



A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL NOGS - GET THE OUTDOOR HABIT IN 2004

THE IRISH DIARIES

The NOGS trip to Ireland in October 2003 was a successful outing and the experience has now been written up by several different NOGS. Your newsletter will feature the diary entries over the next few issues, starting off in usual fashion with, surprise, surprise - the first day's entry!

DAY 1 (Saturday 25th October 2003)

by Nick O'Meyrick

Having succeeded in outwitting the Bristol Saturday shopping motor rush, 10 intrepid NOGS (David, Norman, Nigel, Nick, Sarah, Jackie, Dawn, Maggie, Stella and Iris) arrived at Fulsgate Airport for their lunch-time RyanAir jaunt to Dublin. Anyway, why are NOGS always intrepid? Surely its not compulsory!

We negotiated airport security without losing any of our personal hardware to Airport Officials (a special surprise for Norman "Al Qaeda" Roberts, who suddenly blurted out "Oh Dear, my Swiss Army Knife has just gone through the X-Ray machine in my hand luggage!". Fortunately, he didn't tell anyone, so no-one noticed.

View towards Ballyvaughn.



On arrival in Dublin, we checked out our hire cars and sent our intrepid (that NOG word again!) group straight off to the resort of Ballyvaughn (on the West coast of Ireland, opposite Galway in Galway Bay), while the other 2 less intrepid car loads went off shopping to the Swords Shopping Precinct. This is named after the Swords Road on which it stands and having nothing to do with Quentin Tarantino's film direction!

However, the traffic flow on Sword's Road was as rapid as that on the M25 in the ironically named rush hour ("Europes biggest car park") and the shoppers lost over 1 hour travelling by crawling out of Dublin in Bank Holiday traffic. Journey's end was 150 miles west which was arrived at after several hours of gritty, stoic driving by our drivers (PS "Stoic" means roughly the same as "intrepid", folks!). We arrived at picturesque Ballyvaughn (see the above photo, courtesy of Dave Watins at <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/members/david.watkins/>) at 9.30 pm. At least it would have been picturesque if it wasn't so dark that we could hardly see our hands in front of our faces. However, a hissing, gurgling, undulating black oil slick beneath a sky with more stars than the Milky Way (but less chocolate, folks) led us to believe that we had, in fact, arrived at The Seaside. After a quick cold snack we crawled, exhausted, into bed and fell into dreamless sleep.

DAY 2 (Sunday 26th October 2003)

After a healthy restorative "fry-up" care of Nigel, the day began to run along the time honoured Group A and GroupB ethos.

The A Group yomped off for a fresh, breezy walk along the coast and the B Group set off to forge a bridgehead at a Craft Fair, before mounting a full scale assault on a pub lunch. The Craft Fair was perused quickly as the prices were crafty too; and the shopping was rapidly dusted off in the village Spar.

We had a restorative glass of Guinness (what a cliche!) in the village local, along with an interesting chat with some villagers who had lived in London, and then we jumped in the car and buzzed into Lisdoonvarna, the nearby resort and spa town, in search of Sunday lunch. (This place has its own website at <http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/lisdtown.htm> - Ed). We found a hostelry close to the carriageway, enigmatically named the "Wayside Tavern", and stopped in the car park.

As a bonus, the car park abutted a Salmon Smoke House, which had a unique way of smoking salmon so that it was leathery and reminiscent of delicately flavoured kipper, but most unlike the usual soggy version. When we chose our Sunday lunches, those of us who had meals with a variation of smoked salmon fared very well and enjoyed our choices. This much fun and a whole week of holiday left to go!

DAY 3 (Monday 27th October 2003)

By Mags

The alarm resounded in the form of Nick arriving from the other cottage to get Iris her breakfast! Who needs a clock?!! The day looked promising with blue skies and little white clouds. The decision for the day were the Cliffs of Mohar with Iris opting for a quiet day around Ballyvaughan. Nick was dropped off at Doolin, who decided to walk to Lisdoonvarna.

The Cliffs of Mohar (see photo right) were very popular with lots of vendors selling crafts and souvenirs. Once walking, though, the views were spectacular. The cliff path on occasions became very narrow but the intrepid group negotiated them like mountain goats! A leisurely lunch was eaten with our backs against a ruined tower in the sun, bliss!! Then it was a lovely walk back and a cuppa at the Information Centre before the return home, not forgetting to pick up Nick at Doolin.



After the evening meal a tour of the local pubs beckoned.

DAY 4 (Tuesday 28th October 2003)

By Dave Green

After two good days walking, it was decided to have a day's site seeing in Galway city. After the 25 mile drive, the plan was to meet up in Eyre Square. However, a heavy shower resulted in everybody running for a coffee shop just off the square.

Once the shower had past, it was down to some serious site seeing, with visits to the River Walk, Cathedral, Priory Church, University of Ireland (most courses are in the Irish language), the Spanish Arch and the Harbour, with a few more coffee stops along the way. Needless to say some people did indulge in some retail therapy along the way. In the evening we had an excellent meal in a local seafood restaurant, before heading back to our cottages in Ballyvaugh.

Amusing Note: In Ireland most of the signs are in both the English and Irish languages, something we should be familiar with living in Wales. The Irish language seemed particularly difficult to understand, but one point we easily picked up was how many different words the Irish have for "Shop", to name a few examples; Visitors Centre, Tourist Information, Cultural Centre, Main Building, Craft Centre, Woollen Mill or Art Gallery are all in fact Irish words for "Shop".

MARATHON MAN



Congratulations to Martin Pengilly on his success in the Everest Mountain Marathon, held in November 2003.

Martin finished in sixteenth place, but was the second non-Napali athlete, finishing in a time of 5 hours 18 minutes, while this would be relatively slow for a normal marathon at altitudes up to 18,000 feet this a remarkable achievement. Well done Martin!