

# 2011 - IRELAND

2 June 2011



## County Wexford

The house swap has the great advantage that we have a “home” to go home to each night. The motorhome was similar.

### AROUND WEXFORD

There are many things to see within an hour's drive of our cottage in Morriscastle. After a well deserved morning lie-in (we are on holidays after all) we decided to head south today to do some bird watching, visit Wexford Town, walk around a ruined abbey and enjoy the sunshine at a couple of seaside villages.

### WEXFORD WILDFOWL RESERVE

We've spent time during our trip at a number of bird sanctuaries. The Wexford Slobs, (derived from the Irish word for mud), are famous for their reclaimed low lying land that is home to two-thirds of the world's white fronted geese (10,000), plus an enormous number of Arctic Canadian brent geese. Although the numbers were small, we watched fascinated as the geese, wildfowl and other waterbirds rustled around, swam on the water and fed on the swampy land.

### KILMORE QUAY

We drove through Wexford and decided to come back later in the day to explore. We were hoping to catch a boat to the Saltee Islands (clearly visible from the shore) that are the largest sea bird sanctuary in Ireland. Particularly interesting to us were puffins which we have been trying to get a glimpse of in particular locations in both Scotland and Ireland. Unfortunately tours only run when there are large tour numbers which is usually during the height of the holiday season. So instead we spent time reading the interesting inscriptions at the Maritime Monument, and then rode our bikes around the main street with its numerous



*Kilmore Quay is a typical fishing village. The community have erected a monument commemorating those that have perished in Irish waters - in war, peace, accidents and, of course, whilst fishing.*



*A new thatched house in Kilmore Quay - the same design sits near it with no thatch - it doesn't look nearly as good*



*Rope remnants everywhere on Kilmore Quay beach*

thatched houses. The drive to the next peninsula, Hook, was described as a "scenic coastal drive". It probably was, but because of our low position in the car, and the consistently high vegetation on the road sides, we only caught occasional glimpses of the scenery. What we did see of the countryside was generally fairly uninspiring. It is farming country, pretty much the same as you would see in Australia. Maybe we have just seen too many paddocks! We then came upon Tintern Abbey.

We did not realise that this 13th century abbey included a vast estate. We spent time admiring the main building which was lived in till around 1980's. The majority of the abbey is in ruins and the rest of the estate was in need of major maintenance but despite weed infestation and dilapidated outbuildings we could still get an idea of how grand the place must have looked in its heyday. Its setting on an estuary was a real feature.

**WEXFORD TOWN**

It was late afternoon when we parked on the foreshore and took a walk into the centre of the city. There is a small gauge railway line between the foreshore and the main street. This is probably courtesy of its past as a busy port. Wexford was a very successful port in Viking times ("harbor of mud flats") and more so later, in Norman

times. Some of its illustrious past still remains - remnants of the original wall and the very narrow "paths" which come in at right angles to the port road. We walked up one of these streets (barely a meter wide and so playing havoc with car access) and in a complete surprise we came upon the main street, one block in from the port, again very narrow with many quality boutique shops. There are some interesting monuments around the city. Almost 80% of the population of the town were slaughtered during Cromwell's incursion into Ireland in 1650 and the key protagonists who led the 1798 Irish Rising were hanged in full view of the population on the Wexford Bridge. We are very interested in this history. It really shows us how long the Irish have been fighting the English.

*One of the advantages of living in Ireland - Nora told us that if we get bored we can take a trip by the local Ryan Air to anywhere in Europe for sometimes as low as \$1.*





Tintern Abbey



Wexford's main street with its tourist shops

