

TRAVEL

Beautiful scenery and great food in Ireland

By **BILL HOLLENBECK**
SHANNON, Ireland—I had read so many sticky-sweet travel articles

about that "corner of Heaven" called Ireland and "charm-blessed" people who inhabit it that

I felt sure we were in for a monumental disappointment. Well, we weren't.

We drove through leafy tunnels — ancient rock walls overgrown with vines and dripping fushia

hedges and bramble thickets, backed by trees whose upper branches met above our heads.

And then we would break out into startling vistas of rich pasture, sights of coastal waters, winding streams or mirror lakes and, often, behind them, gentle mountains whose rocky crags wore heavy mantles of viridian grasses.

Then, too, there were the old tower ruins, outlines softened by man's neglect and nature's care, overgrown by moss and lichen, graced by wild flowers.

And, everywhere, handsome livestock. Indeed, all western Ireland appears to be one huge open range where mountain passes are often blocked by wandering sheep and goats and where you may sit awhile surrounded by a herd of cows while they size up the situation and decide whether to amble past your car on one side or the other or let you pass at all.

Using the car horn in this pastoral setting would be quite out of place. If you're in a hurry, you shouldn't be here.

Along with the rich natural scenery, the Irish themselves must certainly be considered the

country's greatest tourist attraction. There is not the slightest doubt but that they top the rest of the people in Europe in sheer friendliness.

While driving, it is best to keep one hand at the top of the steering wheel. That way, you can more easily raise it in reply to the friendly salutes of everyone you pass in the rural areas.

I'd been pretty worried about driving here (on the opposite side of the road and in a car with a stick shift, to which I've become unaccustomed). It didn't take me long to appreciate the fact that these drivers in Ireland were anxious to give me every break. Even during my most glaring goofs, there was only patience — no raised fists, no honking, no audible cursing. On the Con-

tinents they would have killed us.

One thing we were not prepared for was the generally high quality of cuisine, along with a very good selection of imported wines at quite acceptable prices. Meals at the King Sitric-Howth, Snaffles, Lord Edward, Shelbourne Hotel-Dublin, Talbot Hotel-Wexford, Ardree Hotel-Waterford, The Purple Heather-Kenmare, Aghadoe Heights Hotel-Killarney, Old Ground Hotel-Ennis and Fitzpatrick's Shamrock Inn-Shannon were outstanding. Our personal preference soon established what we would or would not order; we ate, for instance, very few vegetables.

In the rating of fair-to-poor, we lumped most vegetables, most salads,

all fruit except for raspberries, and would be complete without a mention of the and ice cream (by superb beverage Peter comparison with Continental varieties).

No report on Ireland would be complete without a mention of the Great Saluted with the remark, "Of all wine, Irish wine is the best." He was referring, of course, to Irish Whiskey.



Spectacular Ireland measures up to all its rave notices, especially in the way in which its charming people make visitors feel welcome. These tourists are enjoying the Torc Waterfall in Killarney, Co. Kerry.

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