



IRISH GAZETTE



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By Kathy McGorray Dougherty



Large Animals

You've seen the pictures in the travel brochures — a smiling couple in their rental car, waiting patiently while the local farmer herds his flock of sheep peacefully down the country lane, with the sheep dog keeping an ever-watchful eye on his herd. Yes, that still does happen in Northern Ireland. And when it does, it creates memories that last a lifetime.

Northern Ireland is still a very rural country. You don't have to venture far outside a city before you come across living, breathing traffic jams. In fact, just a mile or so outside of Cookstown, in County Tyrone, we witnessed a stampede — nearly from the inside!

A farmer was trying to get his cows to cross the road to another pasture, but they had other ideas. One turned, began running toward the cars and the rest joined in. Normally I think of cows as very peaceful animals, grazing in the fields and chewing their cud. I had no idea they could move so fast.

As my husband Steve and I sat in our very little rental car and watched the approaching herd, a fellow in the British Telecom van in front of us jumped out. He stood in the middle of the road and held up his arms. The oncoming cattle took one look at him and stopped. Apparently, British Telecom train their technicians for every possible situation.

Another close encounter took place near Enniskillen in Co. Fermanagh. We were looking for a boat to take us to some islands in Lower Lough Erne. Following a sign, we turned off the main road onto a dirt road which then turned into a trail through a field. As we drove through, the cows (who were off to the side of the field) completely ignored us, thankfully. We found the boat but were too late to catch a ride. Heading back to the main road, we immediately noticed the cows had moved very close to our small trail out. No, not just close, but actually on the trail, blocking our exit. This was a different sort of traffic jam — one car and many slow cows. Eventually they moved, but not until they showed us who really owned that trail.

At many of Northern Ireland's most scenic and historic sites, you'll be sharing the views with the locals — the local cows and sheep that is. It's something that makes Northern Ireland special and leaves you with memories that last a lifetime.

Kathy McGorray Dougherty is owner of Northern Ireland Travels, which specializes in creating personalized, self-guided trips to Northern Ireland. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.nirelandtravels.com/>.