

There is not much known about exactly where it was written and how the collaboration of writing and illustrating was done. It is known that it was at Abbey of Kells in County Meath in the 1200's because of documentation on blank pages. It wasn't unusual for people to use blank pages in books since paper was scarce for their own notes. The abbey church is credited with having the Book until 1654 when Cromwell and his soldiers were using the church for housing. The book was sent to Dublin at that time for safekeeping and later given to Trinity College in 1661.



Next we headed to Dublin Castle. ©K. Scharer , exterior. Antony-22, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior state corridor.



The castle was built on the highest point of the city for its strategic defensive purpose after the Norman invasion of the area. It sits between two rivers, the Poodle and the Liffey, which aided its defensive properties, although the Liffey River is much smaller these days. It was a built as a molte and bailey fortress but in the 1600's was pretty much rebuilt in Georgian style as

a Palace. While the Castle has had many used over the centuries, defensive, as a court, as a royal residence and as the seat of government, which is its current purpose.

Of course, we saw some other interesting places in Dublin. We had dinner one night in the oldest pub in Dublin, The Brazen Head. 

Addam Hardy, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. We also visited the Guinness Brewery, and had time to see other attractions, depending upon our interests, from botanical gardens to various museums.

Next we headed east and a bit north into the center of the country to County Offaly. An extinct volcano, Croghan Hill rises out of a bog. 
Croghan Hill Co Offaly by Kenneth Gallery Smyth, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right. It is believed to be one of the first areas in Ireland to be Christianized and it seems to have been used by prior civilizations as a religious site also. There is a mound at the summit which is thought to be a bronze age graveyard. There is also a Christian graveyard from the 400's on the hill. Legend has it that St. Patrick climbed the hill at one point and that St. Bridgid was born near here. Another ledged about the hill is that St. Patrick on his horse jumped halfway down the hill. He is said to have landed on a rock which turned into a well about 500 yards down the hill and a spring came up. It was turned into a well and each March 17th, locals go to the well for a drink and to say a prayer.

On the western side of the hill at the bottom is a are the ruins of a medieval castle and settlement. Today there is a village on the southern bottom of the hill.

Then we headed a bit south and west so we could walk the Pilgrim's Path to Clonmacnoise, an ancient monastery. This old monastery (right) is located next to the River Shannon. 
Clonmacnoise - Castle near entrance by Joseph Mischyshyn, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. 
Ingo Mehling, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right. At left are the ruins of an old castle. St. Ciaran had the monastery erected in the mid 500's AD. He envisioned the site as a center for religion, education, craftsmanship, and commerce. The site is one of the few ecclesiastical sites in Ireland where there have been pilgrimages from about the 6th century until now. The pilgrimage is a walk around the entire site, which is quite large. There were various places to stop and pray as we proceeded along the pilgrimage route.

Then we headed southeast back toward the coast to County Wicklow. (Ireland countryside is typically discussed in county terms unless there is a major city in the county.)

In Wicklow, we first stopped at Hollywood to begin walking St. Kevin way, an 18-mile trail, following in the footsteps of St. Kevin (Caoimhín Naofa, in Irish Gaelic) through the hills of Co. Wicklow 
to the valley of Glendalough where he initially lived in a cave. The following 2-minute video shows the rain we walked! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJNqtPJNstc

St. Kevin spent most of the rest of his life there in solitary prayer and contemplation. He lived in a cave near the lake, known as Kevin's Bed, shown right below. But after about seven years as a hermit, Kevin began attracting followers and a small place was built for them to live. It grew into a large monastery. After Kevin's death in AD 618, his monastery continued and pilgrims of Medieval time wanted to visit his tomb which was at the monastery. Before proceeding to the ruins of the monastic

buildings, we visited the interpretative center which provided the history of the area. While most of the monastery has fallen into ruin but one round tower remains standing to this day as seen in the picture above. Rafesmar, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, round tower.





Jan-Herm Janßen, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Kevin's Bed, right. We also saw the shell of St. Kevin's Cathedral, shown left. johanvanbetsbrugge, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, St. Kevin's Cathedral. Then we headed along the coast to Wexford.

Along the southeast coast in County Wexford, we found Lady's Island Lake. Our Lady's Island is at the northern shore of Lady's Island Lake and can be reached by a causeway. The Island and lake seem to have been used as a sacred site for women during the time of the Druids, perhaps as early as 200 BC. It was a pilgrimage place at that time. It is still a place for pilgrimage today but for different reasons. Now pilgrims come here to worship the blessed Mother. Lady's Island village and lake by Oliver Dixon, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.



Because the area is close to the continent, the area was well populated from early times. Archeologists have found evidence that a large population existed here, as is manifested by the many large areas surrounded by large clay mounds. There is a tall rock with a flatter one at the bottom, both naturally formed that are believed to have been used as a Druid altar.

But Christianity appears to have arrived during the 500's. St. Abban is believed to have built a church and monastery here devoted to Our Blessed Mother. And it quickly became a place of worship. Robert French, No restrictions, via Wikimedia Commons The photo left shows a bit of the remaining old monastery with the present village behind on the left. But unfortunately in 1649, Oliver Cromwell, trying to reomve all traces of Catholicism, arrived and murdered the priests who served the church on the Island. But just 20 years later, pilgrims were again flocking to the island.





When Comwell's soldiers arived a young boy rushed to the church and took the crucifix from the altar. While he was trying to bring the cross to safety, he was shot and the cross fell into the lake and got covered by mud. It was found in the late 1899's and needed a bit of restoration but is now considered a sacred relic. Andreas F. Borchert, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE, via Wikimedia Commons.

We then headed to Waterford, a bit west from Wexford. But before reaching Waterford city, we visited Mount Melleray Abbey, a Trappist monastery in in Waterford County. Alexander Redfern, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right. In 1982, the monks built a grotto with a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. An interesting event happened in August of 1985. A teen-aged girl was visiting the abbey with her family and they went to the grotto. The girl noticed that the statue was moving. Over the next several days, several others reported the same experience of the statue moving. As a result of there apparitions, people began visiting the grotto and praying to Our Lady of Lourdes. While we did not see any apparitions, we prayed at the grotto.



As the days passed people came from all over the country to see the Grotto and people continue to pray there regularly. We stopped to offer our own prayers before moving on to the city of Waterford.

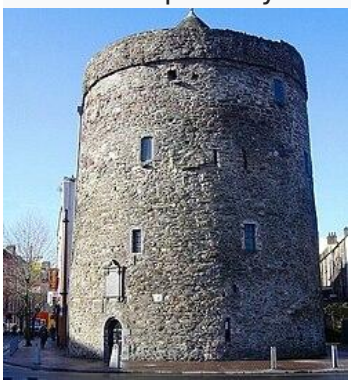


Of course, Waterford is well known for it beautiful crystal objects—vases, pitchers, candlesticks, etc. But Waterford also has a beautiful Cathedral! The Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity is the oldest post-reformation cathedral in Ireland because it was built 36 years before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1629 in 1573, the year as the Catholic Relief Act was passed. HTCHistory, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, *The Cathedral Sanctuary and Baldachin, left*. JohnArmagh, *Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, front façade of church.*



The first law allowed Catholics to start practicing their religion again while the later act allowed Catholics to hold public office and have the same citizenship rights as Anglicans. So, the builder immediately acted to build the church as soon as it was possible in law. We went to Mass while we were here.

Waterford is the oldest city in the country, originally inhabited by the Vikings in the mid 800's but then vacated in 902. But the Vikings returned in 914 and built the city on an inlet of the ocean. It has served as a port city since. The Vikings continued to live there, fending off various attackers, until the Norman Invasion by Anglo-Saxons when they lost the city to the English. One of the remnants of the Norman invasion which still stands is Reginald's Tower



Nmwalsh, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. The tower was built on the site of previous Viking fortifications and is the first known use of motor in buildings.

After the reformation, Waterford along with some other Irish places remain strongly Catholic and participated in the Kilkenny alliance with their own government. But when Oliver Cromwell arrived he was able to defeat the alliance and ensure the reformation went into effect. Before leaving the city, we went to the famous Waterford Crystal factory and some of us had pieces shipped home for souvenirs! And then we had to move on.

We continued heading east to Killarney. The first major settlement in the area was a monastery founded by St. Finian, the Leper, It was on a nearby island and lasted until the Reformation, about 850 years. St. Alban also did some missionary work in the area, so there is a rich history of Catholicism in Killarney. Our first stop was at the Cathedral of St. Mary, left.



NateBergin, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior and interior. The Cathedral building began in 1842 but for various reasons, construction was a bot sporadic. It was during the time of the Great Famine in Ireland and funds were not always available for building supplies or to pay workmen. So, it was not ready to be used until 1855. Work on the spire and nave were not completed until 1907.



The design of the Cathedral is more medieval in style rather than the Greek Revival style of St. Mary's in Dublin. And rather than being in the city, it is situated in a great open field outside the settlement of Killarney. Of course, the town has grown but it is still very green around the Cathedral.



After a brief walk around the town, we began the Ring of Kerry route which leaves and ends in Killarney. It actually starts in the National Park and the walk took us out on the east side of a peninsula into the ocean and then back on the west side to Killarney.

The first stop on the Ring route was at Ross Castle , shown above, left. Dumphasizer, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons. The building is from the 1400's and was built on the shore of Lough (Lake) Leane, shown right. ©K. Scharer. Ross Castle has passed through a variety of owners and was one of the last to fall to Oliver Cromwell's invading army. The castle repelled about 4000 soldiers on the land side of the castle but was defeated when attacked from the water side.



Muckross Abbey was our next stop. It was built by the Franciscans in 1448.



Daviddphotos, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. While the roof is gone from the abbey most of the walls are intact. It stands in what is now a national park, just on the other side of Lough Leane. The abbey was assaulted at least twice: Once during the late 1500's under Queen Elizabeth I. The second assault came from Cromwell in 1652. The second time the soldiers deliberately destroyed the roof so it could not be put back into use by the friars. Some of the friars were killed and the remainder fled to France, abandoning the Abbey.



Torc Waterfall was the scenic stop on our tour of the Ring. Torc Waterfall comes from the Irish words meaning the cascade of the wild boar. The falls are 66 feet high so the water rushed down in leaps and bounds, slashing into a pool with large rocks at the bottom. Ollie-odonnell, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right.

Ladies View is said to have gotten that name because the Ladies in Waiting of Queen Victoria stopped to admire the view when the Queen visited the area in 1861. It is a major attraction for photographers in Ireland, including your tour guide! ©K. Scharer, left. Trevor Rickard / Road junction at Molls Gap, Moll's Gap below right.



After leaving the National Park we continued along the Iverage peninsula to Moll's Gap. The Gap is a mountain pass on the Ring of Kerry route. Moll ran an unlicensed bar along this stretch of Road as the road was being constructed. The Gap is considered to have been formed during Ireland's last ice age about 25,000 years ago.



After passing through the gap, we continue along passing a few villages. The second one of these, Sneem, is described as highly colorful and that is certainly true It seems like every house is painted in some bright color: mauve, lawn green, bright yellow, etc.

Next we pass Staigue stone fort, or what remains of it. Podstawko, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. The fort is believed to be from the Iron Age, built around 100 BC. It appears to have been a defensive structure. It was built from local, undressed sandstone. No motor was used in the ring fort. Originally there were gaps in the walls and a doorway with a lintel stone. Although you cannot tell from the photo, inside there are stairways and passages that go to cells and terraces. The remaining walls are up to 18 feet high in places and 13 feet thick at the bottom. The diameter is about 90 feet.



Our next stop is the Derrynane House and nearby Abbey. The house belonged to a famous Irish Lawyer and statesman, Daniel O'Connell, and the house had been in the family for some time. Now the house is part of the Derrynane National Historic Park. We toured the house and also the lovely gardens,

still vibrant at this time of year. The house still has rooms furnished as they were in the 1700's and 1800's. Gillfoto, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Derrynane House, below left.



The Abbey was nearby on an island that had a causeway accessible at certain times of the day when tides were low. We were able to visit the ruined Abbey site. An aerial view of the Abbey is left. Podstawko, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. The Abbey is believed to have been built in the 500's by St. Finbar. However, there are apparently several sants name "Finbarr" in Ireland so Your Tour Guide cannot tell you much about this saint.



We continued along the peninsula, seeing beautiful scenery at almost every turn in the road and stopped at a village near the turning point of the end of the peninsula known as Portmagee. It was time for a brief rest and refreshment stop. Ingo Mehling, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.



We continue around the end of the peninsula heading back to Killarney. Our next stop is in Cahersiveen, another port town. The village sits on the side of a 1,234 foot high hill known as a Bentee in Ireland, and next to a river. As we walked around the area we saw evidence of early civilization such as ring forts, a Holy well and ruins of a castle. Leacanabuaile ring fort by Hansjoerg Lipp, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. Robert Linsdell from St. Andrews, Canada, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, right, church. We also stopped at the church in town, one of the few Catholic churches named after a lay person. It is the O'Connell Memorial Church. Daniel O'Connell is the lawyer and statesman we heard about before. Apparently he grew up near Cahersivee . He was the major leader mobilizing Catholics from every station in life in Ireland to achieve Catholic emancipation. There is a memorial to the man on the church's grounds. We were able to attend Mass in the church before moving on.







The Kerry Bog Village was our next and final stop before returning to Killarney. The Village is aa museum that depicts the life of traditional Irish villages in the 1800's. Kerry Bog Village Museum by Jo Turner, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons It is an open-air museum meaning there are various buildings and experiences that visitors can explore with outdoor and indoor experiences. It has restored thatched roof cottages, faming equipment, horse drawn-wagons, and other implements from the 1800's used in rural Ireland.

After seeing the museum, we headed back to Killarney to enjoy dinner at an Irish Pub. Monday morning will begin out last leg of our fall Pilgrimage.
Thanks for participating!

Your Tour Guide,

Kathy Scharer