

## REPORT TO ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

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As a recipient of the Rotary Foundation Grant for University Teachers, I was fortunate to find a teaching position on the Isle of Man for the time period of May - August 2004. The Isle of Man is an island located between England, Ireland, and Scotland, in the middle of the Irish Sea. It is 26 miles long and 13 miles wide with a population of 70,000 people. I lived in a small apartment attached to a farmhouse about 4 miles north of the capital city of Douglas. It was a lovely place to live and I had the hospitality of a Rotarian family, the Stephen Goodies, to help me with the details in managing daily life. For transportation I primarily depended on the public buses, walking about a mile from my apartment to the bus stop.

The island has an agricultural landscape of beautifully divided green fields spotted with white grazing sheep. Walls made of dry stacked rock that were undoubtedly created hundreds of years ago in an effort to clear the fields and have since been constantly maintained and added to as the plows hit the rock laden sod, mark a distinct pattern across the hillsides and provide a shelter for the animals from the treacherous wet winds that assault the island in the wintertime. When I first arrived on the island the Goss, a thorny plant that covers the rock walls, was blooming a beautiful golden yellow as well as the wild bluebells that, mixed with the emerald grassy fields, provided a palette of color reminiscent of a Monet painting.

The towns, primarily costal, are perched high on the rocky cliffs above the rugged coastline. Even from the bird's eye view the transparency of the cerillion blue water is evident. There are only a few actual beach areas on the coastline and of these most are not covered with sand but rather rocks of an interesting blend of slate and quartz.

The most beautiful areas inland are the glens, forested areas around the rivers. Here the trees are so dense, and the rains so frequent that everything in the entire area, tree trunks, rocks, even the ground, is covered with bright green moss. Each one is truly an emerald environment so perfect and so green they have an almost surreal quality.

“The Isle of Man has the unusual status of being one of the British Isles that is neither part of Great Britain nor the United Kingdom. People born here are known as “Manx”, classified as British (as opposed to English). As a British Crown dependency, the influence of the British culture is dominant. Although Manx Gaelic is the native language, it is all but obsolete in its use. English is the language of choice and being an island in the middle of the British Isles; the Isle of Man offers an accumulation of a great assortment of English accents. One could compare it to gathering all the different accents in the United States in one county and letting a British citizen communicate there. Every individual I talked to had a different accent. Still, you wouldn’t think that the same language would present a problem, yet much of the time, the accents together with a difference in the use of language yielded difficulty. For instance, an invitation to tea could mean either an invitation to take a break and drink a cup of tea or to come to an evening meal. At The evening meal, if you wanted to order a dish of zucchini you needed to order corjette because if you ordered squash you would get orange juice.

Douglas, the capital of the Isle of Man, is the major seaport and home to 25,000 of the island's inhabitants. It is a beautiful city with a row of Victorian hotels lining the seawall, a restored nineteenth century theatre and a view of the Irish Sea from just about anywhere. The main industry is listed as financial services although tourism has been prominent in the past. It is host to annual TT motorbike races drawing thousands of visitors to the island. The one and only college on the island, the Isle of Man College is located in Douglas. Ray Smith, a Rotarian and the president of the college was an invaluable help to me in locating housing, transportation, and a work visa and in obtaining for me a position within the art department at the college. He also was responsible for introducing me to Rotary clubs on the island.

The Isle Of Man College includes several art programs that allow students to enter as early as the age of sixteen to complete a degree program which prepares them to work in the graphic arts industry or to transfer to a university. The students in these programs attend only classes within the art program all day five days a week. I was able to contribute to the art classes in the department by teaching painting and drawing lessons and assisting with several interesting projects. The projects included the completion of a graphic mural depicting the history of the Isle of Man designed to be located outside a government building that houses the Parliament. We also completed paper mache masks of African animals for a charity ball purposed to raise money for a hospital in Africa. Towards the end of term I assisted students in their preparation for a public exhibition and preparation of transfer portfolios.

In addition to teaching at the Isle of Man College, I also assisted with art lessons for a community project for children whose families had been affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. These children are brought to the Isle of Man annually to receive medical and dental treatment and while there are provided with instruction in various activities including art. It was a pleasure to work with these children.

Another exciting opportunity to contribute came with an invitation to be a guest lecturer and consultant for a group at St. John's Mill, a restored woolen mill that houses art classes for the community. This is a facility houses an organization that strives to blend commerce and religion to meet the needs of the community.

Also- my sponsoring Rotary club had a summer project of building playground equipment for a daycare center. The equipment was made of logs and heavy wood. It was assembled in the Goodies barn where my apartment was, and then transported to the daycare center. My husband, who for a time joined me on the island, was highly involved with this project as well as with the children from Chernobyl.

An interesting benefit of a small island is the simple ability of national government officials to interact in community events. The Minister of Education was in attendance at the reception for the final exhibition at the art department at the college. Several men in the department of the ministry are Rotarians and worked on the playground equipment. Also the Minister of Heath, president of one other Rotary clubs was quite hospitable to us in many ways.

There are five Rotary clubs on the Isle of Man. I was given an invitation to speak and present a program at each club. I spoke on the similarities of Texas and the Isle of Man and the unity of the world particularly through the efforts of the Rotary Foundation. I was well received at each club and thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality of the Rotarians there.

With its 10,000-year history, the Isle of Man proves its antiquity as an ancient land with ancient influences. The churches have cemeteries around them within the churchyards. Many of the gravestones are hundreds of years old. Also there are select few hand-carved Celtic stones and relics that dating from 650-700 AD. Kiells or the remains of ancient priests cells preside over many of the hilltops dating back to the time of St. Patrick. Three circles of stones similar to Stonehenge, have survived thousands of years and leave their mark on the island. This is the land of castles and Celts, an ancient land that has managed to survive the assaults of centuries of invading armies, changing governments, and altering economies. It is a beautiful island with a proud people.

It was a privilege to be there, to learn of a different land, a different people. I am grateful to have been able to make a contribution and represent Rotary International. Without a doubt the efforts of the Rotary International have truly helped to unify the world and help us to see that we have much more in common than we can begin to imagine. We are all better for it. THANK YOU!

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