

The Return and Impending Departure of Your Man On the Can

From Thursday, I shall be pooing in America for a month, and I thought you might like to be kept informed. I will endeavour to keep a somewhat regular log, but it has been a while since my last deposit here, so to grease the skids, I shall first attempt a review of a local loo which I used for the first time recently.

During a moonlit stroll to kick the wall at the end of the Salthill Promenade, I found myself caught somewhat short, and was thus drawn to the bright lights of the public bathrooms beside the Blackrock diving board.

The 20cent entry seemed a very fair price to pay for some privacy and relief. The last time I attempted to do my business outside, midway through the proceedings, I adjusted my footing and stood on an anthill, and in the ensuing chaos, I shook my sandal off into a distant thicket in Norway. To clarify I was in the wood in Norway at the start of the incident, and am not suggesting I possess superhuman leg-shaking strength and ought to be signed immediately for Liverpool football club, though Im not saying that would be a bad idea either.

This was, however, the Ryanair of toilets, and included no toilet paper. Not having had the foresight to bring with me a newspaper, dock leaf, or copy of this newsletter*, I had no choice but to cut my losses and venture to the next booth. Having spent my last 20cent piece, I was forced to part with a full euro coin to enter, and as I did so, I wondered whether this were perhaps some sick psychological experiment. This booth, however, did come replete with paper, so I did not end up taking out a second mortgage on a house that I do not have.

The booth had a motion-sensor activated light, to save the planet, and this promptly flicked off when I was evidently standing too still while creating a paper shield for the toilet seat, one begrudgingly dispensed sheet of two-ply at a time. Quite what manner of bewildered jig was expected of me to keep the light on for the duration, I am not fully sure.

In other time-sensitive quirks, there was a countdown timer on the door directly opposite the toilet, which you could watch as its fifteen minutes ticked down, in case you needed a little extra pressure to move things along. This is not a complaint a visible timer is preferable by far to those public toilets which seem to choose some arbitrary and unannounced length of time to spew you ignominiously back onto the street.

Indeed, as I watched haphazardly and hurried, the timer display flicked off and started counting down from 15 again. It is quite possible that I was being awarded five fifteen-minute slots for my euro, but a part of me wondered somewhat gleefully if I had somehow managed to hack the toilets software system.** Sadly, I could not afford to hang around to find out, as I suspect my date must already have been getting impatient waiting by this point.

As I made my way to the sink, I noticed there was a slot near the ceiling for disposing of your old needles and razor blades, and at a more accessible level, a button labelled Reset flush. I did not press it, but I was curious. If any of our intrepid readers would like to investigate, do let me know how it goes.

The sink itself was one of those comprehensive units built into the wall, where you theoretically hold your hands in place as the unit sequentially administers liquid soap, water, and hot air, so all you have to do is rub your hands together. This one, however, seemed defective, as the water came so immediately after the soap that I did not have time to spread the soap around, and then straight after the water came soap again, and so, I found myself trapped in this vicious cycle of wet but really, really clean hands. In the end, defying the sign on the wall which mocked Leave hands in place until dry, I gave up and wiped my hands on my trousers and hoped my date would not get prematurely handsy.

In conclusion, I would not say the toilet is particularly glamorous, but it makes up for it in convenience. Convenience if you are out on the Salthill prom, that is, as opposed to in, say, France. The privacy is very good provided you remember to lock the door, and conclude your business in a timely fashion. Certainly compared to American public restrooms, where, if you are lucky, the area between your knees and your shoulders is not as available to the general public as if it were featured on the nine o'clock news but I shall no doubt moan about that further in the near future.

The facility is as reasonably clean as one can expect of one used by the general public. There isn't really much to write home about in the way of entertainment, but my cell signal seemed fine, had I needed to call for assistance or play Angry Turds (I thought I was being clever, but it seems this game actually exists ah well). Ergonomically, the toilet was a little high for comfortable squatting, and set very close to the wall, which is fine so long as you don't think about everyone else who been squashed up against it before you.

Overall, I would give this loo 6.5/10, and would readily recommend it to friends if they were passing and were caught short. Maybe bring some toilet paper with you.

*Feel free to vote for the book of your choice, and I can update the article as necessary. Please appreciate, also, how I avoided the obvious cheap joke at the expense of certain maligned university courses, for fear of alienating our literate readership.

**You may scoff, but it would not be a first for me. Last summer I rescued a lady locked in a public bathroom by a Norwegian motorway (that is to say, beside the motorway, rather than to imply the motorway had malevolently captured her and imprisoned her thus Norwegian motorways are lovely), using only my NUIG library card and a pair of sandals.