



# Ancient Britons Irish Tour Belfast & Dublin

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009



*Sweet Molly Malone  
(known locally as 'The tart with the cart')*

## Part 1 - Belfast

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> saw AB's descending on the Culloden Hotel in ones and twos from their various home locations – some by air, some by road & sea. As we arrived it was immediately obvious that the Culloden was a very special hotel with extensive and beautiful grounds where John and Clive discovered a significant statue.



*Belfast's answer to the Loch Ness Monster, officially called "Ninth Life", but clearly identifiable as the ABs' 11<sup>th</sup> player – useful at short corners guarding both posts and the crossbar area !*

As we weaved our way through a wedding reception in full swing after checking in, we variously checked out our rooms, the bar service (fancy that!!) and the food. Most importantly we set the AB's intelligence service to work to discover where to go for the best real ale in Belfast – and in the Dirty Duck we not only found the best ale in Belfast, but also good food and live music and a Saturday night closing time of 1.30 am, not to mention impressive views across Belfast Lough, and all within a 5 minute taxi ride of the Culloden! Both of our Belfast opposition teams were extremely impressed that we found the Dirty Duck on day one!

So to Sunday, and after a free morning spent discovering Belfast, we set off for the Ards leisure centre in the team coach, for what turned out to be quite an exciting ride, including turning into a one way street the wrong way & proceeding along it until a way out appeared! Other drivers seemed to react as though a coach going the wrong way was quite normal! At the Ards Centre, we found a pitch with many goals but only one net between them, and also, as was to prove the norm on this tour, only one umpire, our very own Chris Kitto, but at least the rain at last stopped. Bangor as requested, kindly made a player available to us to make a total of 12.

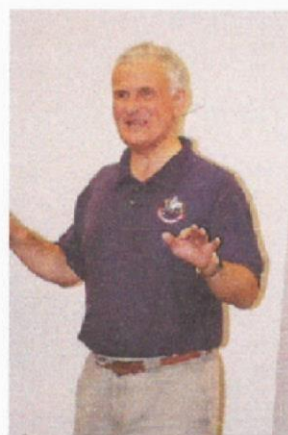


The game started at a frantic pace with the younger opposition (nothing new there!) rushing about the pitch and putting the AB's under considerable pressure. But by keeping our cool and superior passing we

managed to get ourselves back into contention and reached half time only 1 – 0 down. At the start of the second half, we suffered a severe blow, when our youth section (Russell) over-revved and blew up with a pulled calf muscle. We soon went further behind, but then managed to pull one back when a precise pass from Mukesh into the centre of the 'D' allowed John Peirce to finish with a reverse stick "swish" that the goalie failed to see coming. Was this the start of a late fightback? Sadly no, the opposition, getting younger with every substitution, scored a clinching third goal to make the final score 3 – 1. We then went to a very swish hotel/conference centre for the after match hospitality, which was of a very high standard. We were given a bottle of 15 year old Irish whiskey – an occasion will no doubt be found to consume this. Man of the match went deservedly to someone whom the captain and the team manager can't remember !! Man of the match went to Clive Kendall Without the injured Russ, we were going to be short, and our borrowed Bangor player offered to play for us against our next opposition, so at least we could be certain of a full team.



*The whiskey is presented....*

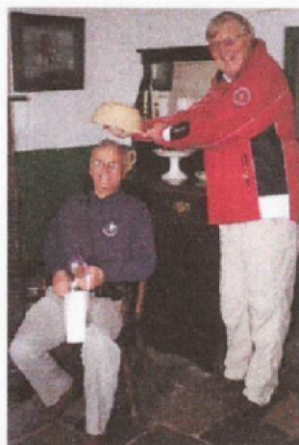


*....and gone 'just like that!'*

Monday saw the rain falling in a major way, and after another free morning sightseeing when many of the ABs were seen in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum adjacent to the hotel, we set off in the coach not yet knowing if the match was on or off.



*In the Folk Museum Trev proposes to Ange (we think he is proposing to blacken her grate – her grate what we know not!!)*

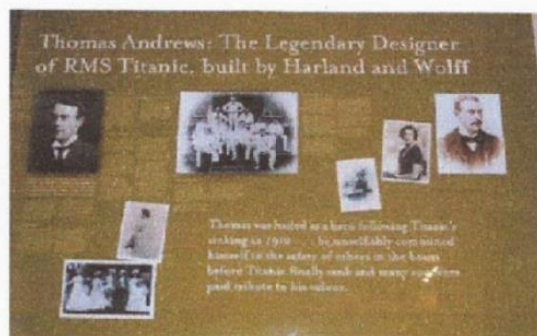


*John and Trev are potty about the Folk Museum*

During the journey info was received that the pitch was flooded, and so it was straight to the after match hospitality at North Down Cricket & Hockey Club, looking out over a nice but substantially flooded cricket ground. Again hospitality was very friendly.



*In spite of the flooded pitch, ABs are in happy mood and John makes the presentation regardless*



NORTH DOWN C.C.	
1857 - 60	R. BRATHWAITE
1861 - 68	R. WITHERS
1869 - 70	R. J. BRATHWAITE
1871 - 75	J. FRAME
1876 - 91	J. ANDREWS Jnr.
1892	T. J. ANDREWS
1893 - 01	J. ANDREWS Jnr.
1902 - 07	JAS. ANDREWS
1908	D. R. TAYLOR
1909	JAS. ANDREWS
1910 - 46	W. ANDREWS
1947	N. D. MURPHY
1948 - 49	W. ANDREWS
1950	J. C. B. IRWIN
1951 - 52	G. W. SPENCE
1953	W. E. WATT DEC.

*In view of the flooded pitch, it was somehow ironic that Thomas Andrews had been President of the Club*

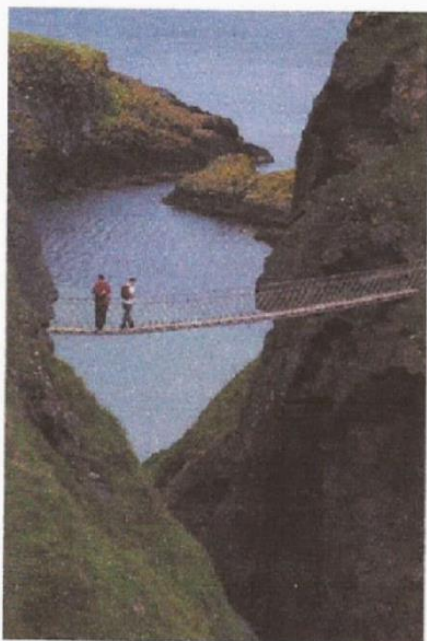
We left well primed for the main event of the evening, a trip across the Hotel grounds to the Cultra Inn, part of the Culloden complex but a little less formal. An excellent meal was followed by an opportunity to get out that bottle of whiskey, which loosened tongues to the point that about 30 mins of story & joke telling followed, including a couple of Enoch & Ayli stories from Mike Greenhough.



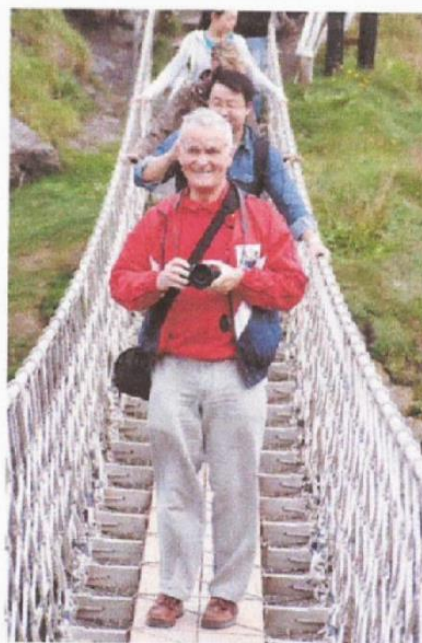
*John pours out the whiskey with Chris on hand to produce a red card if any short measure is spotted*

Tuesday was down to be a free day, but by popular request Julia managed to organise a tour up the coast to visit the Giant's Causeway, with stops on the way to view Carrickfergus Castle, to explore & cross the "wobbly" suspension Bridge at Carrick-a-Rede, a quick "sniff" of the Bushmills distillery (just time to visit the shop). We were blessed with the best weather so far, and although one or two black looking rain squalls were seen in the distance, we experienced mainly sunshine and good visibility. The causeway, with its "organpipe" rocks due to a geological peculiarity is pretty spectacular, and in an age when one is

increasingly prevented from walking on such things due to risk of "environmental damage" it was pleasantly rewarding to be allowed to wander all over the place at will. Long may that last!



*The swing bridge*



*Who's that behind John? Don't tell Paddy but we think it's John Chong!!*



*That's not a giant – just Mukesh working up a thirst!!*



There was only one thing to do on the last evening in Belfast, and that was a second & final visit to the Dirty Duck for dinner, and about 15 of the party made the trip. We went upstairs to their restaurant, which with large picture windows had marvellous views over Belfast Lough at sunset.

Wednesday dawned fine, looking good for the long coach trip to Dublin, and final preparations were made, ie stoking up for the journey by making a final onslaught on the superb breakfasts served at the Culloden – one concept several AB's enjoyed was taking your porridge with honey & a generous slurp of Irish Whiskey!

## **Part 2 – Dublin**

Despite the favourable weather outlook at the start, it soon reverted to type, ie RAIN. It got worse as we went, making the beautifully green countryside look very bleak, and discouraging AB's from taking too much notice of the outside world as the coach trundled along. Actually the large coach only had 12 AB's on board, as some of the party were returning to England and 2 cars worth were travelling independently. After a bit of a search, the driver found our new residence – Bewley's Hotel at Ballsbridge, well positioned for easy sightseeing trips into the centre of Dublin. Not much time for settling in here as the next match was that evening against Avoca. Again, despite reinforcements flown in from England for the

Dublin phase, we had to borrow an opposition player, who afterwards volunteered (and was gladly accepted) to play for us in our final match.



Events in this match have receded rather into the mists of time (contemporaneous notes not having been made) except to record that Mike Heywood scored our second goal of the tour, cleaning up from short range, Paddy made a number of fine saves which earned him man of the match, and Chris Kitto again inspired solo. The final result was a 3 – 1 loss. The match was played in a very friendly spirit, which continued into the after match festivities in a pub virtually across the road from the pitch – no wasted drinking time here!

Thursday was a free day to see Dublin, and started well with the arrival of John Carrick and Jean. It is hard for the writer to fully describe the sightseeing activities in Dublin, as there were no formal trips, just small groups of AB's doing their own thing, suffice it to say that there was a very efficient bus service including open top sightseeing buses (not always the best idea due to frequent rain showers) for which several AB's got good value out of their 3 day passes. Amongst the places visited were O'Connell St, the very centre, with fine statues and an enormous spike called "the spire" in gleaming stainless steel some 140m tall and only approx 15 feet across at the bottom. Very impressive, especially when gleaming in the sun (it did occasionally bless us with its presence). Other places were Dublin Castle, Trinity College, The River Liffey Cruise, and inevitably the Guinness Brewery. Most made it there, some even went round it, others saw the queues and deviated straight to the nearest Pub, the Old Harbour, to try the product out. The writer does not like Guinness in England but found it more than acceptable in Dublin! Ryan's bar (President Clinton was introduced to Guinness here) was another good find, with superb food upstairs, including delightful steaks. The current standing of the pound against the Euro did however make things, especially drinks, expensive in Dublin.



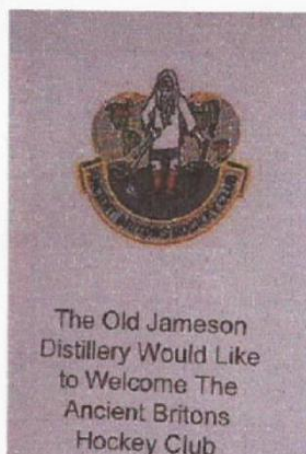
*The Spire – 'very impressive gleaming in the sun'*



*Clive in training mode!!*

The evening saw the end of tour dinner take place at the Old Jamieson Distillery. A little early as still two full days and one match to go, but the crowded schedule dictated this timing. After a tour of the distillery,

we had a splendid dinner in a private room, and in the end of tour speech, the tour captain took the chance to thank Julia for the work she had put into the tour and to give her a little token of our appreciation – an antique ceramic plaque showing an ice skating scene, a subject close to Julia's heart. Man of the tour would have to await future events. The evening was rounded off by joining an Irish dancing and singing show.

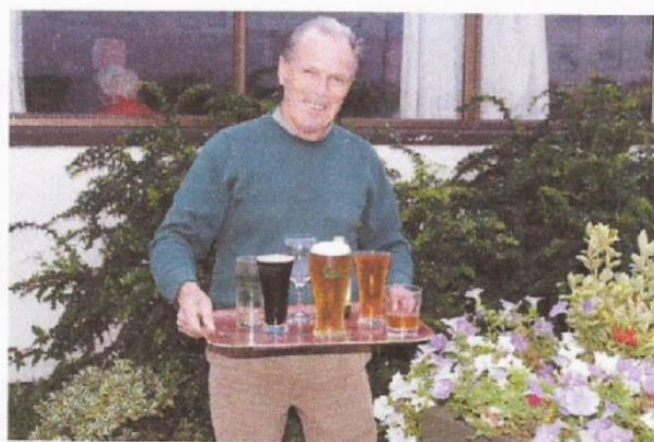


*Dudley claims he caught the biggest fish – he really shouldn't have had that second Irish coffee!!*

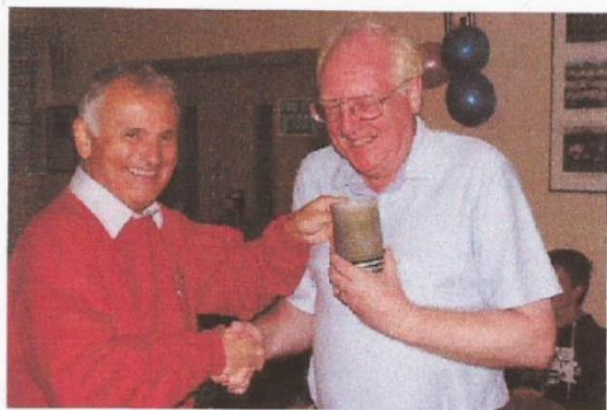
Friday was another day of individual sightseeing, with all enjoying their own choices of visits. On to Saturday, another free morning in which to key ourselves up for the final match! A short coach trip took us to the very pleasant Railway Union sports ground, where better weather found a cricket match in progress. With our squad just able to get out a team with one reserve, we got into the match, as usual, against somewhat younger opposition, but again played in an excellent spirit. Predictably, Chris Kitto was again on his own controlling the match! We were largely outpaced, and despite some splendid play found ourselves with our backs to the wall as the opposition moved into the lead by a couple of goals, however the never-say-die approach of the team made a game of it although we eventually came out 4-0 down. Again, Paddy in goal was outstanding, and was again the clear choice for man of the match.



After the match, in the fine bar of the clubhouse, we were royally entertained, not least by the excellent barbecue. It also presented the opportunity to finish off the last remaining nips of the whiskey we had been given. Then on to man of the tour. Paddy would have been entitled to expect the award having been MOM in 2 of the 3 matches, and he would have deserved it. However, the tour captain decided that in recognition of the excellent way he had controlled all three matches on his own, that Chris Kitto should receive the award.



*Tony shows off his sausage and Patrick is just thirsty!!*



*Chris is 'man of the tour' and John tells us that, in spite of appearances, he didn't drink all that whiskey!!*

Earlier in the day, a research party led by Mukesh had set out to find a restaurant within walking distance of the hotel, for the final evening meal. After making the extraordinary discovery that most of the local restaurants did not serve food on Saturday evenings, and that those that did were expensive, an Indian restaurant was discovered with a good menu and, after successful negotiation by Mukesh, a very reasonable price. All told some 16 members of the party enjoyed an excellent meal to round off a successful tour, even if the match results do not indicate "success".

The tour captain would like to take the opportunity to thank all those whose work either before or during the tour helped to make it run so smoothly, especially Trevor & Mike Heywood for looking after the team's finances.

#### **Tour party**

John Peirce (captain), Mike & Julia Greenhough, Mukesh & Neeru Phakey, Paddy & Anne Maher, Chris & Jane Kitto, Mike & Chris Heywood, Pat Brewster & Nadine Hossent, Dudley Walker & Ann Lewis, Clive Kendall, Alan & Audrey Purnell.

Belfast only: Peter & Greta Band, Trevor & Angela Davies, Russell Gates & Angela Castleton.

Dublin only: Tony & Margaret Perryman, John & Sheila Butler, John Carrick & Jean Wright, Colin & Elizabeth Heywood, Mary O'Donnell.