

*“An Irish tourist who drunkenly mistook the Romanian parliament for his hotel has been arrested in Bucharest. The unnamed Irish national was said to be a little worse for wear as he searched for his hotel in the city’s Old Town. But rather than his chosen accommodation he instead entered Romania’s Palace of the Parliament. Interrogation of the suspect was delayed due to his excessively drunken state.”*

*“Ireland’s first ever academic seminar on the age-old problem of hangovers has taken place in Donegal.”*

The Irish News on 20 November and 30 December 2021



Gorey

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The last five years have been a rich journey through political, societal, cultural and many more landscapes on this island of Ireland. Most of my time I’ve dedicated to trying to understand and making sense of what’s going on here. I won’t pretend to much achievement in that endeavour but the love for this place grows and I often wonder why. Because it sure isn’t the weather, nor is it the NHS, the free health care system. Nature and beauty are stunning but so it is in my country.

It must be the people. The people who shout and fight when having a conversation and who never come up with a straight answer but tinker seven stories into one. They love their craic. In Switzerland I’m told that I sound Irish but I don’t understand the Belfast brogue. After all this time I laugh along cluelessly. So what is it that keeps me here besides McKernan’s home made stew?

It’s the people and their dedication to protest against the eyesore of a temporary corrugated tin wall at the Chinese consulate. Against the height of the finished brick wall. Against the floodlights shining over the finished brick wall and the colour of the mail box after the construction of the brick wall: the wrong red.

It’s the people who welcome you into their everyday life without asking questions. They let you in on family birthdays, weddings and wakes. You’re welcome to stay overnight and instead of bearing a grudge after you’ve broken a precious statue, they serve you a fry. The only rule: don’t ask any questions back.

It’s the women. The strong Irish women I wish not to end up arguing with. Their telling you off in no ambiguous way and yet so vulnerable in their societal role and legacy. Women in conflict and women after conflict – that’s a chapter missing. It’s missing because it’s dear to me and it needs more from me.

While I’m not short on material, and it’s been my intention from the start to dedicate a chapter to the question of a United Ireland, a New Ireland, I find myself overwhelmed with the topicality of it all. You can’t say New Ireland without stumbling over the DUP-SAYS-NO-TO-ANYTHING-BUT-UNIONIST-SUPREMACY attitude, Brexit and ultimately Partition and Colonialism. I kind of cracked after the unionists’ desire for a centenary stone at Stormont.

More topics should have been discussed here. Punk should have been a chapter. The importance of the punk movement during the Troubles, how it brought divided communities together. The local bands still performing. STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, THE UNDERTONES (minus Feargal Sharkey), THE OUTCASTS, THE DEFECTS, THERAPY?, THE SABREJETS, THE DEAD HANDSOMES and Terri Hooley, the godfather of Belfast punk. A new generation is emerging – KNEECAP from Belfast, NO COLLISION from Derry. The Belfast punk saga has been told by musicians and regular punters – the people who ARE the story – I still need to find MY story.

BELFAST RELIABLE NEWS came to be because of the generosity of the people around me. The time they invested sharing their stories. The patience towards a never ending flow of questions. Their forbearance for cultural ignorance and misunderstanding. All the cups of tea and pints of Guinness drowned, lifts in cars offered, lending of books and summed-up opinions. Many times sensitive encounters were made possible through a trusted third party. What a support. I’d love to name each and every one, which means to list all my friends and acquaintances – I might just do that in the upcoming book that is planned for 2023.

For now, with all of that in mind, BELFAST RELIABLE NEWS is closing its doors. But now worries, you’ll be hearing from us in one or the other way again. In the meantime let’s just say – see you later, alright, sound sound.