

2011 - IRELAND

21 June 2011



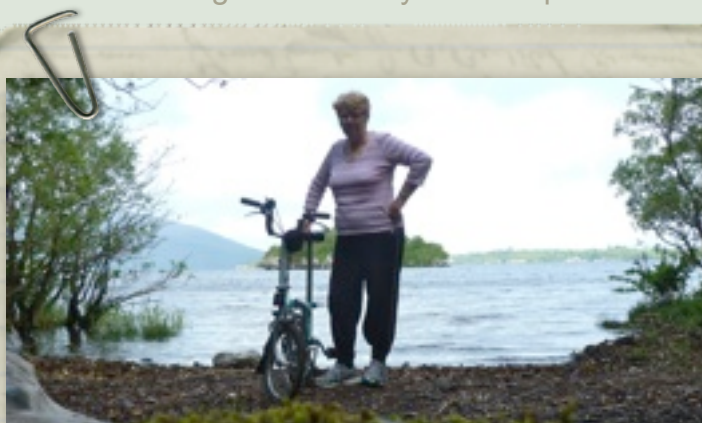
Dingle Peninsula

Almost 25 years ago a dolphin swam into Dingle harbor and stayed. Tour operators soon started to charge to view him swimming. Today 12 boats at a time and 1000 tourists ply the waters viewing the dolphin. He has become the cornerstone of the local economy. But dolphins only live till they are 25 and as the clock continues to tick Dingle's economy will collapse one day.

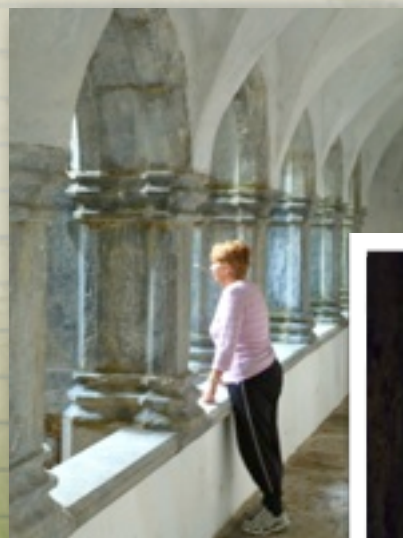
KILLARNEY

We woke reasonably early in Killarney. The weather was overcast and a little drizzly (again) but Heather was desperate for some exercise so we rode the back roads to the Killarney National Forest. The forest is also home to the Muckross Friary and Muckross House and gardens. We visited the Muckross Traditional Farm yesterday. The place is great for walkers and cyclists. The pleasant ride was through beautifully kept gardens. We came across a fallow deer quietly having breakfast. The track is part of the Kerry Way (a walking track) and also doubles as a track for horse drawn vehicles. The jaunting carts, as they are called, ply between Killarney and the national park and also within the park. We rode beside a lake for a bit and then spent time in the friary, parts of which were in remarkably good condition. Needless to say the ruins were again the work of Cromwell - this man has a lot to answer for. We rode around Muckross House, and when we saw the buses start to arrive, headed back to the camp.

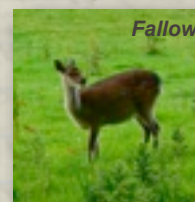
It was then time to proceed on to Dingle - the best of all of Ireland's peninsulas - and to see if the skeptical Nowak's would concur with this assessment.



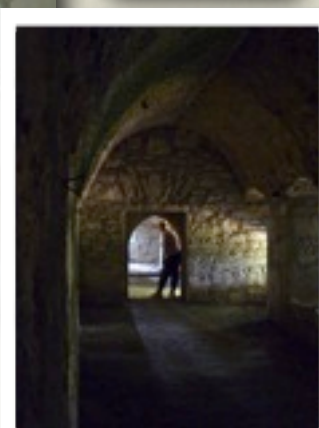
Resting beside the lake



Muckross Friary

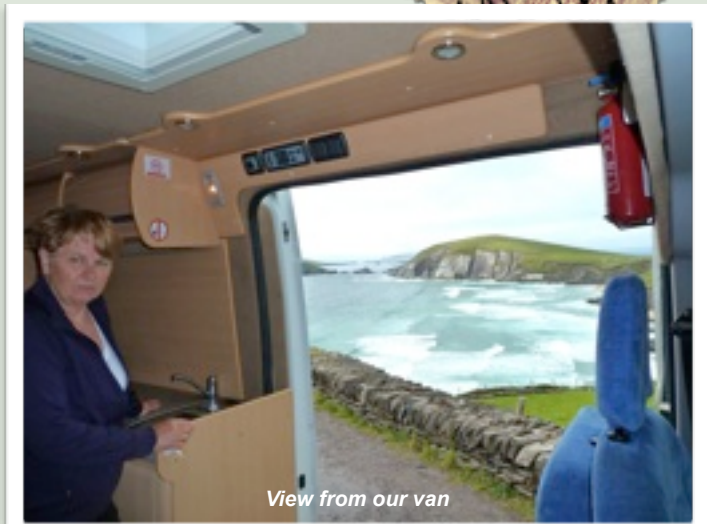


Fallow deer





Muckross House



View from our van

DINGLE

At the head of what is purported to be the most beautiful drive in all of Ireland is Dingle - a port described by the guide books as a town that is "surprisingly cosmopolitan and creative - a place where you will be mobbed in summer but in other seasons it has authentic charms worth savoring." Well! Firstly it was raining which meant that everyone was trying to get inside so you could not move - shops, alleyways, awnings, passageways anything with cover. Secondly, the streets were totally packed with buses and vehicles and rubber necking fellow tourists. Thirdly, all that the centre of town offered was cheap gift shops, multitudes of restaurants and boutique hotels. Yuk. "Creative" is the right word - lots of ways to creatively extract money from the pockets of tourists who come here because of the hype. Heather played her part and

explored every woolen mill outlet she could find, while I stayed outside with the other husbands. We drove on in the rain.

DINGLE PENINSULA

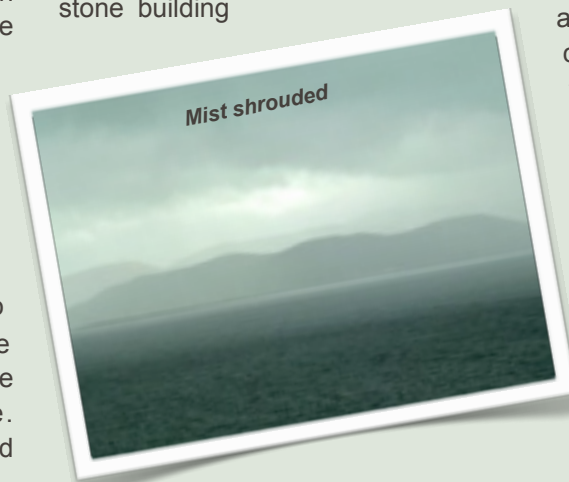
Once again we drove up a nondescript road getting more skeptical as we approached the end. Magnificent scenery? Where? We stopped and visited a ruined ring fort that dated back to 500 BC. This area has the greatest concentration of stone ruins in Ireland. We even saw an old beehive house (a small stone building

shaped like a beehive), being used as a garden shed.

As we reached the end of the peninsula, the road started to hug the shore. The scene was shrouded in mist. We could only make out the outlines of the land. As we drove on the mist slowly started to clear. Absolutely awesome scenery was revealed. Huge fingers of land jutted out to sea - fingers that pointed to islands and fingers that ended abruptly in high cliffs. Whitewater crashed at the bottom of the cliffs.

We rounded the next bend and stopped to brew a cuppa. As we took in the view, the sky cleared, and more and more headlands were revealed.

Tonight we are camped not far from these headlands. Because we have run out of gas, sandwiches are on the menu for tea.





Before



After

