

# Dubliners’ Dublin

By Don Cummer

Every June 16, James Joyce fans from around the world gather in Dublin to mark “Bloomsday” – the day in the life of Leopold Bloom as chronicled in Joyce’s masterpiece, *Ulysses*.

Often they begin at the Martello tower where Joyce lived during his student years. Sometimes they dress in Edwardian costumes as they follow the peregrinations of Leopold Bloom through the city. A favoured station of the cross is Davy Byrne’s Pub on Duke Street, where Bloom stopped for a gorgonzola cheese sandwich and a glass of Burgundy.

Dublin has a lot of pubs. In fact, Joyce once posed this riddle: How can you find a way to walk across the city of Dublin without passing a single pub? Most Dubliners I asked concede that this would be impossible.

I’ve never been to Dublin for Bloomsday, but during a visit in May, I came across another way to explore James Joyce’s city. As a young man, he had written a series of 15 short stories that showed the psychological underbelly of his hometown. He called the collection *Dubliners*.

This year, the National Gallery of Ireland is presenting an exhibit of art works either inspired by the locations of these short stories, or painted during the period by contemporaries such as Jack Yeates.

Each image is paired with a passage from the book, and the combination evokes that pre-war era of gaslights and horse-drawn tram cars, and presents a snapshot of the social history of a city that was, at that time, down at the heels.



Don Cummer with James Joyce

Inspired by the exhibit, I picked up a copy of the book in the museum gift shop and took it down the street to Merrion Square to read. I opened it at random. The action on the page before me took place in this very park.

So I followed the footsteps of the characters through the streets, as far as the book, my map, and the GPS in my blackberry would allow. The locations are all there, much as they were in 1904.

Dame Street, Grafton Street, Stephen’s Green, the Shelbourne Hotel – following Lenehan as he

tries to sponge off Corley, and Corley as he plans to sponge off the housemaids from the Georgian townhouses of the neighbourhood.

A great way to see a city with new eyes. In the finale of “Two Gallants,” Lenehan catches up to Corley on Ely Street, where the big man reveals the gold coin that he has wormed out of his date for the evening. Having followed the two through the streets of the neighbourhood, I was looking for some refreshment. Around the corner, on Baggot Street, was a pub made famous by a different generation of “Dubliners” – the folk group that took their name from the Joyce stories.

The walls of O’Donoghues are festooned with old photos of Luke Kelly and the others who performed in the back room and helped launch a global revival of Irish music in the 1960s. But on a spring afternoon, the focus of regulars is not on music but on the horse races telecast on the screens above the bar.

Although the tourists at O’Donoghues often outnumber the locals, this place is no shrine to a past golden age of Dublin. It’s a living, breathing social centre where, over a pint of Guinness, you can talk to the punters between their trips down the street to lay their bets at the bookmakers. These are people that could come straight from the pages of a James Joyce story.

By the way, there is a solution to Joyce’s riddle: to cross Dublin without ever passing a pub, simply ensure that you don’t pass the pub – instead, go inside each one and have a pint.

However, making it across the city in this fashion would be even more difficult than trying to navigate a pub-free route.

## Understanding Systemic Inflammation, Oral Hygiene, and Cardiovascular Disease

By: Dr. Nasrin Saba DDS

How do you know if gum disease may threaten your heart health?

While the connection is not yet proven, studies suggest that people with periodontal disease (disease of the gums and bones that support the teeth) are at a greater risk. The best defence is to brush and floss your teeth regularly and lookout for problems with your teeth and gums.

Healthy gums are firm, light pink, and very elastic. So if that description doesn’t fit the gums in your mouth, it’s time for a checkup. Watch for these symptoms of gum disease:

- Red, swollen gums
- Bleeding after you floss or brush
- Receding gums or noticing that you seem to see more of a tooth than you used to
- Pus on the gums
- Pain when you bite or chew
- Loose teeth

The major conditions affecting the gums are:

**1. Gingivitis.** This early stage of gum disease develops when bacteria build up in the gap between the gums and a tooth. The most common form is in response to plaque, or a bacterial biofilm adhering to tooth surfaces. Symptoms may be mild, but you may notice some redness, swelling, or bleeding. The only treatment you need is improved brushing and flossing habits. Neglecting this, gingivitis may

progress to periodontitis, which is a more destructive form.

**2. Periodontitis.** This is a more advanced form of gum disease, when the infection has gone deeper. The bacteria release toxins that make the surrounding tissue swell and infected pockets form between the teeth and gums. Over time, the infection can damage the bone beneath the gums, causing the gums to recede from the teeth.

While the mechanism linking gum disease with cardiovascular disease has not been established, several theories exist to explain this.

1. One theory is that oral bacteria can affect the heart when they enter the blood stream. The billions of bacteria and other microscopic critters that live in the mouth unquestionably influence the health of teeth and gums, but do they also cause problems for the heart and blood vessels? Researchers found diseased gums released high levels of bacterial pro-inflammatory components into the bloodstream. These harmful components travel to other organs in the body, such as the heart, and potentially cause harm. For example, bacteria may attach to fatty plaques in the coronary arteries (heart blood vessels) and cause clot formation or by thickening of the walls due to the buildup of fatty proteins. Blood clots and wall thickening can obstruct normal blood flow, restricting the amount of nutrients and oxygen required for the heart to function properly. This may

lead to heart attacks.

2. Another possibility is that the inflammation caused by periodontal disease increases plaque build up, which may contribute to swelling of the arteries.

Researchers have found that people with periodontal disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease as those without periodontal disease.

Although we still have a lot to learn about whether, and how, periodontitis and other oral problems are linked to heart disease, it still makes good sense to take care of your teeth. Brush and floss every day, and see your dentist at least twice a year for regular cleanings and oral exams. This will pay off for your oral health

and just may benefit your heart as well!

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