

Charmaine's Diary

14th June 2010

Monday

I don't like the taste of sponge cakes or coffee cakes or fruit cakes. But what I do like is rice krispie buns. It's a special person's birthday who I know shares a love of rice krispie buns and so I think why not a rice krispie cake? It has the advantage of not requiring great baking skills. My simple idea gets completely out of hand as I create a labour of love that is a rice krispie castle that has four towers with buttresses, a portcullis, an army whose number represents the birthday age, canons and even a knight in shining armour riding a horse. I am ridiculous.

Tuesday

A girlie day out with Mum. Last January, much to my embarrassment, I was selected as the Best Dressed Lady at the Hennessy Gold Cup in Leopardstown and now it's time to spend the prize in the Design Centre in Dublin. With such a big voucher that cannot be used on sale items and must be used within two weeks - it's like monopoly money – and we both indulge in some beautiful items. Mum will have the style on this year in Tralee for sure! Exhausted from our shopping exploits we lunch in my favourite restaurant, Cornucopia, a vegetarian's heaven where the food is wholesome, hearty and unpretentious. Potter around a few more shops before heading home to Athy.

Wednesday

Tucking into my cornflakes, Dad lands the Kildare Nationalist on the kitchen table in front of me. The frontpage headline reads "Athy Roses still bloom in London" and there I am smiling away with my fabulous London successor, Clare Kambamettu, also from Athy. The people of Athy (including me) are very excited by the bizarre coincidence that two Athy girls have been chosen as consecutive London Roses– to think that our little town can do so well in one of the major capitals of the world is just brilliant. My mission of the day – to conquer the army of stuff piling up in my room before I get kicked out of the house...

Thursday

Press interview over the phone and some beautification in my Mum's salon in Athy, Marian's Salon de Beauté.

Friday

Back to my alma mater, Trinity College Dublin, to present certificates to students who have completed the TAP (Trinity Access Programme) summer week. TAP aims to increase interest in higher educational attainment, as well as to assist student progression into third level studies among students from

disadvantaged backgrounds. These students come from schools/families/areas where progression to third level study is not the norm; many will be the first in their family to go to college. I am thrilled to be invited to share on such an excellent programme and get to meet the students who are bubbling with ideas, energy and enthusiasm. Potter down to Merrion Square to see some of the Street Performance World Championships. Beautiful evening sun, hilarious entertainment and good company. Later catch up with some girlfriends over dinner. One of the girls has consulted all sorts of recipe books to come up with a perfect menu and we are left full as a pinkeens. Delicious.

Saturday

A free weekend day – yippee! Take a picnic to Kilmashogue Forest in the Dublin mountains. Again unbelievably beautiful weather. Get very excited at the sight of a stag staring at us and then even more excited when we later see a doe bouncing near us like a pogo stick. In the evening take a stroll around picturesque village of Dalkey and top off a lovely day with a hearty fish n' chips.

Sunday

The Kildare County Show, a constant in my childhood social diary, is taking place in the field behind my home-place. I could throw my leg over the back fence and I would be amongst the dog show, vintage military vehicles and home produce. Instead my Mum drives me eight miles outside the town to get on board a helicopter! The Kildare County Show committee do not do things by half – in fact they were the brains and engine behind my Athy homecoming. I am officially opening the show and they have organised that I make a grand entrance. I am ecstatic – I've never been on a helicopter before. Piloted by the youngest person in Europe who was ever awarded a license, Eoin Roche, I know that I am in capable hands. Blessed with fabulous weather, I take in the breathtaking view of Athy and am disoriented by this unique perspective. We land on the GAA pitch and I am welcomed by a guard of honour formed by a Star War impersonator troop and the local youth club dressed as Jedis. Next I find myself in an open top car, waving to the crowds to the beat of the Churchtown Piped Band (who incidentally have been hugely supportive at events I've attended during the year). I am then ushered on stage to be interviewed by KFM's Clem Ryan (formerly my Irish teacher) and to formally open the show. Also on stage is Eric Donovan, a European boxing bronze medalist and one of the world's best lightweights who is now an Athy hero. Speaking of heroes, six Special Olympians are acknowledged on stage too for their recent successes. I next take a wander through the Show – in the flower section there is a special class called "The Rose of Tralee" which the committee created in my honour and I am chuffed by the thoughtfulness of the compliment. Throughout the afternoon I get involved in all sorts of activities – practicing CPR on a dummy in the Health tent, holding white rats, pet hedgehogs and lively little puppies in Pet's Corner and presenting prizes to the 'Most Appropriately Dressed Man'. I put my pink high-heeled foot down when I was asked by an exhibitor in the Health Tent to participate in a demonstration of ear acupuncture – now I'd try almost anything but sticking needles in my ears and eyebrows goes beyond the call of duty in my mind. But one thing is for sure – there is something for everybody at the Kildare County Show! After a fabulous day with a flying start (literally), I walk home with Mum across the field and we laugh at the irony of it.

