

Clare's Diary

5 January 2011

Wednesday

A family outing this evening to see Jane Eyre in the Gate theatre. My new I-Phone comes up trumps when we get lost in the maze of one way streets that is Dublin, we are in Mum's car so are sat-nav-less. A quick look at the Maps App. sorts that one out! For those of you who don't know the story, Jane Eyre, an impoverished governess who is altogether very plain falls in love with the rich Mr. Rochester, her employer. I am slightly baffled to see that Andrea Corr, probably one of Ireland's most beautiful women, is playing our heroine. But I must say, she does so with aplomb and the whole production is hugely enjoyable.

Thursday

This evening, my Mum and I are celebrating Women's Christmas with the staff and residents at Cuan Mhuire in Athy. This organisation which was first established in 1966 works with people with substance misuse and gambling problems. Its founder, Sr. Consilio is a remarkable lady who has recently been awarded an M.B.E. for her work; it's hard to believe that from one small room in Athy this programme has developed to the extent that over 2,500 people are helped every year in centres all over Ireland. There is a lovely service followed by the most delicious dinner and then some singing and dancing. I am lucky enough to have a few moments to chat with residents and I am both moved and inspired by the stories they tell of their lives up to this point. Having worked in a substance misuse service myself I am very impressed by the peaceful atmosphere that one encounters in Cuan Mhuire, there are lit fires in all the rooms and it genuinely does feel like somebody's very warm and welcoming house! The hours fly by and it is almost 12 by the time I look at my watch and begin saying goodbyes. Mum and I are presented with some beautiful pottery made by the residents-a wonderful memento of the evenings fun.

Friday

Today, in an effort to stop the procrastination, I take myself away to Connemara to complete another PhD application! On the way I notice a small sticker on my windscreen which tells me my next service is due in 1,500 kilometres. A quick glance at the dashboard tells me that I have driven 10,600 kilometres. Ah well, at least this means another trip to Tralee is soon in store.

Saturday

Nothing like a wonderful walk in wild and windy Connemara to blow the cobwebs clean away. I am surprisingly productive and get a lot of work done.

Sunday

Alas, time to head for home again but not before a few long overdue visits to old friends. On the day after I was selected as the Rose I was interviewed live on Radio Kerry. Whilst on the show a message came in from Joe McDonagh and all the gang in Claddaghduff. I remember being so wonderfully

surprised to hear this and Joe, a great friend of my late grandmother and a feature of many of my own childhood memories is 94 this week. I visited him in Clifden hospital on my way home and was thrilled to see him and tell him about all the goings on at home. On my way through Galway I also popped in to see very good family friends, Val and Ray O'Toole. I also knew that if my Rose Escort, Donal, ever found out I had been in Galway and not told him, that he would be severely annoyed so I surprised him on his doorstep for a quick catch up.

Monday

I thought I had escaped the coughs and colds of the season but not anymore. I woke up with a very sore throat and back, aches and pains and shivers today. Daddy says a day in my PJ's is all that's needed, an order with which I readily comply.

Tuesday

Another day of rest today. I find it difficult to stay in bed when I know there is so much to do but I quickly realise that even if I am up and about I won't get anything done feeling like this!