

Outbound Exchange to the Causeway Coast - May 2nd - 7th 2002

Thursday. We arrived at Bristol Airport just as the heavens opened and hailstones like pebbles bounced off our heads. Then we informed that our plane was delayed by 45 minutes... Was this to be a foretaste of things to come ?

No, of course not. We were to find out that all the talk about Ireland's 'soft' (i.e. WET) weather was not to apply to us. Somehow our hosts had managed to arrange five days of glorious weather - now that's what I call INFLUENCE !

We arrived to a very cheery welcome by our hosts and clearing skies over Belfast and from the start it was obvious that we were in for a great time.

Friday. What better way to get to know your hosts and new friends than by a tour of the local Bushmills Whisky Distillery ? An entertaining and very informative talk was followed by a sampling session, enthusiastically participated in by certain members !!



Spoiled for choice !

A picnic lunch in the conservatory at the local golf club was followed by a short walk in the sunshine, then a drive down to the Giants Causeway - What an amazing place. A geological phenomenon, with thousands of hexagonal columns of basalt.

In the evening we went to see the local amateur operatic company in a production of 'My Fair Lady' - an extremely well performed and most enjoyable event.

Saturday Some of us went to 'Bishops Gate' gardens and temple, then on to Grianan Fort, an amazing stone construction with stunning views over Donnegal.

After lunch we went on to Londonderry, visiting the museum and walking the walls, overlooking the Bogside and getting a small idea of what life might have been like during 'the troubles' (You can still see the bullet holes in the walls of the army observation towers !)

Sunday - We had a free day with our hosts.

Monday - Many of us went to Coleraine and toured the glorious North Coast. The weather was so clear that it was possible to see Scotland in the distance. We visited the Glens of Antrim, another beautiful walk down through the woods to see the waterfalls.

In the evening we had our Farewell Party. How quickly our visit seemed to have gone. It was a great laugh with music, poems and songs (some in tune !).

Tuesday We bade a sad farewell to our wonderful hosts and boarded our coach for a tour of Belfast. A tour of the City Hall in the morning, then lunch, was followed by a guided tour of Stormont where we saw Irish politicians in action.

We were all totally shattered when we finally boarded our (once again delayed) flight back to Bristol, but all agreed it was a WONDERFUL EXCHANGE.



Many, many thanks to all our new friends in the Causeway Coast Friendship Force. You did us proud and we look forward very much to being able to return the compliment sometime in the near future.

Jennie