

## Charmaine's Diary

**8th March 2010**

### **Monday**

Play catch-up on media articles and interviews. Organise flights, hotels and train tickets.

### **Tuesday**

Girlie day out for my shopping partner in crime, Mum, and I. Pop into Libra Designs, an Irish clothing label, that has been overwhelmingly generous to me this year and pick up some lovely pieces that I cannot wait to wear! Later on, catch up with a friend over dinner and go to the Olympia to see 'Stones in His Pockets', a drama based in a rural town that is overrun by a Hollywood film crew. The two actors impressively play fifteen characters between them. And I smile to learn that it is set in Co. Kerry!

### **Wednesday**

Mum has a beauty salon and her girls pamper me for the afternoon, trying to beautify me ahead of the busy fortnight ahead.

### **Thursday**

Collect a box at Newbridge Silverware and I am like a child at Christmas with anticipation when I open it. A most generous sponsor of the Rose of Tralee International Festival, they have kindly given me a beautiful black handbag and matching purse. There is also a surprise treat of some of their new collection that was only just launched in the past few months. Beautiful. Catch up with some friends who were amongst my supporters in Tralee and they reminisce on the craic that they had down there last August.

### **Friday**

Drive to Saplings School for Children with Autism in Rathfarnham, Dublin. Each child has made a single cardboard Rose for me and after saying hello to everyone I end up with a beautiful bouquet of cardboard roses. Very cute. Attend the Peter Mark VIP Style Awards in the Shelbourne Hotel. I don't think I've ever seen so many celebrities in one place. Or so much style. Delighted to bump into Rose of Tralee judges Daithí Ó Sé and Mary Kennedy. Both have been nominated for style awards, Mary having won the honour a number of years ago. Daithí triumphs in the Most Stylish Man category and claims that his outfit, of a red ruffle shirt under a tailored pin-stripe suit and red cowboy boots, is inspired by his Kerry roots...

### **Saturday**

Relieved that Aer Lingus check-in staff let me away with being overweight by 3kg and fly to London. Attend the St. Patrick's Festival Ball in the Ballroom at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane. The 2009 Yorkshire Rose, Nicole Moriarty, agrees to be my date for the evening. Guests are welcomed with a champagne and Guinness reception. In between delicious courses at dinner we are entertained by the music of a unique and enchanting harp orchestra, traditional Irish dancers and the St. Naul's Piped Band. I am called upon to draw the prize tickets – I manage to pull out the ticket of Minister of State, John Curran T.D. and the ticket of the Ambassador. I don't think that I will be ever asked to do that job again! Overwhelmed by the warmth and openness of the guests. Chat with Noel O'Sullivan, chairperson of the

London Rose of Tralee committee who spends much of the evening trying to recruit my successor. Meet lots of interesting characters present on the night including Armagh's senior football manager Paddy O'Rourke (who was playing my home county of Kildare the following day) and Seán Quinn of the Quinn Group.

### **Sunday**

Walk in the front section of the St. Patrick's Day parade alongside the Ambassador, Bobby McDonagh and Michael Keavney of the Embassy, Minister of State John Curran and his private secretary Alan Kelly and Catherina Casey of the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith. Amazed by the number of people, of all nationalities, that have turned up on the capital's streets as we showcase our Irish culture. I wonder how a small country like Ireland has managed to take over a city of eight million people for the day. Brilliant. The parade runs from Green Park to Trafalgar Square where festivities continue with an afternoon of live Irish music and dance on the main performance stage. The master of ceremonies is Hector Ó hEochagáin. I am drafted in to do a quick two minute interview with him on stage in front of about 20,000 people. I don't think that anything embarrasses me anymore!