



KELLY'S CORNER

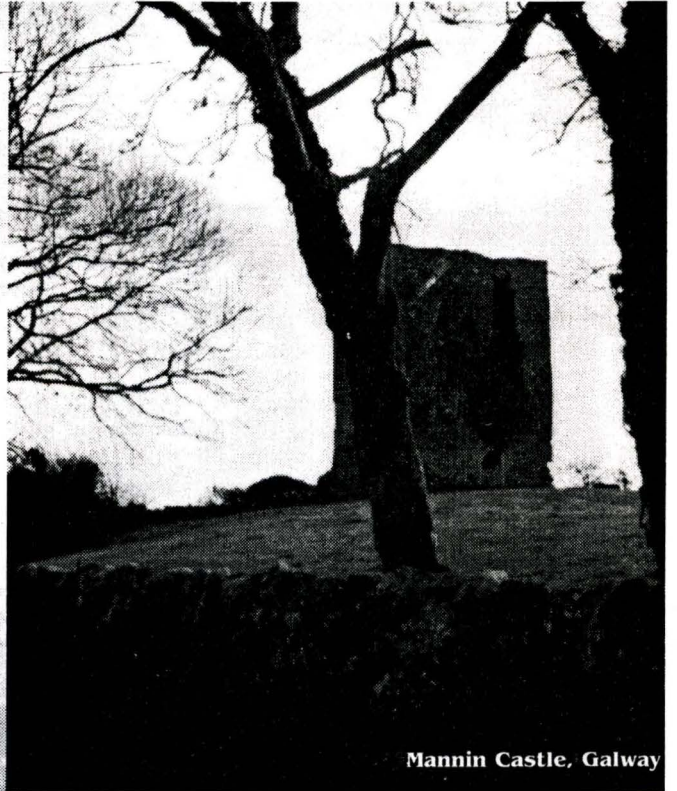
by Jan Kelly

Did you miss me? No, you were probably happy with a little more berth. I went to Ireland for a week. Usually I go home in November, but my cousin, Que Linda London, could only go in mid-September. She works at Kew Gardens and her boss would be going to China on a plant purchasing trip and she would be needed at Kew. The Claren Bridge Oyster Festival would take place September 10-12th, so we thought that would be a good mix. When I was called, of course, I said "Near Labor Day, very difficult time for Cape people to travel, tenants, responsibilities, tennis tournaments, etc." So I hung up the phone and I packed. The next morning I got my tickets and called my cousin back (they have a phone now, as of Easter). The first one in that house of several generations and the only phone on the *booreen* (small road) of Rathcosgrove, Galway.

"Can I wear sandals, Noreen?"

"You cannot," she replied, "you'll catch your chill. You'll wear your Wellies, you'll be mucking about the fields and climbing around the *burren*."

I was met at Shannon, which is like driving the Provincetown-Nantux distance from Rathcosgrove, dragging four bags, one



Mannin Castle, Galway

bursting with North Atlantic Spice packages. The Irish have finally learned to cook. I used to think they lived on the Eucharist alone and I learned to cook by the age of eight, in self-defense. It was that or starve to death. My Aunt Mary Kate used to cook cabbage and rasher, every day. I lived it but I don't think most tourists would.

My cousin Noreen, short for Honoré and her husband Dermot have six children and many cousins living in the area. So unless you deliberately extricate yourself, you are never alone. Endless cups of tea and "chat" go on all day, and 9:30 to 10:00 at night you go out for "a few pints and the chat." We were never home before 3 AM and sometimes 4 AM. From age 18 to 80+, beyond the singing, the dancing and laughter go on, companions to the "chat." It's great *craic* or fun, pronounced "crack."

I love the Irish way of making fun out of nothing, of taking an embarrassing moment or a minute happening and weaving into the history and legend of a person. (The human interaction puts you in mind of the diversity and mutual interest that Provincetown has always had. A person who is negligent to others never lasted here. May we never lose that charm from our little peninsula into the sea.)

Que Linda London arrived the next morning and we got at it immediately. We can fill an empty a room in record time, people are alternately frightened and attracted by our energy and humor, but once strangers get used to us they're like lichens to our presence.

We made several side trips visiting friends and family. We both love the *burren* in County Clare. It's glacial and stunning to view with its tabletop-like stretches of smoothed rocks sloping to a fast-mov-

Part 1

The Road Home

ing sea. There are *dolmen* placed about the fields of polished rocks.

Dolmen are pre-historic monuments of these rocks, resembling a tabletop or altar. They are 6,000 years old and their history is guessed at. Wild-flowers grow within the crevices. The glacier carried and fixed saxifrages, mountain avens and blue gentians to the *burren* 12,000 years ago. Now there is a small perfumery which utilizes the plants and blossoms of the area to produce perfumes called *llaun*, gaelic for island, made from wild orchid, frond of hyacinth and rose and *Man of Aran* cologne with birch notes, green base and light citrus. Slides and explanations of the plants makes this an interesting stop. The *burren* smokehouse is another great stop with wild local salmon, mackerel and trout smoked on the premises. None better in the world!

Great stops but Que Linda London and myself were destined to visit Theresa and John Petty, as we love to do. Theresa and John have been friends of Linda since her infancy. They run a B&B in Lisdoonvarna and are great people with whom to spend time. They are as alive as lightning and all the sparks are enjoyable. The word *passive* would shrivel on the ear when they're around. Theresa is black-haired, slim and beautiful. She is called the Jackie Kennedy of Lisdoonvarna. Hard to think of her as the mother of three muscular men! You could see her on the catwalk sooner than you could see her changing beds. But changing beds she was, so Que Linda London and I pitched right in to make the work light so that the fun, the *craic*, might come sooner. John, a loveable curmudgeon, with a head of striking steel grey, straight-up hair has the most colorful language with sprinklings that I can't print here. He is gruffness to perfection. I can't ever remember being called some of the nomenclature he put on me—and meaning it too.

Well, as we worked away to get nearer to play, the phone rang. Theresa answered and a neighbor was warning that the *bord faité* (tourist board) was in town, in the neighborhoods and doing random, unscheduled inspections. Whirl! Lightning struck. Doors opened, closed, slammed and we three stood still as Theresa dervished around spitting out orders. Linda was to clean off the table and all flat surfaces and stow stuff anywhere out of view. I was slapped with the plastic wrap and told to cover all uncovered food. John Petty was told to go up to Room 4, get in the bed and lock the door. The three of us, with rounded eyes, silent but open mouths went to our tasks. John was not



Jan Kelly (center) with two cousins, Que Linda London (left) and Noreen Carey

wrapping every bare spot and John ensconced in Room 4. Theresa finally opened the door forcing a calm expression to, not the Bord Faité representative, but to another warning neighbor.

"Come out, John. Come on down, John!" And downstairs he came.

"Sleeping Beauty," Linda says, "Why did you have to go to Room 4?"

"How the @#\$% do I know?!"

Well, we finished our tasks and waited calmly for inspection. Theresa would stay, Linda and I would visit the Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells and have a curing drink of sulphur water...like drinking rotten eggs. "Come on cousin, no cowardice, down the hatch—so good for you!" Oh, I couldn't drink it. A tourist lined up to the bar for his glass of the cure-all. One gulp and he was muttering, "I can't stick that, ugh!" Linda had finished hers and was chatting with another tourist. Meanwhile the fellow next to me turned his back to me muttering how awful the taste was and I poured mine into his glass.

We escaped the spa and took a lovely spin around the Burren. Theresa poached wild salmon for us for dinner and we all celebrated the success of passing the inspection, which we would keep celebrating till four in the morning.

Next Week: A Night On The Town



(Right) Our next door neighbor Simon Moylan getting ready to step out for the 'craic' and chat. Notice the shepherd's staff

Hill of the Fairies, Galway