

## Happy Thanksgiving

Many of you will be looking forward to the shortened work week--maybe a bit of Tuesday off, all of Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then of course, the weekend. Since Ireland doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving, there's no rest for the weary this week, and we will be celebrating on Saturday so the relatives (14-22?) can come. The tantalizing promise of an organic turkey has fallen through: the farmer who supplies the butcher will not be taking them to slaughter until just before Christmas (when proper Irishmen & women have their turkey.) We quickly ordered another from the big chain butchers, McArdles. However, the real question in my mind, is what to do for entertainment, especially after the big feast? Of course, in the States, Thanksgiving is almost synonymous with some football game or other. I wonder...

We had a trial Thanksgiving this past weekend, when we had our American neighbors over for dinner. We tucked away any alcohol bottles (they're Baptist) and reviewed the fruit juice lineup in the fridge. We had a little chicken (organic--no problem with butchering chickens, apparently) veg, potatos, spinach, and deadly chocolate pudding for dessert. Everything went swimmingly--our friends arrived with their two adorable children in tow, Peter, 9 and Grace, 7, hair combed & slicked down and best manners firmly attached. All the food behaved, though the oven was running 50 degrees hot, and we really enjoyed the conversation. Peter was sniffing a little throughout the meal from a possible cat allergy, though the cats were under the beds upstairs, but I suspected something was amiss when Grace barely touched her pudding. She wanted to go find the cats, so we went upstairs and she actually managed to coax Malkin out to play. When we came back down, though, Grace was looking very subdued and began to hang on her mother. In a second, things took a turn for the worse. Mom asked, "Are you going to throw up?" and to my horror, Grace nodded. She made it into the hallway, but not quite to the bathroom. Ugh. Dan was so helpful and cleaned up, but as you can imagine, this put a bit of a damper on the evening. Mom and Dad said Grace has a delicate stomach and that she'd be fine, but I couldn't help washing everything they'd touched and disinfecting surfaces after they'd left, just to make sure. That's the first time a dinner I've made has ended up with someone being sick! As a cook, it makes you very nervous.

Yoga is going fine. It's still a little too easy for me. We haven't even got to one single downward dog yet, though I did learn what it's called over here: dog head down! It'll be amusing to try to re-program my brain to think that way. I also hear a funny exchange between these two little old ladies who come to classes together. One was talking to the other, in earshot of the instructor, about how she's having trouble mastering the breathing. The instructor, overhearing, said encouragingly, "It'll come, don't worry too much about it." The lady said, "Well, it's just the breathing all the way down to your toes. I just can't seem to work it." The instructor, without missing a beat, replied seriously, "It's just visualisation, really." And the lady's friend echoed, "Ah, just visualisation, see?" I had a momentary visualisation of my own just then, imagining the lady trying to actually inflate her lungs down to her toes, and choked off the chuckle that was rising.

I will be going into town later today to finally end the saga of the awful English car insurance. They have been just pestering our friends in Wales, which I hope has stopped already now I've cancelled it. They won't refund our money until we send back the temporary certificate (which expired on 31st Oct anyway.) We have received phone confirmation of our Irish insurance, which we are SO EXCITED to have. Just after I wrote last week's update, we took the car in for the NCT. We had to wait for the office to open after the lunch break --though our appointment was for 1:40, it took til 2 to open. They put our poor little car through its paces as we watched through the window. We shuddered when the revving of the engine sounded just a wee bit like a lawnmower and tensed as they lifted it up to check the underside. We expected the fail notice, but when they took us outside, almost laughed in relief to see the large chalk circle on our tire where they'd circled a gash in the tire wall we'd somehow missed! So, we replaced two more tires and then rang the agency back to see if we could get it in that day, as Dan had taken off work to get it sorted. The lady said the center had closed for the day and the next time she could get us in was

two weeks later! I whispered to Dan that I'd seen the hours on the test center and they didn't close til 5. So, we tore back to the test center and managed to sweet-talk the lads into taking us at 4:30 when the 4:20 appt. didn't show. The fact that we had to pay again was almost a pleasure as we were handed our pass certificate and disc for the window. I sent off for the insurance next day, and they rang the following day to tell us we were insured.

Mail is very odd here. It takes days for anything to get to us, but whenever we send anything to anyone in Ireland, it gets there the next day. I think our address must be too new. Our estate was built only about 4 years ago. We live at 23 Rockfield Court, which is off of Hoeys Lane, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland. The mistakes that have actually gotten to us are hilarious. I mentioned the County LANE one, but we just received post addressed to 80 EYS Lane instead of Hoeys. You can just hear it: "H O" must have sounded like "8 O." We've also received some to "Houis" Lane. And the mail can come any time here. I have received both morning and afternoon post on some days. This morning, I was woken by the doorbell at 8:45 am. I know, I know, but hey, there has to be some advantage to staying home alone! Anyway, I realized it was probably a belated package (thanks, Aunt Bethy! letter to follow...) and jumped into my robe and down the stairs. The postman looked only mildly embarrassed and asked me to sign for it. I rallied enough to make the obligatory comment about the weather--cold, with frost everywhere--and he noted unhappily it was indeed freezing. Poor Dan's present hasn't come yet. We think it might've been sent by slow boat from New York by accident. I still don't know what it is and the anticipation is killing me! We don't seem to have post on Saturdays and of course none on Sundays, and they don't pick up mail at your house. I tried to put out a letter once, and the lad on bicycle (no uniform) who delivers our regular mail, looked at it in puzzlement and said, "I'll just drop it in town, shall I?" That was the end of that. So, off to town later today to post a letter. It seems a long way to walk just for that! The library isn't even open on a Monday.

Our library, or leabharlann, here is really cute. It's a beautiful stone building, renovated probably from a warehouse or barn, with a glass extension on the back to let in light. I'd like also to say it's well-endowed, but I'm not sure I can stretch the truth that far. No doubt it has some books you can't find in the States, but if so, they are probably all in the Irish section. The librarians are nice, but have a curious lack of interest in organization or locating materials for people. The books are organized in sections, but for example, the sci/fi fantasy section contains a mishmash of both genres with Anne McCaffrey and Piers Anthony next to each other. And good luck finding the next book in a series! Last week, I tried to find an Agatha Christie audio book (other than Murder on the Orient Express which I own) and found only Orient between an author beginning with "K" and another beginning with "W." I inquired at the desk, only to have the librarian ask me which title I required. I explained ANY would be fine, but she said the system only could tell her that they had 283 titles by Agatha Christie, not which were on audio book. She helpfully said to check back, as she "knew" there were loads, but that they were popular. I stopped myself from asking how I'd find them. I've been tempted more than once to offer my alphabetizing skills on a purely volunteer basis. Instead, I've been poking along doubtfully in the Irish Fiction section, sampling books and authors I've never heard of. I really enjoyed a memoir called Rathcormick, about the author's childhood on a farm in Meath. I currently have out Home Rule, by Clare Boylan, but it's on hold because the latest Gabaldon arrived, finally. I can't recommend this series enough!! The first, Outlander (or Crossstitch in the UK), is wonderful, but this latest was terrific! They are big, historical fiction (with a bit of what Dan calls "Fluff & Lust") books about a woman from the 20th cent who goes back to 18th cent Scotland through standing stones. It spans Bonnie Prince Charlie to the American Rev and Gabaldon's eye for historical detail and humor are unbelievable. They are just hugely enjoyable. Luckily I just finished the latest one, or Thanksgiving wouldn't be planned properly at all. I'm just useless when I'm in the middle of one.

Well, I think I've used up enough of all our time this week! I will try to get pictures of the house sent out soon. I am trying just to send a link, so no one has to download a huge amount and you can avoid them if you wish.:) Until next time, Happy Thanksgiving and may you eat lots of pie...

Love,  
Heather