

The Story of the Claddagh Ring

by Yvette Podber

Many stories exist regarding the history and the creation of the first Claddagh Ring. Following is the most probable and the most historically accurate, and oh yes, most romantic, let's not forget romantic, after all isn't that what the Claddagh ring symbolizes, Love.

Not far past the cobbled streets of Galway, across the Wolfe Tone Bridge and upon the stretches of Galway Bay, there lies Claddagh, a small fishing village in Ireland. This is where the story begins over 300 years ago.

A young man named Richard Joyce, from Galway, left his home, and his true love, to make his fortune. While on a voyage in the Mediterranean, he was captured by a band of Algerian pirates and sold as a slave to a Moorish goldsmith. During his enslavement and many years of captivity, he worked under the Moorish goldsmith who taught him his craft. He became skilled in working with precious metals and as the years went by Richard Joyce became a master of his trade (Goldsmith), perfecting the art of jewelry making and earning the admiration and respect of his Moorish master.

When William III became King of England in 1689, he made an agreement with the Moors that all his subjects who were held in captivity were to be allowed to return to their homes. The Moor master offered Richard Joyce many incentives to stay, including the hand of his daughter in marriage. But Richard refused.... for his heart, and the woman he loved still remained in Ireland.

After eight long years Richard Joyce returned to his native Ireland and to his great happiness found that his sweetheart had remained true to him through all those years. He fashioned for her a wedding ring symbolic of their love, two hands representing their friendship, a crown signifying their loyalty, and a heart for their love.

Richard Joyce wedded his beloved and presented the first Claddagh Ring to her as her wedding ring. They lived happily ever after.... never to be parted again.

Wearing the Ring

The way the ring is carried is of most importance as, if the ring is worn with the crown facing inwards (to the hand) and with the heart on the inside, then it signifies that the bearer is married or engaged, or has found a lifelong friendship.

If the ring is worn with the heart on the outside and with the crown on the inside then it signifies that the bearer is not promised.