

FOUR GIRLS AND A CAR IN S. IRELAND

Dawn breaking over Rosslare harbour turned the sea from a black sound of pounding waves to a deceptively calm-looking expanse of cold turquoise frilled with white crests. Our sense of pride at being some of the very small minority aboard who had not been seasick during the Gale Force 9 night crossing, was slightly nulled by the chill of our damp clothes (the spray had penetrated our sleeping bags while we lay curled up on deck), offset by the tantalising warm smell of First Class breakfast. Our car, which we soon learnt was to have definite ideas of its own, was harbouring our food on another boat which was nowhere in sight. However, once it arrived, we had no trouble convincing the Customs that we were carrying neither ammunition nor tinned meat, and so were allowed to drive off into a hinterland that was just beginning to wake up wherever there was anyone or anything to wake.

Here we met our first indication of being in Ireland. On finding a garage, or more exactly, a petrol pump, we were told that owing to the replacement of hand pumping by electricity we should be unable to get petrol anywhere in that district - the new area transformer had broken! But with typical accommodating cheerfulness the man syphoned a couple of gallons from his car to tide us over till we got to Arthurstown, our first night destination.

We had planned a very flexible route, confining our ideas to Southern Ireland. Our only booked nights were at Arthurstown and at Allihies, right out on one of the South Western peninsulas. This, though chosen rather arbitrarily as a nice-looking situation on a map, proved to be one of the best hostels we visited. It is a square white ex-farmhouse, very well kept by a first-rate warden who was extremely friendly... he even voluntarily dried a pair of my socks in his oven, not I hope, too much to the detriment of the next meal! The welcoming atmosphere was enhanced by the rigours of getting there; we had come to a junction where we had the choice of either going three miles across the neck of a peninsula or fifteen miles round the coast, and had opted for the latter as it promised a beautiful sunset with the light turning the mountains reflected in the sea from red through gold to silver. It was the most literally "coastal" road imaginable, sheer unguarded drops to the water, and heading often straight down as if to land one in the sea, only to turn sharp inland round a jutting cliff. Suddenly, about half-way round, the foot-brake packed up completely. Five minutes later, the silvery dusk that we had just been enthusing over was swallowed up by an utterly unmoonlit night, and three cows fast asleep in the middle of the road on a blind corner only escaped with their lives owing to them being on the "up"-slope. When we had moved them bodily, we calculated we were still 40 miles from Allihies and it was now raining quite heavily. Since with Irish Y.H.A. is not Irish for nothing, the