

Tom and Susan Take A Journey To Ireland

Our journey actually began on July 4th, 2005, when I asked Tom if we were ever going to be able to visit Ireland, and he said, "Well, why don't you see what you can find." From my earliest memories, I had always wanted to go to Ireland, the place where so many of my ancestors had lived and died. I set out to see what I could find. I investigated the best month to go, when the least amount of tourists would be there. October seemed to be good, although historically it is the wettest month of the year. We decided on the departure and return dates, October 14th and October 21st, respectively. With that done, it was time to see who had the best deals as far as flight prices were concerned. After several days of checking prices on various websites, we decided to use Orbitz to make our reservations, and it worked out really well. It was only a few hours later, and we had our flights booked and paid for. The next thing on the list would be to reserve a car, decide on where to spend our time while there, and find a place to stay.

By July 9th we had reserved a car through Budget of Ireland. Now we needed to decide just what it was we wanted to see in Ireland. I had an old travel book which described the regions. I thought it would be nice to see the area where my Grandfather Cornelius Sheehans' family had come from, which was in the County Limerick area, so I searched for bed and breakfasts there. After many days I found one in the town of Glin, which is situated along the banks of the River Shannon. Tom and I decided that this would work well for us, and we booked for three nights there. Then, knowing that we would have to travel back to the Dublin area to catch our flight back to the U.S., we started looking for a place to stay in the east of Ireland. We found several nice B&B's, but decided to try for one near the town of Duleek, close by Newgrange, which was one of the places we definitely wanted to visit. We were able to book there for three nights. We thought that we were set, and all that was left was to wait until the day of departure.



The weeks passed. I sent e-mails to the owners of the B&B's where we had booked. The hostess in Glin was quite helpful, answering all the questions that I had about the accommodations and even suggesting a mini-itinerary of sights we could visit in the area. The hostess in Duleek was another thing altogether. She didn't seem like a very friendly sort of person. I sent an e-mail inquiring about a few things. I was curious to know if we would be given an entry door key, if there were certain hours that we were expected to keep, etc. (these were the same questions that I had asked the B&B in Glin.) Her reply sounded impatient. My questions were never actually answered. I wrote another e-mail a few days later basically asking the same questions, to which she replied that she would not be able to accommodate us after all, that something unforeseen had come up. Perhaps something did indeed happen which prevented her from booking our room. I did get the sense that she just simply did not like my questions, and that her home would not be a pleasant place to stay. I am so glad that she could not book us! However, I found myself once more searching for a place to stay while on the east coast of Ireland.

Tom and I talked about the time it would take to drive to the west coast, and since we would end up spending two days traveling, decided that we would concentrate our travel on the east coast. I canceled our reservations in Glin. The hostess there was very kind, and wished us the best in our travels. It didn't take long to find a lovely place to stay, a corn grist mill which had been converted into four cottages, situated along the River Dee. I booked the reservation, paying ahead of time to make certain of our place.

Now all that was left was to wait for the days to pass. I counted the days by marking them off on my calendar. We took the time to try and familiarize ourselves as much as possible with the area in which

we were going to stay. But it was not until after we arrived that we would realize how much historical and mythological abundance the area in which we found ourselves held.

A little bit about the Sheehan name from the wonderful website ARALTAS.COM :

The beautiful name Sheehan or Sheahan, sometimes contracted to Sheen or Shean, is the anglicisation of the Irish Ó Siodhacháin, from a diminutive of siodhach, meaning 'peaceful'. The eponymous ancestor of the family is disputed, but must have been unique among the Irish of the day to have deserved the description "peace maker". Not every scholar accepts this origin of the name, but given the fact that the sept's traditional coat of arms features a dove of peace, there will be few of the name who will want to consider any alternative. One ancient genealogy places the sept's ancestor as a brother of Brian Boru while another has him as a member of the Scanlan sept. The Book of Leinster refers to "Muintir Sidechain" from a distant relative of Brian Boru.

Cormac Cas was King of Thomond (Tuathmhumhan, modern county Clare with adjacent parts of Limerick and Tipperary) around the fifth century and he spawned a tribal grouping known as the Dál gCais or Dalcassians which dominated Munster until the final suppression of the old Gaelic order in the seventeenth century. Their most famous family is that of O'Brien, but the group includes other well known families such as McNamara, O'Grady, Heffernan, McMahan, Hickey, Clancy, etc. Regardless of the precise identity of their ancestor, the sept of Ó Siodhacháin is believed by most authorities to be part of the Dál gCais, having a chief residence in Lower Connello, Co. Limerick. O'Sheehan, O'Meehan and O'Cullane all served as chiefs in that barony. Over the centuries, however, the members of the sept migrated southwards and in modern times the name is most common in County Cork, though also found in Kerry and Limerick. The name starts to appear regularly in the records of Cork from the fourteenth century mentioned in connection with Kilcredan parish in the diocese of Cloyne on several occasions. We find John Shyghan of Youghal who was a tailor there in 1617. In the same town we find William Sheehan as town clerk in 1688. We also find one Thadeus O'Sheaghan as a Church of Ireland Vicar of Inchigeelagh in 1639. In 1689 we find one Capt. William Sheehan in King James army list.

It is one of Ireland's very numerous surnames: combining the alternative spellings it holds the seventy-fifth place in the list thereof, with an estimated total population in Ireland today of about eight thousand five hundred persons of the name. Of these the great majority were born in Co. Cork or, on its borders, in the adjacent counties of Kerry and Limerick.

Some more exotic variants of the name which appear in old records include O'Sheaghane, O'Sheehane, O'Sheghane, Shehane and Sheghane. One or more of the name of Shyhane are given as titulados in Costlea barony in Limerick in the 1659 census. The rather rare spelling of McSheaghan was found as late as the 1890 birth index. This may represent an entirely different family, i.e. stemming from a name like Mac Sheehy, or may simply be a variation of the spelling of O'Sheehan.

Although the name has little present-day association with Connacht it should be stated that there was in medieval times a sept of the Ui Maine called O'Sheehan: they were hereditary trumpeters to O'Kelly, the O'Lonergans being the harpers to the same leading chief.

O'Sheaghyn, mentioned in the Fiants of 1543 as Chief of his Nation in southern Co. Galway, was not, as might be supposed, an O'Sheehan: O'Sheaghyn is there the somewhat grotesque attempt of a foreign official to write down the name O'Shaughnessy.

The two most distinguished persons of the name in Irish life have both been Catholic priests, Patrick Augustine Sheehan (1852-1913), universally known as Canon Sheehan, author of My New Curate etc., and Michael Sheehan (1870-1945), Archbishop of Sydney, who was associated with Ring College and the revival of the Irish language.

In modern times, Jeremiah (Jerry) Sheehan, an agricultural inspector in Moate, County Westmeath, indulged his passion for local history and genealogy. His efforts resulted in several useful publications pertaining to the Westmeath area: South Westmeath Farm and Folk, Westmeath As Others Saw It, and Worthies of Westmeath. He was also instrumental in publishing a facsimile copy of The Annals of Westmeath.

Heraldry

Arms: Azure in a mount in base vert a dove argent holding in the beak an olive branch proper.

Crest: A dove argent holding in the beak an olive branch proper.