

## Discover treasures among the ruins

# Northern Ireland's lake lands: Rain, history and the Mellons

By Siobhan Starrs

We stood at the bar of the grand Lough Erne Resort, looking out at the driving rain.

"You see that lake out there," mused the barman wryly. "That was a field this morning."

This was my first trip to Northern Ireland's lake lands in the western region, two hours by car from Belfast and a slightly longer drive from Dublin. We had rented a two-bedroom static caravan — what Americans call a mobile home — on the shores of Lower Lough Erne last summer. It was just the right side of cozy for me and my partner Matthew, and our 6-year-old daughter Kitty. Our verandah overlooked the larger of two interconnecting lakes that comprise Lough Erne. Speed boats and jet skis often zipped past.

But the changeable weather meant we enjoyed a week of sunshine and showers, often at the same time. We also had an opportunity to sightsee and glimpse history, from centuries-old Christian ruins to a park that tells the story of the mass migration of the 18th and 19th centuries — including the roots of a famous and wealthy American family.

As soon as the winds subsided, we hired a little boat and set off to explore. We landed at White Island,

home to ruins of an ancient church built around the year 1200. Its Romanesque archway remarkably remains intact.

Among the ruins we found more treasures: six sculptures depicting early Christian figures. One figure holds a shepherd's crook (crozier) like a bishop, and is believed to represent St Patrick. Archaeologists think another depicts Christ. The unusual artworks are thought to date from the ninth to 11th centuries.

On this isolated island I felt like I was the first person to discover them. The glimpse of medieval Ireland and early Celtic Christianity was a real thrill.

We also visited a living museum called the Ulster American Folk Park, about an hour from Lough Erne in Omagh. Buildings from across the province of Ulster and from around the US have been carefully rebuilt or replicated here to help illustrate the stories of the many families who left in the 18th and 19th centuries for a better life in the New World.

### Odyssey

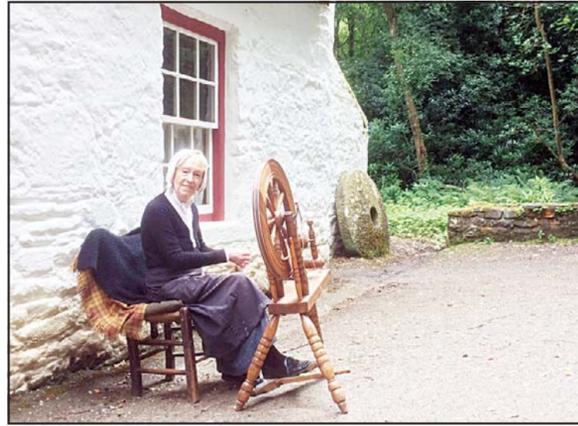
Those stories include the remarkable odyssey of the Mellons. Their original homestead is the museum's center, and their descendants remain among America's wealthiest families. The Mellons were fairly well-off

tenant farmers when they decided to emigrate in 1818, several decades before the Great Famine that decimated the countryside. Their son Thomas was just 5 years old when the Mellons left. The family eventually settled in the town of Export, Pennsylvania, where their large six-room, log farmhouse still stands. The Ulster American Folk Park boasts a replica of that building.

Thomas became a lawyer, then a banker founding T. Mellon & Sons in 1869, today part of BNY Mellon. Thomas' son Andrew, a banker, industrialist and philanthropist, became secretary of the US Treasury in 1921. A school that he founded is now part of Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

But the Mellons' affluence was not the usual migrant story. More typical was a one-room thatched cottage with a mud floor at the Folk Park, representing the home of a fictional family of poor farm laborers, eight children and their parents. They ate potatoes for every meal.

In 1845, the potato harvest began to fail. By the time the Great Famine ended in 1852, a million people had died and another million had emigrated to England, Scotland, South Wales, North America and Australia. Many ended up in the US, where 10 percent



In this July 28, 2017 photo, Liz Devlin demonstrates the art of spinning at the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, Northern Ireland. (AP)

of the population is estimated to have Irish ancestry — including a number of US presidents, most recently Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Other houses representing American homes tell stories of real families like the Mellons with connections or roots in Ulster. The townland became a village with a replica pub, drapery,

pharmacy and rope-makers. At the far end of the main street we entered the dockside gallery, which contains a lifesize replica of a ship. A fare of \$5 would purchase one-way passage to a new life in America. But this was not the Titanic: There were no luxuries onboard. Around 200 people and their belongings spent the duration of the

six- to 12-week journey, four to a berth, in the area between decks of the 100-foot (30-meter) vessel.

As we traced the migrant experience, wandering from thatched cottage to school house, forge and church, our senses were assaulted by the smell of musty quilts, baking bread and smoldering turf. Chatty guides in costume explained their chores, baking soda bread over an open fire, spinning sheep's wool into yarn and creating smelly candles from animal fat.

When we entered the New World section of the park, the clouds momentarily parted and the sun always visitor quipped, "The sun always shines in the New World!"

Well, the sun often shines in Ulster, but the first rule of packing for a holiday in Northern Ireland, is bring your wellies as well as your sunglasses, as the weather likes to dance across the sky. (AP)

### If You Go ...

Lough Erne Resort: <https://www.loughernerresort.com/>

Ulster American Folk Park: <https://www.umni.com/our-museums/ulster-american-folk-park/Home.aspx>

White Island: <http://www.megalithicireland.com/White%20Island%20Figures.htm>

## DAI



Los Rumberos Band performs at the Yarmouk Culture Centre.



Los Rumberos Band members pose with US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R. Silverman (second from right).



Los Rumberos Band members pose with Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah officials.

## Dar al-Athar hosts 'The Mexican Night'

Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah hosted 'The Mexican Night' performed by the Rumberos Band at the Yarmouk Cultural Centre on Sunday, Feb 25.

Rumba is more than just a style. It is party, madness, dance and freedom. It is a lifestyle that brings up unknown parts of ourselves; faces we don't usually show.

This trio was born in the streets of Boston, MA, as an acoustic experiment seeking to forge an intimate connection with the audience. Whether they found Rumba or Rumba found them, Ángel

Céspedes, Lito de la Isla and Paul Sefchovich gave birth to a recipe of latin rock, blues, hupango & reggae, that was later baked in old fashioned Boston. Hence the name: Los Rumberos de Massachusetts. And so, the combination of three untameable voices, two wild guitars and a mesmerizing percussion created a unique style that echoes and reprises tradition and music, both new and old, and celebrates the joy of life.

Los Rumberos de Massachusetts have conquered stages, clubs, sketchy parties and bars

all around the globe, sharing their music with a diverse audience; from mother Boston to Puerto Escondido Oaxaca; from Jurmala in Latvia, to Madrid and Moscow, probably two European equivalents of Mexico City. Los Rumberos have also performed at SXSW '14, CMJ Music Marathon in NY '14 and the Berklee Encore Gala of '13 & '14. Recently, the rumba ambassadors, were named "Best International Band" by the Boston Music Awards for the second year in a row.

ing; 45; 16 and above: Morning: 140 visitors max, Evening: 105;

Tour language: Arabic- English- French; Arabic (English upon prior request); Arabic- English- French; Arabic (English upon prior request); Arabic- English- French; Arabic (English upon prior request)

### Rules and Regulations:

- Please arrive in time for your visit.
- All visitors are kindly required to abide by the mosque's dress code. Male visitors should wear long pants. Shorts and sleeveless shirts are not allowed. Female visitors: should wear head cover and long loose clothing (available at the mosque).
- Foods and drinks are not allowed inside the prayer halls.
- For school visits, teachers are responsible for their students and are required to cooperate with the staff members of the Grand Mosque.
- Photography is allowed inside the Grand Mosque (please note that disrespectful poses are strictly prohibited).

If you would like to book a tour, please contact us:

### Continued on Page 22

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### Continued from Page 18

**Drinking problem?:** Friends of Bill W. are available to help. Totally confidential. Email: [rohsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:rohsecretary@gmail.com)

**Narcotics Anonymous:** NA can help with addiction problems. Totally confidential: 94087800 English/Arabic.

**Cancer online support group:** If you are Cancer patient or family member fighting with this deadly disease, come join our online support group. Best way of dealing with this disease is providing support and share our experience with each other. There

are lot of things which even doctors can't tell so be member of this website and start sharing your experiences which may help others. October is recognized as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). The primary purpose is to promote self examination and screening mammography as the most effective way to save lives by detecting breast cancer at early stage. For more information visit: <http://fightingwithcancer.webs.com/>

## General

**Q8Ball Season 13:** Q8Ball is beginning our 13th season with Boys U13 (ages 10-13) and U17 (ages 14-17). We train three times a week and play regular games throughout the year with schools and clubs. In June 2018, we plan to travel for camp and tournaments in the US. Contact Coach T 97128884 for

information.

**Invitation to Grand Mosque:** The Visits Department is pleased to invite you to visit the Grand Mosque, which is one of Kuwait's most treasured religious and cultural landmarks to discover the beauty of Islamic arts and architecture. Free guided tours are available all year round on official working days between (9-11 am) and (5-7 pm), within a special tour program designed to cater to the

needs of different age groups. The program is as follows:

Reception; Auditorium show; (according to age group); Touring the Mosque; Q & A; Art workshops; (according to age group – between 5 and 18 years old); Snack break; Distribution of the Grand Mosque publications and souvenirs; End of tour.

According to these age groups:  
Age group: 5 to 9 years old: Morning: 60 visitors max; Evening: 20; 10 to 15 years: Morning: 100 visitors max; Even-