



DREAM ON: Holidays abroad have been thrown into doubt

Overseas travel now a fond but distant memory

THE Delta variant of the Covid virus has left the prospect of a holiday 'up in the air' so to speak, but not, unfortunately, in a plane to anywhere.

I was thinking at the weekend of how much I used to look forward to the first week of July after I'd bid a regretful goodbye to my lovely class and not yet begun to worry about what I'd greet in September and the pleasant prospect of two well-deserved months' leisure – and, of course, 'getting away'.

Being bound all my working life by the school year, July and August were our only feasible travel options – peak season, priced accordingly and the continent of Europe at its hottest. Born milk-bottle pale, I lived in forlorn hope that my freckles would join up to form a tan. They never did. Ten minutes' exposure to anything over 16 degrees and I'm a cooked Kerr's Pink and peeling.

The Loving Spouse and I were never beach-y people. Our few forays to the seaside were purely to give infant Daughter Dear the experience of damp sand, chilly, treacherous waters, slimy seaweed, sandflies and a foundering grit-laden breeze. Attempting to lower her into the murky waters of Lough Swilly, she retracted her undercarriage smartly, screaming: "Dirty! Dirty!" A girl after my own heart.

My personal preference was to lie on the sofa with a bag of Mint Imperials for the first fortnight of July watching Wimbledon, as I used to do in my single days, but maternal and wifely duty decreed we should go somewhere. Working on the principle that small children are constantly grizzling, being bored and wanting things, we took shameless advantage of two besotted grandparents with large hearts and a

Anita
ROBINSON



larger garden, annually abandoning the baby to their care while we 'did' the major cities of the British Isles, running from museums to galleries to churches, to restaurants, before tackling 'Abroad'.

Arguably the best holiday we ever had was when the Loving Spouse went to Canada to visit his relations and I went to South Africa to visit mine. We staggered the dates so the poor child didn't feel entirely orphaned. As she grew in wisdom age and grace we eventually included Daughter Dear in our travel plans for the benefit of her education. Driving round Ireland proved not an unimixed delight. My inadequate map-reading skills in the days before satnav brought our marriage to breaking point, with a whimpering child in the

Arguably the best holiday we ever had was when the Loving Spouse went to Canada to visit his relations and I went to South Africa to visit mine

back seat pleading with us to stop fighting. We went round the Ring of Kerry twice (clockwise and anti-clockwise) by accident and never saw it, due to unseasonal fog and an even thicker sullen sea.

Foreign travel brought more contention due to my tendency to run a rope round my entire wardrobe and expect somebody else to carry it. I still mourn the handbag I nearly bought in Siena, spotted again in Florence and a third time in Rome, increasing in price the further south we travelled. I go abroad now with dear friends of like mind and tastes. I'm still recovering from the shame in exorbitantly expensive Venice where, as that day's bursar, I paid for our canal-side coffee and pastries. "Not enough, signora," said the waiter. "Eleven euros 31," I protested, pointing to the bill. "That's the time it was served, signora," he said. They've never let me forget it.

"Travel broadens the mind," they say. For all my admiration of the art, architecture and history of western Europe, it's the unimaginable scale of the African landscape that remains with me. Flying uncomfortably low over the jagged peaks of the Drakensberg mountains in a twenty-seater plane concentrates the mind wonderfully. Standing on the silent bald crests of the Matopos hills in Zimbabwe, one is overwhelmed by the insignificant transience of humanity. And how delightfully incongruous it looks to see an exact replica of Belfast's City Hall in the centre of Pietermaritzburg. Kwa Zulu Natal surrounded by palm trees. Sights (as Seamus Heaney put it) "that catch the heart off-guard and blow it open".

My one regret? For all the careful packing for every eventuality, I never had the right shoes.

ON THIS DAY

JUNE 29 1921

Train Attack Death

OUR Dundalk correspondent writes: The repair of the railway line at Actavoyle [South Armagh] continued on Saturday and is now practically completed. A number of horses have also been buried by labour commandeered in the district.

Another death has taken place as a result of the disaster. Patrick McAteer of Flurry Bridge died from a bullet wound at eleven o'clock on Friday night in Louth Infirmary. He stated before death that he was walking in the fields near his home when he felt a sting in his side and then a soldier called on him to halt. The official story is that deceased ran away when called upon to halt and that he was fired on. It is alleged that in his possession there was found a pair of rubber gloves. Deceased was aged about thirty. James Boyle, who also received a bullet wound, is progressing favourably.

Following the derailment, Dundalk presented the appearance of an invested town. Troops poured in by the hundred from all parts and there were endless lines of motor wagons, armoured cars, ambulances, field kitchens, etc. On Friday night the wounded and dead soldiers were taken by ambulance train to Belfast.

Auxiliaries Shot in Dublin

AT SEVEN o'clock last evening, Section Leader White and Temporary Cadet Hunt of the Auxiliaries, while having tea with their wives at the Mayfair Hotel, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, were shot by armed men. Hunt was killed outright and White seriously wounded.

20 Years for Tyrone Man

SENTENCE of twenty years' penal servitude have been promulgated in the case of Patrick Cassidy of Killavney, County Tyrone. He was tried by Field General Court Martial in Derry on the charges of shooting with intent to murder and attempting to set fire to a dwelling-house. Cassidy refused to recognise the Court.

Francis Donnelly of Durlless, who was charged with the same offence, pleaded not guilty and was acquitted. The case arose out of an attack by armed men on the residence of a B Special Constable at Fymore, County Tyrone in May. **DESPITE moves towards a ceasefire following King George V's 'grandiloquent' speech at the opening of the new Belfast Parliament, violence continued, north and south. Pathé ensured that the IRA attack on the royal troop train made world headlines with the king condemning the 'brutal outrage' by Frank Aiken's 4th Northern IRA division. The IRA had allowed two earlier troop trains to pass before derailling the third. This contained mainly horses. Had Aiken targeted either of the earlier trains containing hundreds of soldiers, the death toll might well have been have been catastrophic.**

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com