



Kate's Chat

CONNECTING THROUGH THE COCOON



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The world needs the wisdom of our elders more than ever

I am not in the habit of watching the English news. I have managed to limit myself to one 'news' a day at six o'clock on RTE, otherwise I find myself scrolling on the wretched phone in a state of disbelief. The great thing about the over 70s is that nothing seems to surprise you. My mother points out that, at 82, she is unshockable because she's 'seen it all!' For the first time in a long time, the world is finally really waking up to the fact that age, experience and the wisdom it brings are what we all need right now. And who has that? You guys! From a family of Irish Republicans, I never really 'got' the Queen but her visit back in 2011 was a revelation. Dignified, respectful and warm – even people who object to the principal of royalty were impressed with her. Her speech to the people of Britain was concise, full of hope and wisdom and relevant to all of us – the whole world is in the same boat now. I could not help but thinking the reason she was called upon to speak was not just her royal status, but her age. In her 90s, she has amassed the wisdom of generations. She has survived wars, seen goodness knows how many prime-ministers come and go and her own stable marriage has endured all while her family's personal lives being played out in the public eye. That said, her life mirrors the rest of us when it comes to caring for and being cared for by our loved ones – the essence of being part of a community. When it all comes down to it, these are the only things that matter. The Queen ended her speech with the words 'we'll meet again'. And - we will. Keep smiling!

Kate x



Tips for cocooned living

I HATE exercise videos, all that jumping up and down frantically in our living rooms – I can't bear it! Mam said she's been watching RTE's Today Show with Maura and Daithi and says the exercise regime is great – gentle, sensible and keeping her limber. I'm tuning in tomorrow!

Please - send me your tips and messages I love hearing from you. You can write to me the old-fashioned way at Kate Kerrigan, Quay, Killala, Co. Mayo, Ireland or email me at

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A BIG Mayo 'howya!' to Alison, her hubby John and all the residents at Riverdale House Nursing Home. Thanks for your good wishes to me and Mam. Stay safe and keep smiling!

Social dancing

Last night I went out dancing.

And not with my husband.

“Don’t even ask” he said when I pleaded that I was researching a new book about the dancehall scene and wanted somebody to take me dancing.

‘I don’t do dancing,’ he reminded me.

The teen does hip-hop dancing, but he was even less keen. He shot me a look of such impertinent cynicism – ready with a smart remark if I so much breathed a request at him. I left it.

Instead I recruited a willing dance ‘date’ in Patrick Greham, my Mam’s neighbor, lifelong friend and newly keen social dancer. We were chaperoned by my Killala friends and neighbours Theresa and Tony Gilroy, both veteran dancers.

As a non-drinker, my understanding of ‘social dancing’ has always ben waiting for friends to get drunk enough for you to drag them to a disco where they stumble around under a glitter ball between late drinks.

However, I am happy to report, that that is all old hat now, thanks to this largely sober, country music phenomenon.

‘If you pick us up around five,’ Theresa said, ‘we’ll have you home in bed by 10.’

Now *that* is what I call a night out.

The McWilliam Park is a sprawling colossus on the outskirts of Claremorris. From the outside it looks like every other characterless modern hotel that was built in the boom time, now ailing and hoping for enough weddings to save it. But on the inside, it was buzzing with the Sunday night social dance crowd. You can dance here from three in the afternoon until three in the morning for the price of a Sunday dinner. It is in the tradition of the ‘entertainment hotels’ that sprung up in Ireland during the 1960s. Now, this large hotel accommodates a thriving Mayo show band scene. Crowds gather here every weekend to listen to Irish country stars like Gerry Guthrie and Mike Denver. Gerry was on tonight and as he’s a local Ballina boy, I wanted to see him. However, he wasn’t due on stage until after nine, by which time I hoped to be within reaching distance of my Horlicks. Theresa took the lead, marching us through the lobby to a lady selling tickets on the door of the main reception room. We paid €8 and walked into a large banqueting suite, set

out with tables around a large dance floor with a small bar at one end. The Blue Ridge County Band were on stage singing a waltz; ‘*At a dance in Ballindine, she promised she’d me mine.*’ The bar was busy, but the dance floor was packed. Everyone was smiling and laughing and having a brilliant time and it was only 5.30 on a Sunday evening! It was like walking into the best bit of a wedding. Except we didn’t have to sit through a two-hour mass and eat an average hotel meal with people we barely knew first. Even the style was comparable - the women mostly wore dresses (no fascinators, mercifully) and the men were largely smart in pressed slacks and ‘good’ jumpers. Patrick took me up for a quickstep, sensibly leading me around the edges of the dance floor so I wouldn’t trod on anybody else’s feet apart from his. I watched the other dancers. Apart from a couple of notable Strictly Come Dancing wannabes, (hands placed carefully on the shoulder, pinkies raised, probably blow-in English), most of the crowd seemed to be just dancing for the sheer joy of it. Theresa and Tony put us youngsters to shame with their speedy turns and fancy footwork and so I sat back down and watched them. It was beautiful just watching this long-time married couple dance together. The endless flow of movement, instructions sent through the tiniest flick of Tony’s finger; they were completely in time and in tune with one another.

Patrick went up to the bar to get me a nice cup of tea and while I was on my own I had an unexpected flashback. It was 1981 and I was on holiday in Longford. My Auntie Angie took me to dance in the Dolphin and some ‘auld farmer (he was probably only thirty) asked me up. I was petrified. I had no idea how to dance and was afraid of making a fool of myself. I think I got up although, now, I can’t remember the dance itself, only the fear I had when asked. How gorgeous I was back then and I didn’t even know it. When I was young, things I couldn’t do made me nervous. Now, I just want to get stuck in and learn everything before I run out of time. When Theresa sat down for a breather I dragged Tony straight back up for a jive. I was terrible. He wasn’t happy and I think I may have badly bruised his big toe.

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