

board jumping on them perhaps I wouldn't have made much difference.) Anyhow, the result was that in the morning, we found ourselves huddled under little heaps of blankets blown up against the wall at the heads of the beds. The fact that the cottage's function as a Youth Hostel is really subsidiary to that of a croft was indicated by the presence in the kitchen of dogs, kittens, hens, and, at one point, even the front half of a cow. However, the atmosphere and situation were terrific and justified our staying a second night there, even though we just failed in our attempt to climb Carrauntoohil, the highest mountain in S. Ireland.

Having found that these more off-the-beaten track hostels tended to have the most friendly atmosphere we decided to spend our last night at Foulksrath Castle which turned out to be as good as we'd hoped, providing the last of a number of evenings of (mainly Irish) folk singing. It was at least 60 miles out of our way, but that was symptomatic of the effect the country has. Distance, and to an even greater extent, time, really do seem irrelevant when there's nothing on the roads, and shops and pubs (usually the same thing) don't open and close, but just supply on demand. In fact we became so used to being able to walk in anywhere at virtually any time of the day or night, that we felt quite hard-done-by when we arrived back in England and found all the cafes and garages saying CLOSED. Ireland seemed very far away when we eventually sat down in a cafe in Cheltenham and instead of the friendly greetings we had come to expect, we found our scruffy looks were attracting disapproving stares. We had to console ourselves with our only mementos of a most enjoyable holiday - a handful of Irish folk records and a genuine Irish flea!

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* CHAMBERS definition of BROKEN SPECTRE:

The name given to a striking appearance seen by an observer in an elevated position when his shadow falls on a cloud or fog bank below him. Owing to the difficulty of estimating the position of the cloud he instinctively assumes his shadow to be thrown at a great distance and thus receives the impression of great size; and, if the cloud is only a few yards below a group of people each imagines his own shadow to be immense while the others appear to cast no shadow at all. Moreover whether the others appear to cast shadows or not, each sees the shadow of his own head (but never of the other heads) surrounded by one or more coloured rings of light called 'glories', formed by diffraction of light. Five such rings have occasionally been observed. The outermost ring which is colourless and has an angular diameter of 67° is called the fog bow or ULLAS RING, after Antonio de Ulloa, who was the first to observe it (Peru 1740). The spectre receives its name from the Brocken in the Hartz Mountains, where it is reputed to occur especially frequently.