

When I listen to the radio or look at the news on TV it is all about Corona Virus ad infinitum. I really have been on information overload and just had to have a change of direction.

So, I found a new friend in the form of lyric FM radio station .Their music is so relaxing and easy to listen to. There is another major benefit in that they have minimum news content and so there is less emphasis on health or Covid.

Now I can drive to the car park in Courtown,unencumbered with all the latest data and political warbling about any issue politicians feel they can point score over an opponent. When I am weather proofed and ready for walking , I stroll along one of the off-road paths and make my way on to the beach. It is generally relatively quiet. At the beginning of this week, I was walking along the beach absorbing the sounds of the waves into my subconscious. I continued and crossed over a small stream and a young woman strolled along and asked me for some advice. She wanted to know if it was safe to climb up the steps on such an icy cold freezing day. I advised her to be careful and off she trotted clad in several layers of lycra, as she was delighted to tell me.She wanted to get to the top of the rocks ,to a grassy patch, and do some yoga and mindfulness. As I turned to make my return journey I looked up and there she was sitting, cross legged on her lofty perch ,monarch of all she surveyed looking out on the Irish Sea. She gave me a friendly wave and I trotted off in my own mindfulness journey. What else would you be doing on a cold and frosty morning in January.

As I ambled, I soaked in the sounds of the sea and the plaintive cries of the few seagulls present. I also noted the hard crispy, frozen sand under my feet. As I walked, I heard the strains of a tin whistle music in my ears. I look around and wonder if last night's glass of Jameson is having some delayed reaction in my aural department. As I advanced further, I saw a man perched on a rock happily playing jigs and reels. Being the inquisitive type, I naturally stopped for a chat. First of all, he told me that he really missed session music in pubs and friends' houses. Secondly, he was fed up with zoom meetings and home schooling He just needed a break from it all for an hour from zoom meetings until the next maths video exercise. He was happy enough with his lot playing tunes for myself and the waves and any passing seagulls. I understood his situation totally. What a lovely thing to do on a cold and frosty January morning.

I bid him slán agus beannacht and continued my trudge along Courtown beach to the melody of Beidh aonach amárach I gContae an Chláir agus Trasna na dtionnta ,dul siar,dul siar. These tunes were buzzing around in my inner consciousness recalling my own primary school days in Tralee ,quite a few pale moons ago.

I was quickly jolted back to reality when I heard a friendly voice chirp in with 'Hello Mick how are you. Jackie was sitting on the rocks with I-phone in hand . She asked me to listen for a minute and wow what a treasure piece of music she was listening to . She sat and I stood listening to a boy soprano singing Panis Angelicus.My tin whistle man kept tuning away while I had my own private space and moment with Panis Angelicus. Jackie sprung up at the end of the music . Some friend had sent her the Panis on her phone . She just had to listen to it, and she was happy to share her joyous moment with me. Such contrasting moments in music on Courtown beach on a cold and frosty morning. Anyway, I bid farewell to Jackie with the more sedate Panis Angelicus now replacing my Irish jigs and reels in my headspace. Whoever said walking was boring.

I was now nearing my first exit off the beach when I heard a familiar voice enquiring after my Kerry umbrella. I had met this couple out walking last week in the spills of rain and we

had a chat . They were wearing their full raingear while I had my Kerry broolly to keep me dry. When she saw Ciarrai she was reminded of her Kerry teacher when going to primary school long ago. The teacher had taught them all the tin whistle. She also taught them some great Irish rebel songs. I pointed out the tin whistle player to her and she was definitely going to engage with him on her walk.

Interestingly she told me that they were forty-five years married on that very day. She told me that Paul Robeson, that great American base baritone had died forty-five years ago on January 23rd ,that very day we were chatting. One of her favourite versions of the song “Kevin Barry” was sung by Paul Robeson. I had to express ignorance of it, while at the same time noting it for a google moment later on in the day. I could not have imagined the American base baritone with his deep sonorous voice singing about an Irish 1916 rebel. When I got home, I duly googled Kevin Barry and Paul Robeson and sure enough she had her information bang on correct. Naturally I played the song and what a beautiful rendition it was.

My phone rang and I had to excuse myself because it was our seven-year-old grandson ringing to inform me that his ant farm had been delivered from the Netherlands and that I would have to come in and see it. Furthermore, he informed me that they were having a fry up for lunch and they were putting on a few extra sausages for me. This was pure bribery knowing my penchant for the sausage and chip. It was equally good because granny would not know of my little foody indiscretion before lunch.

So ,I toddled along and headed for the car and home observing some hardy [silly]humans skinny dipping in the Irish Sea and taking selfies. What else would you do on a cold freezing January morning in Courtown except bare the naked truth and shiver. Modern youth must have their moments. Maybe they were trying to freeze Covid out of their systems.

On the way home I called in to see my ants and all the paraphernalia associated with setting up their new abode in a strange land. There was high excitement giving me all the details of queens and wings and males and workers . There was a great sense of ANTicipation until Dad arrived home to set up the farm in ,of all places, the bedroom. That led to jokes about ants in your pants etc et ceterant.

Anyway ,I scoffed the sausages being caught in the act by my senior dietician who arrived for an unexpected ,unannounced granny visit. They tasted delicious and I must say I felt no guilt only pure satisfaction despite the fact that I had added a few more calories to the already expanded, post-Christmas waistline.

It was quite an eventful cold and frosty January morning in Courtown, and we are only at lunchtime yet. Maybe that’s enough activity for one morning.

Sure ,what else would you be doing. Its better than sitting at home moaning, nibbling , feeling bored and sorry for oneself in these Covid times.

These boots were made for walking. And that’s just what they’ll do

One of these days these boots are going to walk all over you

Get walking boots                      Mick O Callaghan 28th January 2021