

January, 2008

Writing a very belated Happy New Year message from a chilly cottage on the banks of the Dodder River in Dublin.

For those who didn't know, we're in Ireland this year, because Chip was named a Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the National College of Ireland. It's a small place with a large mission, trying to make third level education accessible to non-traditional students. He's found it very interesting and they're keeping him exceedingly busy, with little seat time in this Chair. Everyone here has been very welcoming and we almost speak the language, though there are moments when we draw a blank. We've been to a genuine *ceili*, an evening of song and dance, and may go to a *hooley*, cousin to a *ceili*, this weekend.

I came with the best intentions of writing a very entertaining blog* with stunning photos, but somehow a hill-walking group, a French class, and keeping us fed and housed consume all my time. Perhaps in the spring. We've spent a lot of time finding housing and are soon to move into our third place. Despite a slipping property market, rent and just about everything else here are astonishingly expensive. But we love living without a car, and the ease with which we can get to mountains or seaside by train. We've also managed to spend a week in Romania for a conference on Pragmatism. And a week in Italy for another on Community Informatics.

Emily traveled from Minneapolis and Stephen from St Petersburg for the holidays, joined by one of Emily's college friends who is living in France. With five of us and only two beds we all headed to windy West Cork for the week, to spread out in the cottage of Urbana friends.

Emily has survived her first semester of a PhD program in History at the University of Minnesota and found some singing opportunities in her new home, of course. Stephen was in Russia just for the fall, and returns to Yale tomorrow for the remainder of his junior year, where he'll get back to singing as well.

Our extended family In California, Texas, and Chicago are all well, and Chip's mother will come to Dublin with sister Karen and niece Jennifer for a week next month. My mother continues to live in her lovely adobe, maintains a wonderful garden, and managed to get to Chicago for Thanksgiving, and to my brother's family in Ukiah for Christmas. My sister, and women friends from Scotland, France, and New Mexico will convene for a little Irish *craic* (pronounced "crack," meaning good times) in April. Then there are meetings in Greece and Spain. So there's a full spring ahead.

Expressing a wish for peace goes without saying. But good *craic* to all of you, as well.

Susan, on behalf of the Bruces

Photos, which I hope you can see, include a house behind our Romanian B&B; "our" villa in Prato, a city near Florence we highly recommend; Emily dressed for the holiday; Stephen after his solo New Years dip in the Atlantic.

*Chip's blog: <http://chipbruce.wordpress.com/>



