

38. BY **CHRISTINE COTTRELL**

the COFFEE Ireland



In between our two European trade fairs (Caffe Culture in London and World of Coffee in Vienna), Paul and I made a little detour to visit Dublin for a few days, before heading into rural landscapes of unimaginable beauty – and to be part of the **FOYNES IRISH COFFEE FESTIVAL**. We would like to make some recommendations should you find yourself, as we did, with a couple of weeks to spare on the other side of the globe.

Our first visit was to Bewley's Café (78-79 Grafton Street) where Stephen Morrissey, the 2008 World Barista Champion, once worked. It's a traditional, old-fashioned establishment dating from 1840 that has kept pace with the times regarding coffee. I suppose the staff might have been mindful of delivering their best, as we were in the company of both the Training and Standards Managers, so Julie and Maria were as delighted as we were when four perfect look-alike latte art designs were placed before us. As well as a café, Bewley's is Ireland's largest roaster, importer and supplier of coffee.

If it's a fine praline chocolate you like with your coffee to cheer you up on a dull day, you must visit a Butlers Chocolate Café. There are about a dozen or so dotted around Dublin, Galway and Cork. You'll inevitably pass one in your travels, so pop in to experience "a little moment of happiness" (as they call it in their publicity) and choose a chocolate from the huge selection to complete your coffee experience. Butlers have been perfecting the coffee and chocolate combo since 1932.

Our next visit was to Colin Harmon's 3fe (54 Middle Abbey Street). From Grafton Street, it's a 15 minute walk up O'Connell Street, where you

can take in some of Dublin's most prominent historic buildings at the same time. Colin, a three times Irish Barista Champion, has two places, but the one we visited is an eclectic mix of shabby furniture and deliberate grunge that works well. It's a café during the day and bar after dark. We chose brewed coffee and could not fault our fine Ethiopian Sidamos. Colin was busy preparing for the World Barista Championships in Vienna, where he came third a couple of weeks later. Colin's other café is at 32 - 43 Lower Grand Canal Street.

You'll find Ruslan Mocharsky, the 2012 Irish Latte Art champion at The Art of Coffee (Harcourt Road), which by contrast is a lovely recreation of elegant ambience from a bygone era, complete with black and white flocked wallpaper and chandeliers. As you would expect, we experienced the work of a passionate barista complete with perfect rosettas and little hearts on delicious piccolo lattes. It's a good ½ hour on foot along from St. Stephens Green, but is well worth the walk. Ruslan also has another café at Unit 1, Alto Vetro, Grand Canal Dock, a similar walk along from Merrion Square.

Trinity College is perhaps Dublin's most famous

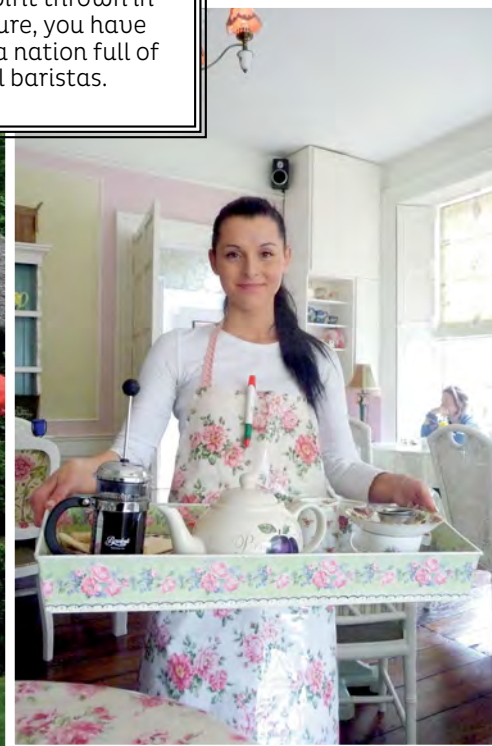
attraction, and the short, guided tour around the college that includes a visit to the Long Room is not to be missed. Nearby you have two great choices for coffee. Go along Pearse Street and you will eventually come to Flux Café (in the Naughton Institute's Science Gallery on the Pearse Street entrance). Or, take the other direction to find the newly opened Cup (15 Leinster Street South) where Kevin will be very keen to impress you with a fine coffee experience. Further along from Cup you will reach the beautiful Georgian neighbourhood with its colourful doors. It might not be everyone's way to burn off calories, but we wore off ours buzzing around the area taking dozens of photos of different doors. You might understand why when you are there.

Another sightseeing "must do" is the Dublin Castle precinct. Afterwards, take a 15 minute walk over the river to Brother Hubbard (153 Capel Street), where we enjoyed another perfect pair of piccolos. The Bald Barista (55 Aungier Street) is in the opposite direction, where you'll find Buzz (the balding barista) and his interesting coffees from Cuba. Incidentally, he also has a cigar shop in Grafton Street, if that is your interest.

We particularly enjoyed Clement and Pekoe (50



★
With a sense of humour and generosity of spirit thrown in for good measure, you have the makings of a nation full of exceptional baristas.



South William Street) which is up to the minute with all kinds of brewing apparatus and where staff were busy pushing aero-presses and brewing pour-overs when we arrived. The owner, Simon, gave us a tour of his vast tea and coffee menu and took time to help us make and enjoy our selections.

We can also recommend a couple of coffee experiences outside Dublin. In Carrick-on-Shannon, Georgia and Gabor, two architects from Hungary, have found new careers in a buzzing little place they designed and outfitted themselves. Café Lounge is a welcome find in the west county, where the beans are roasted in-house and every individual coffee is served "in the continental way" on a tray with a glass of water and a quality chocolate.

We also visited The Galway Roast in Tuam, a short drive north from Galway. The owner, Niall, has 3 cafés so far and is a man on a mission with a master plan for expansion. ("Watch out London; here I come!"). His aim is twofold: no compromise on quality and consistently good coffee in every location. From what we experienced at the small Galway Café (Shop Street) and the larger one in Tuam (Vicar Street), Niall is true to his word, with his quality and consistency up there with the very best.

In the south we took to tea drinking – really because the little teashops were so interesting and

inviting. Most serve a reasonable plunger coffee if you are really not into tea. We recommend, though, that you indulge at least once in the ceremony of some "Irish afternoon" – with a scone topped with lashings of butter, berry jam and Irish cream. Your experience usually comes on a large tray with little jugs and dishes for this and that, fine bone china and little silver spoons.

If you have a few friends to while away the afternoon with, we would recommend the tiered plate that starts with sandwiches and savouries on the bottom, the scone experience in the middle and a selection of cakes on the top. Everything reeks of homemade and wholesomeness, and I reckon you won't get a better cup of tea anywhere than in an Irish teashop. And that's reason enough for me to switch from coffee for a while.

We recommend Cupan Tae in Galway (8 Quay Lane), Mary Anne's Tearooms in Tralee (17 Denny Street) and Fellini Tearoom in Cork (3 Careys Lane). Having a longer stay in the beautiful Killarney area, we visited two teashops: Miss Courtney's Tearooms in the main shopping precinct (8 College Street) and Deenagh Lodge (just inside the entrance to Killarney National Park, opposite St Mary's Cathedral). The latter is very interesting, firstly because it is in a little thatch cottage, and secondly because young adults with Down Syndrome are doing a fine job serving the beverages and meals.

We were fortunate to be in Ireland for the Foynes Irish Coffee Festival. It's now a small sleepy village on the west coast, but during the 1930s, Foynes was an international destination where flying boats landed in the long estuary after their journey across the Atlantic from New York. There's a very interesting museum that houses memorabilia from this short-lived mode of transport, and you can even sit inside a vintage flying boat to imagine how terrifying the journey might have been. Most significantly, you will learn that Foynes is where barman Joe Sheridan invented Irish coffee for passengers needing something to warm them up, as well as keep them awake. A shot of coffee, a spoon of sugar, a swig or two of whiskey, top it all with lots of cream, and you have the perfect Irish Coffee. It seemed that simple, as we were given the instructions to make one ourselves, but the festival competitors obviously saw more complexity and the finer art.

We found Ireland to be a land of happy, convivial people who truly understand the meaning of hospitality. With a sense of humour and generosity of spirit thrown in for good measure, you have the makings of a nation full of exceptional baristas. The specialty coffee scene is small in Ireland and you have to know where to go, but once you have the spots marked on your map, you're set to enjoy some exceptional coffee (and tea) along with your sightseeing.