

Clare's Diary

9 March 2011

Wednesday

Steve Cronly, Commercial Manager of the Festival, and I are on a Roadtrip! We drop my car to the Carlton, Dublin Airport and are on the road to Newry by 8.30am. It's my first time in Co. Down and I am delighted to see our wonderful Down Rose Gemma Murphy there, we have a quick few photos taken before an interview on local radio. Unfortunately we have little time to catch up before Steve and I head for Armagh, back across the border to Monaghan and then up to Tyrone where we spend the evening. In each location we do a press call with the local Rose Centres and in Monaghan, I am lucky enough to visit the very informative Patrick Kavanagh Memorial Centre. We take in a showing of Blood Brothers in Tyrone before hitting the hay after a very long day.

Thursday

On the list today are Fermanagh, Donegal and Derry. We pop into St. Ronan's school accompanied by Niall Oates, the 2010 Fermanagh Escort. By lunchtime I feel deeply appreciative that Steve is doing all the driving as I get to have a nap. Donegal is another part of Ireland that I have yet to see and when we arrive I immediately understand why it is such a popular tourist destination; even today when it is cold and blustery it is still so wild and beautiful. We spend the night in the City Hotel Derry where I am lucky to meet not one, not two but four of the previous Derry Roses, what an honour! We have a delicious dinner before collapsing into bed!

Friday

Another early start as we head East to meet the gorgeous Francis Rafferty and Gareth McCreevy, our Belfast Rose and Escort. Francis and I have loads of fun chit chatting while posing for pictures including one of Gareth pushing us both on the luggage trolley! Next is Dundalk where we stop at a variety of locations including one of the primary schools and the Race Track. Phew, I am just exhausted by the time Steve drops me back at the Carlton for 6pm. I pack and repack for London tomorrow morning before joining my parents for dinner. Also meeting us are Rossa, the producer of the documentary to be filmed in India and Malcolm Quigley from VSO. We have a chat about how the documentary is taking shape and I begin to feel really excited about my upcoming travels. Today has been an emotional day; I find out that I disappointingly do not have a second round PhD interview but this news is soon more than counterbalanced by the fact that my wonderful friend Senator Mark Daly has managed to get me an invite to the White House next week!!!

Saturday

By 8am I am Heathrow bound for the St. Patrick's Day festivities in London. I have just enough time to meet my good friends for lunch, every time I see them all I remember how much I enjoyed being in London and it makes the prospect of moving back here in September not so uncomfortable. Tonight I am delighted to be attending the St. Patrick's Day Ball in the Grosvenor House Hotel, a great night out!

Sunday

The rain is pelting down this morning as I make my way to Green Park for the start of the parade, I am proud to be supporting the float of the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith; this much needed and loved organization is in jeopardy as the building which houses it is about to be sold and if they cannot raise the money to do it they will have to leave. Hopefully today brings them some much needed publicity and I certainly enjoy myself once the rain dries up and I am gallivanting around giving out stickers! I have a quick chat with the utterly charming Patrick Kielty on stage in Trafalgar Square during which he wears my tiara! Afterwards I meet my friend Ciara for dinner before a much needed early night!

Monday

I am trying to squeeze in as much as possible today so I meet my friend Heather for breakfast before a quick run around my old stomping ground. The afternoon brings a reception by the All Party Parliamentary Group in Westminster followed by the Ambassador's Reception in the Irish Embassy. I leave London on the 9.55pm flight after one of the most memorable weekends of my life.

Tuesday

4.45am sees me wanting to throw my alarm clock out the window. Dublin-Newark-Washington. I am convinced that running is the way forward; I force myself to get out to stretch the legs on arrival and I am so glad when I get to take in some of the most iconic views on the planet as result! I am conked out by 9pm.