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The Irish Times - **Saturday, August 25, 2012**

Germans hold better opinion of Irish than of other bailout states

STEPHEN COLLINS, Political Editor

GERMANS ARE much more favourably disposed to Ireland than to any of the other EU bailout countries, according to a poll carried out for The Irish Times in both countries.

The poll found a big majority of Irish people believed Germany was doing at least enough to protect the euro zone.

The unique poll was carried out by Ipsos MRBI in Germany and Ireland by telephone earlier this month. It was conducted against the background of the ongoing euro zone crisis and the pivotal role Germany will play in determining if Ireland will get further relief on its banking debt. The poll was carried out among a representative sample of 1,000 people in each country.

German respondents had a broadly positive attitude to Ireland, with just 3 per cent of them wanting us out of the EU and a majority believing Irish people worked longer hours than they do.

Asked to assess how Germany was responding to the euro zone crisis, 52 per cent of Germans said their country was doing too much; 36 per cent said they were doing just enough, 6 per cent said not enough and 6 per cent had no opinion.

On the bailout countries, 46 per cent of Germans felt Ireland was trying hard to fix its economy, 23 per cent said we should try harder and the remainder had no opinion.

By contrast, 13 per cent of Germans felt Greece was trying hard, 78 per cent felt it should try harder and 9 per cent had no opinion.

The other two bailout countries came in between. On Portugal, 32 per cent of Germans said the country was trying hard, 45 per cent said it should try harder and 23 per cent had no opinion. On Spain, 31 per cent said it was trying hard, 56 per cent said it should try harder and 13 per cent had no opinion.

Asked which, if any, of the bailout countries they felt should leave the European Union, 3 per cent said Ireland, 5 per cent said Portugal and Spain and 42 per cent said Greece.

A total of 49 per cent of German respondents said none of the bailout countries should leave the EU, while 8 per cent had no opinion.

Asked a series of questions on how they compared Ireland to Germany, 86 per cent felt Germany had a stronger economy. However, 38 per cent felt Irish people worked longer hours compared to 32 per cent who felt Germans worked longer hours, while 14 per cent believed both nationalities worked the same hours.

The poll forms part of an Irish Times series which begins today examining the unique relationship between Ireland and Germany. The series, which also runs next week examines how the two countries have become entwined like never before.

On the issue of tax, 45 per cent felt Ireland had lower taxes for workers while 11 per cent said Germany had lower taxes, while 12 per cent thought they were the same.

There was a similar view of taxes on business, with 47 per cent saying they were lower in Ireland, 11 per cent saying they were lower in Germany and 10 per cent the same.

On public sector salaries, 37 per cent felt they were higher in Germany, 18 per cent said they were higher in Ireland and 13 per cent said they were equal.

When the same questions were asked of Irish people, the response was similar on a number of issues.

Asked to assess the German response to the euro crisis, 44 per cent of Irish respondents said it was doing just enough, 20 per cent said it was being asked to do too much, 24 per cent said not enough and 11 per cent did not know.

On the performance of bailout states, 64 per cent said Ireland was trying hard while 35 per cent said we should be trying harder. Just 1 per cent had no opinion.

On Greece, 24 per cent of Irish people said it was trying hard and 69 per cent said it should try harder.

On Portugal, 40 per cent said it was trying hard and 41 per cent said it should try harder. On Spain, 38 per cent said it was trying hard and 51 per cent said it should try harder.

On whether any of these states should leave the EU, 34 per cent said Greece, 9 per cent Ireland, 5 per cent Portugal, 4 per cent Spain and 51 per cent said none should leave.

Germans still positive on Ireland despite euro zone crisis

STEPHEN COLLINS, Political Editor

OPINION POLL: Most Irish people believe EU's largest and most powerful state is doing what it can for euro zone

THE REMARKABLE feature of the Irish Times poll on German/ Irish attitudes is just how well the relationship between the states has survived the euro zone crisis.

It appears a substantial majority of Germans have retained a positive view of Ireland despite the fact that they believe they are being asked to do too much for the euro zone.

The other side of the equation is that a clear majority of Irish people have not been influenced by the anti-German rhetoric emanating from a range of politicians and high-profile media commentators.

The evidence of the poll is that a substantial majority of people in Ireland believe "our gallant allies in Europe" are doing what they can for the euro zone.

People in both countries have very similar views on which of the bailout states are, or are not, trying hard enough to fix their economies.

The Germans rate Ireland far higher than any of the other bailout countries and, not surprisingly, we also rate ourselves higher than the other troubled countries.

In both countries a majority of two to one believe Ireland is trying hard to fix the economy. Surprisingly, a greater percentage of Irish people than Germans believe that we should be trying harder to fix our economic mess.

People in both countries firmly agree that Greece is not trying hard enough, while they each have a more benign view of Portugal and Spain.

In the case of both these countries a significant minority of Irish and German people believe that they are doing enough, but a majority in both countries take the view they should try harder.

There were also remarkably similar responses in Germany and Ireland about which country, if any, should leave the European Union as a result of the crisis.

Just 3 per cent of Germans thought Ireland should leave, while 9 per cent of Irish people thought we should go. That figure probably represents the hardline Eurosceptic minority in Ireland who believe we would be better off outside the EU.

There was broad agreement in both countries about what should happen to the other bailout countries: 42 per cent of Germans and 34 per cent of Irish people think Greece should leave the EU, but very small numbers of both countries would like to see an exit by Spain or Portugal.

One very interesting feature of the poll is 49 per cent of Germans don't want to see any of the bailout countries leaving the EU in spite of the fact that a majority of them, 52 per cent, believe that their country is being asked to do too much for the euro zone.

The fact that almost half the German respondents want to keep Greece in the EU, in spite of their belief that that country is not trying hard enough to fix its economy, is evidence of a continuing commitment to the European project.

The Irish response to the same question is also fascinating. The 20 per cent of Irish people who think Germany is being asked to do too much to save the euro zone almost cancels out the 24 per cent who believe it is not doing enough.

When put together with the fact that 44 per cent of Irish respondents believe that Germany is doing just enough to save the euro zone, the majority attitude here towards Germany is positive.

The view in Ireland that none of the bailout countries should leave the EU is almost identical with the view in Germany. In the Irish case 51 per cent of respondents say that none of the troubled countries should leave.

There were some amusing discrepancies between the views expressed when it came to comparing the two countries on a number of fronts.

Not surprisingly people in both countries strongly agree with the indisputable fact that Germany has the stronger economy.

However, Germans believe that Irish people work longer hours, while Irish people believe that Germans work longer hours.

People in both countries agree that taxes on business are lower in Ireland but Germans believe that Irish workers have lower taxes than they have, while the Irish think the Germans pay less tax.

There is also some divergence on which country pays its public sector workers more than their private sector counterparts.

Germans believe that higher salaries for public servants are more likely to apply in their own country than in Ireland.

By contrast Irish respondents were even more firmly of the view that public service workers here are likely to be paid more than the private sector.

The fact that some divergences emerged on these questions is understandable, given the limited knowledge that people in each country inevitably have about the detail of the taxation system or labour market in the other.

They are an exception to the overall thrust of the poll, which shows remarkably similar views in the biggest and most powerful EU country in the EU and one on the western periphery.

The Irish Times - **Saturday, August 25, 2012**

Power points: an Irish-German affair



- [Photograph: Getty Images](#) [Common assets: the Spire of Dublin.](#)



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DEREK SCALLY in Berlin

Germany has long had a love affair with Ireland, but recent economic developments have put a strain on the relationship. So how does Europe's most powerful economy view Ireland, and what does the future hold for the alliance?

IRISH VISITORS to Berlin usually head to the television tower or the Reichstag dome for views of the German capital. Few Irish know of the spectacular view atop the 20-storey tower in the Ku-damm Karree shopping centre – even though they own it.

Despite a prime location on Berlin's leafy Kurfürstendamm boulevard, the labyrinthine shopping centre has been largely vacant for years. With its dirty grey facade and ghostly passageways, the Karree is the embodiment of the German-Irish complex.

When Sean Mulryan's Ballymore group bought the centre for more than €200 million in 2007, locals agreed it was an astronomical price for a problem property. The centre had never worked because there was no room for anchor tenants on the street front, which was occupied by two historic theatres. To solve that problem, the Irish investors decided they would flatten both to make room for a new €500 million development.

"Ballymore were arrogant and naive in equal measure," says one well-placed source. "They under-estimated everything – except the purchase price." Protests against the demolition prompted a tense stand-off, then the financial crisis hit and Nama moved in on Ballymore's assets, including the Ku-damm Karree.

“It was a high price for a site that didn’t work. Ballymore took a chance and that money is gone now,” says Ralf Bock, Ballymore manager for Germany. Two-thirds of the money paid was Ballymore’s own money, he says, and one-third came from Bank of Ireland. “But it’s a property the Irish taxpayer can be sure will rise in value, their money is safe.”

Ballymore is under pressure from Nama to offload the property. There’s talk of a Turkish shopping mall mogul moving in but, with nothing concrete, key tenants are moving out.

For now, the Karree is a Nama-controlled wreck, cast adrift in a perfect storm of ambition and hubris. Deals like this triggered the eurozone crisis, welding Ireland and Germany together like never before.

For decades, we happily snapped up German jobs, kitchens and cars. German visitors to our island, meanwhile, embraced a surrogate heimat – an idealised homeland even more green and lush than the one Hitler co-opted and poisoned for generations.

Each had something the other wanted – their economic strength for our lightness of being.

Then, after an economic reversal of fortunes, Germany took a dive while flights to Berlin filled up with Irish men thumbing property portfolios. Some were serious players with serious cash, others were fly-by-nights out to make a quick buck with other people’s money. Few were aware of Article 14 of Germany’s post-war constitution, which states: “Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good.” It is this cultural blindness that has come back to haunt us all, as our EU/IMF programme confronts us with our largest partner. The question is: does the German-Irish relationship have a future or will, as a German saying goes, money matters end the friendship?

Before considering what they think of us, it’s worth considering what, if anything, we know of them.

The boom years opened Irish eyes to European delights, from Swedish design to Spanish wine, but Germany remained trapped in central casting. The two most popular German films of recent years dealt with Hitler and the Stasi. In one major Dublin bookshop last week, only eight of the more than 100 books in its German section were not devoted to dictatorship. The fiction section is almost German-free; the biggest success of recent years, Hans Fallada’s Nazi drama *Alone in Berlin*, was first published 65 years ago.

A visit to a similarly-sized Berlin bookshop reveals an embarrassment of Irish literary riches: Binchy and Banville, Enright and Tóibín. German public radio this year produced not one but two marathon radio dramatisations of *Ulysses*.

On Sunday evenings, millions of Germans indulge in soft-soap dramas with whimsical titles such as *Our Farm in Ireland*. Irish folk festivals are a weekly occurrence.

During Euro 2012, everyone here had a laugh over “Angela Merkel Thinks We’re Working” – from the *Bild* tabloid to the lady herself – while the best-selling broadsheet described Irish fans’ Field of Avenbury farewell as a “goose-bump moment”.

“We’ll miss the Irish fans,” wrote the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* daily. “Free as birds and gloriously uninhibited.”

Germany’s love for Ireland is complex and deep, and exists in a separate dimension to the eurozone crisis. Polls show repeatedly that Germans make a clear distinction between Ireland and Greece: like Angela Merkel, they think the Irish are working but that the Greeks are not.

There’s no reason for Ireland to have a German complex on the matter of who owes whom, considering the one-way traffic during the eighth century, when Irish monks brought learning back to central Europe after the dark ages.

“During the first thousand years of [German-Irish] relations, Ireland has been the creditor,” wrote John Hennig, one of many Germans who found refuge from the Nazis in Ireland – another source of credit.

ASK IRISH people what they associate with Germany, they are less likely to mention the Nazis than the strong work ethic, economy and engineering prowess.

That's not surprising: take a close look at the yellow cranes used to build the Titanic a century ago in Belfast and you'll see the logo of Krupp steel on the side. Even Titanic's builder, Harland & Wolff, was co-founded by Hamburg-born Gustav Wilhelm Wolff.

Interestingly, the slogan of German efficiency – Audi's "Vorsprung durch Technik" (ahead through engineering) – was devised by Sir John Hegarty, the son of Cork emigrants.

These cultural links cannot hide cultural distance. Here language is key: for many Irish, thanks to the nuns' love of French, German remains a forbidding barrier. That said, numbers learning German at university are rising slowly, with the hope of employment on graduation.

This cultural barrier has led to many sticky misunderstandings in German-Irish relations. Heinrich Böll's green-tinted Irish Journal provided Germans with idealised views of Ireland for decades. But the Irish reception for Böll's documentary Children of Éire provoked huge controversy on its Irish broadcast in 1965 from viewers who didn't appreciate his literary take on their happy but barefoot children.

The tables were turned in 2007 when ex-German ambassador Christian Pauls remarked that economic success had left Ireland a "coarse" place. Some were put out by his remarks, while others applauded his openness and agreed with his assertion.

A year later, author Jeannette Villachia picked up the theme in her book A Year in Dublin, relating to her readers a well-known Irish economic pundit's "entertaining" explanation for the Irish boom: "After the euro's introduction, his countrymen were able to 'plunder the savings of Germans' at 'interest rates that were good for us but bad for them'."

Dr Gisela Holfter, senior lecturer in German at the University of Limerick, says German-Irish relations – particularly in recent years – have been burdened by positive and negative stereotypes on both sides.

"The German side still happily thinks of Ireland as the green country," she says, "while on the Irish side, there's an idea of Germans living the high life that doesn't correspond to the low social welfare and minimal wage increases in the last decades."

PERCEPTIONS OF Germany's economic rise, while dictating reform terms to poor programme countries, has caused no small resentment. Few know that Germans have seen negligible pay rises in two decades, or that many feel their standard of living is slipping as their society ages. The German giant feels vulnerable.

On a drizzly Saturday night, a group of German visitors on a "civil society tour of Ireland" is gathered in the Teacher's Club on Dublin's Parnell Square for a talk on Ireland's economic crisis.

Any romantic notions are shattered on hearing the rates of Irish youth unemployment and personal indebtedness. The sympathy is palpable, but eyebrows rise when they hear about popular resistance to property tax and metered-water. Both are long a reality in Germany.

"Water is free here?" asks one.

"Regardless of how much you use?" asks another.

No one mentions that the standard Irish dole payment is twice the German equivalent.

"For most of my life we've always paid as I think you should when you are in a strong financial position," says Waltraud Grampp, one of the German visitors. "I feel now there is a hole in our wallet but people still want to dip in, expecting to find more money than is actually there. Their ideas of German wealth are obsolete." The central disconnect of the eurozone crisis is the belief outside Germany that Europe's largest member could and

should do more, while polls show a majority Germans feel overwhelmed by the existing demands let alone future expectations.

“Everyone in Ireland is being pumped up by populist outrage at the indignity of having to live within our means, and blaming Germans for it,” says Peter Sutherland, a former European Commissioner and chairman of Goldman Sachs International. “I think Irish people are generally sympathetic to the German view. Talk of ‘the Germans’ is dangerous if we lose sight that our interest lies in the success of the European project.”

A successful end to eurozone depends on politics and economics, but also perception. While Europe’s leaders have used the crisis to begin pooling financial and budgetary competences, they guard jealously their own national competence on the political-crisis narrative.

Few German politicians, for instance, have suggested a link between Ireland’s property bubble and German banking misadventures in the IFSC, or the unwitting contribution from German savers.

“No one tells the people here that part,” said ex-foreign minister Joschka Fischer at a Berlin discussion in April. “I don’t see in this a master plan but a bit of the reality is being kept from view.” Meanwhile, Ireland’s narrative began with one extreme – “we all partied” – and swung to another – “you are not responsible for the crisis”.

“I don’t subscribe to that view,” says Lucinda Creighton, minister of state for Europe, of the Taoiseach’s December address. “Not so long ago we were praying for outside entities to take control of a rapidly deteriorating crisis. Quite quickly, self-criticism of what got us to this point turned into criticism of anyone else.” She says that clear-eyed engagement with the largest EU member, our partner for better or worse, is essential if Ireland is to argue its case in Europe.

“I agree with the German view that there is no magic wand or pool of money that can make our challenges disappear,” she says. “We need to cut costs to make Europe relevant to the global economy. Where I disagree is on banking debt, lumping it on to sovereign debt. My firm view is that this euro crisis will continue until we deal with that challenge.”

From Fassbender to King Friedrich: the love affair between Germany and Ireland

Michael Fassbender (pictured above) is one of those rare things: a ginger German. With a father from Heidelberg and a mother from Larne, Co Antrim, he was born in Germany but moved with his family at a young age to Killarney, Co Kerry. He first rose to prominence in a TV ad for stout, as the man who crossed the Atlantic to raise a pint and heal a rift with a friend in Boston. Film roles followed, including 300, Hunger, Shame and, most recently, Prometheus. Asked by fans how he lost so much weight to play the hunger striker Bobby Sands in Hunger, Fassbender, with dry German humour, replied: “By not eating.”

In German interviews, Fassbender chats happily about his Irish childhood in Killarney, in particular his stint as a tardy altar-boy, regularly showing up late for Mass – with the keys of the church. In that sense, Fassbender seems to feel more like a tardy Irish Catholic than a punctual German Protestant. “In Catholicism there are these rituals and images: we have, if you will, a better show than the Protestants,” he told Germany’s Cover magazine.

Fassbender has brought sexy back to German-Irish relations, something sorely lacking since the days of Lola Montez. Born Eliza Rosanna Gilbert in Sligo, Lola caught the eye of Bavaria’s King Ludwig I (also pictured above) in 1846 by claiming to be an exotic dancer from Spain. Although married, the king took up with the girl from Grange, even making her the duchess of Landsfeld. Bavarian citizens put up with their king’s cavorting, but their patience snapped when his courtesan began meddling in state affairs. Ludwig was forced to abdicate and Lola had to flee. She never saw him again, but she remained a duchess. In those days, titles were a girl’s best friend.

She wasn’t the first Irish person to fall in with a German king of ill repute. In 1734, James Kirkland from Ballygar, Co Longford, was recruited by King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia to serve in his army. He served in

a special division known as the Tall Guys – at 6ft 8in, Kirkland was a towering sensation, his acquisition part of the king's indulging in what he called his "weakness for tall soldiers".

Kirkland is described as "of good inches . . . but by no means a beautiful man". He was paid £1,000 "on condition of his giving up his person", as well as £60 as three years' wages. Kirkland stayed in service until the king died and today his portrait hangs in Berlin's German Historical Museum.

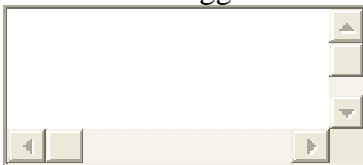
The beginning of recorded Irish-German relations lies in an unfortunate incident. Cillian, a pious if mouthy monk from Co Cavan, was travelling Europe when he converted the duke of Würzburg in 689. Unable to leave well enough alone, he told the newly baptised duke that, having married his brother's widow, he was in violation of scriptures. Hearing this, the scorned wife sent her soldiers to find Cillian and his companions, Colmán and Totan, and had the three beheaded. Cillian left behind his bible in Würzburg, which survives to this day. In its margins are some of the oldest written examples of old Irish.

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Joe O'sullivan
no mention of Heinrich Boll's "Irisches Tagesbuch"??



[22 Hours Ago](#)

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Christian Rudolph
great article!

As a German you get used that if you travel to a foreign country that people are not very excited when they hear that you are from Germany. It happened to me in Canada, Australia and Portugal that locals found it very funny to say "Heil Hitler! to me and my wife when they found out that I am German. Sometimes I said that I am swiss to avoid stupid comments.

I was very astonished when I traveled through Ireland that everybody was friendly and warm despite my strong

terrible German accent. The Irish did not care about it. When I spoke to friends and relatives who visited Ireland they had the same positive experience.

I guess that`s is one of the main reasons why Germans like Ireland so much.



Cop yerself on folks! This "we are not Greece" and furthermore "the Germans think we are not Greece" is beyond cringingly pathetic. (It's also obnoxious and borderline racist)

When you are not getting orgasmic about the odd British or American pat on the head it seems a German pat is the latest source of organism.

What a spineless, self-loathing bunch of drones devoid of any self-respect or self-confidence!

We are *worse* than Greece when it comes to borrowing money to over-pay welfare and Public Servant pay and pensions! Fact. The Germans were as bad in the 1990s - they got their act together in the same years we lost the plot.

If the Germans don't realise that it is because they are victims of the same spin the Irish MSM and Government are feeding our own populace.

On top of that we are saddled with German banker's gambling debts in return for loans we needed to keep funding Greek style deficits for the past 4 years.

Toss in the economic illiteracy (or wishful thinking) of the German and Irish europhile "elites" and you get the catastrophe that is the euro experiment.

The Irish Times - **Monday, August 27, 2012**

Germans buttered up to view Ireland as rural idyll, poll finds

STEPHEN COLLINS, Political Editor

GERMANS OVERWHELMINGLY think of Ireland in terms of green countryside even though only a small proportion of them have ever visited this country, according to a special Irish Times Ipsos MRBI poll conducted in both countries.

Pubs and alcohol come far behind in second place to the idyllic rural image a majority of Germans have of this country.

The other side of the equation is that Irish people think primarily of Germany as efficient, hard-working and clean with a well-run economy.

Mirroring the German view of Ireland, beer festivals figure high up in the Irish view of Germany.

The poll was conducted as part of a series in The Irish Times which examines the unique relationship between Ireland and Germany. The series continues today.

The image of Ireland as a green and beautiful island has imprinted itself strongly on the German people going by the response to the question “when you think of Ireland what comes to mind?”.

Countryside and landscape was mentioned by 60 per cent of respondents with pubs and alcohol in second place at 20 per cent.

Things such as agriculture, farm animals, bad weather and tourism were all cited as was Kerrygold butter, which was mentioned by 11 per cent of Germans as coming to mind when they think of Ireland.

Irish music and dance also made some impact, being cited by 7 per cent of Germans, while the same number cited friendly people and beautiful castles and villages.

Just 9 per cent of Germans have ever visited Ireland while 11 per cent say they have plans to do so in the next two years. By contrast 42 per cent of Irish people say they have visited Germany. This figure appears very high but reflects that Germany is such a big country by comparison and is a popular venue for breaks.

The Irish view of Germany is dominated by images of efficiency and hard work, which were cited by 22 per cent as coming to mind.

Beer and festivals figure high on 14 per cent, with a well-run economy and country getting the same response. Tourism came next with 13 per cent as did jobs and industry.

Angela Merkel was cited by 11 per cent of Irish people as coming to mind when they thought of Germany. This finding demonstrates the powerful impact the German chancellor has had on the perception of her country.

Just 7 per cent cited Hitler and the Nazis as being things that come to mind in the context of Germany. Working-class Irish people were much more inclined to cite this aspect of Germany compared to middle class people.

The same percentage of people cited dominating EU policy as the thing that came to mind.

The poll was conducted by Ipsos MRBI in Germany and Ireland this month. It was carried out by phone among a representative sample of 1,000 people in each country.

28.??

The Irish Times - **Wednesday, August 29, 2012**

Irish in Germany refuse to look back with harshness on economic problems at home



[On Sunday afternoons in Berlin's Mauerpark, Gareth Lennon from Dublin performs as master of ceremonies Joe Hatchiban in his outdoor karaoke. "I don't think it was German money that made \[Irish\] people lose their heads. I think it was the feeling - among Irish people and Irish banks - that property prices were never going to drop," he says.](#)

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DEREK SCALLY

YOU HEAR the roar from Berlin's "Bearpit Karaoke" before you see it, tucked into the side of a hill in the Mauerpark.

For two decades the "Wall Park" – a scrappy patch of green on the former no-man's land between East and West Berlin – has been home to a free-for-all flea market.

These days another big draw is the rollicking karaoke organised by wise-cracking master of ceremonies Joe Hatchiban – also known as Gareth Lennon from Palmerstown in Dublin.

Every Sunday afternoon he unpacks his karaoke kit – a microphone, two custom-made wooden speakers, a car battery, laptop and umbrellas against sun and rain. What happens next is entirely up to the 1,000-plus crowd packed into the semi-circular, outdoor amphitheatre.

The crowd is international, as are the performers and repertoire; a recent session runs the musical gamut from German kitsch too terrible to mention here to Celine Dion, Backstreet Boys and that rarest of karaoke events, a non-ironic rendition of Total Eclipse of the Heart.

The biggest cheer is for an Indian man's knockout version of Guns N' Roses' Sweet Child o' Mine that has two young boys with painted Spider-Man faces rocking out like Axl Rose and Slash.

The Irish-run karaoke show, like the city of Berlin around it, seems a world away from the euro zone crisis. It shares an important lesson with the Eurovision Song Contest: if we can still laugh at each others' singing then things can't be that bad.

"It started with me going around the park asking people to help me see how long it would take to sing the car battery empty," said Lennon (39) who has lived in Berlin for a decade.

Like the thousands of Irish living in Germany, Lennon finds himself in the curious position of looking back at his homeland from a country that some view as our tormentor-in-chief.

Regardless of their backgrounds, however, a common feature of the Irish in Germany is their unwillingness to play the bad emigrant, passing harsh judgment from a distance on difficult circumstances at home.

That said, their distance from Ireland in recent years has helped keep fresh their memories of the bad side of Ireland's good times.

When Lennon thinks of the Ireland he left, he recalls the surreal era of 100 per cent mortgages.

"I don't think it was German money that made people lose their heads. I think it was the feeling – among Irish people and Irish banks – that property prices were never going to drop," he said.

"I don't notice Ireland as a huge talking point here or that German people feel that they're having to tighten their belts on account of anything happening in Ireland over the last years."

Mark Willis (30) from Rathmines has had many lively conversations on the crisis with his roommates – a German, a Greek and a Spaniard – since he came to Berlin 18 months ago.

An analyst with Roubini Global Economics, Willis senses a strong moralising streak running through both German economics and its crisis narrative. He sees a rise of late in negative sentiment towards Greece, "even among friends I would consider reasonable people". Ireland is seen as a "poster-boy, taking our fiscal medicine".

He sees little awareness among Germans he meets of how tough things continue to be in Ireland. And any suggestion that the crisis had many causes, including the euro zone's design, or even that Germany is partly responsible draws an "overwhelmingly negative reaction".

"It's a combination of what you want to believe and what you read in media of a crisis caused by fiscally promiscuous countries, hence the reason for fiscal retrenchment," said Willis.

"It's a remarkable misunderstanding because Germans I know are otherwise incredibly engaged and informed with current affairs and news."

He is worried that disagreement on the causes of the crisis could delay for years the search for a solution. That could place an unbearable burden on German-Irish relations he thinks have survived relatively unscathed until now.

Brigid Laffan, professor of European politics at UCD, and in recent months a visiting fellow at Berlin's Free University, remembers clearly the reaction to her presentation on Ireland's situation to colleagues, in which she used a graph by UCD economist colleague Karl Whelan of German bank exposure in Ireland before the crisis.

"There were gasps. This was an informed audience of political scientists, but they did not know. It has been a very smart act by German politicians to frame the crisis as a problem in the periphery," she said.

Though German investments in Irish banks have since been sold on, repaid or losses absorbed, this initial framing is what Prof Laffan believes still resonates in German minds. This could eventually be a problem for German politicians as the European debate moves towards a broad crisis solution.

After all, how can Berlin explain to voters the need for a joint solution to the crisis if, as they suggested at the start, the periphery was solely to blame?

“The crisis is one of mutual interdependence in the EU and with that interdependence comes mutual vulnerability. Germany is also vulnerable and it would be better if the narrative was rebalanced to reflect that,” she said.

“It’s not just the countries in deepest trouble that have a problem. I wonder if politicians knew then what they know now if the euro would ever have happened?”

Fergal Lenehan, an academic teaching intercultural studies in Jena’s Friedrich Schiller University, has also noticed how many Germans he knows view the euro zone mess as “someone else’s crisis, at most the plaything of the political elites”.

It’s a different matter back home in Ballinasloe, he said, where Nama and the crisis seem to have become ingrained in society.

“People in Ireland seem to have reverted to a passive victim complex, that there was a culture of stupidity for a while and no one could think for a few years in the past,” he said.

In Germany the euro zone crisis discourse excludes its largest member, he said, with German politicians portrayed as “trans-European firefighters on behalf of the Europe”.

If anything, the memory of economic crises past can seem more alive here than present euro zone problems.

Despite this, Lenehan still senses a European solidarity in Germany he feels is almost unknown in Ireland.

“They may think the crisis was caused on the periphery but German eyes are still fixed on the long-term goal of European integration,” he said.

“They view the European project as ingrained on Germany’s future. The only way Germany can function in a globalising world is as part of a common Europe. To do that they have to bring everyone with them.”

The Irish Times - Thursday, August 30, 2012

German love for all things Irish persists



[Ulrich Ahrensmeier and Waltraud Grampp in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. "Dublin and Galway seemed strange on this trip," says Ahrensmeier. "I still saw tourists, yet I found Grafton Street emptier than I remember." Photograph: Eckhard Ladner](#)

DEREK SCALLY in Berlin

IF YOU want to see a grown woman melt with happiness before your eyes, mention the word “Ireland” to Waltraud Grampp.

It is 18 years since the author was first “infected with the Ireland virus”, as she puts it. She has visited Ireland 24 times since and each time is a “homecoming”.

“I remember on the first trip standing in Eyre Square in Galway and thinking, ‘I could stay here’,” says Grampp (60). “It was the dream of my partner and I to retire in Ireland, but he died 12 years ago and things worked out differently. Now I come back whenever I can.”

Just arrived from Bad Homburg, near Frankfurt, Grampp sits in the Teachers Club on Parnell Square on the first evening of her 25th Ireland trip – a “civil society tour” offering a dozen German visitors a mixture of sights and talks.

Germans are the largest tourism market from continental European to Ireland each year and our third-largest worldwide. Some 432,000 Germans visited the island last year, up 14 per cent on 2010.

Germany’s love of Ireland has been tempered by recent realities – first the Celtic Tiger, then the crash – but by no means extinguished.

Grampp is looking forward to feeling once more the “magic” of the landscape around Clifden, her favourite place in the country – although the magic has suffered somewhat because of all the new houses.

“What do people do in their house on a hill every day? Why does the house have to be on the hill at all?” asks Grampp, whose latest book is set largely in Ireland. “If everyone wants space in the countryside, there’ll be no countryside left.”

Drive through the German countryside and the difference is striking: when the villages end, the houses end too. Aware she is starting to sound like the clichéd humourless German tourist, she jokes solemnly that not even German efficiency is what it used to be.

“It used to be said you could send a German into a forest with an axe and he’d come out with a train,” she says. “These days, I’m not sure if he’d come out with even a branch.

“The work ethic isn’t the same, and the country is getting older and poorer, too.”

German feelings of angst and vulnerability, stirred up by globalisation, have been amplified in the euro zone crisis, she suggests. Bailout requests go far beyond what some Germans feel their collective wallet can handle.

“I think that the Greece, Portugal and Ireland crises are just the tip of the iceberg, with the rest of Europe not far behind,” she says.

What does she think of the argument, often heard in Ireland, that banks lent German money recklessly and should also be asked to pay?

“A bank loan isn’t a gift,” she says. “If it’s more than I can afford it’s no wonder when the problems come.”

Grampp though is not blind to the other side of the argument. She recalls *Rosalie Goes Shopping*, a 1989 film starring German actor Marianne Sägebrecht. Its catchline: “When you’re \$100,000 in debt it’s your problem. When you’re \$1,000,000 in debt, it’s the bank’s problem.”

So is Ireland’s banking debt Germany’s problem too?

“I see it as a problem for the whole EU because we cannot separate things: if one has a problem, it spreads automatically to the others,” she said. “We can only find a sensible solution. That banks did stupid things on all sides is clear, the problem is that no one reacted quickly enough to stop it.”

Fellow visitor Ulrich Ahrensmeier’s memories of Ireland go back to 1973, when he and three friends drove around Ireland in a Volkswagen beetle.

Walking down O’Connell Street in Dublin Ahrensmeier (59), a photographer from Hanover, remembers another country.

A “poor, conservative and prudish” place in 1973, where an old man in a pub, hearing they were German, announced that Hitler wasn’t that bad. “We didn’t know how to react, then we realised he was for Hitler because he was against the British,” he recalls.

It was during that trip, during a pub sing-along in Salthill, Galway, that Ahrensmeier was confronted with his broken relationship to his homeland.

“We were enjoying the folk songs until it was our turn,” he said. “We realised we couldn’t sing one entire German folk song between us. It was a broken tradition because of how it was co-opted by fascism, forcing a complete break afterward.”

Ahrensmeier says Germans’ love of Ireland is often misunderstood by locals as uncomfortably hardcore, insufferably patronising or both. The photographer says that Germans’ love for Ireland is a surrogate love for a country it sees at peace with itself.

For German eyes, Ireland has retained some of the irregular and imperfect ways and provides a welcome escape from the often exhausting pursuit of perfection back home.

The two visitors agree that a crossroads has been reached in our relationship. We have also reached a pedestrian crossing on O’Connell Street near their hotel.

Shattering a dearly held Irish cliché of the Germans, neither waits for the green man when they cross.

Ralf Sotscheck, Ireland correspondent for the Tageszeitung daily, suggests that Germans have never forgotten how differently they were treated by the Irish after the war – whatever the reasons.

“The Irish were even one of the first national sides to play against the German soccer team after the war, when no one else wanted to,” he says. “Since then there has been an idea in Ireland that in thanks, the Germans wear green as their away jersey. It’s only a legend, but it’s a nice one.”

A week after returning from Ireland, when I call Grampp and Ahrensmeier they are still glowing from their latest trip.

“I got so much sun that it triggered my sun allergy,” Grampp laughs. “The personal contact to people, regardless of where we went, was never negative, only positive.”

Although an annual visitor, she is still struck by the changes to previous trips. The biggest change are the motorways, she says, but smaller changes are significant, too.

“In 1994, I seem to recall people having more time,” she says. “You could be looking in a shop window and fall into conversation with someone doing the same. That spontaneity is less strong now.”

Ahrensmeier says that ordinary Germans are perhaps not as clued-in as they might be to the real hardships behind Ireland’s reform progress, but German confidence in Ireland’s ability to pull out of this, he adds, should not be disregarded in a contrary fashion by the Irish as ill-informed, patronising German romanticism.

“For all the difficulties in Ireland with the crisis I still see a we-can-do-this energy,” he says, mentioning by name “The Gathering” – the plan to invite home Irish emigrants in 2013.

“It’s the right idea at the right time,” Ahrensmeier adds. “Dublin and Galway seemed strange on this trip. I still saw tourists, yet I found Grafton Street emptier than I remember.”

The Irish Times - **Thursday, August 30, 2012**

The strange death of Romantic Ireland



[A singular brand of nationalism: WB Yeats in](#)

[1923. Photograph: Getty Images](#)

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- ['The Dark Knight': long night, more like](#)

They are among his most famous lines, but when WB Yeats declared that ‘Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone’, what was he referring to, who killed it – and did it really exist in the first place, asks **DAN MULHALL**

I FIRST CAME across WB Yeats’s poem September 1913 and its refrain, “Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone, It’s with O’Leary in the grave” during my schooldays and have returned to it many times since. A century after the poem’s composition, it may be time to conduct an inquest into the strange death of Romantic Ireland.

George Dangerfield’s book, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, describes the decline of the British Liberal Party, brought on by a combination of the Irish Home Rule crisis, the first World War and the rise of the labour movement. In Ireland, another great political party suffered a calamitous decline. The Irish Party, which had been a major political force at Westminster since the 1880s, effectively ceased to exist after 1918.

That decade, whose centenary we are now marking, was a tragic and violent one in European history. It was scarred by war and revolution. In Ireland, it was a time of conflict and upheaval that culminated in the achievement of independence in 1922.

Those years were also rich in Irish literary achievement. WB Yeats produced three important collections: *Responsibilities* (1914), *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921). James Joyce published *Dubliners* (1915), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922). Sean O’Casey’s three great plays, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, although written a few years later, are all set during Ireland’s revolutionary decade. This was a time during Ireland was evidently seething with both political and creative activity.

I expect that any inquest would need to establish whether there was a fatality. Who died? How did it happen? Who was responsible? And what were the implications of those events?

The poem in which Yeats reported the demise of Romantic Ireland appeared in *The Irish Times* on September 8th, 1913 – which, coincidentally, was the date James Joyce chose as Molly Bloom’s birthday. In 1913, Yeats was 48 years of age. He had been a leading figure in Irish literary life since the early 1890s, when he had led the charge for the creation of a national literature, insisting that “there is no literature without nationality and no nationality without literature”.

Was there a death? Yeats strongly believed that something precious about Ireland had been lost during the years before 1913. A decade earlier, he had founded the Abbey Theatre and had written an inspirational nationalist play, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*. During the years that followed, he became increasingly frustrated with the course of events in Ireland, with what he called “the seeming needs of my fool-driven land”. Those he sees as guilty in the demise of Romantic Ireland are savagely derided. They “fumble in a greasy till” and “add prayer to shivering prayer” until they have “dried the marrow from the bone”.

Many of his contemporaries would certainly have contested Yeats’s image of national decline. After all, Ireland’s Home Rule movement appeared in 1913 to be on the verge of accomplishing its elusive goal. The Third Home Rule Bill had been introduced in 1912 and seemed destined, despite dogged opposition from Ulster Unionists and British Conservatives, to pass through the Westminster Parliament in 1914. This was designed to give Ireland its own parliament, albeit with limited powers, for the first time since 1800.

In 1913, members of the Gaelic League would have felt part of an exciting national movement aimed at reviving the Irish language. Founded in 1893, the League rapidly became something of a consuming passion for an emerging generation of Irish nationalists. Many of those who participated in Ireland’s struggle for independence were drawn into political activity by their enthusiasm for the revival of Irish.

Advocates of what was called an Irish Ireland – people such as DP Moran, who edited the *Leader* – sought to promote the idea of a self-reliant, self-sufficient Ireland, thoroughly Gaelic and Catholic in character. Moran, who cajoled his readers to eschew what he called “West Britonism” had little time for Yeats, whom he subjected to frequent, biting criticism.

Arthur Griffith’s Sinn Féin, founded in the early years of the century, brought a new dynamism to nationalist politics, although before 1916, it posed no threat to the ascendancy of the Irish Party. Griffith would hardly have recognised the Romantic Ireland that Yeats mourned. Griffith was a pragmatist who urged Irish parliamentarians to withdraw from Westminster and establish a breakaway assembly in Ireland. The Irish labour movement was beginning to come into its own in the second decade of the 20th century, and it was the Dublin Lockout that inspired Yeats to put pen to paper in September 1913. Finally, those who read the poem in the then staunchly unionist *Irish Times* probably revelled in this report of Romantic Ireland’s decline and fall.

While the claim that a death had occurred would have met resistance at any inquest held in 1913, Yeats was absolutely convinced and, as an invariably perceptive witness to the events of his time, his testimony deserves to be taken seriously.

What died in 1913? The plaintiff’s evidence suggests that the heroic tradition of Irish nationalism had been killed off, those “for whom the hangman’s rope was spun”. Those named by Yeats were Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone, romantic revolutionary figures from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. More generally, Yeats pays tribute to those who had been exiled from Ireland on account of their political beliefs. Most of all, it was the Fenian, John O’Leary, who epitomised the loss for which Yeats grieved.

Yeats fell under O’Leary’s spell when they met in Dublin in 1885. O’Leary had returned to Ireland after five years in prison for Fenian activities and then 16 years in exile, mainly in France. He encouraged the young Yeats to take an interest in Irish writing. In his memoirs, Yeats credited O’Leary with changing his life: “. . . from O’Leary’s conversation, and from the Irish books he lent or gave me has come all I have set my hand to since”.

Yeats took O'Leary's counsel to heart and spent much of the 1890s arguing the case for a distinctive tradition of Irish writing in the English language. He aspired to found "a school of Irish poetry – founded on Irish myth and history – a neo-romantic movement" and had a lofty assessment of Ireland's heritage and future potential. He saw Ireland as "one of the seven great fountains in the garden of the world's imagination" and felt that Ireland could be the source of a new "great utterance" for which the world had been waiting.

Whodunit? In his earlier years, Yeats had engaged in various nationalist campaigns, for example commemorating the centenary of the rising of 1798, opposing the visit to Ireland of Queen Victoria in 1900 and, at some point it seems, being sworn in as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He was never a conventional figure but his commitment to his version of Ireland's cause was genuine.

Yet, by the time he published *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* in 1910, Yeats's perception of Ireland had changed. His poetry reflects this change. In *No Second Troy*, Maud Gonne, a lifelong target of the poet's romantic yearnings, is described as having

"taught to ignorant men most violent ways/

Or hurled the little streets upon the great."

Yeats's disenchantment had personal as well as political roots. Maud Gonne's marriage to John McBride, a nationalist icon on account of his participation in the Boer War, had shaken Yeats. When Gonne's marriage broke up, many nationalists turned against her, while Yeats took her part.

Opposition to the building of a gallery in Dublin to house works of art donated by Hugh Lane became a further source of disenchantment for Yeats, who vented his spleen in verse.

You gave, but will not give again

Until enough of Paudeen's pence

By Biddy's halfpennies have lain

To be "some sort of evidence"

Before you'll put your guineas down,

That things it were a pride to give

Are what the blind and ignorant town

Imagines best will make it thrive.

His problem was that early 20th-century Ireland did not match, indeed could not have matched, his lofty expectations. The survival of Romantic Ireland was, as Yeats saw it, threatened by the values of Paudeen and Biddy, symbolic of Catholic Ireland.

Yeats's disenchantment reached its depths in 1907 when Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* led to disturbances in the theatre. Yeats was in his element defending Synge against his detractors. As he put it, in typically uncompromising terms: "The quarrel of our Theatre today is the quarrel of the Theatre in many lands; for the old Puritanism, the old bourgeois dislike of power and reality have not changed, even when they are called by some Gaelic name."

These events drew from Yeats a series of argumentative poems. He began to articulate his own brand of nationalism, founded on the values of the nobleman and the peasant, which he imagined to be mutually compatible. Yeats developed an aversion to the values of the rising Catholic middle class, which found its own literary chronicler in James Joyce, who viewed Yeats's romanticism as backward-looking. It was, therefore, the

Ireland depicted in *Dubliners*, the Catholic/nationalist ethos, that Stephen Dedalus confronts in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and the society described in forensic detail in *Ulysses*, that Yeats blamed for putting paid to the Romantic Ireland he had treasured since the days of his youth. “Was it needless death after all?”

Three years after he reported the death of Romantic Ireland, Yeats would write that “a terrible beauty” had been born. His focus was the Easter Rising of 1916, which kicked off a new and ultimately decisive phase in the struggle for Irish independence.

The poem *Easter 1916* sees Ireland transformed by the sacrifice of those who participated in the Rising. A reading of the poem makes it plain that Yeats saw these events as something of a rebirth for Romantic Ireland. In 1913, he writes about the “delirium of the brave”, whereas in 1916 he observes that excess of love for Ireland may have “bewildered” the Rising’s leaders. The romantic spirit he proclaimed dead in 1913 had evidently come back to life.

Although Yeats was energised, by the aspirations that inspired the Rising, he wondered whether the sacrifices involved had really been necessary:

For England may keep faith

For all that is done and said.

These words, written in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, anticipate the revisionist debates that have been a leading theme for Irish historians from the 1960s onwards.

This dramatic resurgence of nationalist Ireland, as manifested by the Rising, surprised almost everyone. The struggle for Home Rule from 1912 to 1914 sharpened political divisions in Ireland and resulted in a militarisation of Irish life with the formation of the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers. The Home Rule Bill was finally passed in 1914, but deferred until the end of the first World War. Most nationalists supported the British war effort, but it was the minority who opposed the war that eventually won the day in the wake of the Rising.

Did 1916 represent a genuine second coming for the Romantic Ireland of Yeats’s dreams? Yes and no. Three of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence, Patrick Pearse, Thomas McDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, were published poets. Their names and the ideals they espoused ran through the Ireland of my childhood, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising.

Insurrections, of course, can never be driven solely by poets. In this case, the conspiratorial steel was provided by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which saw its opportunity to strike while Britain was distracted by war in Europe.

The years that followed the Rising were turbulent ones, and it required a sustained War of Independence to break Ireland free from British rule.

WB Yeats moved to Ireland in 1917 and thereafter Dublin became his principal place of residence. He became a senator and many of his mature works took inspiration from his experiences in Ireland. Yeats suffered renewed disenchantments during the 1920s and 1930s, as independent Ireland developed in ways that displeased him. Yeats continued, however, to the end of his days to believe that “Ancient Ireland knew it all”.

The decade after September 1913 witnessed a transformation of Ireland. The dream of a Romantic Ireland was not to be realised in its purest form, but nor would Ireland ever return to what Yeats called the “casual comedy” of the pre-war period. What emerged from this decade of strife was a new and different Ireland, composed of various strands, romantic and otherwise. Yeats’s Cuchulain moved in with the Blooms of Eccles Street! Everything had indeed “changed utterly”.

Daniel Mulhall is Irish Ambassador to Germany. This essay is an edited version of a lecture he gave at the University of Münster.

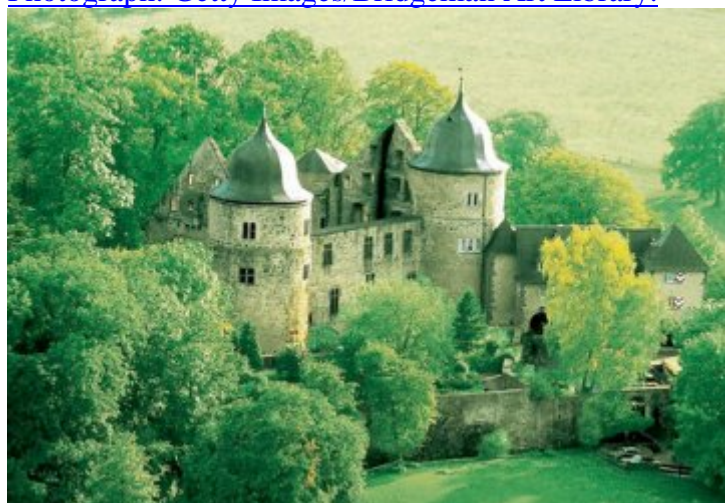
The Irish Times - Thursday, August 30, 2012

Grimmer than your average fairytale



[An illustration for Little Red Riding Hood.](#)

• [Photograph: Getty Images/Bridgeman Art Library.](#)



• Germany is celebrating the bicentenary of the famous fairytales of the Brothers Grimm with a 600km trail that brings their dark tales to life in its castles, forests and towns, writes **DEREK SCALLY**

ONCE UPON a time there was a kingdom called Hesse in a place that would later be called Germany. It was a curious place of princes and palaces, forests and fairytales. But all too soon that was blocked out by the clouds of progress and the fog of war.

Fast forward 200 years, the fog is finally clearing and the German state of Hesse has wrested back its tales from Hollywood's hold. This year it is celebrating the 200th anniversary of the world's most famous fairytale collection, compiled by local brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm.

Our guide through this fairytale kingdom is Sir Dietrich, also known as Dieter Uffelmann. He's easy to spot, waiting for us in full knight get-up on the train platform in Hofgeismar, a pretty town of 500-year-old half-timbered houses two hours north of Frankfurt.

Our first stop is Trendelburg castle, known to locals for much of its 700 years as the home of Rapunzel and her famous hair. Once upon a time a prince is said to have climbed up the captive maiden's locks here. On the day of our visit, he would have an easier job: a yellow crane is extended over the round tower, allowing workers to put on a new turreted roof.

As we pass, two local children sitting on a wall watching the crane, chirp: "Hello Sir Dietrich" to the passing knight, who greets them with a noble wave.

Fact fans will find no historical basis for Rapunzel ever having lived here, but that's not the point. Instead, Sir Dietrich leads us through a low passage into the castle courtyard and a realm of fairytale, maybe, fantasy and make-believe – not something many people think of when they think of Germany. And there it is: Rapunzel's XL-plait, dangling from a tower window.

"It weighs 25 kilos," says Sir Dietrich, matter-of-factly. He should know: he put it there as part of an effort to restore the shampoo-sheen to Rapunzel's tower, Trendelburg castle – now a beautiful, historic hotel – and other nearby sights.

Just a few minutes in this latter-day knight's company melts away big-city cynicism. Half-remembered Grimm tales begin to shine through, thanks to Sir Dietrich's infectious pride of place. Suspension of disbelief has never been so easy.

"This is neither a Disneyland nor do we want it to be; this is our region," declares Sir Dietrich in full rhetorical flight, red cape flowing, sword safely in its sheath. "Every time our stories are threatened with extinction something comes along to revive them."

The latest shot in the arm is the Grimm anniversary, offering visitors a chance to reacquaint themselves with long-lost childhood friends on the 600km "Fairytale Route", running from Hanau in Germany's south – the Grimm brothers' birthplace – to the home of the famous Bremen town musicians in the north.

Would-be visitors note: this route is no autobahn but a winding memory lane through sleepy towns with crooked streets and tilting Hansel and Gretel houses. Anyone who veers off the path without leaving a trail of crumbs is quite likely to get happily lost.

A popular place to start is the city of Kassel. Best known for its Documenta art show – currently running until September – it was once the Grimm brothers' home and where they compiled more than 200 fairytales from regional storytellers.

Visitors to the Fairytale Museum, housed in a Jugendstil villa on a hill, can inspect the brothers' original copies of their two-volume work *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (Children's and House Fairytales) from 1812, festooned with scrawled corrections for later editions.

Although their work of cultural anthropology confused critics – was it an academic work or a children's book? – the edition was a commercial success. But the brothers had little business sense, failed to negotiate written contracts with their publisher, and lost out on royalties. This was the start of financial problems that would plague them all their lives.

Reading the original edition is a hair-raising experience; it is like a German relative of Roald Dahl. Familiar tales have unexpected, vicious twists while there are dozens of lesser-known stories of jaw-dropping brutality.

Ever hear of *The Girl with No Hands*? (See the panel below.) “It is easy to assume that Teutonic prudishness or the Grimms’ delicate sense of propriety motivated the . . . changes,” writes Maria Tatar in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*. “But it is far more logical to assume that Wilhelm Grimm took to heart the criticisms levelled against his volume and, eager to find a wider audience, set to work making the appropriate changes.” The softened tales are still far harsher than more familiar Disney versions: even in chasing commercial over academic success, the brothers left cautionary morals in their collection to have it serve as an *Erziehungsbuch* or “manual of manners” for children.

“Some of the tales are graceful and subtle, and others are dramatic and rough-hewn, but there is plenty of humour, spirit, and pitch-perfect narrative timing,” writes Noel Daniel, editor of an enjoyable new selection of Grimm tales published by Taschen, which has a beautiful selection of historical images. “We left all these elements in [our book] to allow readers to make up their own minds about the original tales.”

After their German collections, they turned to European neighbours, including the 1825 *Elves’ Tales from Ireland* (see panel opposite). Other landmark works include a German grammar and dictionary of the German language. For the two brothers, who lived together almost all their lives, collecting tales was a passion but also a means to an end.

They were leading lights of the romantic movement, a celebration of sentimentality and supernatural that arose as a reaction to the enlightened, industrial world of facts, figures and philosophy.

The Grimm brothers were also active supporters of the movement towards a nation state, but painfully aware that the loose collection of kingdoms that predated modern Germany had no local literary rival to Shakespeare. And so the brothers set about filling the gap with systematic fervour, channelling the energy of the romantic movement into the folklore studies academic discipline they helped create. When the first German state finally emerged in 1871, a decade after their deaths, the literary legacy of the far-sighted brothers helped form the basis of a national canon. Today, their collection is second only to the Bible as the most published book in Germany, a testament to their work’s continued appeal.

“For Germans, this collection is about the creation of a national character and spirit,” says Dr Bernhard Lauer, director of the Grimm Museum in Kassel. “They borrowed material from other sources but organised it carefully and systematically, and wrote it up in a wonderfully, spare tone that has become world literature.”

BUT, JUST as the Grimms profited little from their fairytale collections, Germany gained little after Disney stepped in with its sanitised, animated features. A concerted fight-back began in 1974 when a local Kassel politician found himself in St Petersburg, watching a Soviet ballet retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* – a tale written and based in his own back yard.

A year later, the Fairy Tale Road was born, burnished to a fresh sheen for this 200th anniversary. And not a moment too soon, as a fresh generation of young Germans and visitors are taking a fresh look at a country finally emerging from a war-filled century.

It’s clearly a tourist strategy, but a clever one that draws on the landscape inspiration of both the original tales and the brothers’ retellings.

One of the few places to be explicitly mentioned in a tale is the pretty town of Hameln, home to the famous Pied Piper or, in German, *Rattenfänger* (rat-catcher).

The Grimm version is a revenge fantasy: a colourfully-dressed musician lures away the town’s children when the city refuses to pay him for getting rid of their rat plague.

Town historians say the most likely basis for the story involves a visitor encouraging the town’s young people to leave the crowded town en masse to settle eastern territories of Poland and Ukraine.

In the town’s newly-renovated museum, including a bizarre but fun robot theatre, visitors can explore this and other theories behind the tale.

“We don’t have a direct source but we know something happened here in Hameln in 1284,” says museum guide Claudia Höflich.

Even today Hameln is a delight for visitors. Against a backdrop of houses recalling the so-called Weser Renaissance, the city offers dozens of nods to the famous tale: daily Pied Piper tours, rat-poison schnapps and even a daily musical, Rats!. Of the many places for fairy-tale hunters to stay along the route, none is as spectacular as the Sababurg, an immaculate, turreted castle built on a hill in 1490.

The castle was derelict for centuries, and local readers of Sleeping Beauty in the Grimm collection insisted the Sababurg was the inspiration for the real Dornröschenschloss, the castle of the Sleeping Beauty who pricked her needle on a spinning wheel and fell into an enchanted sleep until a prince awoke her with a kiss.

Today, the castle is a 17-room family hotel, run in the third generation by the Koseck family. “The Fairytale Road exists because we were here first; the concept was set up at a meeting here,” said Günther Koseck. And what of the legend? “There was a definitely a thorny hedge here that grew up when the castle was ruined, and the location is very out-of-the-way, in the middle of the forest,” he said. “Locals came up here on excursions so, from the late 19th century, word spread that this must have been the place the Grimms had in mind.”

Again, it requires a fairytale leap of faith, but dinner guests in the castle are clearly on board when, without warning, a young couple arrives in renaissance dress to relate their tale in rhyming couplets. It should be a cringeworthy, Disneyland moment but, done with such good grace and humour, it’s impossible not to be delighted at the triumph of young love over enchanted spinning wheels.

“I have cousins in England who knew the Grimms’ tales but were amazed they were from here, around the corner,” says Julia Boenning, a 19 year-old student, who plays the part of Sleeping Beauty. “But we never really learned a lot about the fairytales when we were younger either, to be honest.”

Her prince charming, Kassel university student Andreas Richhardt, suggests that Germany seems to be better known in Asia than Europe as the Grimms’ home. “We get huge numbers of visitors from China and Japan,” he says, in a red velvet suit and floppy hat. “After an hour and a half of smiling for photos my face muscles hurt but the look of wonder in the children’s eyes is worth it.”

Down the hill from the Sababurg, Sir Dietrich in his rattling chain mail ends our tour in the ancient, enchanted Reinhardswald forest, which covers more than 200 sq km. In soft, green shady glades the sight of oak trees up to 1,000 years old makes the last dam of doubt burst. Magic takes hold and the gnarled, mossy branches seem to take on fantastic forms of fairytale creatures.

It is easy to imagine the Grimm brothers passing this way, drinking in the atmosphere that persists to this day, an elixir that has sustained their stories for two centuries. Today, anyone who comes to this land of turrets and towers without feeling a touch of fairytale wonder has either smothered their inner child or missed the woods for the trees.

Yes, Germany is the land of fantastic and fearsome efficiency, of Hitler’s Holocaust and Vorsprung durch Technik. But there has always been more – if you know where to look.

“This is a place of Zuflucht durch Besinnung – refuge through reflection,” says Sir Dietrich. “We hope it opens up visitors to what they know, knew or heard once. This place was – is – once upon a time.”

Grimm's Irish connection fairytale

After collecting German fairy tales, the brothers expanded their gaze around Europe and, in 1826, published *Irische Elfenmärchen* (Irish Elf Tales).

The book was largely a translation of Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland, published a year earlier by Corkman Thomas Crofton Croker.

“Whoever has a sense for innocent and simple poetry will be attracted to these tales,” the brothers wrote in their introduction to the German edition. “The tales have an unusual peculiar aftertaste, not without its charm, and come from a country that we only rarely hear of, and not always on the most pleasant terms.”

The 1820s Irish, the Grimm brothers told their readers, are a people who still show traces of their “antiquity, of which the belief in supernatural beings, presented here, is perhaps one of the best examples”.

Perhaps the best-known tale in Germany in this collection is about the poor man nicknamed “Fingerhütchen”. In the original, this is Lusmore, after the foxglove – which was considered a fairy plant – that he stuck in his straw hat. Fingerhütchen was from Aherlow near the Galtee Mountains, and he falls in with a gang of elves in Knockgrafton on the road from Cahir to Cappagh.

They’re so delighted when he improves one of their elf songs that they magic away his hunchback and give him some smart new clothes.

DEREK SCALLY

How to go down to the woods today . . .

The Fairytale Route runs 600km from Hanau, near Frankfurt, to the northern port of Bremen. The southern half is best negotiated by car, the northern half – north of Hameln – runs along a purpose-built cycle path along the Weser river. Worthwhile stops not mentioned above include the pretty university town of Marburg, where the Grimms studied; Hann. Münden, the perfect fairytale town with crooked houses galore, and Bodenwerder, home to the great fabulator Baron Münchhausen.

You can plan trips and make bookings at deutsche-maerchenstrasse.com/en/

The Sleeping Beauty palace in Sababurg has rooms from €80. sababurg.de. Sir Dietrich offers tours of the Reinhardswald forest and surroundings, ritter-dietrich.de

Heart of darkness How grim is Grimm?

Forget enchanting bedtime stories: the original Grimm collection makes for grim reading with enough mutilation and cannibalism to make a Disney heroine faint.

In The Castle of Murder, a young woman agrees to marry a rich man who turns up at her family’s door, only to later discover a secret room in his castle in which people are killed and eaten.

The Juniper Tree features a stepmother who beheads her stepson, cooks him in a stew to be served to an unsuspecting father, while traumatising her younger daughter into thinking she is responsible for her brother’s death.

Children frequently come to sticky ends in these tales. In Darling Roland, a witch accidentally chops off her daughter’s head, and a curious and disobedient little girl is turned into a block of wood and thrown in the fire by the witch Frau Trude. In The Girl With No Hands, a father chops off his daughter’s hands because the devil told him to.

Even the best-loved fairytales have, in the original, long-forgotten brutal twists. When the stepsisters in Cinderella try to force their feet into the glass slipper, modern retellings may not mention they cut off their toes and heels in the process. At their lucky sister’s wedding to the prince, they have their eyes pecked out by pigeons.

In Snow White, the wicked stepmother does not just order the huntsman to kill Snow White, she also orders

him to bring back her heart so she may eat it for dinner.

Bringing up the rear of non-child-friendly themes is what Wilhelm Grimm coyly referred to as “certain conditions and relationships”. For in the 1812 version of Rapunzel, the naive girl finds herself wondering why her dress is getting tighter around her belly after the prince has been visiting her in the tower every day.

Another tale stars Hans Dumb, who finds himself with the magical gift of being able to impregnate the king’s daughter simply by wishing it.

However, it’s not all that grim. In the earliest-known printed version of Little Red Riding Hood by Charles Perrault, the wolf is the victor when the story ends after he has eaten Red Riding Hood and the grandmother. Perhaps the Grimms were having one of their more cheerful days when they altered the ending to have a huntsman slash open the wolf’s stomach from which the girl and her grandmother emerge unscathed to live happily ever after.

UNA KELLY

Once upon a timeline

1785 : Jacob Grimm born on January 4th in Hanau, Germany

1786 : Wilhelm Grimm born on February 24th

1812 : First edition of the Grimm brothers’ collection of stories appears on December 20th

1823 : First version of the collection in English, translated by Edgar Taylor. It is published as German Popular Stories

1825 : Small edition of the collection. It has the first illustrations by another Grimm brother, Ludwig Emil.

1859 : Wilhelm dies on December 16th in Berlin at the age of 73

1863 : Older brother Jacob dies on September 20th, aged 78 in Berlin

1893 : Copyright lapses and the collection begins to appear in many different formats, including Engelbert Humperdinck’s opera Hansel and Gretel in Weimar 1907: The most famous German illustrated edition with images by Otto Ubbelohde is published

1937 : Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs opens as the world’s first animated feature. Walt Disney builds an entertainment empire with Grimms’ tales: Cinderella in 1950, Sleeping Beauty in 1959 and opens Disneyland in 1955

2012 : Grimms’ Fairytales celebrates its 200th anniversary. The collection has been translated into 160 languages, with 120 different editions available in English.

UNA KELLY

The Irish Times - **Friday, August 31, 2012**

Clinching the deal: Some tips to negotiate the inter-cultural minefield

[In this section »](#)

- [How Germany can get us back in the game](#)

DEREK SCALLY

Don't assume things will be the same in Germany as in your existing market

Don't confuse German directness with rudeness. At the outset, keep meeting small talk to a minimum. Don't waste their time, either by showing up late or with blather.

A meeting invitation means you probably have something they are interested in.

Ask for the agenda in advance and come prepared with facts that back up your claims.

Irish charm only goes so far in meetings – evidence of good preparation and market research go further.

Tell them directly what you can do for them better than the competition. Ask questions about projects, budgets and timescales. Really listen to their needs. Don't make promises you can't keep.

Decisions take longer in Germany, with much input and consensus-seeking.

German customers are demanding on quality and service but remain loyal to reliable partners.

Speak German or have German-speaking staff and – above all – error-free (not online-translated) German language materials. As former chancellor Willy Brandt put it: “If I am selling to you, I speak your language. If I am buying, dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen.”

A permanent company presence in Germany, with some German staff, adds to the credibility factor and dispels fears that one might be dealing with a fly-by-night.

The Irish Times - **Friday, August 31, 2012**

How Germany can get us back in the game



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- [The feed mixer patented by Carlow-based firm Keenan, which has operated in Germany since 1990.](#)



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DEREK SCALLY in Berlin

Irish companies that study Germans and their massive market can beat the locals at their own efficiency game

“We have an obsession in Ireland with sending our children to university and that has to change . . . We need to learn from Germany and start making money out of making things, not out of financial engineering

SEWING MACHINES and livestock; just half a century ago, those were Ireland’s leading exports to West Germany. Figures from 1962 show these exports were worth £6 million (€7.6 million). Today, however, Irish companies are selling high-tech products and services into the massive German market, beating the locals at their own efficiency game.

Trade has always been the backbone of our bilateral bond. That was recognised 50 years ago when Ireland's first trade office opened its doors in Frankfurt.

Today state agencies Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia based in Düsseldorf have helped to steer a remarkable revival in Irish exports to Germany, shrugging off the crisis to grow by 13 per cent in 2010 to more than €12 billion annually. At the heart of this revival is sheer economic necessity.

“For many companies Germany is their emerging market,” says Deirdre McPartlin, Enterprise Ireland manager for Germany. “The arrogance that had begun to creep into our behaviour during the boom years – that somehow we were doing the customer a favour in supplying them – has now been replaced by a greater understanding of the need to deliver outstanding customer service.”

Carlow-based firm Keenan, which makes advanced mixing wagons for livestock feed, has operated in Germany since 1990. Its patented mixers produce a unique feed mix optimal to cows' digestive systems that maximises milk yield while cutting down on levels of environmentally harmful methane.

“We deliver a more efficient output from the animal, which is becoming more important as costs of production increase,” says Michael Keogh, salesman for Germany.

Selling efficiency to Germans can be more successful than snow to eskimos with the right premium product, a niche focus and top-class service.

“The farmers know we have a premium product and the service to back it up,” he says. “We repair machines quickly so cows are not left hungry.”

A new Irish arrival in Germany is technology firm Nines Engineering. It is working with the prestigious Fraunhofer Institute – the people who gave us the MP3 file – to develop a more efficient manufacturing process for more complex solar cells.

Nines has picked its moment well: its process aims to cut costs and deliver a higher-quality product just as low-cost Chinese solar panels devastate Germany's domestic solar panel industry.

Nines is currently building its first production machine in Freiburg with European funding and expects to start pilot production later this month.

“The cell manufacturers that are going to come out on top in the future are the ones with high efficiency solar cells requiring a bit more innovation,” says Edward Duffy, the founder at Nines, who comes from Ireland's silicon conductor manufacturing industry.

Irish companies with experience supplying to Intel and Seagate already have the necessary experience to make them credible players in Germany, he says.

This includes “smaller companies that produce high-value products for niche markets – Germany is built on family-owned companies with one billion turnover doing just that.”

Any companies considering a move into Germany should spare themselves a lot of embarrassment by reading *Managing Cross-Cultural Business Relations: the Irish-German Experience*.

The book, by Irish academics Gillian Martin and Mary Keating, maps out the inter-cultural minefield where even small misunderstandings can doom deals.

German managers cited in their book report on meetings with Irish companies that start late with endless small talk, no clear agenda for the meeting nor a to-do list for the next (see panel). Martin and Keating's fascinating study shows that, in business, Irish and German companies can draw on complementary cultural skill sets.

A European comparison shows the Irish thrive on risk and uncertainty, which Germans go out of their way to avoid. On the other hand, Irish people are highly conflict-averse while Germans have no difficulty tackling problems head on.

Put these skills together and you have Irish-German business potential: happy to take risks to pursue Irish-style innovation with a Germanic determination to persist and solve problems that arise on the way to market. Irish companies operating successfully in Germany cite two major impediments to progress: language and qualifications.

“If your company is serious about making inroads and building contacts, you need to have German speakers and materials,” says Michael Keogh of Keenan, who studied German and marketing. “It can be seen as an unnecessary cost outlay, but it could be the difference between getting to a second meeting or not.”

These days Irish third-level graduates with any kind of German skills are being snapped up by Irish companies looking to sell into Germany.

For many German lecturers, the economic slump has been marked by calls from desperate managers hunting for German speakers.

The second shortage is of staff with technical skills, particularly engineers.

While just 7 per cent of Irish school-leavers go on to be engineers, the equivalent in Germany is 37 per cent. Interestingly, less than 30 per cent of German school-leavers go to university; in Ireland it's more than half.

Irish companies operating here have called on the Government to learn from the German model, offering vocational training, with classroom learning and on-site training, as a real alternative to university.

“We have an obsession in Ireland with sending our children to university and that has to change,” said Sean O’Driscoll, chairman and chief executive of the Glen Dimplex group, which employs 1,200 people in Germany. “You don’t have to go to university to be an engineer. We in Ireland need to learn from Germany and start making money out of making things, not out of financial engineering.”

Beyond day-to-day business, O’Driscoll sees an important role for Irish companies in Germany as advocates who can explain to clients the Irish side of the euro zone debate. “Everyone has to live within their means, that is a fact. On the other hand we also have to grow our economy,” he says.

“Irish business people have to get the message across in Germany that paying back debt is a marathon, while generating growth is a sprint.”

Tomorrow: the German company that has kept the lights on in Kerry for half a century

The Irish Times - **Saturday, September 1, 2012**

German crane firm Liebherr has lifted Kerry economy for years



- [The Liebherr container crane plant in Killarney](#)



Around Killarney, Liebherr is more than a company. Its name is associated with a far-sighted way of doing business that has spared many generations from emigration

THE ANNALS of Irish history are filled with foreign companies making loud arrivals and whimpering departures. The German engineering company Liebherr is one of the honourable exceptions. It arrived in Killarney 54 years ago and has kept many home fires burning in the Kingdom ever since. Just don't expect Liebherr to shout about it – or vanish any time soon.

“We are quite restrained in public and do what we do without tooting our own horn – it's just not our way as a family,” said Isolde Liebherr.

The 63-year-old is vice-president of Liebherr supervisory board. She and her brother Willi

Liebherr have controlled the Liebherr Group since their father, company founder Hans Liebherr, died in 1993.

The Liebherr Group is an industrial giant producing everything from cranes and construction machinery to fridges and even airplane landing gear. Divided into more than 130 autonomous companies employing more than 35,000 people around the world, the company has an annual turnover of €3.3 billion.

But around Killarney, Liebherr is more than a company. Its name is associated with a far-sighted way of doing business that has spared many generations from emigration. The company engagement in Ireland goes beyond economic crises or political spats and, for many here, represents the best side of the often complex German-Irish relationship. The Liebherr empire has its roots in the rebuilding of Germany after the second World War.

“During the war, my father was a member of the engineering regiment. He wasn't on the front but spent many years in Russia preparing roads and so on,” said Isolde.

“Even in wartime he thought about how he could create a crane that is more effective, more efficient.”

With the war over, German rebuilding efforts were impeded by drastic shortages of both materials and equipment. Cranes, in particular, were impractical and all but immobile – until Hans Liebherr patented a revolving tower crane that could be moved from one site to another.

In 1949 he started building his cranes in the southern German town of Kirchdorf and, within two years, had 110 employees and more than €1 million in turnover.

By 1958 production capacity was strained at home and Liebherr, anxious to expand to the US and commonwealth markets, put out feelers.

Hearing about Ireland he flew to Dublin, rented a VW Beetle and drove around until he ended up in Killarney. Hearing that the investor was looking at a site in Mallow, a local Killarney delegation met him for dinner and took him out to the lakes.

“He saw the views of the lakes and fell in love with the region at first sight,” said Isolde of the visit, which included a call on the bishop. “The decision to invest in Killarney was taken instantly.”

The decision came just as the Lemass government presented Ireland's first programme for economic expansion, throwing the doors open for free trade and industrial investment. But, in those days, Ireland's infrastructure still reflected more its agrarian past than its industrial future.

“They weren't the easiest in the circumstances in which to build a factory, it was 30km to the next port,” said Isolde. “But . . . when my father decided something he did everything to make it a success. He always thought about how he could do things better and had also a good hand for employing the right people.”

This restlessness was a characteristic Liebherr shared with all of Germany's great industrialists – tinkering endlessly with their products to improve them.

With Liebherr's first foreign plant in Killarney up and running, manufacturing the port and container cranes it continues to do today, the German industrialist was soon a regular sight in town with his wife, four boys and daughter, Isolde.

"I came over for the first time when I was around 10 and later every year," said Isolde. "There were great things to do for children like pony riding and playing on the beaches. And later I enjoyed social life like the Puck Fair."

She remembers the trips to Kerry as a big adventure, first overland and ferry via France and England, later by plane. The air connections to the west were better then than now, she notes drily.

Two years after arriving, work began on what would become the Hotel Europe, with spectacular views of the lakes of Killarney. Even now it seems an unlikely endeavour for Germany's crane king.

"By rights we're a machine manufacturer – the hotels arose from a situation of need," she said. "Accommodation for guests of the factory was needed urgently and a guesthouse was built. During construction the decision was taken to build a real hotel."

The company has two further hotels in Ireland: Dunloe Castle and the *Árd na Sidhe* country house situated on Caragh Lake – prized by locals as the best place in the county to have a discreet affair.

"We're very happy that the hotels have worked well, they belong firmly within our group of companies," said Liebherr, who flies over once a month to visit both plant and hotels.

Today Liebherr in Ireland employs about 800 people directly. With secondary suppliers added, the economic boost to the region has been considerable. Local politicians recently awarded the freedom of Killarney to Isolde, dubbed by some as the town's "fairy godmother".

Liebherr's Irish operation remains in rude health, despite recent economic turbulence, and rising competition from China and India. The plant is operating at capacity and continues to take on apprentices for its training and exchange programme.

"From our factory in Kerry we deliver container cranes worldwide, so we're not bound up as much in the crisis in Ireland – that was our strength in the last years," said Isolde. "The factory in Killarney will be further extended and the jobs are secure. The orders show the level of know-how we have in Killarney."

The Liebherr effect can be seen everywhere in Kerry, most obviously in the managers who came over, married locally and stayed, creating a large German-Irish community.

Its local engagement was clear earlier this year when Liebherr agreed the €6 million purchase and lease-back of the Lackabane golf course around the plant. Presented as a strategic investment for the company, locals concede it was effectively a bailout for Killarney's indebted Golf and Fishing Club.

"Killarney typifies the best kind of German-Irish relations and Liebherr is the best thing we've ever had," says local Senator Paul Coghlan. "Of course we have tourism in Killarney, but Liebherr is year-round and we'd be lost without them. They're wonderful for the country."

Kerry businessman Tim O'Shea, whose father Mackey O'Shea had close contacts with Hans Liebherr, describes the company as the "lifeblood of Killarney".

Killarney locals and Liebherr managers agree that the company's long-term approach to business and loyalty to its staff is inseparable from its status as a family-owned company. "People have a basic need for security and that is something we value highly," says Stefan Heissler, communications director and board member at Liebherr International AG. "For us, long-term planning stands in the foreground. That is something our customers and the people working for us seem to appreciate. It's a recipe that's worked well for us over the years, why should we change?"

Ask Isolde about her family's decades of dedication to Ireland, in particular many quiet contributions to good causes, and she seems puzzled that you would want to run a company any other way.

"We've adopted some important principles of our father, like our long-term view and our dependability and reliability. As a company owner one has responsibilities," she said.

"We are active in areas where we are based, but also support bigger projects. It is normal, when one is asked, to give something back. There is nothing unusual there."

Series concluded

The Irish Times - **Saturday, September 1, 2012**

Path out of crisis will mean far closer ties to EU neighbours



[Cordial relations: German chancellor Angela Merkel with Taoiseach Enda Kenny. Like elsewhere in Europe, where attention is on Greece, Berlin's view of Ireland's prospects remains stubbornly optimistic. Delicate diplomacy will be required to present a more nuanced image of Ireland's circumstances without destroying its hard-won reputation on reform.](#)

DEREK SCALLY

ANALYSIS: Despite mutually warm feelings, Germany won't be a pushover in Irish bid to secure debt relief

SINCE IRELAND entered its EU-International Monetary Fund bailout in 2010, a chorus has emerged in Irish life that is determined to project most if not all of the State's recent misfortunes on to Germany.

The property bubble? Reckless German banks lending too much money. The bailout? A crass claw-back of German money by usurping national sovereignty. The fiscal treaty? An attempt to insert Germanic economic doctrine into its neighbours' statute books.

In this narrative it is always the Germans, alone, who impose, demand, block and refuse.

Fair-minded bailout critiques of Berlin have been stripped of nuance and context to pack a populist punch: the slumbering German giant has awoken and is discovering once again its long-dormant urge to dominate the Continent.

This newspaper's Ipsos MRBI poll suggests this attempt to shift public opinion in Ireland against our largest European neighbour has failed. Despite the shadow of crisis, neither side has lost sight of the other's true face.

Some 46 per cent of Germans think Ireland is trying hard to fix its economy, while almost two-thirds of Irish people believe Germany is being asked to do just enough or too much in the crisis. Even the careworn clichés – German love of our landscape and pubs, Irish regard for Germany's strong economy – have survived the crisis intact.

As we face into an awkward autumn, however, it would be naive to presume all is well.

Irish officials face an unenviable task in the coming weeks when they tour European capitals trying to nail down details of the financial relief for Ireland to which leaders committed at their June summit.

Such relief is crucial to retaining market confidence as a brutal budget looms, Irish officials will argue. But German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble is not yet convinced, telling this newspaper Berlin will not back “anything that generates new uncertainty on the financial markets and lose trust which Ireland is just at the point of winning back”.

The best minds on Merrion Street and in Iveagh House have to find a formula that delivers real fiscal relief in Ireland without appearing elsewhere to be a second bailout, triggering a negative response from markets and taxpayers in donor countries.

Like elsewhere in Europe, where attention is on Greece, Berlin’s view of Ireland’s prospects remains stubbornly optimistic. Delicate diplomacy will be required to present a more nuanced image of Ireland’s circumstances without destroying its hard-won reputation on reform.

Spelling out the political consequences – on all sides – of a debt-relief delay may concentrate minds. If Germany wants its bailout success story to continue prospering, agreement on relief is needed before bailout fatigue in bailout donor countries tips over into exhaustion. The window of opportunity is closing.

Solving the euro zone crisis has been delayed not just by conflicts of national interest, but also misperceptions and poor tone. The Irish are not alone in complaining that the German position comes across as patronising – its moralistic tone more suitable for a pulpit than a negotiating table.

Talk here of Schuldensünder, or debt sinners, who “have to do their homework”, reflects a disparaging social attitude to debt, but also Berlin’s framing of the crisis as a peripheral party being bailed out by the blameless core.

This has left politicians struggling to explain to German voters why they may need to make an even greater contribution to a final euro zone deal. The expanding ranks of Germany’s bailout sceptics are ready to exploit this opportunity at next year’s general election. So far, Germany’s political mainstream believes this challenge can be seen off with threadbare European platitudes.

On the Irish side, meanwhile, there is a popular claim that Germans harbour flawed notions of euro zone economics. There are some interesting arguments here, such as the huge boost to German competitiveness at its neighbours’ expense thanks to an under-valued euro. These observations never get very far in Germany, however – packed as they often are in a withering dismissal of German economic dogma that is at odds with the European Keynesian mainstream.

Berlin’s insistence that crisis countries can cut their way back to competitiveness and growth may aggravate its partners, but it goes to the heart of an economic tradition that has served Germany well. A similar problem arises when Germany’s critics, in Ireland and elsewhere, accuse it of misreading its own history to block a crisis solution. It was 1930s austerity that opened the door to Hitler, the critics say, not 1920s hyperinflation. But historical experience is a chain of events, not self-contained bubbles of cause-and-effect.

Germany’s recent history, from the 1920s to unification, has been a narrative of economic extremes from which its people have drawn their own painful conclusions. Suggesting that a country’s take on its own history is flawed is unlikely to raise the tone of the debate. Few in Ireland would welcome German economists announcing that high levels of Irish home-ownership is an irrational obsession based on a misreading of its own history.

As someone with an eye on both sides of the debate, it’s interesting, if depressing, to watch each side accuse the other of hindering a solution to the euro zone crisis.

Berlin says its neighbours in effect want to solve Europe’s problems with German money today – with no interest in the consequences for tomorrow. Germany’s critics, meanwhile, say Germany is fiddling over plans for the future of Europe while Europe itself burns.

Each side has to move and, after years of stalemate, matters are coming to a head. The coming months will see talks on a new European banking regulator, a condition for Germany to back further bailouts to Spanish banks. To much relief around Europe, Berlin has agreed to sever the link between banking and sovereign debt.

The European Central Bank is expected to present proposals next week to buy sovereign bonds and stabilise euro zone borrowing costs in exchange for reforms. Later this month the European Stability Mechanism bailout fund, the cornerstone of euro zone crisis-fighting, will be put through the legal wringer by Germany's constitutional court.

There is little doubt now that Ireland's path out of the crisis will lead into a very different European Union, with far closer ties to our neighbours than ever before. The crucial question is how Ireland wants them to be regulated.

EU crisis management has been characterised by inter-governmental deals, hammered out at all-night summits. Critics say such direct deals between leaders favour large members at the expense of smaller states.

A new European treaty, as called for by Berlin, would give fresh impetus to the so-called community method. This is the EU's traditional way of doing business, refereed by the European Commission, where countries such as Ireland believe they are more likely to get a fair hearing. But going down this route would require further transfers of sovereignty to Brussels. Criticising one path while blocking the other is a road to nowhere.

Ireland has to decide what it wants in Europe, how it plans to get it, and what it is prepared to sacrifice along the way.