

2011 - IRELAND

29 May 2011



Donegal

What's the difference between Iceland and Ireland? One letter!!

IRELAND

When we turn on the radio, switch on the TV to watch sport or the news, or try to read the (road) signs we know we are in Ireland. We knew about Irish Football but have never seen Hurling (till today on TV) - a curious cross between hockey (use of a long stick), tennis (the stick has a bat on the end), football (same field and goals), rugby (tall goal sticks and tackling), and baseball (similar ball). The Irish language is totally incomprehensible. The Irish must have better tongue manipulation than us.



Today we learned about Irish "travelers" - firstly from a farmer in a local pub and then incidentally, from a TV program. This genetically distinct group of people, as the name suggests, move from place to place. They don't have a normal home. According to the TV program, genetics has proven that they are not related to the Gypsies. Trespass laws are now making their life very difficult.

OLD CAR

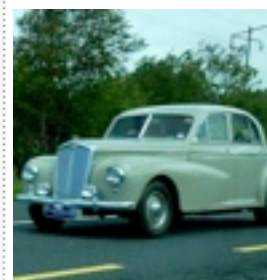
My father's first car was a 1948 Wolseley 6/80. It was used as a police pursuit car in England. A special car in my memory - wood grain, speed and comfort. I had to double take when we passed one today.



Windy conditions on the coast



Donegal Abbey ruins



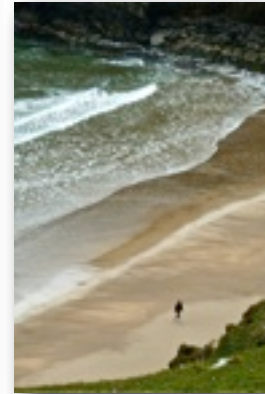
Ubiquitous Wolseley 6/80

Yesterday we asked our B&B host about historical places we should go and see in Londonderry. She shrugged her shoulders and said - there aren't many - "they've all been blown up!!"





Killybegs harbour fishing fleet



Cold windy beach

DONEGAL

We decided to drive quickly from Rathmullen to Donegal Town so we took to the highways. The green countryside zoomed past quickly and was not much different to other rural areas. We were keen to see the dramatic headlands of the coastline around Donegal Bay.

We arrived in Donegal and rode our bikes around the centre of the town and admired its main attraction from afar - Donegal Castle. We read about its tortuous history but decided not to take the tour inside. At Killybeg we drove around the harbor to admire the large fishing fleet - there was no security evident because we could walk right up to the sides of the ships themselves.

Next it was the Slieve League where evidently the cliffs rise up 600 meters from the sea. Unfortunately no roads parallel the cliffs and we could not find any tourist boats that were available to take us out. Instead we ended up at Malin More, which was almost as impressive. The wind gusts were so strong it was difficult to open the door of

the car but the vistas were fantastic. We took lots of photos despite the bad weather.

We cut our tour short today and returned closer to civilization to ensure that we ended up in a B&B that could guarantee internet access. We have to transfer some funds for my mum for the purchase of a new apartment. It is now nearly midnight and we are still waiting for the necessary info from the solicitor.

We spent an enjoyable evening mixing with locals in a neighboring pub and then watched the antics of a couple of foals in the paddock outside our window. In the morning we intend to explore the McSwyne Castle ruins we can see nearby.



St Patrick is reputed to have spent 40 days praying at Lough Derg (30kms from Donegal) to rid Ireland of evil spirits. Not sure if he succeeded but each year between June and August thousands of pilgrims descend on the island where St Patrick is supposed to have spent his time.



McSwyne's Castle



Our B&B for the night

