



The Ireland Fund of Monaco Residential Bursaries

Awarded annually, The Ireland Fund of Monaco Residential Bursaries were established to enable writers born or living in Ireland to pursue a current project during a one-month residency at the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco. We are pleased to present this personal reflection of Dr. Vandra Costello on her experience in Monaco.

About the Author

DR VANDRA COSTELLO is an historic landscape consultant and garden writer. After studying law at Trinity College Dublin and the Honourable Society of the King's Inns, she practised at the bar in Dublin for a number of years before studying landscape architecture at University College Dublin. She holds a PhD from the School of Architecture of the National University of Ireland for research into the history of Irish demesnes in the seventeenth century. Vandra has written and lectured extensively on garden history and is currently finishing a book on Irish Demesne Landscapes 1660-1740.

Reflections on Magical Monaco *by Dr. Vandra Costello*

It is less than a month since I returned from my magical stay in Monaco but it feels like it was all some kind of wonderful dream—the Princess Grace Irish Library and The Ireland Fund of Monaco miraculously gave me a bursary to live in Monaco for a month, with a flat, pocket money and, best of all, a gorgeous book-lined study complete with Jack B Yeats painting to work in—alone, and in peace.

I was met at the airport and ferried to my apartment by my fairy godmother Judith Gantly, the administrator of the PGIL (as it is known to the cognoscenti like moi), after which she showed me the ropes, introduced me to local traders, pointed out the post-office, chemist and other necessities and behaved like an all-round angel.

On my first day at 'work' I met fair Geraldine and Sile who works part-time so I didn't see as much of her, but happily she was around on my birthday and she and the others gave me a lovely tea party complete with delicious French apple tarte tatin.

Monaco itself was a revelation, there is so much more to it than the casino, expensive shops and fast cars. There are charming museums and galleries, wonderful old buildings and churches, markets and funny little old fashioned shops. The place is steeped in history and culture if you know where to look for it.

I can honestly say that I have never in my life felt as safe as I did in Monaco. I met some wonderful people in Monaco, some of whom I hope are friends for life—the wonderful women at the library, friends of the library Alan Douglas and Ciaran Walsh, and Pierre Joannon and his beautiful and elegant wife Annick and I am already planning my return trip to Monaco. I feel like a sort of honorary Monegasque and long for the sights and smells of the principality, the buzz of scooters, the boulangerie, the noisy market beneath my window, the azure sea and blue skies and the wonderful people who made my stay such a pleasure.

I cannot thank The Ireland Fund of Monaco enough for providing me with the time, the space and the means to work in peace for a whole month. I am happy to say that I have completed my book and that it is now with the publishers and will be out later in 2014.