

Transcript of Podcast 060: Road-Tripping Ireland

{Intro:

ANNELAURE: I think that what I liked the most about Ireland was the Irish people. I found them to be very friendly, nice, helpful, and extremely polite, and it really made a difference.}

{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a fortnightly series looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Brit with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'whys' behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

My therapist would object to the way I was going to start this pod, so instead I'll say 'thank you for bearing with me and accepting the slightly less-than-regular issuing of this pod'. It's supposed to be released in the early hours of Thursday mornings, as when I originally started it some four years ago, I had a discussion with an avid podcast listener who I worked with, and he suggested it was a good time to catch the commuter traffic, whilst still not being lost in the vast amounts of pods released on Mondays. Hello Andrew. But I know many of you will be listening long after the event, so it probably doesn't matter as much in hindsight as I thought. The things you learn. Indeed one day I will probably do some kind of blog post on 'things I wish I knew before starting a podcast'. Including the usefulness of a sound library and the need to fully understand the effort it takes and set expectations accordingly. It's been four years since I started this pod, more-or-less, and I was originally aiming to do it weekly. {pause} *That* lasted all of three episodes.

I am aware I more-or-less do a weekly pod now, but since every other week is a recording of my Twitter Spaces, I don't think that counts.

Anyhoo. I have an excuse this time, and it's very much the subject of this pod. I've been away from home, on a road trip around Ireland for a week and a half, and while very fun and worthwhile, it's not the ideal situation in which to prepare a podcast episode. I know other podcasts plan their episodes long in advance so this doesn't happen. I also know though that many of the podcasts I listen to most ... do not do this and they're as last-minute as I am. But in their defence, they're conversational podcasts (like my Twitter Spaces) which take much less pre-planning (but more post-production), so they're more suited to frequency.

Mmm, editing. All I need to do is remove the bits where I lose the ability to read.

Anyhoo. Other housekeeping first, and even though I came back from Ireland on Tuesday evening, only a day later I was out again. I was socialising. What? Me? Talking to people? A whole group? Who am I and what happened to the real Barefoot Backpacker? In my defence it's a monthly get-together so if I hadn't gone I'd've had to wait till mid-August to not go again. It was a chatty meetup for non-binary people in Glasgow, and there were a surprisingly large number of us there, just under 20 - who knew there were twenty enbies in Glasgow? It was nice to see that not everyone was AFAB either; male enbies always felt a bit more rare, because patriarchy, which I'll be discussing in an upcoming blog post. We met up in a bookshop after-hours; so, so many of my friends would love to be locked in a bookshop after it had closed for the day, but we just chatted. I never even nicked any of their cafe's packets of crisps.

In fact, while I was away, it was non-binary awareness week and, on July 14th, non-binary people's day. I scheduled a couple of things in advance for it though, including a post for my day-job's intranet site, which seemed to go down really well. I'm not one for chasing 'likes' but it got more likes than any intranet blog post since someone did one on the intersection between being Queer and being disabled. Looking back through the blogs, it seems the most likes always come on Queer-related posts. Which is not something you might expect from an organisation like the one I work for. At some point in the future I'll do some posts on travelling as non-binary, but that'll have to wait until I've ... well, travelled as openly non-binary. Probably after the Travel Blogger Conference I'm going to in September.

So, as I say, I've just come back from a trip to Ireland. You may recall I went backpacking around Northern Ireland in February, and I said there was a long-standing plan to visit the Irish Republic. Well, this was that plan, finally realised. My friend Anne-Laure wanted to visit Ireland and in summer 2020 we'd sketched out plans to do a 10-day trip there, but things kept getting in the way. Mainly Covid, but not exclusively - indeed in one case it was because I was already going away the week in question (to France); a curse on all these people who have their birthdays at the end of May. But not a big curse, because I think they're all fab. And anyway, Laura's trip was birthday-specific. But that's a tale for a previous podcast episode.

Several things made this trip to Ireland stand out, though. Firstly, I was going with a friend who is quite a control freak, who specifically told me that if she'd been planning it, she'd have had our itinerary locked down pretty much to the hour, about four months ago. Frankly, I'm amazed she allowed me total control of the trip, and was prepared for the 'you know, I've no idea where we're going to be staying in two days time, let me have a look, do you have any preferences', which only happened three times, to be fair.

She had come at me with a 'hit list' of things she wanted to do, though. Some were non-negotiable, some were active preferences, and some were casual 'this would be cool' things. Surprisingly, we did almost everything on all three lists, although this did involve some creative route-mapping and overnight stays.

You may initially get the impression this was her trip and I was just a tag-along. In a way this was kind of true. Although I'd not been to the Irish Republic since, er, 2002?, I was very much of the mindset that this trip was more for her benefit than mine. There were a couple of specific things I wanted to see and do, but oddly (apart from one I only found out about en route) they were all on the last day of the road-trip part of the holiday.

One of the other things that is really important to mention is that this was literally a road trip. In the early days of planning, we'd not raised the concept of travel, but I did quickly realise that many of the places on her list were ones better accessible by car. It would make the trip much more expensive, but would give us the freedom and ability to visit places less accessible. With hindsight it also allowed us to stay in cheaper accommodation in the countryside rather than irk about city parking and city hotel prices. Obviously this isn't a method of travelling I'm used to, because I tend to travel solo and, let's be honest, if I were the only person alive on the planet, I'd still manage to crash a car. Apart from short excursions, the last time I road-tripped in a car was four years ago in Western Australia with my netpal Shelly, and I wouldn't even be able to begin to remember when the time before that was, so this was a whole different and rare experience for me. Anne-Laure was happy to do all the driving (she likes driving); my job specifically was to keep her awake, and to ensure we were going in more-or-less the right direction. We'll come onto that later.

Oh, and yeh, I've known AnneLaure for 17 years and we used to date. We stopped dating a long time ago, in like 2009 or 2010, I've no idea, it's actually not important to the way we see each other. Just note we know a lot about each other, and have travelled together before even, so that definitely helps as it means we already know how each other tick and there'd be no surprises about how each other are. It wasn't like I was travelling with someone for the first time, or with someone I didn't know that well.

The plan was to meet up in Dublin on the 9th July. AnneLaure had booked flights in for 9th and out for the 19th, giving us around 10 days to explore. I decided to take my time and overnight in Belfast on Friday 8th. This would allow me to travel overland, and also to do a Parkrun in Belfast, before a casual trip southwards on the Saturday lunchtime to a pleasant Dublin. It didn't quite turn out as chill as that ...

{section separation jingle}

{V - "No virgin me for I have sinned. I sold my soul for sex and gin. Go call the Priest all meek and mild, and tell them Mary is no more a child"}

I don't know how much you know about Irish sport. Outsiders might think the most popular sport would be football, or should I say, and I'm saying this for a specific reason, soccer. Internationally, you might be right, but domestically, two sports dominate. I mentioned one in my recent podcast on Myths & Legends - Hurling has been popular for millennia; basically lots of people run around a field with a big stick and try to hit a ball more than each other. Allegedly. The All-Ireland Hurling Final between Kilkenny and Limerick took place on 17th July at Croke Park in Dublin, and is why I had quite a bit of trouble sourcing a hotel in the Dublin area for the end of our trip. In the event I booked into the Premier Inn at Dublin Airport, which worked out in a number of other ways anyway, so that turned out quite well.

The opening weekend of our trip, however, coincided with the semi-finals of the All-Ireland Gaelic football competition. On the Sunday, Dublin played Kerry, which would have been awkward enough, but on the Saturday it was Galway against ... Derry.

Now. The island of Ireland was, traditionally, divided into 32 counties (although this is no longer administratively true - the six counties that became Northern Ireland first became 26 admin areas and are now, apparently grudgingly, 11 'super districts' - in my ambition to visit every 'county' in the UK, although I'm going by current admin area, I've kind of low-key decided to ignore the chaos of Northern Ireland because Some Of Them Are Very Small, even if, with hindsight, I have been through most of the 11, if not the 26), and four provinces - Ulster, Leinster, Munster, and Connacht. Hashtag: Meath got shafted. Anyway, the way Irish sports work is that teams represent each of these counties, and there are provincial competitions, and the winners (and generally, the runners-up) in each province (so, 8 in total) play each other in a knock-out tournament to determine the All-Ireland winner.

Ulster consists of the 6 traditional counties of Northern Ireland (Armagh, Antrim, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, and Tyrone), and three in the Republic (Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan). It's therefore likely that at least one NI side will end up with a chance of being in the semi-finals. And though it's possible to get to Dublin (where the semis and the final are held) directly from any NI county, the easiest and quickest route is via Belfast.

None of this I was aware of when I arrived in Belfast on the Friday evening. All I knew is that I had had immense trouble booking accommodation in Dublin for the Saturday and the Sunday nights, and I'd ended up having to get some student accommodation which, it not being the academic year, had been opened out to visitors.

As an aside, it was pretty good accommodation. I remember being a student in a hall of residence; this was not like that. Rather, this was a specific place, that had the style and feel of a hotel, divided into small blocks, and each block had floors, and each floor had a couple of separated 'apartments' which contained four bedrooms and a communal, fully-fitted kitchen with space to cook and eat. We will not talk about the fact the key-fob used to access the block and the room also opened somebody else's room when I forget what room we were in. Anyway. The only other irk was that the kitchen window let in so much heat and light that at times it reached over 30 degrees Celsius in there. Which made it not a comfortable place to stop and eat.

Anyway, back to the sports issue. I'd not booked any travel from Belfast to Dublin because, you know, big cities, plenty of routes between the two. Nope. All the coaches were fully booked, could not get a ticket, and I couldn't even get an advance ticket on the (less-frequent than you'd expect, once every two hours) direct train. My only hope was to get a walk-on ticket, but when I went to the not-the-central-but-the-one-the-Dublin-trains-go-from railway station on the Saturday morning (and I took a pre-Parkrun detour purely to get the ticket!), they said due to passenger numbers they weren't selling tickets until two hours before departure.

Parkrun itself was cool. I'd chosen to overnight at the Premier Inn in the Titanic Quarter (because it was cheap and available, although when I went to check in I had to wait a bit cos a few teenagers had rushed in and set the fire alarms off), and it was convenient for two Parkruns, I'd gone for a walk through much of East Belfast on the Friday evening to check them out, and accidentally coming across a local street festival in between them, with live music on stage and everything. In the event I chose Victoria Park over Ormeau Park; Ormeau was prettier but the course routing made little sense, plus Victoria was flat. Neither were entirely suitable for barefoot running due to knobbly tarmac so the choice was purely aesthetic (and I had a new pair of minimalist running shoes, Skinnors, to check out anyway). And entirely flat. I don't think I've ever done an entirely flat Parkrun before. This was reflected in my time; my second fastest Parkrun time ever. And I don't know how I feel about that. Because my fastest time was the last Parkrun I did before lockdown, barefoot, on a course that was entirely Not Flat, and indeed notoriously so. So though the difference was less than 10 seconds, it does mean ostensibly I'm slower than I used to be, and may be reflective that in the last two years, I've very definitely aged two years. Although it might be interesting to see how fast I can do Sheffield Castle Parkrun now.

On another note, what I also didn't realise was how close Belfast City Airport was to Victoria Park, nor how many planes land there. I've no idea where they fly from; even Clazz, last time I was in Belfast, flew in from Edinburgh to Belfast International, somewhere half an hour by bus to the west. It's quite something to be warming up for a run only to be distracted by a plane flying so low you can pretty much see the people on it.

But Parkrun doesn't help me get to Dublin. A detour back to the station afterwards though secured me a train ticket (albeit three times more expensive than my coach back at the end of the trip). Everyone was going to Dublin to watch the game, either live or in pubs, and the train was full of jerseyed-up fans. Although I did

surprisingly get a window seat, maybe because I got to the train in plenty of time. It wasn't just Gaelic football fans though; about a quarter to a fifth of the train was full of a somewhat different demographic - the band Westlife were playing in Dublin the same night so there were a not insignificant number of boyband groupies. Many of whom probably remembered them from their first time round.

I eventually arrived in Dublin sometime between 2 and 3pm. AnneLaure had been there a while already, possibly to her own surprise given the current chaos in airports and with flights; I was half-expecting her to have been stuck in Toulouse for at least a day, but apparently not. And yes, I could have flown from Glasgow to Dublin, and yes, inclusive of the hotel cost in Belfast it would have been far cheaper to do so, but it felt really weird to consider flying to somewhere that's literally just 'right there'. Plus I wasn't travelling with hand luggage for ... reasons you don't need to know about, so it was never an option. And besides, coming back to Glasgow was a breeze. Except for the fact someone on the coach through Scotland threw up on the seat behind me so the coach smelt a bit for the journey, plus someone in front of me was having a phone conversation that was so loud at her end (she was wearing headphones so probably didn't realise) that when she finished, a couple of people applauded sarcastically. But anyway.

{section separation jingle}

{V - "Been so long away from home, I almost made this place my own. Now it seems I'll soon be gone, moving on and all alone"}

AnneLaure had 10 days, and as I say it was up to me to design a route that covered everything she wanted to do in the short time allowed. Because we had the advantage of a car, I was able to pick a route through the country rather than being forced to overnight in larger towns; this had the dual advantage of allowing more flexibility in where we stayed, as well as being marginally cheaper - that said, it was still a much more expensive trip than I'm used to. Not gonna lie, when the bus back from Glasgow city centre refused my card on the Tuesday evening I thought I was going to have to go into panic mode, but no, that was just my card being awkward. It's already more bent than I am, presumably because I sat on it or something ages ago.

Flexibility in route planning was also important because I was booking everything fairly last minute. The issues of Dublin itself aside, many of the B&Bs in western Ireland I looked at were fully booked, so I had to get a little creative at times. This led to some interesting overnight stops. I also had to balance out that AnneLaure was doing all the driving, and while she said she was fine with it and enjoyed it, I didn't want to push out any really long days.

After our two nights in Dublin, we picked up the car from a place near the Dublin docks, and headed west. I toyed with the idea of overnighing in Kilkenny and Cork, or possibly Cashel, but in the event the most convenient place en route for an overnight stay was a B&B in a small village some 20km north of Kilkenny, called Freshford. Wikipedia tells me the Irish Conker Championships take place there every year, reinforcing the vibe that everywhere is interesting and has something notable about it. Anyway, we had trouble finding the B&B at first because it had no discernible sign and was down a dead end road just after a housing estate, and looked for all the world like a standard detached house. Which I guess it was. But when we got there it was pretty nice; it felt homely, with lots of cute decor. Our bedroom was mostly shades of blue, and contained a couple of armchairs as well as an ensuite with a shower and toilet - all toiletries provided. Breakfast was traditional fry-up, nice but a little small compared to others.

The next two nights, the Tuesday and Wednesday, we overnighed in a B&B that wasn't even in a village. Rather, it was just off a country lane a couple of kilometres from the nearby village of Castlemaine, in the centre of County Kerry in the south-west of Ireland. The most striking thing about the room we were in was the huge amount of cupboard and wardrobe space. It was also plushly-carpeted throughout - the soft stuff that feels like it might eat you with hugs, The B&B itself was owned and run by an older, retired, married couple and was full of trinkets, which the husband informed us was all the wife's choice. I managed to knock something off the wall when I climbed the stairs with my backpack; he said he'd been trying to get rid of it for years but by the time we left, it was back up. Breakfast was available as an added extra - the husband said he offered it but not as standard because it generally wasn't worth the hassle. It was huge. HUGE. I ended up having a quarter of AnneLaure's. We only had it on our first morning - we decided we could grab something on the way on the Thursday. Incidentally, breakfast on the Wednesday was the only real time en route we spoke to other guests at any of the places we stayed - a couple of creative artist types who were doing some exploring of Ireland of their own.

For the Thursday and Friday we'd headed north, into County Clare and the small village of Kilfenora. I'd needed somewhere near the coast for this bit, not too far from the ferry to the Aran Islands, and this felt like as good as any other I found. This is in the heart of an area known as The Burren, as well as being the filming location for a popular TV series, but we'll come onto both of those things later. The B&B here was on the edge of the village and for once had a signpost outside it making it pretty easy to spot and get to. For once we were in a downstairs room, and AnneLaure was also happy the owners had a dog she could get to play with. The ensuite here was comfortable but the shower had a fixed head rather than a hand-held jet director thing, and the lady running it was desperately keen for us not to be cold so insisted to us that she would put the heating on. Listener, we were in the beginnings of a heatwave; the heating was pretty superfluous. This was also another B&B that lacked the second B, but since we had busy days while we were there, this wasn't a problem.

Our final night on the road before we headed back to Dublin had proved problematic. I'd wanted to overnight somewhere in the Connacht National Park area, partly for convenience and partly to ensure Saturday wasn't an overly-long driving day, but there was pretty much nothing available. Galway town, too, was proving elusive, but looking further afield I managed to get somewhere in the small village of Knock. And indeed I found several B&Bs in Knock, all ready and waiting for me. We'll come onto why later, suffice to say we are not the target market for that village, in several ways. Anyway. This was the only B&B we stayed in that felt more like a hotel; it was a large building and we were staying in an annexe behind it. On the plus side, the annexe was more like a small apartment - by far the biggest place we stayed, it had a fitted kitchen, living room with sofas, bedroom with a double bed and two single beds, and a large bathroom. The downsides were more in the detail; while the kitchen had everything practical, it was hard to find since it was scattered everywhere (the cutlery, for instance, lived mostly in a cooking pot). The bathroom had some fittings that needed, well, fitting, and a couple of the bedside lamps didn't work. Also, the WiFi hadn't been set up to reach the annexe yet. It had the feel of a place that would be really nice when it's finished, but right now it was still a work in progress. Breakfast was pretty good though, and quite large. The owners of the B&B were away so it was being looked after by an extroverted version of me; she was funny, slightly off-kilter, and quite, quite, disorganised.

The last two nights of our trip were in the Premier Inn at Dublin Airport. While we chose it primarily because it was available and at a not-horrendous price, and because we felt it would be convenient to be closer to the airport for admin reasons, it turned out to be a really good decision as it made our last full day and journeys home really chilled and stress-free. It's a Premier Inn, so you kind of know what you're getting; this one was a bit too warm overnight but we were about to have one of Ireland's hottest ever recorded days so we'll forgive them that. The only other thing to mention is while we were checking in, we witnessed someone crash a whole tray of large cocktails behind us. They were trying to take them up in the lift and failed to even get that far. They managed to save at least one, though, so it wasn't a complete disaster.

{section separation jingle}

{V - "No virgin me for I have sinned. I sold my soul for sex and gin. Go call the Priest all meek and mild, and tell them Mary is no more a child"}

Ireland is quite a religious country, as you might be aware. It comes as no surprise at all to her then that many of the places we visited had a religious bent to them. Not because either of us are religious (despite being French, AnneLaure is not Catholic, and my upbringing in Liverpool defined 'religion' as 'are you blue or red' rather than any thoughts of afterlife or divine beings, Dixie Dean and Kenny Dalglish aside), but rather because several of them are interesting in their own right. And regardless of your own beliefs, it can't be argued that religious buildings in general aren't pretty, or impressive structures. Unless you're a Quaker, I suppose, whose religious buildings, by design, are plain and simple.

The big cathedral is of course St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. It's assigned as the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland, which is interesting in two respects; firstly that the Church of Ireland is Anglican (and Ireland is Famously Not), and secondly that it's not even the designated Anglican Cathedral of Dublin (that honour goes to nearby Christ Church Cathedral). It seems the two had been in dispute about this since St Patrick's Cathedral was built. In 1191. Got to hand it to religions, they know how to hold a grudge. Anyway they've been friends since 1870 so it's all sorted now. As to the other point, it's been both Catholic and Protestant over the centuries, at the behest of whichever flavour the English monarch preferred, but has been solidly Protestant since King William's victory over King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. King William's chair is one of the items on show.

AnneLaure asked me about the Battle of the Boyne; she asked 'who won, who lost, and who was in the right'? Small wars have been fought subsequently over the answer to that third question, so I'm tactfully not answering that. Especially as an English-born socialist.

The Cathedral's most famous 'son', as it were, is Jonathon Swift who, along with someone who these days might even be assigned as their Queer-Platonic Partner, Esther Johnson, is buried there. Swift himself, well known for being an author and satirist, and indeed many of his works need to be read with a corresponding eye on contemporary Irish history, politics, and social culture, was the Dean at the cathedral, and was notorious for sermons lasting several hours, during which he'd use a pulpit with added wheels, and slide up to people he saw sleeping in church and loudly admonish them.

Visiting the Cathedral is quite simple; we bought tickets online that had an estimated arrival time on them, but while that seems like a large commitment, be aware we bought them about half an hour in advance. You can get an audio tourguide - a hand-held device that you push buttons on a and hold to your ear. Unlike many audio tours, this one was informative, well-paced, provided additional information if requested, and, crucially, wasn't just reading what was already on visible boards or written in the guide leaflet map.

We went to a couple of other cathedrals and churches en route. These included St Mary's Cathedral in Limerick, with a huge stained-glass window and an unusual series of misericords. I love the sound of the word misericord. They are ridges built into the undersides of folding seats, and used so people can surreptitiously rest on them during long sessions of standing prayer. No doubt Mr Swift would have looked unkindly on their use. They seem to have been very uncommon in Ireland, but present elsewhere - the most culturally-famous are in Ripon, in Yorkshire, which I mentioned in a previous podcast, which allegedly inspired some of Lewis Carroll's characters in the Alice books.

Another place with a series of churches is Kilkenny (no connection to South Park), including two pretty much next to each other both dedicated to St Canice. One is the (Anglican) cathedral church, dating from the 13th Century, and has a large tower (just over 30m tall) which you can climb and get views across the region. We did not do this. The other is a standard (Catholic) parish church. St Canice, also known as St Kenny (yes, really - the city is named after him; 'kil' being the Irish & Gaelic word for 'church', hence the proliferation of places beginning 'kil' across Ireland and Scotland), was a 6th Century abbot and missionary, and as such one of the early Christian ministries in Ireland, although a century after Patrick.

The Catholic Cathedral in Kilkenny is dedicated, like Limerick, to St Mary, and dates from much more recently (the 1840s), and is allegedly inspired by Gloucester Cathedral, although despite having been to Gloucester Cathedral, I've also been to a heck of a lot of other cathedrals too and after a while they do kind of blend into one. mean there's only so many ways of designing a building in a cross shape with very high ceilings and lots of arches. Although the ceilings are impressive enough for me to have six pictures of on my phone - it's made up of panels that look like designs you'd have on fancy cushions, in red and blue with dots and florals.

Kilkenny also boasts the Black Abbey, a church-like building that's actually a priory of the Dominican Order, and, at 1225, one of the earliest of this kind in Ireland. The difference is one of ecumenical matter rather than of lay person interest; it looks and vibes like a church inside, with obligatory altar and stained glass windows. It also has a statue of St Dominic dating from the early 1500s which, not gonna lie, looks pretty creepy.

The most religious of places we visited though was of course Knock. This is a village of about 970 inhabitants, which has its own international airport, and the fourth busiest airport in the whole country (after Dublin, Cork, and Shannon; not that there's much other competition to be fair, although that's more passengers than Derry Airport across the border). Over a million and a half people visit the village each year, which must make it one of the most toured places in the world relative to local population.

It is, like Lourdes in France, one of those places people come to for pilgrimage, for very similar reasons. Back in 1879, several residents of the village had a vision of Mary, Joseph, and St John the Evangelist at the church. This wasn't an isolated incident seen by one person; it's reported over twenty villagers saw something at the church and, aside from the original apparition, other people reported seeing other visions elsewhere at the same time, including the Lamb Of God and several other concepts in Christian imagery. It is beyond the scope of this pod to determine if those visions were genuine or not, all I will say is that it's convenient they were so easily identifiable, given how they most likely looked in history.

Reports of the incident spread quickly, and Knock became a spot for other believers to come and visit, believing the church and the area were blessed in some way. People go there to be cured of illnesses, or to seek

a spiritual reawakening, or to seek peace with God before their imminent death. You can fill your water bottles with holy water from any number of taps on site. There's several churches and a basilica, a huge open area with seating so you can sit outside and listen to services, an eternal flame, a large cross erected in conjunction with the Pope's visit in 1979, and a tapestry depicting the events of the original apparition. There are also many shops on the main street selling nothing but religious paraphernalia. This is the place to get your models of a praying Virgin Mary and your 'Mum and Dad, I prayed for you at Knock' heart-shaped paperweights. It is, exactly, as you imagine.

We didn't find a pub.

{section separation jingle}

{V - "Silks and satins and crimson velvet will someday fade away. But the stones will stand across the land and love will have its day"}

Our trip wasn't all 'Ave Maria, gratia plena, dominus tecum' though. And I think I managed to avoid The Angelus on RTE1. There were plenty of other historical and impressive sites we saw that had less of a religious bent. That said, Kylemore Abbey, high on AnneLaure's hitlist, does have a religious connection (clue's in the name); in 1920 a group of Benedictine Nuns made homeless after World War 1 destroyed their homes in Ypres, Belgium, took possession of Kylemore Castle and turned it into a monastery-type environment. They're still there today, and constructing a new purpose-built building for their needs.

The original building here, Kylemore Castle, was built by Mitchell Henry, a mid-to-late 19th Century doctor, manufacturer, and MP. Him and his wife holidayed to the area in the 1840s and fell in love with it, so much so that he promised her he'd build them a house there one day. True to his word, that house was completed in 1871 after four years of construction. Although called a 'castle', it's more of an affected manor house. It's ... quite large - around 3,700 meters squared in area, with over 70 rooms.

It's set in very beautiful surrounds, deep in the Connemara National Park, which I'll talk about later, but it's at the base of a steep hill ridge (halfway up which is a statue of Jesus, like the Christo Redentor. Quite why it's not at the top of the hill is a mystery I did not find an answer to), surrounded by forest, and next to a large lake. A couple of the rooms in the castle look out onto the lake and one imagines it'd be the perfect setting to do a spot of wild swimming or boating in the early dawn light, with no-one around to disturb the peace. Maybe the nuns do. I don't know.

Also in the grounds is a small gothic-style church and a mausoleum. Disappointingly, Margaret Henry, Mitchell's beloved, died of dysentery in Egypt only about four years after they moved in; he built the mausoleum and the church in her honour, and died himself several decades later, not having remarried, and is buried in the mausoleum next to her. Love does that to some people. Anyway, the place got sold a couple of times until it ended up in the hands of the Benedictines, who remain there to this day, although part of the castle itself is open for tourism.

They also made use of the Victorian Walled garden that the Henrys created, itself a large area of grasses, flowers, herbs, ferns, and greenhouses situated almost 2km away from the main house (but still part of the estate. The Henrys may have been middle class but they were certainly on the upper end of that definition. Either that or Ireland was cheap to buy at the time, for reasons that may have been related to the English that we won't go into on this pod). One notable part of the garden is the rockery. Most people who create rockeries in their gardens collect rocks from elsewhere and place them in a pattern. Not the Henrys, who arranged for someone to create one based on the rock of the hill that was already on site. With dynamite. I mean, it saves heavy lifting, but still ...

Another castle-that-feels-like-a-mansion-house was in Kilkenny. Although Kilkenny Castle was built in the latter years of the 12th century and originally served as a defensive fortification (it stands directly on the River Nore), enough of it survived into the 18th and 19th Centuries for it to be fully used as a large home, which although fell back into disrepair in the years afterwards, has in the past few decades been renovated and restored. It's now possible to explore the bulk of the building, and see things like the bedrooms, the nursery (complete with creepy Victorian dolls), and the large Picture Gallery, built in the early 19th Century and, as the name suggests, display a number of pictures and tapestries. A further tapestry was on display on my visit - in the basement there were panels from one currently being worked, the Ros Tapestry. This is inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry, and is being created to show, in a similar vein, the history of SE Ireland during the arrival of the Normans, and the development of the later port town of New Ross.

A similar house can be found not far out of Killarney, in County Kerry. Muckcross House is, like Kylemore Abbey, set in woodland and by a large lake. However it has much more of a 'Chatsworth House' feel rather than vibing like a castle. Indeed Queen Victoria stayed here once, and part of the route through the house you can visit takes you through where she stayed while she was here – it's a lot of admin that was required for such a short visit, and horrendously expensive for the owner, with perhaps not as much kudos as you might expect (the house was sold soon after to pay off debts).

Visiting the house takes you past some also takes you through the servant quarters and the wine cellars, complete with hundred-year-old-branded bottles of wine and condiments. Empty and open, obviously.

The whole estate, after passing through the ownership of the Guinness Family which, to be honest, could probably have afforded to buy half the country at one point, became Ireland's first National Park in 1932. It's since been expanded and now covers just over 100 km² – about three times smaller than Malta.

Nearby is Muckross Abbey, an old ruined, well, abbey. It was founded in the middle of the 15th Century as a base for Franciscans, but it only saw use for about 200 years until Oliver Cromwell (who else) sacked and burned it. The walls are still largely in situ but the roof has long gone. This is of benefit to a large tree (the internet says its a Yew Tree, I have no opinion on that) which is growing inside one of the old rooms of the abbey, well, in the old cloister yard anyway, but still giving a kind of Lara Croft / Indiana Jones vibe.

Another ruined abbey lies a little way south of Kilkenny, in fact – the southern part of Ireland seems to have country houses and nearby ruined abbeys quite frequently. This one is Jerpoint Abbey, dating from a couple of centuries earlier, and disestablished by the English King Henry VIII. Like Muckross, it's still pretty well coherent, but largely roofless; quite an impressive place for a ruin.

The most notable of the religious ruins though is almost certainly the Rock Of Cashel. This site, on top of a large hill, originally served as the capital of the ancient Irish Kingdom of Munster (to go alongside my visit to Ulster's capital at Emain Macha back in February), although there had always been a religious bent to it. St Patrick himself is believed to have come here (and there's a cross dedicated to him on site). At the start of the 12th Century the sitting King of Munster gave the entire site to the church, presumably in return for blessing and privilege. As a result pretty much everything on site dates from this period onwards, and there's nothing left of the Munster Capital.

What is on site though is pretty impressive. The main part is a large open-plan stone cathedral dating from the mid-13th Century, built in the shape of a cross, alongside a couple of towers and some very old gravestones. Next to it is an older chapel, Cormac's Chapel, that's been recently restored (it was full of mould, basically). It dates from not long after the church took over the site, and is covered with stone carvings and wall/ceiling murals of a type very unusual in Ireland, resembling more Germanic styles, suggesting they wanted something unique and distinctive here in this special place.

What's curious is the main cathedral was built in the mid-13th Century without any regard to what was already on site. As a result, the original main entrance, which would have opened out onto the rest of the hill, is now pretty much blocked off by one of the high stone walls of the cathedral coming past at an angle.

Although the site, literally, went through the wars as it were, and was finally abandoned in 1749 when a new cathedral was commissioned in the town centre, apart from the roof falling down, the walls are in pretty good condition for something nearly a thousand years old – you can certainly stand in the nave and get a sense of how big and imposing the building was. And the views from the hilltop outside the walls is quite expansive too.

One 'proper' castle we went to was King John's Castle, in Limerick. S'called King John's Castle cos he was the one who ordered it built, to strengthen the Norman Invasion of Ireland. There's quite a lot of the battlements and a couple of towers left, and you can certainly have a wander through and look out over the city. There's also a few interactive exhibits in there too, and a large museum in the basement talking about the history of the castle and Limerick in general, but concentrating mainly on the Sieges of Limerick (plural, yes), the main ones being in 1642 and 1650. Interesting period in the history of the British and Irish Islands, that; growing up in England we're always taught about the English Civil War, the one where we killed a King towards the end of it (and then 11 years later decided that was a really bad idea, and invited his son back to take the throne again). But branches of the war were fought in Scotland and Ireland too, and Limerick (as one of the biggest cities of the island of Ireland) was in the thick of it. 1642 saw the Irish Catholics & English Royalists take the city, and 1650-51 saw them lose it again to the Protestants and English Parliamentarians.

It's kind of amazing in a Not At All Amazing way just what we're not generally taught in History Lessons. I know everything could be considered important, but there's important context left out at times.

There are limits, though, and those limits are more commonly seen when history becomes legend. There are stone-age ruins across the whole of Ireland; a land with such a vast array of myth & legend is obviously going to have been settled for a long time, and while those sites definitely existed, what they were and what they were used for is told through oral folktales which may change on retelling, rather than written history books whose changes on copying are more likely to be recorded.

On a hill some 40km NW of Dublin, and close to the town of Navan, are the remains of a series of tombs, henges, and buildings that were used and occupied for several thousand years. This is the Hill of Tara, the centre of Irish history and myth, the home of the High Kings of Ireland, and the place that served as the political capital of the island in pre-English days. The name 'Tara' itself has become synonymous with Ireland (there used to even be a TV channel in the UK called Tara TV that showed things like Gaelic football and Irish soap operas), and is believed to mean 'place of sanctuary'.

While the site has several mounds where burials and structures have been found, many of which suggesting the people here were of high status, the most notable item is a small standing stone, about 1m high, that is believed to be the Lia Fáil, or 'Stone of Destiny', the place where the High Kings of Ireland were crowned. There's many myths about it in particular (that it cried out when the rightful king touched it, that Irish hero Cu-Chulainn broke it when it *didn't* cry out for his nephew, because petulant teenagers are a bit like that, and that the present one is just a copy cos the original was loaned to Scotland and was never returned, becoming the Stone of Scone, where the Scottish Kings were crowned). Anyway, you can touch it yourself if you want. Nothing happens

From a similar period, but the other side of the country, is the Poulnabrone Dolmen. It is, as the name suggests, a dolmen. These are also huge gravestones, in effect, that have a distinctive design, usually with two or more upright blocks of stone supporting a flat 'roof'. What makes the one here particularly notable is its size - one of the largest in the country. The supporting stones are around 2m tall, while the 'roof' (it's called a capstone, apparently) is roughly 4m by 2.5m in area. It's believed it marks the site of a burial of upwards of 30 people, complete with grave goods, although it's also known that the site itself wasn't anywhere central; it's as remote now as it was then, situated on a rocky field on quite a high part of the country, some distance from the nearest settlement. But let's talk about the countryside for a bit, since that's another reason people visit this country.

{section separation jingle}

{V: "I travel Ireland in a day. You just nod your head, I'm on my way"}

The dolmen was in one part of the Irish countryside called The Burren, and one small part of it has been designated the Burren National Park. This is an area mainly located in the north of County Clare (not that County Clare itself is that big). It's an example of what geologists call 'karst' - a landscape dominated by rocks like limestone on the surface which, being water-soluble, have created a weird-ass scene of large scattered rock with crevices between them, making the area seem like one huge irregular block-built pavement, with frequent scattered huge rockpiles looking a bit like a lunar landscape. Unsurprisingly there's a lot of caves in the area, and cave tours is a popular tourist attraction. We did not.

Given the area is also full of old ruins like the Poulnabrone Dolmen, and given this was very much farming country, it's sometimes hard to tell whether what you're looking at is a natural rock formation, an ancient stone-age monument, or a ruined famine-era farm building. The region is also pretty hilly, with small country lanes barely two cars wide meandering through the vista.

Where The Burren meets the coast, we get the Cliffs of Moher. These are a spectacular part of the scenery, as sheer cliffs upwards of 100m high meet the vast Atlantic Ocean. There's a road, part of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, that runs along the top of them, and there's one point where you can stop and, for €12, park up and walk along them for a length.

However, if you look on a map, you'll find that a few km further south there's a country lane going to Liscannor and Mullaghroe, and if you take this, you'll eventually get to a car park where you can drop in €3 into an honesty box by a farm, and walk for a km to Moher Tower and a much quieter stretch of the coastal footpath.

The tower itself is not exactly fenced off, and is the ruin of a Napoleonic War-era fortification used as a lookout post. But mainly you're here for the views from the footpath of the cliffs, which reminded me very much of those you'd see along the coasts of the islands in Orkney of Mainland and Westray, which I guess were created in a similar manner.

Just off the coast of Moher are the Aran Islands. These were high on AnneLaure's 'hit list'. There's three of them - from biggest to smallest they are Inis Mor, Inis Meain, and Inis Oirr (Inisheer); we only had the time for a day trip so we took a ferry from Doolin, a short car ride from where we were staying in Kilfenora, to the largest island of Inis Mor. The trip took about 45 minutes each way, past the other two islands at a distance, and we even saw a couple of dolphins en route there. On the way back we also had a good view of the Cliffs of Moher from below.

There's quite a lot to see on the islands, and AnneLaure decided to take a bus tour so she could get to explore it more fully (this seemed to involve an awful lot of waiting around for things to happen) - I did a loop walking on my own along the country lanes. My journey there was quite busy, with lots of cyclists and the occasional pony&trap overtaking me (you're not allowed to take your car onto the islands so the only vehicles on there are entirely local), while my walk back was on an inland route where I saw literally two people in the space of an hour and a half, which for a small island full of tourists, is quite an impressive achievement.

There were two specific points I passed; one was a bay where one can stand on higher ground, look out over the water, and see lots of seals. Or at least most people can. I ... apparently there were seals there but to me it just looked like a load of rock slabs and some water. The road is quite a way from the sea at this point and my observational skills are ... lacking. I do know what a seal looks like though. It's not like I'm looking for some random bird or sea creature.

The other spot on the island is Dun Aengus, a large prehistoric hill fort on the west of the island. It's largely reconstructed, or at least its framework has been, with low-built stone wall so you can easily tell how it would have been back in the day. It's situated at the top of a small hill, and right next to a huge cliff edge where there is no protection whatsoever from the drop. People were taking pics very close to it; I ... chose not to.

Another part of western Ireland with hilly coastal scenery is County Kerry. I know 'The Ring Of Kerry' is justifiably famous, but we didn't do that bit. We went one peninsula north, which to be fair still involved narrow country lanes with mountain and sea views (including the Conor Pass, which was pretty hairy and narrow for cars but I'd imagine absolutely glorious for motorbikes). Mainly, it must be said, because, well, I first went to Ireland in 1989 on a holiday with my uncle, mother, and step-dad, and we had a week (I think) in the Kerry town of Dingle. And on this road trip, I guess I just wanted to go back to Dingle and appreciate it more because at the age of 14, I was maybe not the right sort of age to care what I was looking at. And, as it turned out, I had absolutely no recollection of the town when I went back, so either my memory is pants or past me has blocked a lot of things out of their mind.

One of the things I do recall from my previous visit was all fuss about Fungie. Now, Fungie was, and I assume that's the right word, a dolphin who first appeared in Dingle harbour in the early 80s, and became very much a tourist attraction in his own right, because how many places have a large friendly dolphin as a regular visitor. A whole industry was created around him, around trips to see him, and around memorabilia and souvenirs related to him. The harbour even has a small statue of him. He was a regular visitor to Dingle until October 2020. Note that bottlenose dolphins have an average lifespan of 17 years, so while he 'disappeared' and hasn't been since then, you know exactly what probability would suggest.

Anyway. Dingle is somewhere you can book whale-watching tours from. I did not do this. My travel companion Anne-Laure did, and had a wonderful time viewing leaping dolphins and all manner of sea creatures and birdlife. When she wasn't seasick. I took the opportunity to walk along the coast to a folly tower and a dead lighthouse. Saw the same scenery,. Didn't get seasick. Went to the pub. Saved €50. I'd say I got the better deal. LOL.

Dingle itself is one example of something I'll talk about in the summary, suffice to say it's what you might call an Instagrammer's dream. It's also where we had The Most Expensive Meal on the trip, almost €100 for two people, but if you're in a fishing town, it makes sense to metaphorically push the boat out and get some decent fresh seafood to eat. On our way back to our B&B we also saw sunset at Inch Beach; I mean we didn't intend to see sunset there but we loitered so long in Dingle that by the time we passed it it was heading towards dusk. Inch Beach is huge, about 6km in total length, and the sea at low tide is quite far out, meaning it's a good place to wander.

The southwestern part of Ireland is littered with fjords and peninsulas, and the one north of the one Dingle's on ends in the village of Fenit, This also has a beach, but its main notability is for a large harbour that, unlike that at places like Dingle which cater primarily for local fishing boats and tourist traffic, is a trade harbour and, it appears, an official entry point into the country (at least for shipping traffic). There's a long pier connecting the village to the harbour, and then much the harbour is blocked off, accessible only to official traffic. Beyond and alongside the harbour is a small pathway that goes to a small mound, atop which is a huge statue (we're talking more than life-size) of 5th Century apostle Saint Brendan The Navigator, who was allegedly born in the vicinity of Fenit. He's most notable for a large sea voyage where he discovered (and celebrated Mass on) St Brendan's Isle, a mythical island somewhere in the North Atlantic, allegedly somewhere near the coast of northern Africa, kind of near the Canary Islands. Spoiler: it doesn't exist. I mean, it could have been Madeira, but who knows. Some believe he reached North America, which is one of those theories that's best described as 'certainly possible, but unlikely'. Anyway. He did something and went somewhere and is noted for it. Ahhh if only he was a travel blogger.

The other notable scenery was also in the west of Ireland - apart from hills like Tara, much of the centre and east of the country is very flat farming country. It's definitely why cows are such a big part of the agricultural scene here, and one of the two reasons why Irish butter is really common in the UK (the other being the weather. "The grass is always greener", yeh, because they get the rain first. The Gulf Stream is what stops the British Islands being as cold as Newfoundland & Labrador, but obviously all those clouds travelling across the ocean from Mexico have picked up a lot of water along the way ...).

Anyway, Connemara. This is an area in County Galway to the north of Galway town, and was one of AnneLaure's 'must visits'; to be honest I can understand why. With its mountains, its lochs, its country lanes, its vast open wile scenery, it felt a world away from the flat farmlands of the east, almost like a different country.

It reminded me quite a bit of Scotland, in fact, and with good reason. The area (and some of it is a National Park, although only 20km² of it) is largely made up of peat bog and heathland, like much of north-central Scotland (Rannoch Moor and that area). There's lots of water here, little in the way of active farmland. It'd be a great place for birdwatching and mountain hiking though.

AnneLaure's knowledge of it was from a song in France by Michel Sardou in the early 80s called 'Les Lacs du Connemara', which she proceeded to sing to me at regular intervals as we drove through it.

{section separation jingle}

{V: "pale pubescent beasts roam through the streets, and coffee shops. Their prey gather in herds, in still knee-length skirts and white ankle socks"}

I would talk about Dublin but honestly, that would probably require a separate pod. This one's long enough already. I might do something in the upcoming week for my Patreon subscribers. Keep a look out in your inbox.

Some of what we did on the trip was ephemeral, interesting in passing, and oh my, I came up with many observations of things I found interesting and unusual, so here we go,

As mentioned earlier, one of the places we stayed in was the small village of Kilfenora, in County Clare. What I didn't realise until I was there was that not only was it one of the best bases from which to explore The Burren, but it was also the centre of filming for a certain 1990s Irish sitcom. Regardless of how you feel about one of the creators, it can't be argued that Father Ted is one of the greatest (and most bizarre) TV comedies ever made. Much of the village was used for outdoor shots, including the pub that we ate in one evening, and the parochial home itself is a few km along a country lane nearby. It's privately owned, but I'm sure lots of people wander past and take pictures from the road. Like I did. Obviously.

On our way back from Knock to Dublin, I made sure we passed by a small field in County Roscommon, near Athlone. Now, I'd been in this area before; back in 1992 I had a penpal from exactly this part of Ireland, even down to the same township (the delightfully-named 'Curry'), and I visited her once, but again I had no recollection of the surroundings in practice. I mean, it was thirty years ago, and we didn't stay penpals long after meeting - I had that effect on people at the time, in truth. But this time my visit here was for a very different reason. One of the podcasts I listen to, called 'Sounds Fake But Okay', I occasionally sample it on my pod in fact, which they haven't yet complained about, they're a podcast hosted by two 20-somethings from the USA

and they talk about asexuality and pop-culture in ways I only vaguely profess to understanding, anyway, with the proceeds of their Patreon they bought a square foot of Ireland through a company called Buy Ireland. Basically, that company owns a field in County Roscommon and has taken to selling off little bits of it to people who want the craic of being landowners. Kind of like the old 'buy a star and name it after yourself' thing in the 1980s, and similar to NFTs, except the place actually exists. The podcast 'Sounds Fake But Okay' bought it on a whim and designated it The Asexual Capital Of The World. For the record, it's a big overgrown field, with no boundaries or markings so, you know, it's not like it's sectioned off or anything and there's no guarantee that they haven't oversold the area anyway, but it's a cool principle as long as you don't take it in any way seriously. And of course I didn't, but went anyway, because how could I not?!

So, general observations about my trip.

Firstly, I have issues with the roads. As the navigator, that affected me personally and intensely. So, road signs aren't always obvious and road junctions aren't always signed. Especially in the countryside but even on the R roads. An R road is a 'regional' road, the third class of road after motorways and national roads, so kind of the equivalent of big-numbered 'A'-roads or decent-quality 'B'-roads in the UK. Note that the roads in Ireland need a bit of work. Those R roads especially could do with a bit of resurfacing and flattening. There's even an advert for a car on the radio that says their suspension is so good they can even record a car advert for the radio on a country road in Ireland. The classification below 'R' is 'L', for 'Local Road'. These are very often unsigned, narrow, and require good map-reading skills. Anyway, junctions are often unsignposted, and in some places much less obvious than the map would have you believe. In addition, it's rather more common than you might hope that you have to 'turn off to stay on', or TOTSO, as the somewhat geeky UK road website 'sabre' calls it - the situation where to stay on. The named and signed road, you physically have to turn off at a junction rather than continuing in a straight line on the same road. This caught us out several times.

Having said which, that we had a car in the first place was a good call. In the very initial phase of planning, we did wonder whether we could do this by public transport, but I was insistent that we go by car, even though that would put more pressure on AnneLaure. My reasoning was that Ireland's public transport network wasn't that great, and would we really want to be carting bags around with us all the time - while I'm a backpacker of extreme renown, AnneLaure isn't. And with hindsight, having car access, although expensive, was quite a godsend. I'm not saying public transport doesn't exist in Ireland, of course it does, it's just that though buses and even trains do go to most of the places we visited and stayed, their frequency is low, so we'd have been limited in terms of time and logistics.

Another advantage of having the car too is that we could overnight in country B&Bs in small villages rather than be stuck to larger towns where hotels seemed to be more expensive. We had the flexibility to explore - this was especially true on the Saturday night when we ended up in Knock; I was able to look in a much wider area because I knew we could drive there. I mean I don't even think we could have got into Commemara by public transport effectively anyway, so there's that.

I've not spoken much about food. There's a reason for that. We seemed to eat at a lot of pubs. Because that's what Ireland is. Beer and pizza was the bulk of our sustenance, This included several brewery taps, in Killarney (Killarney Brewing Company), Dingle (Dick Mack's), Limerick (Treaty City Brewery), and Dublin (The Porterhouse Brew Co), as well as a nice selection of local beers from Irish breweries en route (eg Galway Bay, Bru Brewery, West Kerry Brewery). Yes I also had a Guinness. It was okay. We never made it to the Guinness brewery in Dublin. That's for another trip. We did have a large and expensive seafood restaurant meal in Dingle, and on our last night in Dublin we went to a Mongolian Barbecue restaurant (so mid-2000s). In addition, it must be said that one of the things on AnneLaure's hit list was 'I must have a Full Irish Breakfast'. Yeh, we had a few of those lol.

As an aside, I did notice Ireland seems to be lacking in sausage rolls, pork pies, and, for the most part, pasties. They need Greggs, they really do.

Also from a financial point of view, last minute travel in Summer in Ireland isn't exactly recommended - very few B&Bs available. In general though, Dublin seems to be almost impossible anyway - almost nothing in the entire city is even on the market, never mind at a good price. Even hotels in satellite towns were going for €350/night. And not just because of GAA and Hurling. At least getting back to Glasgow was cheap and convenient.

Ireland in general is full of towns with colourful buildings. It's not just the small villages and tourist towns either. The high street of Dingle is, as I've inferred, an Instagrammer's dream due to the pastel shades of the pretty

houses along the quiet backstreets, but equally somewhere like Kilkenny and even parts of Limerick and Galway were lined with houses in pinks, blues, greens, there's little uniformity and seemingly no planning legislation diktat. It almost feels you can have a house any way you like, any colour you like. It's lovely.

Speaking of colours, as previously mentioned our trip coincided with the last stages of both the Hurling and the Gaelic Football All-Ireland Championships, and since our trip went through most of the counties involved (Kilkenny and Limerick reached the final of the Hurling, Kerry and Galway reached the final of the Football), we were constantly surrounded by expressions of support. It wasn't just flags, which were seen flying not just from passing cars but also from the sides of buildings; both houses and businesses en route; but also on small billboards on the side of the road, where local businesses and even politicians had erected signs professing their support. Even schools were in on it; one near Limerick was a Primary School saying 'good luck to our alumnus', who may not have even played that much while he was there some 15 years ago.

On a personal level, I did notice a more-than-you-might-expect number of women wearing clothes with a daisy theme. This might be where I need to go shopping in the future. Indeed I bought a new hat from a market stall in Galway; purple with daisies. It was only €5.

{end pod jingle}

Well that's about all for this episode. Tune in next time as we once again go Beyond The Brochure, although Ireland is very definitely *in* many of the brochures, it must be said. Anyway, until then, in the words of Irish Comedian Dave Allen, 'May Your God Go With You', and if you're feeling off-colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro theme tune, same as intro, just a different bit of it}

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure was written, presented, edited, and produced in the Glasgow studio by The Barefoot Backpacker. Music in this episode was "Walking Barefoot On Grass (Bonus)" by Kai Engel, which is available via the Free Music Archive, and used under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}