

Clare's Diary

26 January 2011

Wednesday

This evening, Mum, Dad, my brother Madhu and I along with various family members and a couple of friends troop to Leinster House for dinner. I must say it feels rather exciting to wander along the corridors of this building on what is such a historic day in Irish politics. We are treated to the 'Senator Mark Daly Experience' and receive the full tour which we are all fascinated by. It is difficult not to be impressed by this place and by the lives of those in the portraits that decorate its walls. My grandfather was heavily involved in the War of Independence so I always find learning about his peers and the events of his time quite inspiring. After the tour we have a delicious dinner in the restaurant and I get to catch up with Niamh and Roisin aka Dublin and San Fran Roses; as always when I am in the company of these two I spend the evening giggling away!

Thursday

I whizz out to the airport this morning to collect Valerie Kerins, one of the masterminds-in-chief behind the festival and the person who knows more about what I am doing than I do myself! We meet Gerry Thompson and John White at VSO headquarters so we can discuss the possibility of a trip to India as well as a potential trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Summer. I am so pleased that VSO are on board as a festival charity partner this year and I'm very excited about the prospect of both trips. It's hard to believe that just a year ago I was humming and hawing and trying to decide whether or not to enter the Rose of Tralee.

Friday

This weekend I am hanging out with the Holiday Tralee crew in the RDS for the Holiday World exhibition. We have great fun advertising all that Tralee has to offer as well as seeing how many things there are to do throughout this beautiful country of ours. Certainly from my perspective, I have spent the past few years concentrating on going on holidays abroad and it's only recently that I have realised how much there is to do at home. I have a look at some of the camper vans and dream of driving around the world in one before Sandra Leahy, from Holiday Tralee, and I hop into a replica Formula One car and take it for a test drive. I get the fourth fastest time, getting around the virtual track in 40 seconds!

Saturday

Back out to the RDS again today. As part of the Rose Tour last August we were taken through Ballinasloe in a vintage car parade. I was driven by the lovely Skip Heinecke who kept me entertained with his stories of all the far-flung places he has visited. Skip is head of European Sales with Minor, a company which specializes in luxury resorts in all corners of the world. I am surprised and delighted to see his face here today and it is really lovely to catch up. I promise to call in to visit he and his wife the next time I am passing through Offaly.

Sunday

A day of rest and PhD applications...

Monday

Today I drive over to Athlone to visit a good friend of mine. Jess normally lives and works in Bristol nowadays but she has been seriously ill over the past few weeks and has been recuperating at home after several operations. I am delighted to see her looking well and healthy and interested to see the war wounds on her tummy which are fortunately healing well. Evening time sees me heading back to Kildare where I am meeting the 2009 Rose of Tralee Charmaine Kenny for dinner. Given that we are from the same town it seems crazy that it has taken us so long to meet up but nobody understands better than she how hectic life is at the moment.

Tuesday

This afternoon we have a family photo-shoot organised with a photographer from the Farmers' Journal. It is related to an interview Mum and I did before Christmas about my Granny's farming life. We take a couple of snaps of old pictures of her and I feel proud to be remembering her in this way.