





# | Burren Bliss



Buy Me A Coffee

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BY MORGAN BOLGER ON JULY 10, 2022

SPORT

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During a visit to the Burren in County Clare, Oliver Cromwell's lieutenant-general [Edmund Ludlow](#) wrote of the memorable landscape that it had 'not water enough to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury him'. A spell on a yoga retreat might have opened his eyes to the serene natural beauty around him.

In 1999, off a small fuchsia-fringed road near the Clare-Galway border, Dave Brocklebank found what he had been looking for at last, a haven from the turbulence of the city, and a place to realise his dream. The [Burren Yoga Retreat Centre](#) was born; where the wisdom of the East meets the wild Atlantic West of Ireland.





*Wild Atlantic Way.*

Dave and his wonderful family have invested themselves in the venture with admirable devotion, and no little sacrifice, bringing together a dedicated team to offer a retreat to enhance body and soul. I can testify to the experience affecting lasting, positive change.

I arrived in the early evening and breathed in the clean, fragrant air. A sylvan pathway led me past moss-covered rocks to the door where I was greeted by Dave, his azure eyes brilliant pools of inner calm.



He showed me around the recently renovated building; immaculately clean and finished to the highest standard. The objective is to be carbon neutral by 2025. The bedrooms, all newly constructed with fine-quality woodwork, very comfortable beds, and sophisticated modern touches such as underfloor heating and electric window blinds, are ample in size and bright, affording verdant vistas of lush fields and woodland. The bathrooms are sparkingly modern and elegant.

There is a room for silent relaxation, and one for massage from a therapist who, I was assured by a repeat visitor, has “magic hands”. Upstairs is a cosy nook for reading, with numerous books on yoga and meditation. There is a comfortable lounge in which to take one’s ease and admire the treescape and mountains beyond, or chat with fellow guests. Outside is a circular, stone space for outdoor activities; a nod to our ancient forebearers and the many archaeological sites in the area.

In the dining room, Ida, our Croatian cook, presented sumptuous and cleansing vegetation and vegan meals, produced from locally sourced and organic ingredients, all washed down with water from the well.





*Gráinne leads a class.*

The *pièce de résistance* is the brand-new state-of-the-art yoga studio. Here, in this large and well-lit space with enormous windows offering more expansive views of bare mountainside, and trees swaying in the breeze like seaweed in a current – Gráinne, poise and grace incarnate – gave gentle instruction in yoga and meditation, at times bathed in glorious sunlight. She is one of a team of teachers who Dave, over years of careful selection, has chosen to offer the best possible experience to well-practised yogis and novices alike.

And then there were the daily outings. The first was to mythic [Coole Park](#), once home to Lady Gregory and haunt of Irish literary greats, their names carved into its Copper Beech autograph tree; W. B. [Yeats](#), Bernard Shaw and J.M Synge. We took a stroll by its otherworldly turlough (a disappearing lake), its banks ablaze with vivid green, and along its woodland paths, passing great cypresses and cedars along the way. Then lunch in the pretty market town of Gort, in the charming Gallery Café with paintings by local artists displayed on the walls.





*Clints and grykes.*

On the second day, led by radiant, soulful Erin, our guide and *bean an tí*, we went to Mullaghmore, to explore the renowned karst landscape of the Burren, those primordial tropical seabeds, abrim with petrified corals, urchins, and ammonites, sculpted by glaciers and carved by rainfall into incised pavements of glistening clints and grykes. The latter are fecund with long-ago deposited Connemara soil to create nurseries for the abundant flora (among them orchids, herb Robert, and honeysuckle) to jostle towards the sunlight.

A dragonfly, tinkerbell wings of shimmering organza, sketched a perimeter around us as we walked. Upwards we climbed to the summit, horizons of wonder before us, it seemed as if we were atop the cerebral grey matter of a submerged giant.

Returning to the road, we paused to pet some “self-walking” dogs and headed to the shore, via the house which was the location for the irreverent Irish sit-com Father Ted, enjoyed an excellent seafood lunch at Linnane’s in New Quay and later, a swim in the brisk, abluting ocean.





Back to the centre and a yin yoga session. Given my lack of yoga over the previous months I was reminded of a quote from another famous Clint, who once growled, “a man’s gotta know his limitations”, but I was surprised to feel how my muscles and joints could be coaxed into suppleness in the right environment, and with such expert instruction.

So if you’ve been thinking of doing yourself the favour of spending some time at a lovingly-envisaged and realised home away from home, with superb food and facilities and nestled in sublime natural beauty then this retreat is for you.

Personally I have felt a renewed sense of corporeal freedom and am learning to transcend more easily the clints and grykes of my mind, moods, and emotions, and am discovering a higher plane of consciousness, to operate in the space between thoughts,

I carry it still, this moment of bliss in the Burren. And I hope you will too.



*The Burren Yoga Retreat offers full-board stays of various lengths with expert yoga instruction throughout the year.*

*All Images courtesy of the Burren Yoga Retreat.*

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