

A SEISMIC MYSTERY

From an IRTRAD post of a few years back:

"The beat of 50 bodhráns will reverberate around Athea to mark the official opening of this year's county fleadh which takes place over the June Bank Holiday weekend."

News item from the *San Francisco Examiner* for the day after:

Seismologists Baffled by Mystery Readings

Senior seismologists at the University of California at Davis are at a loss to explain the unusual readings recorded by their instruments yesterday.

According to spokesman Dr. Lester Zleen, some of the delicate and expensive machinery used to detect earth movements in distant parts of the world actually fell off the tables where they had stood unmoved for decades. "I've never seen anything like it in 40 years of experience," said a shaken Dr. Zleen. "The recording pens were snapped like toothpicks. Something damned big happened yesterday and we don't have any idea what it was."

Scientists at the Lamont-Doherty facility outside New York City also detected what appeared to be seismic activity and were able to identify the epicenter as western Ireland. "That's really weird," said Dr. Maryanne Undelgleiber, acting seismologist at the facility. "As far as anybody knew up to yesterday, there are no fault lines or tectonic movements anywhere near Ireland. There hasn't been a volcano in Ireland for fifty thousand years. In other words, we don't know what happened, but we do know it was BIG."

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Other reporting stations recorded a quasi-rhythmic thumping of some two hours' duration. One station in Indonesia reported cracks in its windows resulting from the mystery vibrations.

No personal injuries have been reported, but premature birth of quadruplets to a family in Tierra del Fuego may be related to the phenomenon.

Attempts to contact authorities in Ireland have so far been unsuccessful due to local holidays, but travellers returning from the Emerald Isle report numerous instances of being bounced out of bed. One witness claims to have watched the bar of a local pub undulating during the disturbance. "It was like watching a bedsheet being shaken out," said Ernie Blornik of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who with his bride had been honeymooning in County Clare. "Drinks, glasses, bottles, everything was flying all over the place. And then there was the dull roar, like thunder coming from somewhere. It was terrifying and it seemed to go on forever. It was no way to spend a honeymoon, I can tell you that." Mrs. Blornik concurred, although she did say that at first, the undulating motions were "kind of cool", but she offered no further explanation.

Other visitors close to the Irish epicenter reported cows and sheep being flipped over by the vibrations. "There they were, standing around as usual," said one witness. "Then this noise started, and next thing we could actually watch them bouncing up into the air eight or nine feet and landing on their backs. They seemed surprised. A few struggled to upright themselves, but most of them actually seemed to be enjoying the vibrations. Guess it felt like a massage, and most cows and sheep don't get too many of those. They were mooing and bleating to beat the band, and it looked like they were having the time of their lives."

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Caretakers at Knock reported a deluge of worried visitors to the holy shrine.

"Everyone was talking about the end of the world," reported one priest. "Actually it was great - I haven't heard so many confessions in years. I was kind of sorry when it was over."

Investigations are continuing.

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