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## [Walking Through Wexford Town](#)

Posted by: [Max Crean](#)

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Reflecting on life from a height of 37,000 feet, sipping a glass of Chardonnay wine, watching the good Earth's colour, mood and rugged terrain change is a miracle and blessing I cherish every time I fly, and this time was no different. Looking out with wonder along the distant horizon to a fabulous pale blue and orange red sunset. Marvelling at the starry dark blue vastness of space above. Watching the Sun's last rays play on wispy cloudtops floating serenely far below; brilliant white turning pale yellow then to a rich dark red fading through shades of bluish grey into the dusk. Like no other place between heaven and earth here was peace, perspective, and time to think.

As the sandy wastes of Western China, the Gobi, Khazakstan gave way to the the endless forests of Siberia, thoughts about the road trip to the land of my ancestors came to mind.

The county of Wexford in Ireland was the place of my mothers birth on October 6th, 1917. It is an eye watering eight and a bit thousand miles as the crow digs or twelve thousand as it flies. If you were to put a very long knitting needle through the Earth's core, starting on the lawn just in front of my home in New Zealand it would pop up somewhere in the vicinity of Wexford town hall; allowing of course for some experimental error with a knitting needle and a friends six inch diameter globe. This geographical coincidence was not lost on my genealogical sensibilities, however, with only one lifetime at my disposal, it didn't take long to figure out burrowing a passage to the northern hemisphere through the bowels of the Earth was a tad ambitious, so decided to fly.

Discovering my Irish ancestry and the desire to do so has grown over the years, manifesting itself in many plans to visit, only for life to intervene and set aside my plans for another day, and then another, and another yet again. Now in the summer of 2009 fate and fortune were in alignment at last, the time had come; Ireland was to be part of a fly drive tour round Europe also taking in the English Cotswolds, Snowdonia in Wales, the Spanish Mediterranean then Italy and Rome. Sitting back in my seat I started to dust down some old memories.

Assembling what few facts I knew about my mother and her childhood brings with it a sense of loss, it always has and I know in my heart this is one of the reasons a trip to Ireland had never been made. I was still hurting and it was high time to do something about it. Blocking out the unhappy memories of an unloved and neglected childhood, I now realise, has also blocked the path to reconciliation with my mother's memory and her rightful place in my heart. Strange as it may seem to adults who as children were lucky enough to be surrounded by Grandads, Grandma's, Aunts, Uncles, cousins once and twice removed; our family was alone, Mum, Dad, my brothers, my sister and me and that was it. In the past when this melancholy emotion comes bubbling to the surface of my thoughts it would be contained, battened down and ignored, but this time was different. This sense of

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loss for what might have been may never leave me completely but knowledge, they say, dispels fear. I am my mother's son and she was a daughter of Ireland, I was determined to know their history and so in turn know mine, to acknowledge the privilege of life I owe them both. This was my frame of mind as the aircraft landed at London Heathrow and the reverse thrust of the aircraft engines kicked in.

After after a bum numbing twelve hour flight, release from captivity was imminent. I carefully packed away thoughts as the huge wings and frame of our hermetically sealed village trundled toward the terminal. By the time Angelika was gathered into my arms in the arrivals lounge they were gone but not forgotten. It was to be three weeks later they were fully unbundled as the afternoon ferry from Holyhead to Dublin slipped the Quay and set sail for the Emerald Isle.

It is a little known fact that Ireland along with Luxembourg is now one of the most prosperous states of Europe and the world. The path to this exalted position has not been easy. Its ancient and modern history is interwoven with that of Celts, Romans, Vikings, Normans and for almost the last thousand years the whim of English Kings. It's progress punctuated by wars, rebellions and brutal suppression. The Republic Of Ireland or Eire as it wishes to be known came into being with the Executive Powers (Consequential Provisions) Act, 1937. Until Ireland ceded its sovereignty to the Lisbon treaty of 2009 stood, at last, as a proud and independent nation. As one commentator on a Dublin radio talk show put it "We didn't really want independence we just thought we would play with it for a while".

Our car rolled off the ferry into the Dublin's crowded, milling streets after a two hour crossing of the Irish Sea in July 2009. The evening sun welcomed us into the heart of the city. Angelika looked at me with a big grin and put her hand up for a high five, after all the talk we were there. Now where was that hotel?..... Bugger, It didn't look that far away when I booked it.

The evening sun welcomed us as we made our way into the heart of the city. We were staying at the Louis Fitzgerald hotel in south west Dublin it is about 15 Kilometres of city centre driving to get there. We both lost our bearings about 10 seconds after we left the ferry terminal, hopelessly lost we both started laughing, this wasn't as big a problem for us as it might have been for many others. We were veteran road trekkers, sometimes you just have to go with the flow, if you are lost in a big city so be it. A lesson learned many years ago about the art of really being in a place is to always keep alert, your eyes, ears and mind open, camera at the ready if needs be, just have a look around and enjoy it.

Rolling down the window, a relaxed arm leaning on the door and controlling the wheel we drove through hordes of U2 fans coming out Croke park after their homecoming concert, 80,000 of them. It also explained why pre-booking accommodation close to the city centre had been so hard and the astronomical price of what accommodation there was. All requests to my navigator for updates on our present location were returned with an innocent and clueless smile so when we saw a sign saying "City Centre" we took a left and turned south on the N1, crossing the Liffey River a little while later then working our way out to the Louis Fitzgerald near Clondalkin taking in the sights and sounds along the way. We had good look at Dublin's buildings and architecture between Croke Park and our hotel. They were a reminder of the mighty influence English culture has had on the Irish. I had to pinch myself when I started thinking I had somehow landed on the Leytonstone high road and was heading into the City of London.

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To cap off a great days travel we had our hotel room upgraded free of charge, it seems they had double booked our room and were "full". They upgraded us to disabled and put us in the "Disabled suite" at a room rate nominally four times what we had paid for the other. Grinning like Cheshire cats we dumped our bags in our fine accommodation and headed into town on the tram for something to eat and drink. Listening to the Gaelic pronunciation of all the station names on the way in was a joy, blackhorse is "An Capell Dubh", and I swear it sounded like they got Enya to do the recording, magic.

We got off at Connely in the heart of the city. We had set out from Coggeshall in Essex at six o'clock in the morning now it was to be Saturday night in Dublin and now here we were stepping through the evening light along with thousands of others in this place so far away from home. Angelika might have settled for a quiet night in after our long day but I was on a secret mission.

Redoubtable and experienced Guinness drinkers I meet on my travels assure me that the stuff drunk in the worlds watering holes was but a pale comparison to the real thing being supped in the land of the Leprauchaun. Therefore one of the things I had promised to do was to drink a pint of Guinnesss, that icon of Irishness, in a traditional pub in the heart of Dublin. Surely a truer experience of Irish life a man could not have.

We found the pub we were looking for on Swift's Row by the River Liffey, with lots of polished wood and brass fittings you could practically see the peat fire and smell the puffing clay pipes of centuries past, it was ideal. A pint of the venerable black stuff was ordered and its delivery into my hands was keenly anticipated. After a portentous period of pouring the bartender appeared triumphantly with the pint, he had even managed to draw an outline of the shamrock on the head of the beer, a nice touch. The Guinness and surroundings were perfect but I could not help but wonder at the juxtaposition of the pint's unarguably Irish heritage with the smiling oriental features of the Chinaman who served it to me.

The next thing I had to reconcile myself to was the reason for this Chinamans beaming face, he had just charged me EUR 5.50 for the black stuff and EUR 3.25 for Angelika's orange, we were being robbed. I found out later that the price of Guinness had been fixed by law, don't laugh its true, they were just debating whether to free it up again. GPI (Guinness Price Inflation) is a serious matter to pub owners whos impoverished patrons have deserted them. Make no mistake this land was changing.

Sunday would be spent sightseeing; Monday I would attend the Dublin records office and search for my mum and her history

To Be continued.....

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