

Day 19 Aug. 12 – At Sea - on to Dunmore East, Ireland – Stonehenge Theory

The day started with calm sea and sunshine as we cruised through the English Channel between France and England towards the town of Dunmore East in the Republic of Ireland.

At 10am there was an Explorations Series lecture on two unrelated subjects. One subject was how geologic plate tectonics cause the oceans, and particularly the Atlantic Ocean to spread. The second topic was about how the ice ages may have influenced human activity. The lecture was given by Dr. David Smith in a most interesting and informative way. The tectonics information was pretty standard but Dr. Smith introduced a novel ice age related explanation for the construction of the Stonehenge site by primitive Neolithic people in England. Most schemes involve the assumption that the huge stones were moved tens of miles from the source by rolling them on logs using levers and some kind of rope pulled by a large number of people. The movement of the stones many miles over the hills and valleys of England always seemed implausible to us. However, some explanation was needed for the presence of the unique type of rock found at Stonehenge to be so far from the known sources of such material. Today David Smith told us that there was published work on the subject claiming that the large stones were moved by glacial action during the ice age and they were deposited near the Stonehenge site by the retreating glacier. The stone age people had to make a heroic effort to move and erect the giant stones but it did not involve moving them tens of miles. This theory has been added to the growing list of things that need further research when we return home.

About 320 new passengers boarded the Maasdam yesterday in Rotterdam for the return trip to Boston. We are told that the ship is fully booked. This morning in the Lido one of the stewards had the job of informing new people that trays were no longer being provided for the buffet. There were a few of the new people wandering around the ship with a lost look in their eyes but by the formal dinner this evening everybody seemed to be fully engaged and having a good time.

We took advantage of a day at sea to relax and rest up for the next three days with a different city to tour each day. The weather was cool and comfortable. We made use of the verandah for some quiet moments.



In the area of info about the Maasdam staff there was bad news on Saturday, August 8 when we learned that the cruise director, Susan Wood, had left the Maasdam. She had a medical emergency with one of her family members and took leave to attend to that matter. She is such a vivacious person

and so active that you would see her around the ship several times a day as well as at the introduction of speakers and entertainment acts. On many evenings before the main entertainment show she would skillfully conduct an audience participation game with the passengers waiting for the show to start. We marveled at how she did her job so well with few assistants. There is no word as to her return which we hope is soon. In the meantime Susan's assistant, Moyra, has been standing in and doing a good job.

During the night we will turn the clocks back one hour at 2am to account for our westward travel into a new time zone. Too soon we will be back on Eastern Daylight Time. Tomorrow we anchor at 8am in the harbor at Dunmore East, Republic of Ireland. We will take a tender boat in to check out the town and then take a guided tour of the countryside scheduled to start at 1:30pm. We will leave Dunmore East about 6pm tomorrow night headed for Liverpool, UK.