

## **Christmas, 2013**

Here we are again, and 2013 has gone by in a hurry. We had a great year (with one major setback I'll explain later). Hope everybody else had a wonderful year.

Janet, after having fractured her leg last year, spent the first month or so recovering fully from her injuries. She is fully healed and getting around fine now.

In April and May, we spent good deal of time working on our deck remodel. John completed adding paneling below the upper deck to keep the lower deck dry, and a contractor added a gutter to drain the runoff from the paneling to a downspout. Also, we ran wiring and painted much of the trim in anticipation of upcoming future improvements.

In July, we started our last bathroom remodel. This time we are converting our downstairs half-bath to a full bath with a curb-less walk-in shower. All of this required moving a wall which contained plumbing from the upstairs bathroom, which involved cutting into the slab below to reroute the drains. Overall, a complex job for a relatively modest increase in size, but now we have everything we need to live downstairs should the need arise as we get older and have trouble navigating the stairs.

A long dry summer gave John the opportunity to fix some drainage problems around the house. The downspouts on one side were draining into the ground around the foundation since the drainage pipes were broken underground. He dug up what was needed and ran new pipe, which now exits far down the back yard near a creek. Additionally, we were able to extend the shelter for our motor home so that it easily covers the motor home plus allows room for dry storage.

In September, we set out on our long delayed trip to Ireland. After several flight delays, we arrived in Dublin on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and went to our hotel in the Temple Bar district. We stayed in Dublin for several days seeing all the sights and enjoying the food (and the Guinness). Then we picked up a rental car and headed out into the countryside. We took too many side trips to describe them all, so I won't go into those. After Dublin, we spent a couple of days in Waterford, and then moved on to Dingle town. Dingle was our favorite, and we wish we could have stayed there longer. This is a very authentic little Irish town, and the pubs are lively at night with Irish music and dance.

After Dingle, we moved on to Doolin to see the Cliffs of Moher. Again, like Dingle, Doolin is full of friendly people and a lively night life.

From Doolin, we traveled to Spiddal, a little town just west of Galway City, to stay at a bed and breakfast. While there we took a ferry boat to spend a day on the Aran Islands, which is a fascinating historical treasure. After that, we had to drive back to Dublin to turn in the car and head back home. All in all, it was a wonderful and educational two weeks in Ireland.

And finally we need to share some less than happy news. About a year and a half ago, John was diagnosed with prostate cancer. At the time it was in a very early stage, so after consulting different doctors we decided to wait and monitor it to see if it progressed slowly rather than risk the potential side effects of surgery. However, in October his PSA level had taken a sharp increase so another biopsy was taken, and it showed that the cancer had progressed faster than expected. After sorting through the pluses and minuses of the various options, the decision was made to start beam radiation treatment. A course of 8 weeks of treatment started in early December, and will continue until early February. The cancer is still in an early stage, so the odds of a complete recovery are high. After the treatment, we will continue to monitor the situation for the foreseeable future.

Pictures of our adventures are on our web site, [www.majorspain.com](http://www.majorspain.com).

Here's wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Please keep in touch.

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Janet & the Molly Malone statue in Dublin



Janet in the Temple Bar district of Dublin



Charles Fort overlooking Kinsale harbor since 1670



John and Janet in Dingle



John and Janet at the Cliffs of Moher



A thatched roof cottage on the Aran Island of Inishmore

