

IRELAND

Graham O'Sullivan, accompanied by his collie dog, was having his weekly walk on Derrynane strand, on the south west coast in County Kerry. As is the habit of such pets that relish their freedom, they wander ahead checking for the recent presence of like-minded, sniffing and staring and following the line of accumulated weed deposited at high tide on the seashore. Amongst the natural maritime debris wrenched from the ocean floor there is always the bottles, the bits of rope, weathered boards, the ubiquitous plastic objects and such stuff, dropped from boats or swept down rivers and forced ashore by the Gulf Stream.

This canine friend has a retrieving instinct and presents his master with the occasional discovery. Today was no exception as he chose a plastic bottle and duly placed it at his master's feet. It was sealed but clearly visible inside was a typewritten note that roused the natural curiosity of the beachcomber.

THE SHIP

On the evening of 16th April 2005, the biggest liner ever built and owned by the Cunard Company slipped her moorings in Southampton docks with over 2000 passengers on board including myself, my wife and my two brothers. The Queen Mary 2 was bound for New York and due in port six days later. Average speed 25 knots on the non-stop voyage. Each night before retiring I took a brief visit to the rail on deck seven and dropped overboard a bottle containing a message. If by some absolute fluke the plastic capsule survived the terrors of the Atlantic Ocean and landed on some distant shore possibly a thousand or more miles away maybe, just maybe I would hear of its arrival. One has a tinge of guilt over littering but I don't feel like a criminal. Moments later when it must have been well astern I re-entered to join the other happy chattering passengers who were unaware of my escapade on deck and neither did I receive an unfriendly tap on the shoulder despite the C.C.T.V.

The ship relentlessly ploughed onwards at a steady pace until the captain informed us a passenger was reported missing. A ship's officer contacted the missing man's family in Germany and a farewell message was located in his desk. The mighty liner put about and retraced its course in search but to no avail. The old sailor had chosen his final voyage. We then increased speed and docked at Pier 90 in Manhattan precisely on the scheduled arrival time. When our three-day stay in the Big Apple was over having seen many of the renowned sights we returned home by jet-plane and soon after settled into the daily routine of life.

BANDON

16-10-05

Four score and one hundred days later on a Sunday afternoon the phone rang. It was none other than the aforementioned Mr. O'Sullivan, a perfect gentleman, who was ringing to excitedly notify me of his sensational discovery. Though I had not divulged my phone number in the bottle message he none the less felt an immense desire to communicate the good tidings and instantly located the relevant source of rapid contact. We discussed the gratification of travel and I recounted a brief summary of the westbound voyage of QM2. Graham is a Cork man who now resides in Kerry. I know I hoped for this news but one still is amazed and believes it is well worth recording this narrative. The quirks of life and odd nature of humans will always occur and hopefully bring pleasure and wonder!

Thank you Graham and I hope you will continue patrolling and just possibly luck will be repeated. The prospects of locating one must be extremely remote but to find two should merit a monument!?

George Beare