



The House on an Irish Hillside

Felicity Hayes-McCoy

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This is the story of how one woman's life was transformed by a remarkable village on the Dingle peninsula in Ireland. It's a life-affirming tale of rediscovering lost values and cherishing loved ones and the communities we live in.

The House on an Irish Hillside Details

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Author : Felicity Hayes-McCoy

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Felicity says

This is part memoir, part history, part love story from an author who was born in Ireland went to live, work and establish herself in London, then returned to the remote, Irish speaking area of the Dingle Peninsula. She found community, friendship, wisdom, a deep love of the Irish and their/her true language, as well as a great peace of mind from learning to live slower in her little stone cottage with her husband Wilf. Here she finds her place in the remembered/retold history of the hills, her cottage and the forebears who lived there before, long before.

Dorothy Fitzgerald says

i was able to read this while i was living in the exact location that the story takes place, Dingle, Ireland. i would have enjoyed this book regardless, but being able to walk the roads where the story takes place, certainly influenced me. This is a well written book, well researched and honest to the culture of the location. This is a memoir and travel book. If you have been to Dingle, or are going to Ireland this is a good book to read. And if you just want to go to Ireland.... but can't.... this is the book for you!!

Janet says

I loved this book and would happily read it again. Felicity Hayes-McCoy tells her life tale along with that of two places, time, and the memories and myths of those places across time with marvelously vivid imagery.. As I read, I felt peaceful, adventurous, and inspired. A feat which no book has driven me to in a long time. Hayes-McCoy masterfully wove together so many threads of her life into this piece.

Jean St.Amand says

I didn't realize until I started reading that it wasn't a story, it was true...I only managed to get to page 25 and was so bored I just had to stop because life is too short.

Fiona Linday says

This clever memoir writing seems like an indulgence. The book takes you to Felicity's home and to numerous story scenes. There are contrasts in setting and peoples but always a warmth and the feeling of being welcome. The rich writing handles description of places and traditions remarkably well and intertwines that with the use of music and word. You can almost hear the ocean and smell the mountain air of Western Ireland. She talks of a landscape representing memories that shouldn't be destroyed and of a slice of cultural history. I've never actually been but it sounds most inviting. She takes us back to a time when people lived their lives as part of communities that stood or fell together in

hard times. Then she talks of seeking an awareness and details beautifully how she and her husband achieved this; living between London for work and culture and Ireland for stillness and leisure. This was an outstanding opportunity for a pleasant escape.

I received a free copy for which I was most grateful.

Kevin says

I read this immediately it was published and loved every minute of it. I've just been prompted to comment here while reviewing her most recent book. This is a wonderful description of a journey to a less stressful existence, memories of story-telling, making new friends and learning old ways on the western-most tip of Ireland. It is a great read, I highly recommend you take a look - I'm sure you'll enjoy it as much as I did.

Leslie says

This was a rich, layered story of an Irish woman and her English husband, discovering a place of beauty, stories, and community. They restored a house on the western end of the Dingle peninsula and became part of an ancient place with legends, music, and the history of dependency on the land and survival in hard times. Hayes-McCoy weaves all this together with some of the beloved Irish language thrown in. It's a story you live in and then come back out into a very different place, longing to return to "Corca Dhuibhne".

Angela says

This book is a true love story between Felicity and the spectacularly beautiful Dingle Peninsula. From the day of her arrival as a student of Irish at the age of 17, the magic of the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, in the south-west of Ireland filtered into her heart and mind down the years, the incessant 'pull' culminating in herself and her English husband buying Tí Neillí Mhuiris – (The house of Nellie, daughter of Muris), a house built from stones picked from the fields and remembered with affection for its once smoke-filled kitchen. Anyone who has ever crossed the magical Connor Pass, and dropped down into the beauty of the Dingle Peninsula has experienced the unique sense of this place. Few who visit here are not enchanted by the fabulous scenery, the friendly people, the history, the cultural tradition and the wonderful food. Felicity's book is beautifully written – flowing along with perfectly chosen words building the word pictures that pervade every page. We are enticed by the 'polished pewter waves' and 'rain-washed mornings with skies like mother of pearl' and 'waves shimmering emerald, turquoise and jade'. Dingle is a place that challenges those who wish to describe it, for we simply do not have the vocabulary. My two abiding images are of red hens pecking at watercress and girls cycling to dances with their high heels slung around their necks! It was at this level that Felicity's writing appealed to me so very much, but there is more. Felicity has an extensive knowledge and regard for Irish myth and local folklore and these together with the beauty of the place are the 'weft' on which she weaves a beautiful tapestry of stories of her love affair with Dingle's people and places. Manannán Mac Lir, the Celtic God of the Sea, Mrs Hurley, Danú the Fertility Goddess, Kath the London neighbour; Spot the neighbour's dog and the Sun God Lugh – all woven together to deepen the understanding of this place. On these pages you will find present day relevance of Imbolg, Bealtaine, Lughnasa and Samhain, the great festivals and turning points in the Celtic year; you will join in on dancing in the kitchen and music by the fireside, celebrate Nollag na mBan and the 'Wran' boys. The mythology, the folk-tales the music, song and dance, the living friends and neighbours and the simplicity of

things that matter to them, together with the memory of the dead, some of whom died before the author came to live here and some of whose coffins she followed, is all intertwined into a wonderful tribute to all that is Dingle.

This book will I believe, appeal to anyone who has visited Dingle and has been smitten by it and who keeps going back. It will also appeal to people with Irish roots, who have never stood on these shores as it will give them a sense of what it is to be Irish, what it is to be tied into the traditions and myths of our heritage and how these things impact on everyday life. For people who have no ties to this land, this book is a beautiful exploration of getting back to the things that matter and you will want to read it again and again. I heartily recommend it as an excellent read.

Katy says

Poignant and clear headed. Read it.

Steve says

Felicity Hayes-McCoy tells a compelling story of the Kerry region that she adopted. Although she grew up in Dublin she went to London to learn and practice her profession (acting, writing, playwriting). Descendant of Galway and Eniscorthy folk, she developed an early love for the Irish language which first took her to the rural Dingle peninsula. Caught up in a busy London career, she purchases an old house and is drawn into the ancient cycles of rural Irish life. Hayes-McCoy's love of the Irish language helps her to explain the customs in a way no travel book ever could. The story is, by turns, thoughtful and joyous. I've heard it said that a good book is an old friend. That is certainly true of this. Take the time to savor it, like a comfortable cup of tea at the end of a long day.

Molly Ewing says

My enthusiasm for this book may be partly due to the fact that I picked it up from an Eason's in Carlow, and read it while traveling to and around the locations where it is set on the Dingle Peninsula. It is a lovely memoir, incorporating elements of Irish history, mythology and anthropology with the very personal story of finding, purchasing, and renovating a traditional cottage, learning the wisdom of a specific place, and becoming part of a small community "out back" in the Gaeltacht village of Corca Dhuibhne.

Kathi says

I enjoyed this book very much, because it brought me to an area of Ireland that has captured my heart. If circumstances in my life were different I would choose to do exactly as Felicity and Wilf have done and make Corca Dhuibhne my second home. I feel like I'm home every time I go there.

Katherine says

Felicity Hayes-McCoy lives on a peninsula on the west coast of Ireland, where living is at a completely different pace and community is vital to everyday life. A place where myth, song and storytelling are not only as ancient as the ocean and hills around them, but just as much a part of today's culture. Filled with profound insights and lovely lessons on living a life of depth and meaning. This book is a gem of a memoir, a definite keeper.

Highly recommended.

Jen says

I loved this book. I wish I had a better word for it than "love," because it took me right back to the two weeks we spent on Sleah Head a few years ago. Everything I felt about Dingle and Sleah Head and Dunquin and Ventry and all of the little villages surrounding Sleah Head and the Blasket Islands...all of it is in this book.

The Dingle Peninsula is a magical place, and I really wasn't particularly familiar with all of the Celtic history, but Hayes-McCoy gives a good history of how those traditions still affect life on the peninsula today. I only wish she'd given a little more history of the Blasket Islands, but since no one lives there today and the islands are basically abandoned because of their remoteness, it probably wasn't all that relevant to this tale.

Kate says

I bought this book in the Dingle Bookshop as I left the peninsula, and read it in airports and aeroplanes on my way back from Ireland to New Zealand. It was a lovely way to name all the things I love about home and it brought the realisation that what's important is bringing the quality of life that Felicity describes to whatever place you live in. Life here in rural NZ is not the same as life in Corca Dhuibhne, the strands don't overlap and weave together in the same way as they do there. But still there's great joy in it; the turning of the seasons, the pleasure of friends and the partnership with place. These are the treasures she writes about, and I think the core of this book is her voyage find that in the place she lives in, be it London or Corca Dhuibhne.
