

2011 - IRELAND

15 June 2011



St Patrick's Rock

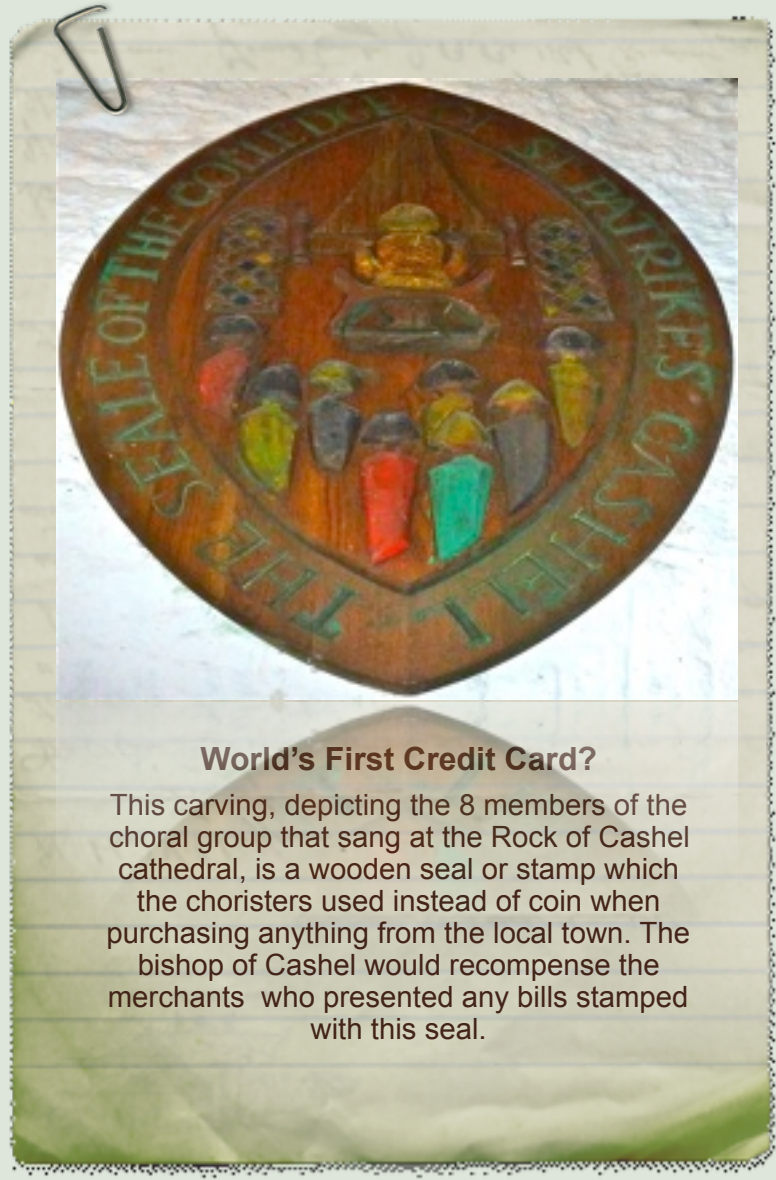
Most people know that the patron saint of Ireland is St Patrick. Few know that St Patrick was Italian!!

ON THE ROAD

We successfully left our overnight caravan park without buying more than one punnet of strawberries. The caravan park was on a fruit farm and, as part of the site fee, we were supplied with a bottle of freshly squeezed apple juice. Heather had an early morning walk around the farm and admired the hydroponic setup.

It's so good to be in a van again. It is now possible to see over many of the hedges to the fields beyond. Or, maybe, just maybe, the hedges have been trimmed here in the south, especially for the tourists like the Nowaks.

The GPS has persisted in chucking wobbles of late. Heather has had to use the road map to navigate. Could it be coincidence that these problems have arisen since Obama's visit? Maybe the FBI have been disrupting the satellite to disrupt would-be troublemakers such as ourselves! We were told that cars were stopped from traveling around Dublin airport when Air Force One was flying overhead.



World's First Credit Card?

This carving, depicting the 8 members of the choral group that sang at the Rock of Cashel cathedral, is a wooden seal or stamp which the choristers used instead of coin when purchasing anything from the local town. The bishop of Cashel would recompense the merchants who presented any bills stamped with this seal.



Cahir Castle viewed from the stoplights



Kinsale

CASHEL

Most countries have rocky outcrops where man have built edifices. The Rock of Cashel is the “big daddy” of them all in Ireland. This monument is recognised all over the world and attracts many thousands of visitors. Today was no exception. Despite the fact that the castle/cathedral is largely shrouded in scaffolding, hordes of visitors were on the site. The first known embattlement was built on this rock in 370 AD - some 80 years before St Patrick began the process of converting the Irish to catholicism. In 1101 the rock, and much of the surrounding lands, were given to the Catholic Church. Our tour guide pointed out many of the historical and architectural aspects of the multitude of religious buildings (and their extensions) that crown the summit. The imposing group of buildings look like they are an extension of the rock itself. Although not the most imposing, but certainly the most archeologically important, is a chapel with the oldest remaining original stone arched roof in Ireland - the one with scaffolding all around because it is decaying, and in danger of falling down.

We were glad to get away from the crowds (more than we have seen on our trip so far) and walked over the

fields for 10 minutes to the nearby ruins of Hore Abbey. This was built by the Benedictine monks in the 13th century. Very imposing, but enjoyably gloomy, with great views up to the Rock of Cashel. A drive through the narrow streets of the village of Cashel completed the morning.

CAHIR

We admired Cahir Castle from the stop lights coming in to town but decided we had had enough of castles for the day so headed south towards Cork.

TOWNS ALONG THE WAY

There is something exhilarating about arriving on the outskirts of a village and without knowing what’s in store, stopping and jumping on the bikes to have a closer peek. Its easy to get lost in some tiny alleyway or back street which suddenly leads on to a main street. It’s only when you look up that you realise how old some of the buildings are. Places like Clonmel and Kinsale were our pick - each with that “old time” feel about them - terrace buildings with paint peeling off yet evidence of earlier grandeur (an old carving or dilapidated sign) and a main street that still retains a certain captivating charm, yet busy with locals going about their daily business.

“The town of Cahir encircles its namesake castle which does not rise to the heights of Rock of Cashel but it does do a good job of looking like every castle you ever tried building at the beach. Towers, a moat, and various battlements hit every fortified cliché you can think of - except it is missing a long-haired blond in the highest window.”

Lonely Planet

Decaying 13th century chapel arched roof



Rock of Cashel



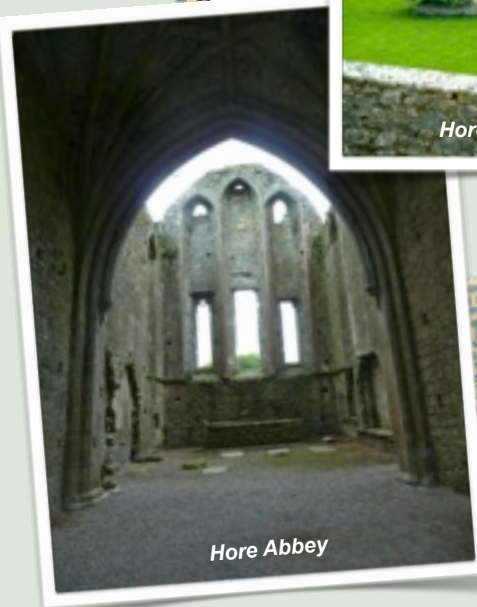
Rock of Cashel



Hore Abbey

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Hore Abbey

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Kinsale Harbour