

The Thrashing



Although nobody took me up on my offer of "Free Help" there was one man who invited me to accompany him and his friends to the Thrashing in Clonygowen on Sunday the 7th of September. I had met Jim, known to the locals as "Stony", in the pub the Sunday before the Thrashing. I explained what I was doing and he said I should go over as far as Clonygowan, because as an Artist I would enjoy it. He was right. I ventured over on the back of a trailer listening to Midlands Radio 3 on the radio, blaring from two speakers. I got into the Thrashing for free, and was offered food, drink and free entertainment. There were Vintage Tractors, the Old Fashioned Thrashing, a Country Kitchen and Butter Churning displays. I was very well taken care of and got a lift home on another trailer whilst sitting on ferret traps. What I did in return for Jim was an old fashioned form of documentation, a drawing. When finished I was praised no end, and Jim said he was "delighted I came", I was equally satisfied. It was a win\win situation, I got to interact with a number of people from the area, and Jim got a drawing free of charge, for the simple fact that he saw an opportunity and grasped it.

Final Thoughts

I do realise that it is hard to accept a new person into an small area where most people know each other extremely well. I have lived in Crookedwood for eight years and we are still considered "Blow In's." Suspicion and trust are two issues that people seem to have equal trouble with. I have found it amazingly difficult to infiltrate Daingean in almost any way. What I was offering is a rare thing in this day and age. With the word "Free" people may have had the preconception that there had to be a catch somewhere, but there was none. Perhaps peoples pride got in their way. I was surprised at the lack of interest in something that I thought people would pounce upon due to the cost of labour these days, but I was wrong and my plea to "Help" fell on deaf ears. I would like to thank those who did give me a chance and hope in future people may take the time to think about what is being offered without hesitation. I do still have to ask myself, Why did'nt anyone want free help?

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"Free Help"

A 3 week stay in Daingean

Aug 22nd - Sept 12th
2008



Ronan Coughlan

Approach to Work

On the 23rd of August 2008 I started a 3 week stay in The Good Hatchery, an art studio in Daingean, Co Offaly. My plan was to help people doing work, free of charge. The reason: to help others in the old Irish sense. Some call it "doing a turn". I feel that people have grown distant from the days of old due to our fast paced lifestyles and lack of consideration for our fellow man. I hoped to interact with the people of the town and to gain a better understanding of the area as a whole. Initially I had planned on using the familiar as a starting point, and what more familiar than Turf. I tried to offer my assistance turning, heaping or drawing home turf to anyone who would like the help. I was introduced to a few people and with these contacts tried to make arrangements. Unfortunately the bog was in a state of collapse due to the bad weather all summer. With this in mind, I let the people that I contacted know that I was willing to help regardless, yet I received no further phone calls. I decided that I was going to have to broaden my range of possible candidates.

Getting the Word Out

Having approached over a dozen people face to face with no avail, I felt a new approach was needed. I heard there was a notice board in the local shop and decided that this would be a good place to advertise. I made a written "Help Offered" sign and posted it up. I offered my free help with a range of activities including Turf, Construction, Household Work, Gardening, Art Grind's, etc... I said I would help with anything at all, as long as I was helping directly with something that needed doing. The advertisement had no results. So I decided to then broaden my potential audience by making up three different posters. Thinking if people had not seen or heard I was around, they would after I placed my posters about the Village.



These posters were once again fruitless other than a call from 'Jake Stephens' and an anonymous caller who wanted one hundred trailer load of turf thrown into a shed in a half an hour. A feat that even the most seasoned of turf veterans would find a Herculean task!



Apart from the two lads winding me up I had no further replies to my posters, other than having had them pulled off the electrical poles. So I decided to try and get the most amount of potential interest at any one time by advertising at Mass. I proceeded to print over a hundred fliers exclaiming I had only one week left and that I was offering "Free Help" to anyone that wanted it. I also stated I was originally from Cloghan, so I wasn't from a million miles away and that all I wanted to get out of this work was a short exchange with the person I was helping. I placed thirty or so fliers on the table with the newsletter and the rest were placed in the wipers of all cars parked outside the church. I thought that I would get some calls of interest due to the numbers at Mass, but I was wrong and received no calls.