

W E E K S I X M A Y 2 0 2 0



Kate's Chat

CONNECTING THROUGH THE COCOON



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We can all adapt our lives rather than stop living

A neighbour of a good friend of mine in Dublin is a man in his eighties who is cocooning from the virus. She's been keeping an eye on him out her window and for days she watched him as he brought out his push lawnmower and mysteriously began to cut one corner of his garden. When the patch was cut, she saw him bend down and walk around poking into the ground. What on earth was he doing? Not gardening. The next day dawned and Mr. Dunphy strode out onto his homemade golf course with his bag of golf clubs in tow, bobble hat and quilted jacket on. He sliced through the air and in the corner of his garden he recreated the golf course he would frequent. If he couldn't go to the golf course then he would bring it to himself!

A woman is celebrating her 106th birthday safely cocooned in a nursing home in Dublin this week, an amazing feat! May Spain isn't getting to spend her 106th birthday up close with family members this year but everyone in her life is finding different ways to celebrate her special day. While she couldn't see her friends and family in person this year, the kind nurses were able to set her up to video chat her family, and she was able to see more people than usual with grandchildren from far off places joining in!

That's the good news of this week- that life is different now but it hasn't stopped. The Irish are a sturdy bunch and we will all be able to go from daily visits to the golf course to building your own in the garden, and having a birthday party with friends and family to having it all through the joys of technology. And be happy while doing it!

Kate xxx



Tips for cocooned living

Almost all of our favourite hobbies can be adapted to suit cocooning. From bingo across the garden fence to snail mail chess, the options are limitless, and you don't have to take up new hobbies – the classic hobbies are well loved for a reason!

So this week I challenge all my lovely readers to find the silver lining and continue living our lives but with new and innovative ways! I'd love to know how you are making the most of cocooned life.

You can write to me the old-fashioned way at Kate Kerrigan, Quay, Killala, Co. Mayo, Ireland or email me at katekerriganauthor@gmail.com

The Saturday Drive

My successful single working girl friend from Dublin was squeezing me in for a flash-36 hour weekend. I took her on a looking-at-scenery spin. Showing off my quiet scenic life to the city girl, with her sushi bars and art galleries and 'barista' lifestyle. Reminding myself why I lived here. I threw a few sandwiches and a flask into a bag and we headed along the North West Mayo coast.

We drove straight through Ballycastle village and headed along the cliff-lined coast towards the Ceide Fields interpretive centre. The squat, round building advertises the prehistoric fields – the oldest sign of farming in the world. The interpretive centre itself is an impressive piece of modern architecture, compensating somewhat for the fact that the fields themselves are just – well – fields. Beyond them there is a dip in the road and a sharp right turn at an old hunting lodge that had not been used for all my life certainly. For years this uninhabited Victorian-style building on the side of the road on the side of a cliff looked eerily occupied, exuding a solid, confident beauty with its pointy Victorian roof and ornate awnings. Driving past I got a shock because the roof has gone and it looked like skin and bone, just another derelict house. I felt sad because, one of the great things about the scenery on this coastline is that it doesn't change.

Every time I explore the remote corners of this coastline I think about moving even further west. How wonderful to be this far away from everything. Then I remember, I used to feel like that about Killala until I actually moved there. You take life, and all its craziness with you. I have the sea outside the window of my own house, but somehow, I see it without really looking.

Gripping the wheel along a narrow road we took right turns in forks in the road and a trickier-to-spot right turn a few more miles down through the seemingly never-ending barren boggy mountains. Down here is my favourite place in Ireland - possibly the world - Portacloy beach.

I took my significant Dublin boyfriend for a picnic here on his first trip down 'Wesht' over twenty years ago. Now we're married.

Portacloy is a beach in a small cove, flanked on either side by high hills that are not foreboding enough to be called cliffs. It is always deserted with

white powdery sand and smooth, white and grey pebbles at its rim. Dotted in the hills around the beach and looking directly down on it are a scattering of houses, which, for me, just adds to the mystery of the place. I suppose we are not that far from the buzzy town of Belmullet but all the same – this seems like a thoroughly remote place.

The beach looked beautiful with tiny waves simmering in from the Atlantic. We found a corner and, starving after the long drive, opened the flask and sandwiches.

I remembered the last glorious day here. Leo built a sandcastle and I made sausage sandwiches on the camping stove. When was that? Oh God – I realised - the Teen was a small child! Could it be over ten years since I last came to *'my most treasured place in the world'*?

'You are so lucky,' my friend said, 'to have all this on your doorstep.'

I smiled smugly and passed her a sandwich. 'Sorry it's not focaccia,' I said, sarcastically. She smiled back and hungrily dug into the ham on white pan.

Suddenly, I felt bad. Here I was bragging about my life amid the landscapes of North West Mayo, having picnics and walking barefoot on white sand, when this wasn't my life at all. My life is wiping countertops, writing and school runs. It is played out in the car park of Lidl not along the remote beaches of the Wild Atlantic Way.

'Are you jealous?' I asked my friend.

'Desperately,' she said.

'Don't be,' I said, 'I haven't been on this beach for 10 years. I spend every weekend supermarket shopping and cleaning.'

'I have never been to IMMA,' she said. 'I spend all my time at work. Cleaning my kitchen is *actual* recreation.'

We sighed and looked at the sea.

'Well - you're here now.'

I said. 'So are you,' she replied. As much as we would hate to live each others lives, we could also make our own lives better.

Right there and then we made a pledge. She would visit IMMA before the end of the year and I would come back and spend at least one more day of this summer, on this beach. Possibly with each other.