

2011 - IRELAND

13 June 2011



Kildare County

We did not realise that Ireland, like Switzerland, remained neutral during World War II.

CAPTURING THE SUN

We are intrigued by conservatory rooms. Unlike Australia they are a common sight here in Ireland (and UK). Their design is similar and they always look like they have been added on to a house rather than being integrated into it. Pauric and Nora's "sun room" is like all the others - semi circular in design with full length main windows/doors, little upper windows that can be opened, and an opaque roof. Just a few rays of sunshine, even on a cold day, and the results are surprising. The warmth hits you full on as soon as you walk into the room. Conservatories seem to be a godsend in cold climates - especially for clothes drying.

TOWN NAMES

Over the course of our trip we have come across many unusual place names. Today, as we drove to the grand canal, rather than spending the day in Dublin, we came across - Porterstown, Johnstown, Mylerstown, Germanstown, Halverstown, Richardstown, Newtown, Painstown, Staplestown, Hodgestown, Goatstown, Milltown, Friarstown. Very inventive are the Irish. Reminds me of the name of the village near Makow in Poland- Nowaki (or Nowakstown).



Conservatory (sun room)



Estate house 1, Ditto 2, Ditto 3, Ditto 4 etc



Chef extraordinaire



Typical bridge over Grand Canal





Bip and Bop working hard for Irish Water



We have had many comments about our "silly little bikes"



THE GRAND CANAL

We wanted to get in some exercise today and the Grand Canal appeared like a great place to do this. It is not far from Newbridge and the weather looked promising. The canal runs from Dublin to Shannon Harbor (138 kms) and we figured we'd be able to ride for quite some distance along the tow path next to the canal. We parked our car at Robertstown and set out along the well maintained path. We were surprised by the crystal clear water in the canal and the fact that it was flowing quite fast. We then saw a strange sight of two boats, one cutting the weeds and the other removing them from the canal. We also had a long chat to the "master" of one of the locks. He has lived in the area all his life and remembered a time when the canal was used for drinking water. Guinness only stopped sourcing its water from here in the early 1980's. The lock master lives right beside the lock - an idillic location. His job also involves flood mitigation and maintenance of the jetties and mooring facilities.

Our day was going very well until Heather got a puncture. Bugger. We had to limp back to the car, pumping Heather's tyre up every 500 metres till we got there. We then drove around the area visiting many of the lovely villages and historical attractions.

MAYNOOTH

We laughed and laughed as we read the commentary on the walls describing the sordid history of this castle. So many characters with short fuses. So many killings and so many double crosses. The keep was impressive despite it being in ruin. We were very surprised with the vibrancy of the town - a university town full of students in the main street.

We drove on and despite finding that a number of other attractions (eg: Donadea Castle and CastleTown) were closed, we finished the day very satisfied with our last day in Newbridge.

In its heyday the Grand Canal was a hive of commercial activity. Evidence of its glorious past can be seen in the the Grand Hotel in Robertstown which unfortunately is now boarded up. Another feature are the many small stone bridges over the canal.



