

Celtic Camino Route Notes

Bray to St James's Gate

You are now, but only if you want to be, a pilgrim on the road to Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrims of all religions and none relate to each other and the places through which they walk in a particular way; this is the way it always has been. Neruda was not talking about the Camino, but of course he was talking about the Camino, when he wrote:

*Nadie puede llamarse Pedro,
ninguna es Rosa ni María,
todos somos polvo o arena,
todos somos lluvia en la lluvia.
Me han hablado de Venezuelas,
de Paraguayes y de Chiles,
ne sé de lo que están hablando:
conozco la piel de la tierra
y sé que no tiene apellido.¹*

(Demasiado Nombres – Too Many Names – Neruda. Vintage Neruda by Vintage Classics)

So let us walk a bit with an open mind and an open heart and see what we can see.

Along the way will see some native flora and there are Hispanic connections here as well as some historical connections I will note. I have a personal communication from Dr Matthew Jebb, Director of the National Botanic Gardens as follows:

“Where genetic work has been undertaken on Irish woody plant species (This would mostly be woodland species – the slowest and steadiest ‘migratory’ plants) it is apparent that they share genetic links with Spanish populations above those of almost anywhere else in Europe.

For example Oaks in Ireland show a strong genetic link with Oaks of the Iberian peninsula above all other European samples. The earliest samples of pollen all occur in bogs in Cork/Waterford, implying that the arrival route was across the Celtic sea, which when lowered by the Ice age would have provided a landscape of many islets.”

Stage 1 Bray Seafront to St James's Church Crinken (Bré – meaning unclear)

¹ No one can claim the name of Pedro, Nobody is Rosa or Maria, all of us are dust or sand, all of us are rain under rain.

They have spoken to me of Venezuelas, of Chiles and of Paraguays; I have no idea what they are saying. I only know the skin of the earth and I know that it is without a name.

Bray Esplanade

We are standing near the first Mouteiro in Ireland inaugurated by the Spanish Ambassador, Ion de la Riva, in 2023.

Before the advent of the railway in 1853 Bray was a poor fishing village. The railway brought seaside and other resort holidays throughout England and Ireland. The railway pioneer, **William Dargan (1799-1867)**, with the support of the local landowner, William Brabazon (1803-1877), 11th Earl of Meath purchased land near the shore; removed '*unsightly huts of fishermen and bathing women*', compensating the occupants and creating the esplanade. This is our starting point.

St Paul's Church, Bray

St Paul's Church, erected in 1609 and reconstructed in 1911, on the south shore of the River Dargle opposite the Royal Hotel, is the oldest building in Bray. The building was deconsecrated in 1987

Stage 2 St James Church to Station Road Killiney (Killiney – Cill Iníon Léinín Church of the daughters of Léinín)

St James Church, Crinken

Parishioners at St Paul's Church Bray in the 1820's became dissatisfied with the Rector, Rev Robert McGee.

In response, Crinken was founded by two women, **Mrs Hanna Georgina Magan** and **Mrs James Clarke**. It opened on 14 June 1841 and pursues a mission of evangelical ministry. It is defined as a '*church without walls*', or a parish not defined by territory. An unusual feature of this Anglican Church is a large bath in the cellars for baptism by total immersion and not, I think, in use today.

The daughter of Georgina Magan, **Augusta Elizabeth Magan (1825-1905)** was reputedly the wealthiest heiress in Ireland. She was jilted at the altar. She was the inspiration for *Miss Havisham* in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. In 1879 she gave her property at 77 St Stephen's Green to Charles Stewart Parnell² at a knock-down rent of £23 per annum

Shanganagh Castle (Seangánach – the place of the ants)

² ("The Chief" of whom Yeats wrote in "Come gather round me Parnellites": "*The bishops and the Party that tragic story made, About a man who sold his wife and later then betrayed, But the stories that live longest live on above the glass, and Parnell loved his country and Parnell loved his lass*")

The core of Shanganagh Castle dates from the 1760's.
In Shanganagh Park you will find the second Mouteiro.

Stage 3 Station Road Killiney to Convent Road Dalkey (Dalkey -Deilig Inis -Thorn Island)

George Bernard Shaw lived here as a boy. *"I lived on a hilltop with the most beautiful view in the world – I only had to open my eyes to see such pictures as no painter could make for me"* (with thanks to Maurice Dockrell and as set out in "Between the Mountains and the Sea, Peter Pearson).

We cannot leave this beautiful village of Dalkey without a reference to Flann O'Brien's, *The Dalkey Archive* which features the fictional mad scientist , De Selby, who tries to destroy the world by removing all the oxygen from the air and in which novel both James Joyce and St Augustine have speaking parts. Nor should we pass by without remembering Hugh Leonard playwright famous for "Da" and Maeve Binchy the novelist. It is home now to famous artists who, like everyone else, are entitled to their privacy; so now let us pass on.

Dalkey is also home to the annual Dalkey Book Festival.

Stage 4 Convent Road Dalkey to Joyce Tower

Joyce Tower

This is one of the many Martello towers built around the Coast for fear of Napoleon invading . They were intended to garrison troops. It is a place of pilgrimage for Joyce enthusiasts particularly on Bloomsday.

James Joyce stayed at this Martello Tower between 9 and 14 September 1904. The Tower had been leased from the War Office by Joyce's former friend **Oliver St John Gogarty** who inspired the character Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*. The opening scenes of *Ulysses* take place here.

Gogarty was furious of the depiction of him in the novel.

Stage 5 Joyce Tower to Seapoint Tower

Roger Casement Statue

Roger Casement was born in Doyle's Cottage Sandycove, between Fitzgerald's Pub and The Butler's Pantry in a row formerly known as Lawson's Terrace. A plaque on the façade of 29 Sandycove Road marks the location.

The representational bronze statue of Roger Casement (1864-1916) was placed on 14 September 2021.

Commissioned by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co Council following an open competition, it is the work of sculptor **Mark Richards**, Fellow Royal Society of Sculptors.

Dun Laoghaire Harbour -(Dún Laoghaire – Fort of Laoghaire – Laoghaire was a 5th Century High King of Ireland who used this site as a base to carry out raids on Britain and Gaul.)

The Harbour was constructed between 1817 and 1859, a decade after the construction of Howth Harbour. It was intended to be an ‘asylum harbour’, where ships could take refuge in a storm.

The Harbour was constructed mainly from granite sourced at Dalkey Hill.

The last visit of Queen Victoria to Ireland was in 1900. She arrived in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) and the Victoria Fountain here was erected in memory of this. It was vandalized in 1980 and in 1981.

It has been restored and now happily is left, not as endorsement of anything or rejection of anything, but as a monument to our history. It’s a marker stone on the way in every sense.

Stage 6 Seapoint Tower to Merrion Gates

Seapoint Tower

Seapoint Tower was one of 50 small defensive coastal forts, or Martello towers, erected around Ireland in the early 1800’s, each at a cost of £1,800. They stand 12M tall with two floors to accommodate a garrison of 15-25 men and an officer. There were 26 Martello towers along the coast of Co Dublin in line of sight of each other.

On the 20th of November 1807 gale force wind caused the sinking of two troop ships, the *SS Rochdale*, and the packet ship *Prince of Wales*, on rocks near Blackrock. They were carrying troops to the Napoleonic Wars. The impact of 400 bodies being washed ashore had a huge impact on both public and official opinion.

The Seapoint Tower was the clubhouse of Seapoint Boat Club between 1916 and 1931 and subsequently headquarters of the Geological Society of Ireland, who vacated the Tower because the atmosphere within was not conducive to the preservation of records.

Newtown House, Newtown Avenue

Newtown House was built around 1800 in an elegant suburb then called Newtown-on-Strand and now called Blackrock. Jeremiah and Catherine O'Meara lived here. The O'Meara's were well-off and got on well with their neighbours in Newtown. **Lord Edward Fitzgerald**, (incidentally a cousin of **Charles James Fox**) was among their many friends. (Lord Edward's mother was a formidable woman. She holidayed in Blackrock and invited Rousseau to tutor her children which he was not available to do. Lord Edward was an aristocrat but became a leader in the Society the United Irishmen and was fatally wounded in the course of arrest on the eve of the rebellion of 1798.) For an interesting account of the life of Lord Edward read Citizen Lord by Stella Tillyard.

The O'Meara's had a son, **Dr Barry Edward O'Meara** who was a Royal Navy physician and surgeon and a founding member of the Reform Club at Pall Mall London. He accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte to Saint Helena. He was Napoleon's physician and, at the Emperor's suggestion, kept a diary of his conversations with him on St Helena. The diary is a fascinating glimpse of the character of Napoleon.

For example the entry for the 19th of March 1817 finds Napoleon in his bath reading the New Testament. This surprised O'Meara who considered that most would have regarded Napoleon as an unbeliever.

"It is not true" said Napoleon, "I am far from an atheist. In spite of the iniquities and frauds of the teachers of religion, when I was in power I did everything I could to re-establish religion. Man needs something wonderful. It is better he seeks it in religion than in fortune telling! Moreover, religion is a great consolation and resource to those who possess it, and no man can say what he will do in his last moments."

On the 20th of September, by way of further example, the conversation turned to the dangers Napoleon had seen and O'Meara asked how many horses had been killed under him in battle "*eighteen or perhaps nineteen*" was the reply!

I am grateful to "Napoleon's Doctor – The St Helena Diary of Barry O'Meara" by Dr Hubert O'Connor for this information.

Napoleon made O'Meara a gift of a snuff box, a statuette, a toothbrush and a bar of soap bearing his profile and a promissory note for 100,000 francs when O'Meara left St Helena. The personal items form part of the collections at the Royal College of Physicians, Kildare Street, Dublin.

Blackrock House, Newtown Avenue

Blackrock House was built in 1774 and became the residence of **John** and later his fourth son **Edward Smith Lees**, Secretaries of the newly established Post Office in 1774.

Blackrock House was used as the summer residence of the Lords Lieutenant, when it temporarily received the name Rutland Lodge.

Others who regularly visited included the Lord Lieutenants of Ireland George Nugent Temple-Granville (1753-1813) Marquess of Buckingham between 1787 and 1789; John Fane (1759-1841) 10th Earl of Westmoreland between 1789 and 1794; his successor, Charles Pratt (1714-1794), 1st Earl Camden; Robert Stewart (1769-1822) Viscount Castlereagh, Chief Secretary for Ireland who oversaw the Act of Union and the infamous John FitzGibbon (1748-1802) 1st Earl of Clare, Attorney-General and subsequently Lord Chancellor and architect of the Act of Union – also called “Black Jack”.

Idrone Terrace

This formal terrace overlooking Dublin Bay and is unusual because it was built without stables, marking a change in the social and residential patterns facilitated by the advent of the railway. The railway enabled the middle class to reside outside the City.

Blackrock Railway Station

The Station was opened on 17 December 1834 as one of the three original stations on the new route – the others being Westland Row and Kingstown. The design was inspired by that of a classical villa.

Rock Road

The Rock Road is one of the five oldest roads in Ireland. It was originally known as *Slíghé Chulain* and linked Tara, seat of the High Kings with Co Wicklow

The Old Punch Bowl, Booterstown

Dating from 1779, this is the oldest pub in the neighbourhood. It was known as a haunt for highwaymen.

Booterstown Marsh

The only remaining saltmarsh on the south shore of Dublin bay provides an environmental awareness amenity within an urban setting. It is a brackish water

marsh covering approximately 4.3 ha, with both salt and fresh water intakes and has a seasonal pattern of vegetation. It is an important bird feeding and roosting area for ducks, geese and waders and probably contains the highest concentration of wintering wildfowl of an Irish estuary. Keep an eye out for the Little Egret a brilliantly white heron-type bird. It was rare in Ireland and familiar to the Mediterranean and the coast of North Africa until it first started breeding here and is perhaps a sign of global warming.

7 Merrion Gates to Hanover Quay

Sandymount Strand and Joyce

The two chimneys of the Poolbeg power station are locally called the Barber Poles because of their red and white hoops. They are no longer in use and they were to be demolished but following a lengthy campaign they were given protected status. They are not identical twins and have different dimensions. They have acquired cult-status but are remarkably new: one was built in 1969 and the other in 1977. They are quite visible from the airplane and for some a welcome sign of home. (I am grateful to Kurt Kullman's *The Little Book of Sandymount* for this information). And for some the barbers poles are home: peregrine falcons have been seen to nest there!

The high white steel sculpture at the city end of the promenade in Sandymount has various names. It was exhibited in Japan under the name Geisha and later called An Cailín Bán (the fair maiden) and finally called "Awaiting the Mariner". Some call it the Mexican Wave! It was a gift from the Mexican artist Sebastian to the City of Dublin. Controversial at first, (the Irish Times headline at the time of installation was "Sculpture on Sandymount Strand creates shock waves"), it has gained acceptance.

James Joyce was born at 41 Brighton Square Rathmines in 1882 and subsequently resided at 16 different addresses in Dublin, including 35 and 103 Strand Road Sandymount in 1904. William Butler Yeats and Seamus Heaney also lived in Sandymount.

Joyce's great novel, *Ulysses*, chronicles the experience of three Dubliners in the course of a single day, Thursday 16 June 1904.

It was written over a period of 7 years outside Ireland but Joyce declared '*Ulysses is going to make my place famous*'. But in 1920 when the novel was serialized the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice successfully argued to have *Ulysses* declared obscene, regarded as a work of perversion and effectively banned in the US before being published as a complete novel.

The banning was a reaction to the use of four-letter words and the stream of consciousness narrative of one of the characters, revealing her innermost

thoughts. A particularly explicit episode concerning Bloom occurs on Sandymount Strand.

In the late 1930's Sandymount Strand was considered as a possible location to construct a new Dublin Airport.

In Ulysses Joyce has Stephen question " *Am I walking into eternity on Sandymount Strand? Crush,crick,crick.*"

Seamus Heaney wrote:

*"The dotted line my father's ashplant made,
On Sandymount Strand
Is something else the tide won't wash away"*

And you can find these words inscribed in stone in the Jardin de las Piedras que Hablan – Xardin das Pedras que Falan – in Santiago right next to the words of Rosalía de Castro at the centre of the spiral arrangement of speaking stones. When you arrive in Santiago this Garden of the Speaking Stones is well worth a visit. Amongst the other stones are the words of Marta Pessarrodona, Kerstin Hensel, Zenó Bianu, Bernardo Atxaga, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, Antonio Gamoneda and Luz Pozo Garza.

The words of Rosalía I sense are apposite but I would welcome a clear translation from the Gallego:

*"Dende aquí vexo un camino,
Que non sei a donde vai,
polo mesmo que n'ó sei,
quixera o poder andar"*

If the tide is out we can walk a few steps on Sandymount Strand.

Sandymount Baths

Sandymount sea-water Baths were constructed in 1883 and connected to the shore by a 75 metre pier which featured a bandstand. The pier was demolished in 1920.

Sandymount Martello Tower

The Tower was used by Dublin United Tramways Co as an office. It operated trams and buses in Dublin until 1945.

Oliver Cromwell and Ringsend

Ringsend was originally a long narrow peninsula separated from the rest of Dublin by the then much broader estuary of the River Dodder. A bridge was erected in 1640 which has been replaced five times.

Oliver Cromwell arrived in Ringsend with his army comprising 4,000 horses and 8,000 foot soldiers on 15 August 1649.

As we walk to Grand Canal Dock take time to see the stunning graffiti artwork along the way.

Grand Canal Dock

Before Grand Canal Dock was opened in April 1796 this district, from medieval times, was associated with lepers – a legacy reflected in the street names such as Misery Hill and Lazer Lane and slightly further away, Townsend Street (Shraid Cnoc na Lobhar – The street of the Hill of the Lepers) Those afflicted by leprosy also made the medieval pilgrimage to Santiago.

The original Port of Dublin was situated upriver, near the Civic Offices on Wood Quay. When the Dock opened it was the largest port in the world. It was a bustling industrial hub – full of mills, warehouses, coal and dockyards. However, by the 1820's it could not accommodate steam powered ships and eventually fell into disuse and dilapidation until massively renovated from the late 1980's.

8 Hanover Quay to Christchurch Cathedral.

The replica statue to Admiral Brown founder of the Argentine Navy is here on Sir John Rogerson's Quay.

On Custom House Quay you will see the Famine Statues to the victims of the Irish Famine. It is by Rowen Gillespie and is haunting.

Trinity College Dublin

We are now at the site of the pre-reformation All Saints (Hallows) Priory which was located in medieval times where Trinity now is. Here we connect with the earliest reference to the medieval Irish pilgrimage to Santiago which is found in Archbishop Alen's register. From the register we know that funding was designated in 1216 or 1217 for a Dublin hostel for pilgrims to Santiago. It was to be built by the Priory and possibly near to a small inlet in the river Liffey where the Stein or Steyn is close to Pearse Street Garda Station. It is not known whether the hostel was ever built. But the record proves a Dublin connection with the pilgrimage going back over 800 years. You are now walking on that medieval pilgrim path as far as your destination at St James's.

This Augustinian Priory of All Saints provided accommodation for visitors and all religious houses were expected to provide hospitality to pilgrims and travellers. So it is likely that Pilgrims on the way to Santiago stayed here.

Created in 1592 under Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), only surviving child of King Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his second wife Anne Boleyn (1507-1536), who was executed by beheading. It is located on the former site of All Hallows. Catholics were permitted to enter and take degrees from 1793, when it had been in existence for over 200 years. All religious tests, except those connected with the Divinity School, were abolished in 1873. Catholics however required a dispensation from their local Bishop to attend.

Parliament House, College Green

The Palladian Bank of Ireland was the world's first purpose-built two-chamber Parliament House. The Parliament remained there until the Act of Union 1800. The main entrance to the former House of Lords has six Corinthian columns crowned by statues representing Justice, Fortitude and Liberty.

Dublin Castle and the Chester Beatty Library.

Dublin Castle was the centre of British Administration in Ireland. Red Hugh O'Donnell and Art O'Neill escaped from here in 1591.

On the 28th of January 1602 Red Hugh arrived in Santiago de Compostela, stayed in San Martin Pinario and attended Mass the next day in the Cathedral. On arrival in Spain in January 1602 at A Coruna Red Hugh had gone to visit Breogán's Tower – the tower of Hercules to pay homage to "his ancestors". This leads to a discussion of the shared history/myth that the Irish and Spanish/Gallegos are one people. This history/myth surfaced at different times including, quite surprisingly, at the time of Mayor James Michaels Curley's leadership of the Puerto Rican delegation which placed all its vote for FDR at the Democratic Convention. How this erstwhile and controversial Mayor of Boston came to do that is another story!

Christ Church Cathedral

The Cathedral of the United Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough is the elder of Dublin's two medieval cathedrals, the other being St Patrick's Cathedral. It was founded in the 11th Century, rebuilt in the 12th Century and enlarged in the 13th Century. It was extensively renovated in the 19th Century, giving it the form we see today, including the tower, flying buttresses and distinctive covered footbridge.

Bernadette Cunningham (Medieval Irish Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela) notes that Christchurch, with its multitude of relics, would have attracted

pilgrims to Santiago and the Augustinian canons there might have offered hospitality.

She notes that while relics were not, unlike on the continent, usual at Irish Pilgrim sites Christchurch was an exception. Here there was the baculus Ihesu (the staff of Christ reputedly given to St Patrick by an angel), a thorn from the crown of thorns and a miraculous speaking crucifix amongst other relics including that of St Foy of Conques (Conques is one of the major shrines on the Le Puy route to Santiago).

The visiting of relics and the miracles associated with them is a theme which is fully developed in the Codex Calixtinus (The famous 12th Century guide to the Camino). Book V Chapter VIII, thereof is entitled “The bodies of the Saints that rest on the Road to Santiago and should be visited by pilgrims” and by coincidence or otherwise, St Foy (St Faith) is buried at Conques on the Le Puy road to Santiago.

The Author of the Codex advises “Burgundians” and “Tuetons” to visit her remains there as they pass by. A church was built above her remains and the rule of Saint Benedict scrupulously observed (ie hospitality to all). At the front of the Church was a spring “more admirable than what can be praised with words” . Water was and is of supreme importance to the pilgrim. (I acknowledge Teresa Moralejo Gárate for her translation of the codex and published by Alvarellos)

We might pause here at this once-Catholic and now -Protestant and beautiful, welcoming Cathedral, to consider the Reformation which led to the decline in the Pilgrimage to Santiago. Martin Luther regarded the veneration of St James as idolatrous; Erasmus strongly criticized both the cult of relics and extended pilgrimage. Pilgrimage was one of the fault-lines of the Reformation.

Now we all walk together as once we did in the middle ages. Christchurch, Archbishop Jackson and Dean Dunne have been exceptionally hospitable to the Bray to St James’s Camino and the simple “neighbouring” (to use a beautiful Ulster-Scots word for “Meitheal”) which occurs along its route.

Whatever about the motivation of the medieval pilgrim , a fundamental purpose/result of modern pilgrimage surely is to reconcile with nature, ourselves and each other?

St Audeons

The scallop shell is of course associated with St James and baptismal fonts using a scallop-shell design were widespread in medieval Europe, BF tells us. A 12th Century Irish example is found at St Audeons.

9. Christchurch Cathedral to St James’s Church.

We now pass the remains of the old City wall and enter the famous Liberties. At Thomas Street recent excavations found remains with scallop shells worn.

St James's

We will now shortly reach St James's and the end of the journey. Before we go in notice the figure of the Liberator on the left side of the archway above the door. O'Connell was "The Liberator", a champion of non-violence and may be mentioned alongside Ghandi and Martin Luther King. He shares this name, given to him by the people, with Simón Bolívar, "El Libertador". One of his sons, Morgan O'Connell, was a young volunteer officer in Bolívar's army at the age of 15.

Bernardo O'Higgins, of Basque, Spanish and Irish ancestry fought with Bolívar in the liberation of Perú. After the battle of Ayacucho he returned to Bolívar for the victory celebrations but dressed not as a general but as a civilian; he toasted Bolívar "Senor, America is free. From now on General O'Higgins does not exist; I am only Bernardo O' Higgins, a private citizen" O'Higgins clearly understood the Meitheal system.

The Meitheal was over and he went back to being himself.

I wish to thank particularly Myles Duffy of Probus and Trekkers who laid the foundations for this note.

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(I would welcome additional stories from the people and places along this camino to add to this note)

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