

## Irish Medical Adventures

Back by popular demand: A New Irish Update

This is a great country to be pregnant in. (Apologies to all English teachers past & present for hanging preposition.) It's true though. I get loads of support from all & sundry. My friends here are very protective: my German baker friend even took me grocery shopping last week so I wouldn't have to carry anything! Actually the "Don't lift anything, you're pregnant" thing is starting to get a bit annoying. Luckily I have plenty of chances to lift things while doing housework. Maternity care here in the South is free. It's a bit odd though-- prenatal care here is called antenatal. When I say it, I have the uncomfortable feeling I'm saying "anti-natal!" All the GP visits, hospital admissions, even immunizations after birth are all free. Not to mention the parking spots by the stores reserved for mums with babies.

And then, they pay you for having kids! It's not a big stipend, but it's there. In the North, you even get free dental care while you're pregnant. And did I mention the dairy products? Mmmm.

I had a dentist adventure on Wednesday. I knew where Anne Street was, and number 6 seemed relatively uncomplicated to find. However, when I arrived, #6 was clearly a residential address. The toddler and dad watching telly looked at me strangely when I came in the gate. I hurried out again. I walked up & down a little, and then decided to try a nearby sweets shop. I walked in and there was a girl of about ten at the counter and a tiny older lady behind it. I waited, but then the girl said, "You might as well go ahead. I haven't decided what I want yet." I asked about Dr. O'Sullivan, and the lady, without hesitation said, "Yes, you want to go up to the church. Do you know where that is?" The girl was staring at me because of my accent by this time. I said yes, but that the number 6 was down by her shop. The lady replied, "Oh sure, but the numbers start up again 1-2-3 at the top of the street by the church.

You'll find it up there, with a golden plaque on the wall outside." And the girl helpfully added, "There's a cream coloured door and two doors down you'll find his door." Well prepared, I set forth again and found the office right away. After my visit, I saw the girl in the doorway of the cream coloured door, munching on a bag of sweets. I waved & she smiled back at me.

On Thursday, I met my new GP, Dr. Sinead O'Brien. When I made the appointment, I was told to go to the Ice House Hill area, look for the Hines market, and there was a "wee white cottage" which was the surgery (doctor's office.) Just in case, I looked up the address, #1 Demesne Road. Thursday came, I hied myself to Ice House Hill, and drove around looking for #1 or Demesne Road. Neither was forthcoming. I did find a #1 Park Villa, but it was most definitely not a wee white cottage. The only market near Ice House Hill was Tony's, so once again, I popped in, hoping for the same kind of luck I had in the sweets shop. Sure enough, the owner directed me up the street a few doors, to the "white bungalow next to the alley." It wasn't #1 or Demesne Rd, but I saw the sign for the doctor in the window. I had a great appointment and am very happy with Dr. O'Brien. However, she had some trouble hearing the baby's heartbeat. She was very determined and spent about 25 minutes looking

for it, but with only minimal results. She told me I could go into hospital if I wanted reassurance and wrote me a letter. When Dan got home, we went to Drogheda to hospital. The first nurse we saw was a very worried person and didn't help much. She mentioned things like needing to be admitted overnight, etc. The midwife, Fiona, was much better. When she bustled in with a big smile, Dan and I felt immediately better. As she briskly took my blood pressure and found the heartbeat in about 1 minute, we stared at her trying to place her. In the car on the way back we finally figured it out: Fiona was exactly like the funny housekeeper in Father Ted, only much younger. We could just hear her saying, "You will, you will, you will, you will, you will!"

Now, this message has gone on longer than I thought, so I'm going to consolidate the rest of it. I heard that these messages of mine go on & on & on and don't want to bore anyone!

So, to sum up: cats love to watch snowing & hailing (plagues of locusts would not be more interesting to them,) there are cute little lambs with black faces in the fields these days, we attended magnificent all-honey dinner for the Slow Food Movement, St. Patrick's is a proper no school/work holiday here--apparently Irish have patriotic duty to get legless today, but we are staying in and Dan is making garlic soup. If you want more info, I'd be happy to flesh out any of those for you.:)

Happy Spring Break to Lawrence Uni folks!

Heather