

DISCOVERING IRISH HERALDRY

Published in the R.H.S.C. BC-Yukon Branch THE BLAZON Fall 2016

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After a long flight from Comox BC to Dublin Ireland, via Calgary, Toronto and St. John's, the last thing on my mind upon arrival was heraldry. First we had to find our hotel after the tourist bus dropped us off downtown and then oriented ourselves as we navigated through the bustling crowds and past some alluring pubs. A stroll in the afternoon after a failed attempt at a nap resulted in a pub visit before an early supper and bed. With mind and body rejuvenated it was time to hit the bricks and explore Dublin, my grandmother's birthplace.

It sure is crowded in Dublin. So crowded you can almost miss the heraldry as you dodge pedestrians, tourists, prams, couriers and brewery delivery lorries as you walk along uneven cobbled streets and sidewalks. Crossing the River Liffey on the busy O'Connell Bridge you approach the popular shopping and tourist area. A significant heraldic landmark is the O'Connell Monument at the foot of O'Connell Street.

The monument recognizes the 19th century Irish nationalist leader, Daniel O'Connell (1775 – 1847). The monument has some interesting heraldic aspects; on its four sides are the arms of the four provinces of Ireland. Shown in the photograph is a close up of the arms of Ulster. The arms are done in hatching; always a good challenge for visualizing the tinctures. The three other sides display the arms of Leinster, Munster and Connacht.

Wandering up O'Connell Street is very interesting. While busy with the bustling stream of locals, the sidewalks are very wide and you can amble along. One interesting modern item you cannot miss, it's that large, is the Spire of Dublin; the world's tallest sculpture at some 121 metres. It is shaped like a big needle and you can get a glimpse of it in the O'Connell Monument photo, just off the sinister shoulder of Daniel O'Connell's stature.



O'Connell Monument, Dublin with a close up of the Arms of the Province of Ulster. Photo: Steve Cowan



Close up of the Arms of the Duke of Northumberland shown at the centre chief of his portrait frame in the portrait gallery of Dublin Castle. Photo: Steve Cowan

Dublin is a great place to explore by foot. From our hotel we wandered over to Dublin Castle. This was once the seat of British power in Ireland. The parts of the castle we explored were the State Apartments, a series of richly decorated rooms that are used for official functions and receptions. While a revolution was needed to create the Republic of Ireland, the rooms and their portraits and decorations reflect how the Castle was used while part of the United Kingdom.

Going through the various areas we saw lots of heraldry. Along the hallways were many portraits of Irish nobles, each with his arms carved and painted onto each portrait frame.



Star of the Order of St. Patrick

Going through the Throne Room, State Drawing Room and State Dining Room we could see how well the Republic had preserved the Imperial heritage of the castle. For me the highlight was going into Saint Patrick's

Hall. Originally known as the Great Hall, or Ballroom, it became Saint Patrick's Hall in 1783 when King George III

instituted the Illustrious Order of St. Patrick. In 1881 the Hall became the ceremonial home of the Order of St. Patrick. About the hall are the various banners of the Knights of the Order of St. Patrick living at the time of Irish independence in 1922. Below the banners are the stall plates of the knights.



Saint Patrick's Hall at Dublin Castle. The banners on display are from the Knights of the Order of St. Patrick. Photo: Steve Cowan



The former Chapel of the Order of St. Patrick at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Photo: Steve Cowan

The original home and chapel of the Order of St. Patrick was St. Patrick's Cathedral in central Dublin. So, chasing the story of the Order of St. Patrick in reverse order we set off to the Cathedral.

What an amazing place to see heraldry; St Patrick's Cathedral. What had been the original Chapel for the Order of St. Patrick is now the Choir for the Cathedral. With the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1871 the Chapel of the Order

ceased to be used as such. The stalls, stall plates, carved helms and crests and banners were left in place at the request of Queen Victoria. And, while they are a bit dusty, the heraldic devices make an impressive display. Tucked away on a pillar on the south side behind the Choir is a small frame showing a drawing of each banner with the name of each knight; great in helping heraldic enthusiasts with naming the banner owners.

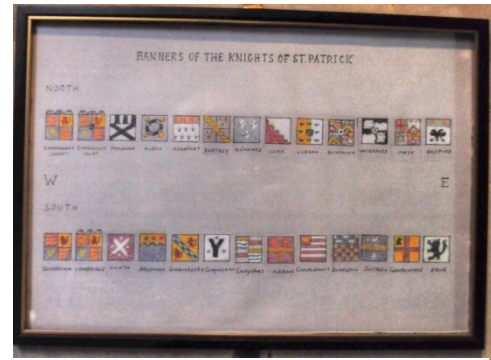


Diagram of the banners and names of the Knights of the Order of St. Patrick.

Photo: Steve Cowan



West wall at the entrance of St. Patrick's Cathedral, showing Royal and ecclesiastical arms.

Photo: Steve Cowan

some spectacular stained glass windows. Walking down the Nave and turning left towards the North Transept you can get a feel of the military history of the British Empire. Look up and you will see numerous Regimental Colours that have been retired from various Battalions of Several Irish regiments.

Having now explored St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and seeing the Chapel of the Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick, and as described in the Summer 2016 issue of the Blazon, my exploration

of Saint Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh and the Chapel of The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, I now need a trip to London to explore the chapels of the Order of the Garter, Order of the Bath and the Oder of the British Empire.



LEFT

Carved helms and crests above Knights' stalls in the former chapel of the Order of St. Patrick, St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Photo: Steve Cowan

RIGHT

Retired Regimental Colours at the St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

Photo: Steve Cowan

