

Hope your Monday goes smoothly. I will try to write weekly until interesting things stop happening (HAH!) If I missed you in the first mailing and you'd like to read that installment, please write back and I will send it along. I am still trying to fine tune the mailing list.

So, when I left off, Farmer Rocket had just 'hove" into view. We have a weekly farmer's market here, on the courtyard of the library, a renovated gorgeous stone building by the St. Patrick's cathedral in the heart of town. It's a small market and does a few vegies, cheeses, bread, baked goods, honey, apple products (apple & elderflower juice is like fairy wine), and a bit of jewelry. I go every Saturday morning. Last week, they had added a crepe stall and a simmering vat of potato leek soup, with buttered brown bread. Very, very tasty. The crepe man was from "Fhrohnce" and bemoaned the fact that he was out of Grand Marnier and promised to run over to France to get some before the next week! However, this week, he was not in attendance. I struck up a conversation with Frances the Beads (more about titles later...) and she said that the Health inspectors came last week and he had no license to serve food. She noted, with a look of frustration, that the man was just being "French" as it was very easy to apply for a license. I noticed that the soup at the apple stall was gone too, and wondered if they were just being Irish!

There's a local custom with names, not much used anymore, but it amuses me, so I'm keeping it up in these letters. Given names are followed by a description of what the person does or sells. There's a store in town which gave me the idea: Tommy the Bikes. He does, appropriately, sell bikes, as well as outdoor wear and the occassional ticket for a concert. So, the bead seller at the market, a nice chatty lady, is, appropriately, Frances the Beads. Then there's Sheila the Pesto, and of course Farmer Rocket, who I must now call Peter the Rocket! Sheila told me his name is Peter. Sounds a little like Peter Rabbit, no? I know, far-fetched. Anyway, I call him Peter the Rocket because after I've bought vegies from him, he always tries to suggest extras, usually, "Bit o' rocket? Bit o' coriander?" Rocket, of course, being arugula, and coriander is cilantro. He managed to cut some rocket and stuff it in a bag this time before I could say no. Then, as I was getting out the change to pay him, he got completely tied up with a couple of older ladies. The guy next to me noticed my attempts to pay, and nudged me with a wink, saying, "He's forgotten about you--run now!" We laughed and I was finally able to pay.

Dan's uncle (ok--I'm working on remembering they're my relatives too!!) Eamonn is coming over tonight and may stay the night. I am airing all the laundry which is very musty from the container. Much of my time here seems to be unpacking books (33 boxes!) or doing laundry. Once that is out of the way, I may start looking for a volunteer or a little morning job. As Marian (Dan's dad's 1st cousin) observed, "I'd crack up if I were home all day long by myself." Dan's job is progressing well. Today, he is back to pulling cable, like in the States, because his company is moving to a better location, in the center of the old brewery, on the Armagh road. Electricians usually pull the cable here, so he's the one with the most experience in the crew.

I am hoping that the mail will bring us our insurance packet today. I spent a very frustrating two weeks here trying to get car insurance. We have insurance from England, but we wanted to get the car registered here asap. Registration was no problem--had to pay duty of 350 euro--and tax was fine, but insurance proved tricky. Most companies wouldn't take our US licenses with the international driving permit, so we were quoted as having provisional Irish licenses. None would take our US no claims bonus of six years. One company wouldn't insure cars over 10 years old! Another didn't insure drivers under 25 at all. And, of course, Dan won't be 25 until December. Our quotes ranged from 2600 to 2700 euro per year. Finally, I found an insurance brokerage and a wonderful lady who kept on it until she could find (mail just arrived and insurance is here! Hooray!) us a policy. It's only going to be 1300. Thank goodness.

Well, off to check on the laundry and to do some research. We may be hosting some students from Lawrence U for a weekend, and I want to be more knowledgeable about our sites in this area. Ever heard of a St. Oliver Plunkett? No...me neither.

Love from our lovely green country,
Heather

I know this is a long list of friends--if you would rather not get these messages, please email me back to let me know. Otherwise, if I don't hear from you, I will know you are enjoying the updates.