

Where the Adventures Begin

The sense of exploration and taking on challenges without a safety net seemed to be part of my nature from the jump, metaphorically and literally.

My mother recalls that before I had even turned one, or could walk, she was baffled, repeatedly finding me smiling on the bedroom floor, even though only moments before she had securely placed me in my cot surrounded by high guard rails on all sides. This was before the days of cot cameras, so Mam made do with secretly peeping around the corner of the door, unbeknown to the reckless adventurer in the cot. To her dismay, I somehow managed to clamber my tiny body onto the edge of the railing of the cot, precariously balancing my torso on it for a split second. Before my mother could react, I threw caution to the wind, as I lumped myself like a sack of spuds onto the floor, landing any which way gravity took me. That was the mystery solved and an indication of things to come for a child that was prone to giving himself a bump or 10.

Once I got on my feet, I had ants in my pants. I was an instant runner, an easily distracted explorer and a right pain in the arse for any adult given the impossible responsibility to keep an eye on me. My reputation was so bad that my older relatives and their friends wouldn't risk taking me out for a walk a second time. 'Fool me once ...' and all that. I was there one second and out of sight the next.

After a few scenarios like this, I can't blame my parents for playing it safe. Still, I was horrified to see some of my cruel toddler photos recently. There I was in one of those oppressive harnesses, being walked like an excited puppy by my brother. My mam tells me it was essential and completely justified, for my own sake and for the benefit of everyone else's nerves. My inquisitive nature, lack of any self-preservation instinct and speed off the mark, must have tested the hearts of the adults around me.