



CORRIB BRANCH

FROM ZARA BRADY



Ready to go Mining!

CORRIB DRY RALLY TO LOVELY LEITRIM

17-19 January 2014

When the annual Dry Rally is in the planning in Corrib Branch there are several elements that always have to feature:

- Hotel on waterway
- Boat Trip
- Shopping
- Restaurant
- Outing for the adults
- Outing for the youngsters

Before we proceed any further, allow me explain a Dry Rally to the uninitiated. It means travelling by car instead of on your boat.

The town of Carrick-on-Shannon capably provided five out of six on the list for our mid-January weekend - the only thing missing was the boat trip. The resident river cruise boat had been lifted for its annual maintenance and all efforts to find an alternative proved unsuccessful.

We were based in the comfortable and welcoming Landmark Hotel overlooking River Shannon, less than two hours drive from Galway. On the Saturday morning, the Market Yard, Dock Arts Centre, Costello's Chapel (the world's second smallest church) plus lots of shops, a bookstore, boutique and the marina, kept twenty-two of us occupied for a few hours.

ARIGNA EXPERIENCE

Next on the agenda was an afternoon visit to nearby Arigna

Mines in North Roscommon. The route from Arigna village up the mountain to the mine gave way to wonderful views through the rising mist - suddenly beautiful Lough Allen appeared down below us. The lake is the northernmost lake on the River Shannon and approx 7 miles long and almost 4 miles wide at its widest point.

A former miner took us on a 45-minute tour of the coal mine and demonstrated the methods used to extract coal from one of the narrowest coal seams ever worked in Europe. Miners had to lie on their side and chip away at the coal face with a short handled pick and a shovel. They crawled along a tunnel, following the seam of coal, which was never more than 20 inches high. There was usually a pool of water in the bottom of the tunnel so the men were constantly in damp clothing. They remained like this for the day until they had finished their shift and had hauled several tons of coal to a miniature railway wagon, called a hutch.

Despite the back breaking work, many young aspiring miners left school at 14 years of age, to start their mining career at the easiest and lowest pay level, before working up to the more difficult but better paid position at the coal face. The coal in Arigna produced no explosive gas unlike English and Continental coal but the work was of course hazardous. Rock falls posed the greatest danger and even though accidents were

rarely fatal, they were the cause of many broken limbs. As one members of our group commented, 'all teenagers should visit the mine, when they are slacking at school, as a wake-up call'.

Regular employment was uncommon in the province of Connaught in the 19th and 20th centuries, and there was an oft used saying: 'There was money in Arigna when there was no money elsewhere'. Mining sustained the people of Arigna down through the centuries and helped them through the horrors of the famine years. It all came to an end in 1990.

On the trip back to Carrick-on-Shannon we slowed down near the golf club to get a glimpse through the trees at Woodbrook House. The house was immortalised in David Thomson's classic book, *Woodbrook*, in which he describes Anglo-Irish life from the ten years he spent here in the 1930s as tutor to Major Kirkwood's daughter, Phoebe.

The book weaves between nineteenth and early twentieth century political and social Irish history together with the author's developing love for his pupil. In an epilogue he relates returning to Woodbrook in 1968, to find that the Kirkwoods had sold off part of the estate to the local golf club, the wings of the house had been demolished, and a local family, the Maxwells, who had formerly worked on the estate, had bought what remained and lived in a few rooms at the back of the house. Woodbrook House was sold in 1970 to John A. Malone, who live there until his death in 2013.



Moylurg Viewing Tower, Rockingham Estate

Micheál Ó Súilleabháin composed a piece for piano and orchestra called *Woodbrook*, conceived as the soundtrack for a radio documentary called *The Story of Woodbrook - David Thompson's Book*, produced by Julian Vignoles and first transmitted on RTE Radio in 1986.

On Saturday night we dined upstairs at the Oarsman Restaurant on Bridge Street in Carrick-on-Shannon. Lovely interior with plenty of buzz and atmosphere, and everyone raved about the food. Well worth a visit.

Sunday was geared towards the children with a visit to Lough Key Forest Park. The group divided up and some went with the small children to the Adventure Kingdom and despite rather persistent rain enjoyed a magical time on towers, roundabouts, swings and puzzles. There was a great range of innovative play equipment geared to a variety of age groups and abilities - not to mention their courage!

LOUGH KEY EXPERIENCE

The other group headed off in the direction of the Lough Key



Castle Island, Lough Key



Jetty on island, opposite Rockingham Estate

Experience. It was an audio-assisted trail of the park so you took it at your own pace and spent as much or as little time as you wanted to on the walk. The firm favorites were the 19th century underground tunnels, the Moylurg viewing tower and the amazing Tree Canopy Walk. This is a 300m long construction of timber and steel 9m above the woodland floor which meanders through the treetops and gives a panoramic view of Lough Key and Castle Island.

A visit for lunch to the Lakeside

Café and a walk along the newly constructed Marina brought our weekend visit to Lovely Leitrim to a close. It might be a relatively small county but it has buckets to offer and is ideal base for a weekend.

On Saturday night we dined upstairs at the Oarsman Restaurant on Bridge Street in Carrick-on-Shannon. Lovely interior with plenty of buzz and atmosphere, and everyone raved about the food. Well worth a visit.....

SCUTTER CUP

Peadar Canavan took to the floor to announce the much awaited results of the Corrib Branch Scutter Cup. The nominations were:

Klassie Lady: Squeaky clean, that we know of, but keeping very quiet, as usual.

Cranky Cranchi: Took a long walk off a short pier and ended in the water.

Sin E: Nearly severed PCV's arm at Aughanure, should have done a proper job.

Pilgrim: Hit the same rock at Coad, getting friendly with these shallows.

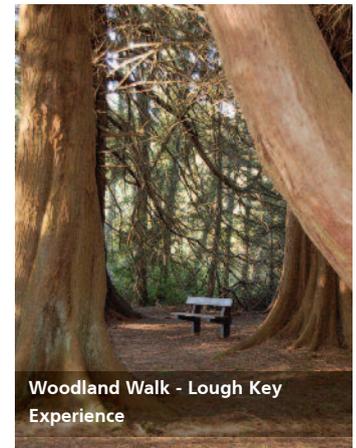
Corsair: Hit another rock below Gallarraig, bent prop and p-bracket. All in a day's boating.

Why Not: Flooded boat from an unknown source, keep looking under the floor.

Mistral: Crashed *Corsair's*

mooring, took 45 mins of cutting to free it. Mooring thrashed. Holed the bow below Kilbeg, cruised for 4 days taking water. Bow thruster making funny noise, flooded of course. Edward noticed bow down, came to rescue. Ergo - Scutter Cup done and dusted, well earned.

Photos: Zara Brady



Woodland Walk - Lough Key Experience

WEAREN ENGINEERING



Boarding steps



Swim platforms

Tanks



Pull and push pits

Boarding ladders

Call Eric on 087 2538038
See: www.eweengineering.com