

14th Sons of the Desert European Convention

Cobh Ireland

8 – 11th September 2023

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Itinerary

“Céad Míle Fáilte”

Friday 8th September

2.30pm... Registration in the foyer of The Commodore Hotel with collection of Goodie Bags (*Mála Maith*) and your Cork guide which will include a special convention translator should you need to converse with some of the Cobh locals.

(At this juncture we should point out that one of Cork's most popular terms of endearment is the word "Langer". Unfortunately the word is also used as an insult in certain circumstances and being able to differentiate which type of langer you are being called is an art in itself. The committee accepts no responsibility if you are a langer instead of a langer!) Welcome to Ireland.

You will also be presented with your convention treasure hunt that can be filled out over the course of the weekend, so keep those eyes open. You will also be given your Cobh map that will ensure you know where to be for certain activities and don't get lost whilst in the town!

Mingle in O'Shea's Bar and renew old friendships or simply wander about the beautiful village of Cobh. Feel free to relax and enjoy the sea air and see the view of land that was the last that the passengers of the Titanic would see.

6pm... Assemble in the Jack Doyle Function Room for a welcome to Cobh and introduction of our special guest, Mr. Adrian Gebruers. Adrian is the current Head Carillonneur at St. Colman's Cathedral where he learned his craft under the expert tutelage of his father Staf who was the gentleman who played the Carillon for Stan and Ollie on the 9th September 1953. Adrian was ten years old at the time and was by his father's side when the Boys insisted on meeting Staf and personally thanking him. Hear the story of Laurel and Hardy in Cobh and why it meant so much to both of them.

7pm... 3 course dinner followed by the *Failte na bpubaill* (Welcome of the Tents).

9.30pm... We will enjoy an Irish night with traditional Irish music and craic in the company of Cobh Traditional Irish band, "Finnegan's Gaels" who will entertain us with a variety of musical numbers where the occasional audience participation might be called for.

Saturday 9th

7am – 9am.. Breakfast

10am sharp... Assemble outside the Cobh Heritage Centre for the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Boy's arrival at Cobh on 9th September 1953 and the wonderful welcome they received. The plaque will be unveiled by our guest Adrian Gebruers whose father Staf was the musician who played the Cuckoo Song on the Cathedral Carillon Bells.

10.30am... We will enter the exhibition area to explore the Cobh Heritage Centre and discover the history and the story of mass Irish emigration from the town. Read the stories of the Titanic and the Lusitania and their connection to Cobh and take in the lives of some of the Irish people who left home forever and made it big in the new land. Learn about 19 year old Jeremiah Burke who died when the Titanic sank in 1912 but not before he sent a chilling message in a bottle which miraculously landed only a few miles ashore from his home in Cork.

12.30... Assemble at St. Colman's Cathedral for an introduction to the Carillon Bells by Adrian Gebruers, the Chief Carillonneur. Adrian will explain the workings of Europe's largest Carillon Bell and then play for us "The Cuckoo Song" at almost the exact time it was played for Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy as they arrived into Cobh Harbour 70 years to the day. This is a once in a lifetime chance to hear this and the Sons of the Desert wholeheartedly thank Adrian for organising this for us.

Lunch and the afternoon will be on your own and will allow you free time to explore some of the wonderful quaint bars and pubs and coffee shops that Cobh has to offer. Mingle with the locals and try to understand the sweet Cork accents. You will be provided with a Cobh – English accent translator which will contain useful phrases should a local converse with you:

"He's the bulb off yer man in that thing" ... which translates to, "He is physically similar to that well known actor from that well know movie whose both names elude me at this time".

Or, **"The state of his bazzar. He looks like a right Gow!"** ... which translates to, "His haircut is of such a poor standard it makes him look like a feckless idiot".

Or you may be lucky to hear, **"she's some flah"** ... which means, "she is rather attractive".

We recommend The Titanic Experience if you wish to indulge yourself in a piece of history and see the original pier where the transports for the main ship left Cobh. You can hear the personal stories of some of the passengers and immerse yourself in the recreated bedrooms that were a feature of the ship.

4.30pm – 5.30pm... There will be a public Carillon Bell recital in the cathedral for anyone who wishes to attend. This is a very special chance to hear the wonderful music of the Carillon and is highly recommended.

7.30pm... Evening 3 course banquet in the Jack Doyle Function Room where green is the colour of the night and we will endeavour to turn the function room green. Don the emerald colour as best you can and you may win a prize for the best costume.

9pm... A special showing of a convention related piece of film on the big screen followed by Sons Entertain with a variety of exciting acts and some questionable ones too. A mixture of comedy and music combined with drama and all served up in the usual Sons fashion. Afterwards a traditional sing a long session will take place into the early hours with some talented musical members of the Jitterbugs Tent.

Sunday 10th

7am – 10am... Breakfast

10.30am... Assemble at the Spike Island Ferry terminal for the 11am ferry over to Spike Island, a notorious Victorian Prison. We will spend several hours wandering around this fabulous historical site and learn the stories of those who were incarcerated there such as Henry Sweers who attempted to escape from Spike Island in 1863 by swimming to the town of Cobh, which at 1800 metres was no small feat. But rough seas meant he only got half way and was forced to turn back. The wardens put him chains so that he would not try to escape again.

Or how about James Grey, a Manchester born thief who would become infamous as the criminal 'Jack in the Box'. Grey constructed a large wooden trunk with clever levers and hinges that meant it could be opened and locked from the inside. He would climb inside his trunk, have a friend dispatch it to accomplices in Cork, Belfast and Liverpool, and while the trunk was en route Grey would climb out and pillage the freight carriage.

We will have a light lunch on the island and enjoy the Boys on the big screen in one of their funniest prison moments.

2.30... Ferry departs for Cobh

4pm ... The Cobh Euro Convention Quiz taking place at The Commodore Hotel followed by the Cobh Olympics where conventioners will have their chance to compete in a variety of slow energetic pursuits and tasks where low IQ is required. Perfect for the Sons! Be prepared, you may be asked to pin something on something. Or guess the number of something in something. Or even roll something into something. (The games committee are still working on it).

7pm... Dinner and a "*searmanas bronnta*" (award ceremony) where we will discover who made an impression on the convention committee. The awards will rival the Oscars but with an Irish twist that sees the return of "The Paddy", a much coveted statuette.

9.30pm... Dance the night away in the company of one of Cobh's premier live bands, "Dr. Dec and the Side Effects" with music from the 60s and 70s. This is not to be missed and promises to be a memorable night. Dr. Dec is a funny guy and you may just find yourself on the receiving end of a joke.

Monday 11th

7am – 10am.. Breakfast

11.30am.. Assemble in O'Shea's Bar for the goodbye meeting with thanks and acknowledgements going to those who deserve it and sighs of relief that nobody got left on Spike Island. We will pass the pineapple to our Italian friends who will host the 15th European Convention.

At this point please feel free to congratulate the members of the Jitterbugs Tent for a super convention.

NB... For any questions or queries during the weekend please contact any member of the Jitterbugs Tent who will be sporting rather fetching Green Name Badges.

Anybody who is continuing their stay in Ireland please contact the members of Jitterbugs should you require any information or travel suggestions.

Convention cost is €530 per person sharing and includes all hotel accommodation, three banquets, three full breakfasts, one lunch on spike Island and all convention activities, entrance fees and ferry costs.

The single room supplement is €40 per night (x 3 = €120) giving a total single delegate cost of €650

First deposit of €200 is due on July 1st 2022

2nd Instalment of €165 due on 1st November 2022

3rd and final instalment due on 1st May 2023 (Single supplement €120 is also due on 1st May 2023)

All prices are in Euros.

The Commodore Hotel in Cobh will be the main convention hotel and will be the venue for all banquets. Due to the huge interest from delegates who wished to attend the convention we have engaged a second hotel, The Water's Edge which will host delegates on a B&B basis only. The Water's Edge is located approx. 90 seconds walk across the road from the main Commodore Hotel. Delegates will be assigned a hotel based on room availability and on how best the convention committee can accommodate as many Sons as possible who wish to attend.

Please Note.

On Saturday the 9th September, delegates will need to get from the Heritage Centre to St. Colman's Cathedral by 12.30 sharp. The distance is 600 metres and it is approx. a ten minute walk. The walk is mostly uphill and at some points it is quite steep. We will have a number of very *limited* spaces via car transport for anyone who has mobility issues. Please notify us in advance should you require transport. The journey back down from the cathedral is of course downhill and delegates are encouraged to say "weeeeeee" as they make their way back downhill with arms outstretched.

Contact .. cobh2023@gmail.com