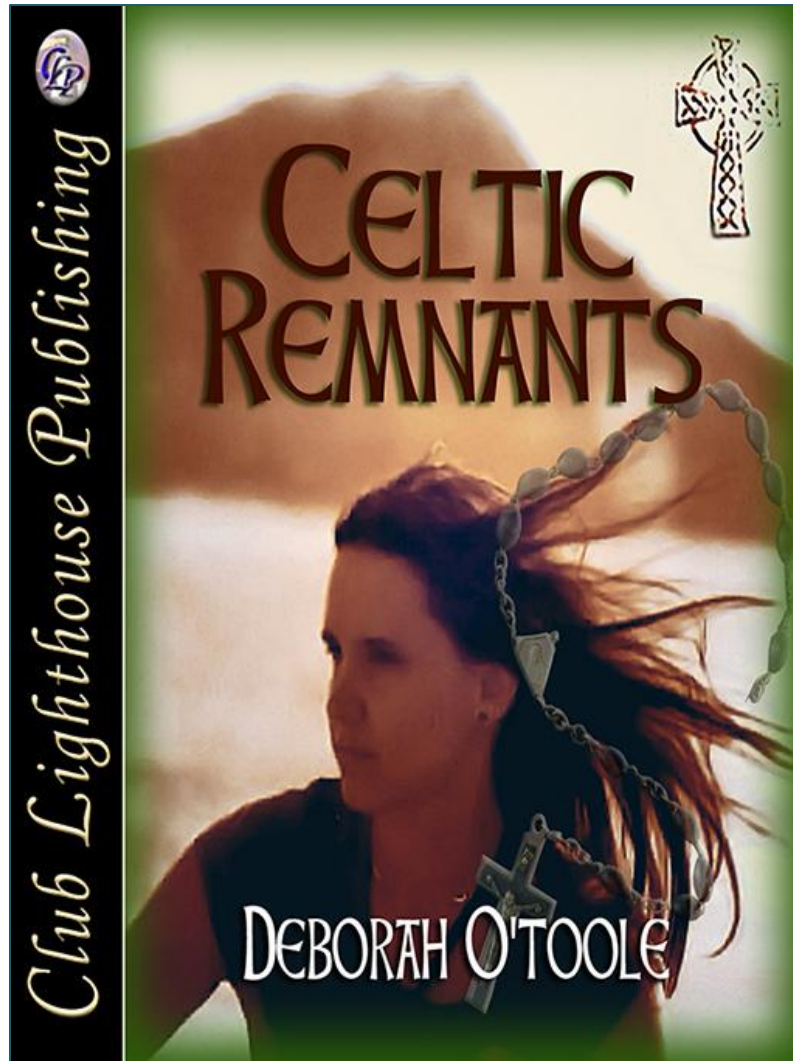


Questions & Answers about:

Celtic Remnants

By Deborah O'Toole



"Celtic Remnants" is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of the author.

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ABOUT "CELTIC REMNANTS"

Celtic Remnants by Deborah O'Toole is a novel of enduring love and betrayal set in the political turbulence of Ireland, glamour of London and the wilds of Scotland.

A young girl is shaped by horrific events which change her life forever. After Ava's brother and parents are killed by British soldiers, she vows to avenge their deaths as she picks up the pieces of her shattered world.

Before she can move on, Ava falls in love with handsome nobleman David Lancaster, eldest son of a belted Earl. Their relationship ends dramatically when his family refuses to accept her. Afterward, Ava sets her life on a course of violent revenge in the name of political justice with her childhood friend, Tim O'Casey.

Unable to forget Ava, David hires a private investigator to look for her years later. When he finds her, Ava is hardened by more than a decade on the run and wants nothing to do with him. However, after being injured during an ambush in the English countryside, Ava and Tim go to David for help. He spirits them off to a remote Scottish hunting lodge to heal.

Momentarily safe amidst the rugged beauty, Ava begins to wonder if she can give up her deeply-felt political beliefs to build a normal life with David. Or will happiness forever elude them?

Can Ava relinquish her political convictions, even for love?

Celtic Remnants was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing.

For more, go to:

<https://deborahotoole.com/>

The following is a general "Question & Answer" session about *Celtic Remnants* by Deborah O'Toole.

Where did you get the idea for "Celtic Remnants"?

Irish politics have always played a big part in my life. I might be American, but my interest in history and the conflict in Ireland was something which began when I was very young. One of my most beloved and positive role models was my uncle Mike O'Toole, who passed away in 1993. He was a wellspring of information about Ireland and the Irish, although his interest was more to the militant side. Thanks to him, I became fascinated not just with history in the sense of religious and political turmoil, but in the foundation of our family line.

To answer the question, my idea for *Celtic Remnants* came about in the early 1980's. The notion of a well-heeled Englishman mingling with an Irish-Catholic girl of modest means caught my imagination. The original premise for *Celtic Remnants* began much differently, with the Englishman posing as a terrorist in order to reunite with his lost Irish love. That scenario didn't seem to work too well as the story progressed, so I changed the first few chapters of the book. Instead, the Englishman is *looking* for his lost love years later. However, by then, she is a hardened terrorist and wants nothing to do with him.

Why did you choose to make the central character - a woman - the terrorist, rather than portraying a man in the same position?

It's all too typical, isn't it? People assume only a man can feel so strongly about his political convictions that he resorts to terrorism to get his message across. Wrong. Women feel just as passionately about issues which matter to them, so why not put a female in a militant group? Even from the start, I never considered putting a man as the focal character in *Celtic Remnants*.

It was always going to be about the woman, one way or another.



When a man stays true to his convictions, he's admired for his integrity. However, if a woman follows her heart into the heat of a battle, she is viewed as tough, bitchy or unladylike. Do you find that to be true?

Unfortunately, social perceptions of strong women are still skewed. Perhaps all the warped ideals will change in a future generation, but I doubt I'll see it in my lifetime. Yet that doesn't mean I have to accept them as they are now. Frankly, I have no use for men who expect women to act a certain way just so they can feel "masculine" about themselves. It's a ridiculous waste of time, and it's a game I've always refused to play. My views will probably render me an old woman living alone with a bunch of cats, but so be it.

Without giving too much away, the female character in *Celtic Remnants* does not cave when it comes to deciding between her love for the Englishman and her strongly-felt political convictions. Because of atrocities inflicted upon her family, she has no other choice, really.

Yet you portray Ava Egan - the female terrorist - as having emotional conflict over her "work" and her love for David Lancaster, the Englishman.

Well, she's a human being, isn't she? If her family members hadn't been deliberately killed by British soldiers, her life would have taken a very different path. In Ava's mind, her choices were taken from her because she had to avenge her family. After awhile, it also became about the injustices suffered by the Irish as a whole, and not just her family.

She doesn't like killing or torturing people or setting off explosions, but her rage and sense of injustice drives her forward. There is no other way for her.

When Ava first decides to join a militant group, she goes through a specific bout of physical training, as well as learning about explosives and weapons. Are those things you have personal knowledge of, or did you need to undertake research?

I'm not a gun enthusiast by any means. Some of the particulars came about after research, while others were gleaned from people I know with knowledge of various weapons.

I don't have an inside line into terrorist-training, so I developed the physical aspects of Ava's initiation into the militant group by using my imagination. For instance, I decided to use Irish stick-fighting as a training method to increase physical endurance. Also known as *Shillelagh* or *Bataireacht Sail-Eille*, stick-fighting is an ancient form of Irish medieval combat involving spears, pikes, quarter staffs and wattles in varying lengths. It might be antiquated, but it worked for story purposes.

Ava is close to her childhood friend and fellow terrorist Tim O'Casey, yet sometimes they bicker ferociously. Is their relationship based on people you know?

The testy relationship between Ava and Tim is of my own making. They are more than just friends and fellow terrorists, although their interaction is never romantic. Their respective family members were taken from them violently, which irrevocably binds them together through thick and thin. No matter what happens at the end of the day and no matter how bitterly they argue, they both know their connection is permanent. Basically, it's *until death do us part* for them, without the marriage factor or romantic love. They have each other's backs, without question.

With Northern Ireland now enjoying relative peace, do you think "Celtic Remnants" will be viewed by some as outdated?

The bulk of the story in *Celtic Remnants* takes place between 1972 - just before Bloody Sunday - up to 1993, with the epilogue going forward to the year 2000. So, no, I don't think it's outdated at all. It is part of history, anyway, the long struggle between the Irish and English. Treaties and promises do not erase painful memories or feelings of bitterness.

The idea of Irish terrorists running amok nowadays may seem a bit dated, especially since the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. However, many years prior to the peace process intense sectarian violence in Northern Ireland raged unabated. The individual memories created by "The Troubles" certainly did not wash away with the flourish of a pen stroke on 10 April 1998.

The model for the cover of "Celtic Remnants" bears a striking resemblance to you. Did you pose for the cover?

[Laughter]. No, it's not me. The model is my cousin Sheila. Out of all our family members, Sheila and I are the two who look most alike. The cover for *Celtic Remnants* was designed around a photograph of Sheila taken many years ago. I thought the background looked like the coast of Ireland – depicting the character Ava as she goes back and forth across the Irish Sea to take care of "business" – so naturally I thought it perfect for the book cover. It was either going to be that, or an image of a broken Irish rosary. [Note: For more about the book cover, read Deborah O'Toole's blog post "Celtic Cover History" @ Irish Eyes: <https://irisheyes.deborahotoole.com/101012.htm>].



Model for the cover of "Celtic Remnants" by Deborah O'Toole.

The ending in "Celtic Remnants" leaves open the possibility of a sequel. Do you have any plans to write a continuation of the characters?

I think *Celtic Remnants* stands very well on its own, so I haven't made any plans to write a sequel. This might change in the future, but at the moment I have nothing in the works in regards to a continuation of the story.

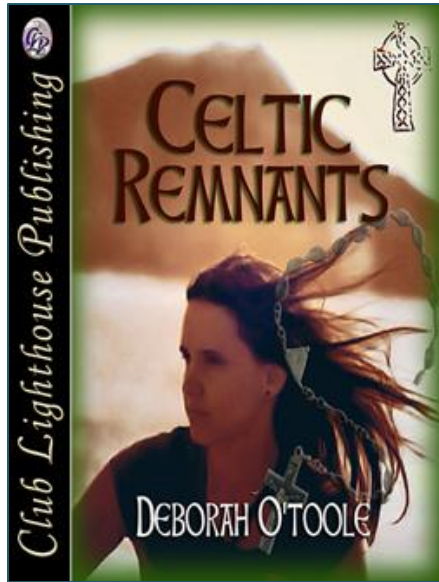
Out of all the different books you've written, how does "Celtic Remnants" rank on your list of favorites?

Near the top, naturally. [Laughter]. Books are sometimes like children. You can't very well favor one over the other without unduly prejudicing the reader.

***UPDATE 04/28/2024:** Deborah O'Toole is currently working on a sequel to "Celtic Remnants." The book is titled "Celtic Fragments," with a tentative release date of 2026. Storyline, estimated release date and book cover design may be subject to change. More: https://deborahotoole.com/books_celticfragments.htm.

"CELTIC REMNANTS" INFORMATION

Celtic Remnants by Deborah O'Toole was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing.



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EXTRAS:

Celtic Remnants @ Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/celticremnants>

Celtic Remnants official website:

<https://deborahotoole.com/celtic/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Deborah O'Toole is the author of *Celtic Remnants*, *The Crypt Artist*, *Glinhaven*, *In the Shadow of the King* and *Mind Sweeper*.

In addition, she writes darkly abstract poetry (*Torn Bits & Pieces*) and short-story juvenile fiction (*Short Tales Collection*), and is the author of a series of historical essays, articles and book reviews for *Ambermont Magazine* and *Class Notes*.

Writing as Deidre Dalton, Deborah is author of the "Collective Obsessions Saga," which chronicles the extraordinary loves and dark obsessions between two families sweeping a span of more than 165 years, most of which are set against the backdrop of a magnificent seaside mansion in Maine. Books in the ten-part family saga include *Hearts in Sorrow*, *The Advent*, *Quixotic Crossings*, *The Twain Shall Meet*, *Enthrallment*, *The Keeper's Journal*, *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight*, *Megan's Legacy* and *Limb of Iniquity*.

Also writing as Deidre Dalton, Deborah is author of "The Bloodline Trilogy." The novels follow the uniquely magical yet ominous journey of three women through time. The trilogy includes *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*.

Using the pseudonym Shenanchie O'Toole, Deborah also writes for the recipe website Food Fare. She is writer and co-editor of a dozen cookbooks, along with more than forty titles in the *Food Fare Culinary Collection*.



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