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September 4 – October 1, 2020, Vol XVI, Edition 217

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ENVIRONMENT

pages 39-40



HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

pages 42-47



GARDENING

pages 50-51



Twelve-year old Jonah Bates visiting Hairy Henry Care Farm in Ballylickey, which offers therapeutic and educational activities to children and adults with additional needs. Hairy Henry Farm is appealing to the West Cork public to support its Gofundme campaign to raise funds for a barn. See inside for more details.

Internationally renowned artist donating proceeds of art sale to CUH Charity and West Cork Rapid Response Unit

West Cork based, internationally renowned Australian artist, John Kelly, spent 45 days in hospital and many more months in and out, two years ago. That he is alive today is thanks to the astonishing professionalism of the West Cork First Responders Unit and Cork University Hospital (CUH). To show his gratitude, John is donating the proceeds from the sale of one of his paintings, 'Castlehaven', which is being auctioned next month, by Sotheby's, (Ireland).

John says "I ask that you take a moment to look at this painting representing the magnificent view from Ceim Hill looking over Castlehaven Harbour between Reen Peninsula and Castletownsend. Having lived for 17 years in this beautiful, if somewhat remote, part of the world as a healthy and robust person I became acutely aware of both the fragility

of life and the vulnerability that comes with living in a rural environment. In August 2018, I collapsed and would have died if it hadn't been for the combined response of my wonderful family and local friends, the medical 'rapid responders', the ambulance service, and extraordinary care offered by medics and staff at Cork University Hospital. As a gesture of my appreciation, this painting is going to be auctioned through Sotheby's Ireland in September this year with all proceeds going to the CUH Charity and West Cork Rapid Response Unit."

No 56 in the Catalogue, Castlehaven by John Kelly will be included in the Sotheby's auction, Irish Art, including works from the collection of Sir Michael Smurfit on September 9.

To view the painting go to www.sothebys.com

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Everybody is working hard to meet the new guidelines but if you see something that has been missed, notify the business and give them the opportunity to remedy it rather than posting on social media.

Bantry doctor shares his experience as a critically ill patient with Covid-19

Dr. Owen O'Flynn is a 23-year-old trainee doctor from Bantry who spent time at the ICU in Cork University Hospital as a critically ill patient with Covid-19. Dr O'Flynn, will share his experience at the Covid-19 National COVID Research and Scientific Meeting on September 5, which will be attended by medical professionals working in intensive care throughout the country, who will discuss the management of critically ill patients with Covid-19.

Owen, who is currently working in University Hospital Kerry as a first year SHO on the GP South West training scheme, speaks to **West Cork People** ahead of the event about his illness and treatment

From a farming background, Owen is the middle child in a family of seven children. After training in undergraduate medicine for five years in University College Cork, he graduated in May 2019. During his time there, he

experienced many of the Irish hospitals including University Hospital Waterford, South Tipp General Hospital, SIVUH, Mercy University Hospital and CUH. He was also lucky enough to be given the opportunity to travel to Zambia and



L-R: Emma O'Sullivan, Courtmacsherry, who works in Medical Administration in CUH and also spent a prolonged stay in CUH ICU as a patient with Covid-19, Dr. Owen O'Flynn from Bantry, a Trainee Doctor who spent time in CUH ICU as a patient with Covid-19, Dr Corinna Sadlier, Consultant in Infectious Diseases at Cork University Hospital and Dr. Ivan Hayes from Clonakilty, Consultant Intensivist and Critical Care Director at CUH, launch the National COVID Research and Scientific Meeting, a virtual conference for medical professionals and the public on the management of critically ill patients with Covid 19.

Pic: Gerard McCarthy

work in Mission Hospital Lubwe with Surgeon Noonan Society who helps provide medical equipment to many countries in

Africa. During his intern year after graduating, he spent nine months working in CUH and three months working in Bantry

General Hospital.

An all-rounder when it comes to sports, there aren't many that Owen hasn't thrown

his hand to, most notably football and hurling with Bantry Blues, as well as playing rugby

Continued on next page...

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... Cont'd from previous page

with UCC J2 Bulldogs. His most recent interest is hiking, having climbed Carrauntoohil this time last year and Kilimanjaro three years ago.

The very fit and active doctor doesn't know how he contracted the virus and explains how a post viral syndrome resulted in his hospitalisation.

"During what we think was the actual viral infection back in late March my only symptom was anosmia, meaning I couldn't taste or smell anything for about eight to nine days. My first symptoms before admission were stomach pain, sore joints and muscles, vomiting and nausea, diarrhoea, extreme fevers and chills and a diffuse rash."

"During what we think was the actual viral infection back in late March my only symptom was anosmia," he explains "meaning I couldn't taste or smell anything for about eight to nine days. My first symptoms before admission were stomach pain, sore joints and muscles, vomiting and nausea, diarrhoea, extreme fevers and chills and a diffuse rash." It was at this point that Owen was admitted for management of his symptoms and then after two days, admitted to ICU. "During my admission I was swabbed for Covid three times and each time it was not detected," he says. "I was however antibody positive, which gave us the leading diagnosis, as it takes approx four to six weeks post infection to develop antibodies."

"We are unsure but the most likely thing that happened is a Kawasaki-related disease (also known as PIMS) process that resulted in my lungs going into acute respiratory distress (ARDS), as well as an acute cardiomyositis, which resulted in my heart function becoming a third of what it should be in the space of a few hours."

Owen's treatment consisted mostly of supportive management and excellent nursing care. Medication-wise, he was given antibiotics, as is the case with any hospitalised Covid patient to cover for superimposed infection. He was also started on cardioprotective medication, which he is still taking. "I was also on a high dose of anti-coagulation, to reduce

my risk of getting a clot in my lungs or a stroke, both of which have an increased risk in Covid infection," says Owen. "Most importantly, I was on high flow humidified oxygen up to 60 litres/min at 60 per cent, and I received inotropic support in order to keep my blood pressure stable, as a result of my poor heart function. I would like to thank all involved in my care both while I was in and out of the hospital, as I did feel very included in my care and every decision that was made."

Owen says that he felt frightened every day while in ICU and he feels fear every day since. "The scariest parts were first going into ICU on Tuesday because my deterioration was so quick and on Thursday and Friday when I really felt the effects of my heart failing," he explains. "The things that kept me somewhat sane while I was lying face down were the messages of support from family and friends across the world, as well as the doctors looking after me, as they were all very concerned for my wellbeing. I remember trying to stay strong while phoning home every evening, sometimes struggling to complete a sentence with the shortness of breath."

Physically Owen's recovery took about eight weeks from admission to returning to work. He is aware that eight weeks is not a long time to be out sick given the fact that he was admitted to ICU, however he feels that his recovery was very well managed. "Physiotherapists phoned me everyday to give me advice and answer any concerns I might have had. I am still on medication for my heart and will be for the foreseeable future. I don't know if I've mentally recovered from it yet as I was very sick at the time. I know that on any given day in the ICU I could have died and it is very tough to live with that knowledge."

His fear now lies in the long-term effects the virus may have on his health. "We don't know what the future holds. We have very limited follow-up data on antibody response, we know very little about these post viral syndromes and we don't know how long outside of primary infection they can happen," he says. "Personally my biggest fear is a long-lasting cardiomyopathy that result in heart failure. My scans show us that my risk of that is the same as if I never got the infection but we have a knowledge base for this virus that is infantile in the grand scheme of things and we don't know what's around the corner."

He says he couldn't be prouder of the people of Ireland for gritting their teeth and doing

all they needed to flatten the curve in the first instance. "I know that the government has had to make some very difficult choices in the past seven months and I'm sure there will be even tougher ones to be made in the coming months."

Owen would like to encourage people to continue to social distance and keep their contacts down to as minimum as possible. "I would also like to thank both the local people of West Cork and nationwide who prayed for me and had mass said for me during my illness."

Hosted by The Intensive Care Society of Ireland, the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine of Ireland and the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland, the Covid-19 National COVID Research and Scientific Meeting on September 5 will focus on the experience and learnings of Irish Intensivists (ICU doctors) and Anaesthesiologists during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. They will explore what happened, the learnings, the best treatments options from an Irish and global perspective, and ethical issues surrounding the management of this new and challenging disease.

"I don't know if I've mentally recovered from it yet as I was very sick at the time. I know that on any given day in the ICU I could have died and it is very tough to live with that knowledge."

The online event is free for the public to attend. However, as numbers are limited online registration closed on Wednesday evening. To check if there is still availability, you can email Rebeca Williams at rwilliams@coa.ie.

The meeting takes place the day after the ICU 4 U Charity Cycle, which will see ICU doctors, nurses and staff cycle from all over Ireland to Dublin to raise €100,000 for people particularly affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The cycle is in aid of four charities – Breakthrough Cancer Research (cancer patients), Aware (mental health), ALONE (older people), and ICUsteps (ICU patients). The concept came about because ICU staff are uncomfortable at being called frontline and heroes. They want to put the focus back on those most in need. For more see www.icu4u.ie.

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Public invited to help raise a barn for Hairy Henry

Hairy Henry Care Farm in Ballylickey is appealing to the public to support its Gofundme campaign to raise funds for a barn.

Hairy Henry's Farm offers therapeutic and educational activities to children and adults with additional needs (Autism, Down Syndrome, emotional and social difficulties, mental health issues etc.) and is serving the West Cork community and families and organisations as far as Cork city.

Sandra Schmid, Therapeutic Riding Coach and Social Worker, together with Hairy Henry, the therapy horse, and a unique team of friendly farm animals, supports people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with animals and nature in a safe space where learning and growing and healing can happen at everyone's individual pace.

Sandra established the Care Farm in 2013, and she says one of the big struggles they have had over the years is the unpredictable weather; because all sessions take place outdoors, they are weather dependent and it is very tricky to offer a consistent service all year around to clients who

often urgently need regular and frequent therapeutic support.

Hairy Henry's is looking for help to raise a barn so that sessions can take place all year around in a safe dry space, independent from wet and windy conditions. Sandra has calculated the overall cost in

Hairy Henry Care Farm supports people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with animals and nature in a safe space where learning and growing and healing can happen at everyone's individual pace.

the region of €100,000. She is hoping to receive some grant aid and raise some money with local and online fundraising activities.

Since the campaign has started, Sandra has raised over 10 per cent of the amount. A Gofundme campaign has been set up in an effort to raise the outstanding amount of

€42,000.

You can find out more details of this worthwhile project on Hairy Henry's Youtube channel.

Sandra will be taking Hairy Henry the therapy horse on tour in the first week of September to raise awareness of her unique service and to meet with communities all over West Cork. Families will have an opportunity to meet up with Henry the horse.

The Hairy Henry tour dates are:

- August 30: Schull 11am-1pm, Ballydehob 1.30pm, Durrus 2.30pm
- September 1: Macroom 11am-1pm
- September 2: Kinsale 11am-1pm
- September 3: Dunmanway 11.30am-1pm, Castletownbere 9.30-10.30am
- September 4: Clonakilty 9.30-11am, Bantry 12-2pm
- September 5: Bandon 9.30-10.30am, Skibbereen 11.30am-1pm

For more information, please get in touch with Sandra on 087 9389867 or see her website www.hairyhenry.com for more details.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the September issue of West Cork People.

I believe I welcomed you to the September issue as well in my letter last month; is anyone else having trouble keeping track of the days?

I think rollercoaster is the only word to describe the summer past. Coming back after three months in lockdown, businesses enjoyed an unexpected decent summer season with staycationers choosing West Cork as their number one holiday destination. Covid, while still an imminent threat, had retreated somewhat; the sun came out for a while and the future didn't seem so bleak. Then last month, some of our politicians let us all down very badly (I'm not even going to go there) and the rain came pouring down, causing massive flooding and millions of euros worth of damage in towns and villages all over West Cork. The future didn't look so rosy anymore. As a business that has been flooded twice in two different locations over the years, we understand the financial and mental pain of these business owners; West Cork needs action now, not in one years time, two years, or three, we need it now. It's time for our leaders to step up and ensure that culvert work and flood schemes are completed, as there is only so much that small and medium businesses, the lifeblood of this country, can take!

As schools fill with the excited and happy chatter of children this week, we can only hope that everyone will continue to work towards suppressing this virus in our community. As Kieran mentions in his column this month, we face our biggest test fighting off a second wave and now is the time for the people to lead.

Inside this issue, you will find plenty to take your mind off our current troubles. We bring you a special feature on 'Remote Working', which for so many in West Cork has become the norm. We speak to employers and employees of local companies to get their experiences; covering the positives such as the freedom and increased productivity it can encourage but also addressing some of the concerns that employees may have. Connectivity, Planning a Home Office Space, Technology, Retraining and Employment Opportunities and Wellbeing are all discussed.

Everyone is feeling a bit fatigued this month; it's time to slow down and take stock. Just remember we live in one of the most beautiful parts of the world!

Until next month

Mary



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Freedom of the press...or not



By Clonakilty Amnesty Group

Two days before World Press Freedom Day, Amnesty International warned that censorship of vital information related to the Covid pandemic has become a global phenomenon and urged governments to prioritise public health over their own egos.

Ashfaq Khalfan, Amnesty International's Director of Law and Policy, wrote, "We all have a right to know about crucial issues that can affect our health, like equipment shortages, as well as to access reliable statistics which may contradict the official government line."

Journalists around the world have been threatened, arrested and harassed by governments who have fallen short of telling the truth to those they govern.

In Egypt the editor-in-chief of Alkarar Press newspaper disappeared for a month for

challenging the official statistics on Covid-19 cases.

In Venezuela, where there are serious shortages to basic health care and medicine, journalist Darvinson Rojas spent 12 days in detention for reporting on the spread of the virus.

In Hungary, where journalists have reported being harassed, threatened and smeared for scrutinising the government's response to the outbreak, Victor Orban has amended the country's Criminal Code with new provisions that threaten journalists with up to five years in prison for spreading false information.

In Myanmar, a Ministry of Health Official said criminal charges would be filed against anyone who speaks out about the lack of Personal Protective Equipment.

The list of countries where speaking the truth to power is a dangerous act is long – Niger, Venezuela, Turkey, India,

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Rwanda, Uganda, Somalia, Tunisia, Palestine, Russia, Egypt, Hungary.

We need honest and factual reporting at the best of times. In the worst of times, with conspiracy theories abounding, ranging from the ridiculous i.e. that the virus was introduced by governments around the world to control us – to the absurd i.e. that Ireland will become/is a police state, we need the truth even more.

In this country, we can challenge authority and we can express ourselves freely. We live in a democracy. For democracy to survive, let alone flourish, a free press is vital.

We hope you will help us in this vital work, either by joining our group in Clonakilty, becoming a member and/or writing letters and emails. Phone Sue on 023 8845056 or Mary 086 8559199.

Joe and Sean have almost completed their loop of Ireland's coastline



Long-cycle novices Joe McCarthy from Drimoleague and Seán Gordon from Rosscarbery took a month off their summer jobs at The Celtic Ross Hotel to cycle around Ireland's coastline, in order to help two worthy charities, West Cork Rapid Response and Pieta House.

The adventurers (pictured above in Kilorglin, Co. Kerry) set off on August 10 with just a tent, cooking utensils and small amount of luggage on their bikes. A daily log of their journey is being posted on their GoFundMe page "Doing The Loop" where people have donated generously. Joe and Seán are learning much about Ireland's coastline, visiting all its nooks and crannies, and their stories are very entertaining.

They are due to arrive back in Rosscarbery around 3pm on Sunday September 6. Collection buckets will be available between 2-4pm on the Causeway in Rosscarbery if anybody wishes to contribute.

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IMAGINE MORE



Community spirit evident in recent flooding but West Cork wants action

Severe flooding wrecked havoc across many towns and villages in West Cork in recent weeks. Bantry, Skibbereen, Bandon and Rosscarbery were all badly hit with flooding also taking place at Dunmanway, Connonagh, Clonakilty, Drimoleague, Leap and Ballydehob. **John Bohane** hears from business owners and local representatives about the damage and need for action



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FIANNA Fáil
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The unseasonal high volume of rain in August, combined with high tides and lack of culvert defence mechanisms led to distressing scenes in many businesses, residential properties and on many roads throughout West Cork. The substantial damage caused untold heartache for businesses and residents alike in the various communities. The only positive to emerge from the recent flooding destruction was the great community spirit, which shone through in all the local towns and villages. Businesses and locals rallied around helping prevent more damage, which typifies the great character and sense of humanity in West Cork.

Bantry town in particular suffered acute damage in the late hours of Monday, August 24 with Barrack Street, New Street, Main Street and The Quay area destroyed by flooding and businesses and residential property suffering huge damage.

Shane Spillane, proprietor of O'Connor's Seafood Restaurant in Bantry, was overwhelmed by the scene he encountered on arriving at his restaurant. "It came up through the drains and streamed in everywhere including the front door. Our only luck was to have tiles on the floor," he says. Although Shane acted quickly, removing all the furniture from the restaurant, there was of course still damage. "We had to close for two days in order to get it professionally cleaned such as the volume of water," he says. "You couldn't write the script at the moment unfortunately...first with Covid and now severe flooding."

On a positive note, the picturesque town of Bantry has had a strong summer with large numbers of visitors. Local businesses such as O'Connor's Restaurant were happy with footfall over the past few months. "Business has been very good," says Shane. "However, I think we have to keep in mind that we have been probably busier due to so many other places being closed, an unfortunate side-effect of the pandemic."

The strong community spirit in Bantry was evident in the days after the flooding with Shane and his team feeding the huge groups of volunteers in clean up action throughout the town with soup and curry.



Staff Raymond Warner and Michael Corcoran pictured during the clean up of Dri-nagh Co-Op shop in Bantry following severe flooding.
Pic Daragh Mc Sweeney/Provision

The restaurant owner was full of praise for the role everyone played. "The emergency services were great, all putting in huge hours and doing Trojan work," he said. "We were affected badly but there were other places that suffered much worse so were happy to help raise morale and assist others under stress, as we are all in this together."

Richard Harrington, owner of The Quay's Bar in Bantry echoed Shane's sentiments. Born and raised in Bantry, Richard said this was the worst flooding he's ever seen in the town. Richard was working when it happened. "I opened the blinds and saw two feet of water inside the door at 11.30pm," he shares. "I was lucky that I was able to put sandbags out immediately, which was a huge help. Like O'Connor's, staff at The Quay's were able to act quickly, and again having tiles on the floor helped. "We had very minimal damage compared to other places who were not so fortunate," says Richard. "Your heart would go out to the other business owners."

Richard, known to all as Paco, was full of praise for the huge support he received from friends and family members, as he embarked on his clean-up operation. "Everyone rowed in and helped one another. Two friends of mine rang me from Kerry and Dublin respectively, offering to come down and help with the clean up," he revealed. That gave a little boost. Everything helped. My staff were also great; a few hours of mopping



Patrick O'Donovan, TD, Minister of State with responsibility for the OPW, visited Skibbereen to meet with those affected.

and brushing got the job done." The Quay's was able to open the following day at 12noon.

"Bantry urgently needs the flood relief and the culvert works to be completed," says Richard. "We are very prone to flooding, our system is outdated, and it badly needs upgrading. The recent flooding hopefully will focus minds and ensure progress is made quicker, which will benefit everyone in the local area."

Local county councillor Danny Collins, in his role as chair of the West Cork District, called a meeting for councillors and the council executive, which was held on Monday, August 31. Danny, who runs the Boston Bar in Bantry town, revealed that the necessary finance is ringfenced

for the proposed flood relief scheme.

"€6.7 million has been set aside for the flood scheme in Bantry," he explained. "This has been in the pipeline over the last few years. They reckon work won't be completed however for another three years, as it will have to go through the due process and all the relevant parties."

Danny promises that the councillors, as elected representatives, will keep the pressure on to ensure the work gets done as quickly as possible. "We will keep driving this on so the work is completed," he assured. "I also brought up the Humanitarian Fund Scheme to ensure residents and business owners

Continued on next page...

...Cont'd from previous page

get adequately compensated. This scheme presently only covers businesses, but I have written to Minister McGrath to stress the need for residents to be helped also."

Councillor Collins explained the culvert works are completely separate to the flood scheme. "Minister O'Donovan and Minister McGrath also revealed that the money will be there for this work, which is good news," he said. "The response from the various ministers has been very strong and we are guessing the culvert work will be done in the same timeframe. There are different stages to this job and hopefully plans will be put in place to ensure the disruption to the town won't be too bad during works carried out."

Danny recalled his upset upon arriving into Bantry town on the night of the flood the flooding occurred. "When I saw what was in front of me, I nearly cried," he said. "I saw the volume of water coming down Seskin over a four-foot wall, which was a scary sight."

Danny says the town was fortunate there wasn't a high tide that night. "Everyone is drained from the year we have had. Business owners were just getting back on their feet and then this happens. Some businesses opened the following day, while others have yet to re-open."

He is however confident the town will get back on its feet. "Hotels and bed and breakfasts are all reporting a good summer due to domestic tourism," he says. "Bantry is a great town with a lot of great organisations doing good work behind the scenes. Everyone works together for the good of the local community and the future is bright."

Bandon town was also hit that night; the town's drainage and sewer network overwhelmed by the incessant rainfall. Flooding occurred on Bridge Street, Brady's Lane and South Main Street and a number of residential homes and businesses were damaged. Only prevention works from emergency personnel stopped more extensive damage on the night. A lot of anger was expressed by locals and business owners who are dismayed at the constant flood damage to their town despite millions being spent on work in recent years.

Just less than a week before, on August 19, Skibbereen town, in particular Bridge Street, also suffered flooding damage. Once again unrelenting pressure on culverts resulted in the street being flooded. Great community spirit was again evident, which ensured business owners were able to re-open in the immediate aftermath of the flooding.

Ashling, Daly, owner of Beatique by Ashling Daly on Bridge Street acted quickly to



The clean up in Bantry. Pic Daragh Mc Sweeney/Provision



Hairdresser Kathleen Guth cleans her salon on Bridge street, Bandon.

Pic Daragh Mc Sweeney/Provision

limit the damage to her salon. "I got an awful fright when I arrived initially," she said. "There was almost two feet of water at the door and it was up to the windowsill. It came in halfway up the skirting on the inside." Ashling said she was fortunate that help was on hand from great neighbours and friends. "The community spirit was brilliant and I am so grateful to all who helped. We got to work immediately getting a lot of the water out, which ensured no lasting damage to the floors. I stayed closed the following day, as everything was wet, and I had to give the whole place a thorough clean."

Thankfully the flood relief scheme worked in Skibbereen, which helped ensure the rest of the town's streets were unaffected by the flooding. Ashling and her business colleagues are hopeful the recent work on the culverts will further alleviate their fears going forward. "Hopefully it won't happen again. All the various business owners and residents have been through enough," she said.

Earlier in the month from

August 12, Rosscarbery and surrounds suffered millions of euro in damage caused by torrential rainfall over a period of 72 hours, which resulted in flash floods affecting multiple properties. Roads were also destroyed.

Cork South West TD Christopher O'Sullivan has vowed to keep working on behalf of all the residents and business owners who have been affected by flooding in West Cork. "My heart goes out to all who were impacted. The frequency of these events and the amount of towns impacted in Cork South West is frightening. It begs the questions, 'are our towns prepared for the extreme weather, which is becoming far more common?' A commitment has been given to Bantry by Ministers McGrath and O'Donovan, which is great news. I welcome this, but this work needs to happen immediately. Bantry has been flooded five times in the last 30 years. In my role as a TD, I will be pushing for this scheme to be implemented immediately. I will also be working on ensuring residents

can avail of the Humanitarian Grant along with business owners. There were a number of roads destroyed in West Cork, which also need to be repaired immediately."

The Clonakilty-based TD was lavish in his praise for the great community spirit in all the various towns and villages. "It was great to see. People were out with their brushes and generally helping out. On a positive note, the Bandon and Skibbereen Flood Relief Schemes generally worked. They were successful, as without these, more of their streets would have been flooded. In saying that, a thorough investigation still needs to be carried out however. Local authorities have questions to answer in regard to culverts. That is the least that business owners and residents deserve."

The following are extracts from statements released by the Cork County Council Communications Office in relation to the flooding events in Bantry, Skibbereen and Bandon respectively.

"A detailed assessment is now underway into the Bantry flood

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event, involving Cork County Council and the other relevant agencies, including the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Irish Water. This will inform decisions on short-term and longer-term actions, which will feed into the development of the OPW Flood Scheme and Culvert Works."

"The Skibbereen flood event is being reviewed jointly by Cork County Council and the OPW to ensure that the works in both The Cutting and Cork Road areas are robust going forward.

It is expected that a construction tender process will commence in the coming weeks for the culvert and drainage works on the Cork Road, as funding support has been confirmed from OPW and TII."

"Irish Water's Bandon Main Drainage Scheme is also in progress. This will involve some storm water separation and some upsizing of combined sewers. This work, when completed, will provide significantly increased storm water capacity."

Bantry Credit Union launches Scholarship 2020

Bantry Credit Union has announced the launch of its annual Third-Level Education Scholarship Scheme for 2020. The scholarship is worth up to €6,000 over four years to the winner.

Set up in 2003, the scholarship is now in its 17th year. Like everything else this year, the scholarship application and award process is going to be done differently this autumn due to Covid-19.

For starters, it's being run a bit later than usual. That's because it is always tied into the CAO Round One dates. This year, the Round One offers are being issued on September 11, with a reply date of September 16. So, the closing date for receipt of completed application forms for the Bantry Credit Union Scholarship 2020 is Saturday, September 19.

The second change this year is that the entire process is going to be completed remotely. The application process with be completed online at www.bantrycu.ie or through email. And the selection process, including interviews with shortlisted candidates, will be conducted remotely via Zoom.

Announcing the launch of this year's scholarship, Bantry Credit Union Manager Finbarr O'Shea said that "it is just another instance of how everyone is having to adapt to the new realities in a Covid-19 world".

He paid tribute to the Independent Adjudicators who oversee the entire competition every year. The same three adjudicators have been involved more or less from the beginning. They are drawn from UCC, CIT and a second-level school outside Bantry. Finbarr said their commitment to the credit union's scholarship scheme for nearly 20 years "speaks volumes about the calibre, dedication and professionalism of so many educationalists who have devoted their working lives to education".

Full details of the scholarship scheme including application procedure, application form and Terms and Conditions will be available on the credit union's website (www.bantrycu.ie) from September 4. Alternatively students can email Julie Hurley (at julie@bantrycu.ie) who will be handling the administration of the scheme this year.

The main criteria governing eligibility to apply are:

1. The applicant must be either a member or the child of a member of good standing of Bantry Credit Union Ltd as at January 1, 2020.
2. The applicant must be in receipt of an offer of a place at a recognised third-level institution within the European Union.
3. The course the applicant intends to pursue must be a full-time course of at least two years' duration and must lead to the award of a Higher Certificate, its equivalent or a higher award.
4. The applicant must be entering third-level education in the academic year 2020/21 for the first time, whether as a school-leaver or as a mature student.
5. With the exception of a SUSI Student Grant, the applicant must not be in receipt of any other scholarship or other form of funding to a value greater than €250 per annum.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Travel Green List

I have to travel to a country on the 'COVID-19 green list' for essential purposes. What happens if it gets taken off the list while I am abroad?

The Government is advising against all non-essential travel overseas. But people may need to travel to and from Ireland for essential purposes and international travel cannot stop completely.

For that reason, on July 21 2020, the Government published a 'green list' of countries with a similar or lower incidence of COVID-19 to that of Ireland. People entering Ireland from these locations do not have to restrict their movements for 14 days. The list is intended to act as a guide to where Irish residents may travel safely for essential purposes, such as for essential work or to care for family members.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA) travel advice for countries on the 'green list' is that you should take 'normal precautions'. This means that the country is as safe as Ireland. The security rating for all other locations remains unchanged at either 'avoid non-essential travel' ('orange') or 'do not travel' ('red'). However, because the international transmission rate of the virus changes constantly, the 'green list' is reviewed every two weeks. That means that countries and locations can be added or removed at the end of each 14 day cycle.

For example, on August 4 2020, two weeks after the 'green list' was first published, the Government removed five countries from the list (Malta,

Cyprus, Gibraltar, Monaco, and San Marino) because they had rising incidences of COVID-19. This meant that any Irish people who had travelled to Malta, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Monaco, or San Marino before August 4, 2020, now have to restrict their movements for 14 days upon returning home.

In conclusion, if you travel to a country or territory on the 'green list' and the country is removed from the list while you are abroad, you will have to restrict your movements for 14 days to minimise your risk of spreading the virus. This means you must not:

- Visit other people.
- Meet face-to-face with anyone who is at higher risk from COVID-19.
- Use public transport (if possible). If you have no option but to use public transport, you must wear a face covering.
- Go to the shop unless absolutely necessary. If you have no option but to go to the shop, you must wear a face covering.

Lastly, everyone travelling into Ireland from any location, a 'green list' country or not, must complete a Passenger Locator Form.

You can find out more about the rules regarding international travel during COVID-19 on citizensinformation.ie. (information here correct as of August 13, 2020)

Buying a service

I just had a new patio fitted by a landscape gardener two months ago. The patio slabs are already beginning to crack. I am not happy

with the quality of the work. What can I do?

When you hire someone to perform a service you are making a contract. As parties to the contract, you and the landscape gardener (the 'service supplier') have rights and obligations. If your service supplier does not do what they said they would, they are in breach of the contract. Contracts can be written or verbal and a verbal agreement is still legally binding.

Under the Sale of Goods and Supply of Services Act, 1980 you can expect that: The supplier has the necessary skill to provide the service; The service will be provided with proper care and diligence; The materials used will be sound; Any goods supplied with the service will be of 'merchantable quality' (that is of reasonable and acceptable standard, taking into account other factors such as durability and price).

Your service supplier is not allowed to mislead you. They should give you accurate and truthful information about the service. A misleading claim includes where you were told the service is of particular standard or quality and it isn't. If something goes wrong, your service supplier must put things right. As a general rule, the service supplier can repair or replace the service. Alternatively, they can refund the costs of the service to you.

If you are not happy with the quality of the service you should: Act as soon as you can – a delay can indicate that you have accepted faulty services; Do not attempt to repair what went wrong yourself or give it to anyone else to repair it; Make sure that

you have a proof of purchase (a receipt, cheque stub, credit card statement or invoice); Keep all evidence of damage caused by poor work, for example take photos; Check any warranty or guarantee you got from your service provider (the warranty or guarantee is the service supplier's promise about the quality of their services and what they will do if there are problems).

First, complain to service supplier – explain what the problem is and how you want it to be put right. Put your complaint in writing so that you have a record. If you complain over-the-phone or face-to-face make sure to take note of what was agreed.

If the service supplier disputes your claims about the quality of the work, you may need to get the opinion of an independent expert.

Finally, if you have complained to the service supplier and the problem is still not resolved, you can use the small claims procedure (for jobs less than €2,000) or take a civil case (for claims over €2,000).

Know Your Rights has been compiled by Citizens Information West Cork which provides a free and confidential service to the public. WEST CORK HELPLINE 0761 078 390

Email Bantry.cic@citinfo.ie. Information is also available online at citizensinformation.ie and from the Citizens Information Phone Service, 0761 07 4000.

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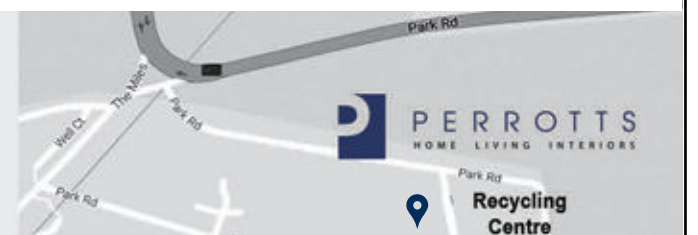
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Discovering a different way of schooling

For so many of us homeschooling during lockdown was an exhausting trial; in fact the collective sigh of relief when the schools reopened recently could be heard all over the country. Although of course there were fun and satisfying aspects to it as well — most of these were reserved for parents who didn't have to juggle working eight-hour or longer days in the home with feeding, entertaining and educating their children. We came to really value the role that teachers play in our children's lives. Despite this, in a climate where wearing masks, maintaining social distance and flexible working have become the norm, more and more people are turning toward homeschooling. In fact even before Covid there was a growing, active community of homeschoolers in Ireland. The Collins' are a home-educating family of seven who live on a busy dairy farm in West Cork. Pearl Collins tells **West Cork People** why she decided to educate her children at home and why isolation or pandemic schooling is in fact not the same as home education at all.

“**T**his year was hard,” says Pearl, who emphasises that pandemic schooling is a lonely pursuit and certainly not the same as home education. Like everyone else the Collins family found it very tough not to see their friends and family and to have to call a halt to their many activities and pursuits out of the home. “It was lonely,” says Pearl “and we had to discover new ways to spend our time within the restrictions of being home 24/7. We missed our old life and had to adapt to the new circumstances just like all other families.”

Four out of the five Collins children (aged three, eight, 10, 13 and 15) are schooled at home. The children pursue individual passions, as well as learning together, each to their age, ability and interest “and our 13-year-old daughter currently attends secondary school,” says Pearl. “They are all free to choose their path and we support them along the way.”

Pearl, a ceramicist, who also works as a stylist, content creator and business and marketing mentor, says that home education has transformed her family's way of life.

“Some years ago we found ourselves completely stressed out! I would spend nearly three hours driving everyday for all the school runs with a newborn in the car; we had an 8, 9, 12, 2,

3 and 5 o'clock school run. We felt our quality of life was low with little time for connection and nurturing. I felt I was rushing the kids and myself constantly! I was burned out and I think the kids were too,” explains Pearl.

“We are now so very grateful to have discovered a different way of life, one that is for us richer in connection with each other and in mindfulness. It is satisfying to think that we were able to adjust to what was best for our family and the physical and mental health of our children.”

Pearl acknowledges that every family will have different needs and what suits one family may not be right for another but she says this was their calling.

As well as keeping chickens, ducks and geese and sharing their days with two wolf-hounds, the family grows a lot of their own produce for a large part of the year, trying to live as sustainably as possible. Pearl works from home, her husband works on the farm; they all navigate life, the ups and downs, together.

Where do they find time for homeschooling? “But there is so much learning in everyday life too,” says Pearl.

We love to be active,” she explains “we hike, we surf, we love taking the boats out on the lakes. We read an awful lot. We cook together, we garden together, we laugh and we



All of the Collins family craved more family time, nature, free thinking, hands-on learning and physical activity.

cry together. I love to learn artisan or heritage skills such as basketry, weaving, sowing, beekeeping and the kids often join me.”

All of the Collins children love performing chemistry and science experiments (the kitchen at times becomes a lab) hearing tales of history or doing woodworking and tinkering. “One of our daughters is very musical and plays the piano and harp for a couple of hours each day, another one lives for art,” says Pearl. “We are always looking for opportunities to build on and expand the diversity of skills we have. In our eyes the children's education does not cease at any one point throughout the day or during the holidays. When we do not have our heads in books or in a hands-on experience — we may be still busy learning through free play, simply by observing, discussing or exploring.”

Pearl says that the incessant monitoring and evaluation of pupil's performances caused their children to develop anxiety, angst and trepidation about school, which is why they decided to take them out of mainstream education.

Their creativity, natural curiosity and love of learning and their problem solving skills eventually became very



Four out of the five Collins children (aged three, eight, 10, 13 and 15) are schooled at home.

inhibited,” she explains. “Close family members, describing one of our children, said ‘the spark was gone.’”

Through discussion, Pearl and her husband discovered they had a different idea of what an education looked like for their family. “Foremost we wanted to nourish our children's faith in their own competence and nourish their self-awareness and self-confidence,” she explains.

All of the Collins family craved more family time, nature, free thinking, hands-on learning and physical activity. “Simply put the children were just not happy people anymore and eventually enough was

enough, we said we would give it a go!” says Pearl.

She says there are many options available to choose from for whatever style of home education might suit your family. “You can explore different curriculums, unschooling, self directed learning, Charlotte Mason approach, Waldorf etc. it takes time to work out what suits. We don't personally put a label on how we do home education, probably we have learned something from all the styles and have over time created our own.”

While not following a curriculum per se in home educating her children, Pearl shares how her eldest daughter is current-

ly working her way towards her International Highschool Diploma (Leaving Certificate Equivalent) via Clonlara (www.clonlara.org). “It works via a credit system,” she explains “there are no exams and she is free to create her own curriculum. She will be able to apply for college just like any student that has come through the Leaving Certificate.”

The children take their learning from a wide variety of resources — explorations, books, interactions, museums, exhibitions, hands-on workshops, documentaries, podcasts or audiobooks...but predominantly people, moments, expe-

Continued on next page...

...Cont'd from previous page

periences and lots of discussions and debates!

A huge part of the learning happens outside of the home and the family interact with lots of people on a daily basis. "We meet with other home educators once a week and we have several activities we go to, for example the kids attend oil painting and classical drawing classes at the Clonakilty School of Painting," explains Pearl.

"Don't be afraid!" is the message Pearl wants to get across to anyone considering home educating their children "Parents embarking on homeschooling tend to worry a lot about Maths; our eldest has taught herself (supported by us) all of the advanced algebra and is currently working through trigonometry. There are such fantastic resources out there to assist and support our children's learning. Some of our favourites are Mel Chemistry (subscription-based), A letter from Afar and the Life of Fred Maths books for something online-based; Khan Academy is brilliant and free."

The main challenge for Pearl and her husband is getting to spend quality time with each other. "Sometimes it's hard to have a longer conversation, as there always seems to be an interruption, a curiosity that



needs investigating or a question that pops up!" she admits.

"I would be telling lies if I didn't say that it is really tiring and trying at times but it's so worth it seeing those happy faces every morning full of zest ready to start another day of home education.

"It took a lot of time spent together and much perseverance...but I believe all the hard

work too has made me be a more resourceful, understanding and a happier mum!"

For anyone looking for help to get started on their home educating journey, Pearl is happy to be contacted on Facebook (Pearl Collins) and she will add any interested parents on to the home education Facebook groups.



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Yoga (in cordoned off Canteen Area)	Mon, Sept 28	8:30-9:30pm	Irene McCarthy	6 weeks	€70
Barre Pilates (in cordoned off Canteen Area)	Thurs, Oct 1	5:30-6:30pm	Mary Kelleher	6 weeks	€70
Criminology QQI Level 5	Thurs, Oct 1	6:30-9pm	Sheila McCarthy	13 weeks	€270
Mat Pilates (in cordoned off Canteen Area)	Thurs, Oct 1	7-8pm	Mary Kelleher	6 weeks	€70
Mathematics QQI Level 5	Thurs, Oct 15	5-7pm	Orfhlaith Dinneen	22 weeks	€390
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2020 Businesswoman of the Year winners announced at Network Ireland West Cork Virtual Awards ceremony

The Network Ireland West Cork Businesswoman of the Year Awards 2020 ceremony took place in a very different style this year with a virtual meeting. Network Ireland is Ireland's longest established and leading female focussed business network. It is the go-to national women in business organisation to promote, support and lead women in business at all levels and to drive their professional and personal development. Guest speaker for the evening Margaret Nelson, CEO of FM104 and Q102 celebrated all finalists and highlighted the importance of networking, saying "Networks are communities of people and fundamentally it's about people and connections when in business."

The awards were sponsored by AIB, official partner of Network Ireland since 2013. Vicki Creen, AIB Manager of Service and Sales, Cork Local Market, spoke on behalf of the judging panel, in which she was joined by Kevin Buckley, co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) at Spearline and Deirdre O'Shaughnessy, editor and co-presenter of Cork's 96FM Opinion Line. Vicki said, "AIB are delighted to sponsor these awards and support women in business. This year proved to be an exceptional year of change for everyone with businesses having to pivot their business model to suit customer needs." She congratulated all those who entered the awards and said "Entries were very strong this year, and as judges, it was hard to select a winner in each category, they are all winners for going through the award process in a time of such challenges."

All those who entered the awards were congratulated for their outstanding achievements and recognised for their resilience in such a challenging year. The awards winners on the evening were as follows.

Mags Riordan of Bumblebee

Flower Farm took home the Solo Businesswoman Award; Marie Wiseman of Wiser Marketing won the Award for Emerging Business; and the Business Innovation Award went to Anne-Marie Kingston of White Sage Decluttering.

The theme of this year's awards is 'Power Within', a celebration of the resilience, motivation, insights and know-how that women in business have to fulfil their potential and lead and inspire others. Each of this year's finalists were entered into a very special award category 'Power Within Champion' designed to recognise these qualities and the winner of this award was Barbara Noonan Sexton of Barbara Noonan Homeopathy.

Speaking at the awards, Caroline Murphy, President of Network Ireland West Cork, said, "To celebrate this year's awards virtually was both a new experience but also a lot of fun. We are very proud of the Network Ireland West Cork Awards winners, Mags, Marie, Anne Marie and Barbara. These awards are a real opportunity to firstly review their businesses and then showcase them to a wider audience. It can be a real confidence booster as to receive this kind of acknowledgement is very special. My heartfelt condolences to the other finalists but I'm confident that the winners will represent our branch in a very positive and professional way."

"As a branch, we have been so well represented at National level. We are hoping for a hat trick win in 2020 and to bring a third National award back to West Cork," she added. Caroline thanked all those who entered, along with the judges and speakers and the committee for all their input in making this a very special event.

One hundred per cent of ticket sale proceeds from this event will be donated to branch president Caroline's chosen charity,



Barbara Noonan Sexton of Barbara Noonan Homeopathy.
All pics: Dermot Sullivan



Anne-Marie Kingston of White Sage Decluttering.



Marie Wiseman of Wiser Marketing.



Mags Riordan of Bumblebee Flower Farm.

which is Féileacáin, a charity very close to Caroline's heart. Caroline thanked Marie Cregan from Féileacáin who spoke passionately about the support that

Féileacáin offer to families who have been affected by the death of a baby.

Each of the winners selected from this region will showcase

West Cork businesses and put a spotlight on them not only on a local, but on a national level. The winners from Network Ireland's regional awards will compete

for the coveted national awards, which will be hosted virtually from Powerscourt Hotel on Friday, October 2, 2020.



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When food can kill – a lesson from WWII



THE HISTORY & POLITICS CORNER

Shane Daly

Shane Daly is a History Graduate from University College Cork, with a BAM in History and an MA in Irish History.

"They were put on a rich diet and began to recover and put weight on but then they died suddenly." –Laurie Pettit

Refeeding syndrome for many centuries was an unknown entity and remained somewhat of a myth until the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps in 1945. As well as being a relatively unknown entity, it is also possibly the least talked about cause of fatality in the Second World War.

Soviet soldiers upon the liberation of WWII camps were met by thousands of men, women and children who had been in a state of medical starvation for months on end. The well-meaning soldiers – met at the gates of the camps by POWs with their ribs and sternum protruding from their bodies and chests and

obviously in need of medical care – took food such as biscuits and chocolate bars from their own government-issued ration supplies and gave them to the prisoners, not knowing that it would lead to their almost immediate death. It is estimated that 500 POWs from Auschwitz concentration camp and as many as 14,000 from the Belsen concentration camp – most famously known as the site where Anne Frank's family died upon capture – died of refeeding syndrome.

There are reports from 1945 of prisoners dying immediately having taken their first bites of food, however when fleeing the concentration camps, the Nazi's burned thousands of documents and medical records that they kept from previous experiments on the prisoners, therefore it is very difficult to confirm this to be true. The reports of people dying immediately may also be attributed to the many other ailments that the POWs would have been suffering from. What we do know now (from documented refeeding cases in the years post 1945 and advances in medical knowledge from cases of patients suffering from anorexia) is that death from refeeding, if it is done incorrectly, occurs within 36-48 hours of first taking in sustenance to the body. This is a result of the body going into shock from the re-introduction to calories.

As Soviet scouts, then troops, arrived at the Auschwitz complex, bewildered prisoners greeted them with tears and embraces. Anna Polshchikova, a Russian prisoner, later recalled the gruff confusion of the first soldiers. "And what are you doing here?" they enquired in an unfriendly manner. We were baffled and did not know what to say. We

looked wretched and pathetic, so they relented and asked again, in a kinder tone. 'And what is over there?' they said, pointing northwards. Also a concentration camp. 'And beyond that?' Also a camp. 'And beyond the camp?' Over there in, the forest, are the crematoria, and beyond the crematoria, we don't know."

The first Soviet troops to arrive moved on toward other targets, but the Red Army soon took over the camps, establishing field hospitals on site. Polish Red Cross workers – volunteer doctors, nurses and paramedics who just months earlier had participated in the Warsaw Uprising – assisted in the recovery too. "The situation was desperate," recalled Józef Bellert, the physician who organised the group. "We could barely administer the most urgent medical aid." As they got to work, they saw body parts strewn around ad hoc cremation pits used after the SS demolished Auschwitz-Birkenau's crematoria; human remains and ashes were everywhere. Survivors suffered from malnutrition, bedsores, frostbite, gangrene, typhus, tuberculosis and other ailments. And though the SS had attempted to destroy all evidence of mass murder, they had left massive storerooms filled with shoes, dishes, suitcases, and human hair. "It was chaos," says Jonathan Huener, a Holocaust historian at the University of Vermont.

Once established, the Red Cross staff and local volunteers responded as best they could to the survivors' needs, navigating a cacophony of different languages. They diagnosed patients, gave them identification documents and clothing, and sent over 7,000 letters to help the patients locate

family and friends around the world. "Some of the sick did not realise that they were now free people," recalled Tadeusz Kusiński, a Red Cross orderly. At least 500 of the 4,500 patients died, many from refeeding syndrome or a lack of sanitary facilities.

Shocked at the skeletal condition of some of the prisoners they were liberating who had been subsisting on starvation diets for months or even years, Allied soldiers handed over every scrap of food they could lay their hands on. But then – many of these reports say – 'the succour has an unexpected and horrifying effect: some of the prisoners fall instantly dead at the first bite, within minutes many others have followed.'

The most infamous of these stories comes from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in northern Germany, best known as the camp where Anne Frank died after her family's arrest. Belsen did not have gas chambers and did not conduct mass executions as were carried out at Auschwitz and others, but by the end of the war it was suffering from a terrible epidemic of typhus and was as deadly as any camp. In December 1944, five months before the camp was liberated, Germany began mass transportation of prisoners from other camps into Belsen. This made the overcrowded, diseased, and starvation conditions far worse. From that point, the death rate of prisoners approximately tripled every month, reaching over 18,000 dying in March 1945 alone.

When the allied troops arrived, they found 60,000 survivors, most of who were near death from typhus, starvation, or both.

From an article about Belsen in a BBC series on the liberation of the camps: 'Some inmates had been starved for so long that they had lost the ability to digest the rations that well-meaning British soldiers offered them; within minutes of taking a biscuit, some inmates just passed away.'

During starvation our body makes a number of changes to its chemistry in response to starvation, changes which are intended to preserve its most important tissues for as long as possible. Electrolyte imbalances often result. Then when you start eating again, a whole wave of fluid and electrolyte shifts takes place. Insulin production increases, among other changes. The main feature of refeeding syndrome is hypophosphatemia, a dangerous shortage of phosphates in the serum, as well as shortages of other minerals. Phosphorus in particular is essential for all cellular processes, and hypophosphatemia can result in respiratory failure, cardiac failure, arrhythmia, seizures, coma, and death. Although the liberating soldiers at Belsen quickly learned that refeeding was doing its share of harm, the mechanisms weren't known. But they couldn't just not feed the people. And from what's recorded historically and what's known today, it does indeed appear that fatal refeeding syndrome was responsible for at least some substantial portion of those 14,000 post-liberation deaths.

We do see refeeding syndrome today. There's no ethical way to deliberately put test subjects into such a dangerous physical state, but people already in that condition do come into hospitals, so we have study data on the syndrome. Mostly these are an-

orexia nervosa patients, but there are a variety of other types of patients with severe malnutrition. Among other lessons, these cases have given us an opportunity to study the actual time of onset of hypophosphatemia. The average time is 1.9 days after refeeding begins. This is generally in line with the best reports from Belsen and other camps, which stated that many prisoners died after just a few days.

More importantly, these modern cases have taught us how to refeed safely and avoid the syndrome altogether. According to data published in the British Medical Journal, which studied over ten thousand such cases, 100 per cent of patients went into hypophosphatemia when fed intravenously with a solution that did not include phosphorus supplementation; but when it did, the incidence was reduced to just 18 per cent. So clearly, phosphate supplementation is key in refeeding. The current recommended guidelines for refeeding malnourished patients is to start with multivitamin supplements, and then proceed with feeding at 10 kcal per kilogram of body weight per day, and slowly increase it over four to seven days. This allows the patient to adjust to the re-introduction of calories and has a much higher chance of survival. The phenomenon of refeeding syndrome is unusual but the unfortunate events of the liberation of concentration camps during the Second World War has allowed us to become more educated on the topic and in turn equipped us with the ability to save the lives of countless people in the future.

The 'Secrets' of Skibbereen's Masonic Lodge

Visitors to Skibbereen are sometimes surprised to come across a building, incongruously tucked

away on Mardyke Street, with a neo-classical façade adorned with a 'square and compasses' motif. Locals have ever known it

simply as the Masonic Hall.

But what is freemasonry and what secrets lie within? The present master of the lodge, Pat

Evans, a retired HSE manager, is happy to explain.

"Freemasonry is a world-wide organisation that has its origins in the traditions and ceremonies of the medieval stonemasons. Daniel O'Connell, 'The Liberator', described it as 'philanthropy, unconfined by nation, colour, sect or religion.'"

"The Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland was formed in 1725 and is a fraternal, non-political, non-religious and charitable organisation that welcomes men of good character to membership. It administers lodges across Ireland from its headquarters at Molesworth Street, Dublin (www.freemason.ie).

"Skibbereen's lodge was formed in 1817. We meet eight times a year, from October to May. Each meeting begins with a formal ceremony, then the routine business of minutes, matters arising, a report from the almo-

ner on members who may be ill or in hospital, and so on. There are sometimes presentations on various aspects of freemasonry such as our history, the ancient origins or our ritual; how men of good character may make a better contribution to the society in which we live. In keeping with the ethos of freemasonry discussions relating to politics and religion are strictly prohibited and no member is allowed to use their membership for personal benefit or gain.

"The meeting concludes with a charity collection and closing ceremony after which we enjoy a small 'festive board' prepared by one of our members.

"Each Christmas we donate to local charities. Over the years these have included the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (Skibbereen), Cope, Co-Action, Skibbereen Geriatric Society/ Meals-on-Wheels, Cancer Connect West Cork, Marymount

Hospice, Schull Community Hospital and West Cork Women against Violence. In March this year, we donated €5,000 to local frontline volunteer services helping those most at need in our community due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Government Covid-19 Regulations permitting, both visitors and locals will be very welcome to visit Skibbereen's unique lodge room on Culture Night 2020 to be held on Friday, 18th September 2020. To ensure a safe and enjoyable visit, admittance will be by advance online booking only on eventbrite.ie. For those unable to visit, you can still enjoy a virtual tour from your armchair that evening on www.culturenightcorkcounty.ie. If you can't make it on the night you can see our video on youtube. Everyone is welcome on the night, so spread the word - it's not a secret!



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How a Scot accidentally discovered his West Cork heritage

In last month's issue **Paul O'Neill's** journey tracing his West Cork roots took him to Dunmanway. This month he continues on to Reenroe in Clonakilty.

Our next stop was the farm at Reenroe, Clonakilty where my grandfather was born. At that time, it was in the hands of another of my Dad's cousins and his wife where another warm welcome awaited us (although I'm thoroughly ashamed to say that I forget their names). Their farmhouse was built in the 1950s, if memory serves, but the remains of the original farm cottage, the one in which my grandfather was born, were only a few hundred yards away, although it was just an overgrown pile of rubble at that time. We felt like royalty when our hosts dusted off some antique-looking bottles of Guinness for us, and we were then regaled with memories of days gone by. They all talked about my grandfather, recalling him as a person they knew well and loved, but also remembering his prowess as a horseman, and we were shown a photo of him jumping over a rather high-looking farm wall on a horse. I wish I remembered more about that visit, but I was young then, a bit bewildered by the tsunami of family history, and things that didn't seem all that important then feel like the most vital of details now. Being in the same room as those four people was very special.

We stayed a couple of hours, then dropped Michael back at his shop and said goodbye, but our day was by no means finished, as Denis was very keen for us to see an essential totem in our family history, the Kilmichael monument. In Glasgow, where we grew up, the IRA was taboo, mainly due to the ongoing troubles in N. Ireland. You'd see it graffitied on walls and sometimes hear IRA songs at football matches but it was well known to all that its mere mention could land you in serious trouble. Imagine our surprise then, when we were taken to this massive monument with 'Irish Republican Army' engraved on it. I remember, much to my embarrassment, looking around uneasily to make sure no one was there to see us, as we'd get reported, or something.

On the very spot where one of the most important engagements of the Irish War of Independence took place, Denis, swelling with pride, told the gripping story of the boys of Kilmichael. One of those boys was Stephen O'Neill, Staff Captain of the Third Cork

Brigade, Section Commander of the West Cork Brigade Flying Column, but also my great uncle and my dad's godfather. We realised quite a few things that day, such as how ignorant we were of Irish history. We learned also that these fighting men of Kilmichael were extremely brave, incredibly hardy, ready and willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and are rightly talked about and commemorated to this day. Not only that – we had a war hero in our family (just not the kind that can be celebrated too readily in the UK) and the family could not have been prouder.

I have since devoured all the reading material I could find on West Cork's vital role in the Irish War of Independence, and Uncle Stephen is mentioned several times. By all accounts, he was dedicated to the cause, was valued by his peers and acquitted himself with valour, but after playing an important role in many engagements and going on the run, was captured and spent a year in British prisons. After the war, he ran a shop in Clonakilty and worked in the building trade, amongst other things, then lived out the latter part of his life in Co. Kerry with his wife and family. He sadly died on July 7, 1966, just days before the unveiling of the Kilmichael monument, an event he had been looking forward to attending.

The remainder of our trip was of course very enjoyable but when Iain and I look back on that week in Ireland; it is our West Cork experiences that we value most. It was almost as magical for him as it was for me.

The magic didn't stop there however – when I went home and told my Dad all about what had occurred, it inspired him to make a trip over himself and he was able to reconnect with his long-lost family, so that chance encounter on a Spanish island gave rise to a remarkable chain of events and made a lot of people very happy.

In 2003, I made another pilgrimage back to Dunmanway and discovered that, sadly, Denis and Michael had both passed on. The TV shop was closed down and empty, which was a shame, but I was delighted to find Margaret still running the pub. She had changed its name to Nealums in tribute to Denis after his death, as Neal was the affectionate nickname the locals had for him. It was wonderful to be back, this time with my son Euan, and the reception we received took me right back to those earlier days. I kept in touch with Margaret thereafter, mostly by way of Christmas cards and was greatly saddened to hear of her passing in 2019. Her brother's family informed



Paul, Jan 2020, standing in the same spot in Dunmanway as his father and friends were pictured in the 1946 photo below.



me, and invited me to visit them, so I have a new connection with my Irish family.

Before I left that day in 2003, I bought a print of a lovely painting by local artist James McCarthy: 'Early Morning, Dunmanway' from 1967, in which a group of men in work clothes are waiting outside Denis O'Neill's pub. It has held pride of place on my wall all these years and I look at it often, with great fondness.

My wife and I had been planning a trip to visit Margaret for quite a while before we heard the sad news. We decided to go anyway and in January 2020, from old haunts in Donegal, we journeyed in our wee camper van, down the stunning Wild Atlantic Way to West Cork, with some unexpectedly beautiful weather.

The pub had closed down after Margaret's passing and, as I stood outside the locked door, its emptiness echoed my sense of loss. It had felt to me like the heart of West Cork and the seat of my family. I was still glad to be there, as it felt like I was paying tribute to all those we had lost, including my Dad, who had passed away in 2006. I had his old Dunmanway cycling photos with me and managed, with a bit of detective work, to find the exact spots in which they were taken. I had also brought a photo of the painting I love so much, so I tried to recreate that too, 53 years after it was painted.

West Cork, you may have gathered, is very dear to me and will always be in my heart. The pub and the people I knew

may be gone now but my ties to the place still feel strong. We had intended to investigate the

area much more thoroughly during our most recent trip, but Ireland is full of the most

wonderful distractions, and we were pressed for time, leaving us unable to achieve all that we had planned to see and do. This just means I'll have to come back very soon – to revisit the farm at Reenroe, and find my great grandparents' grave, visit Uncle Stephen's grave and his old shop in Clonakilty and do a lot more detective work and nosing around. Mostly though I'll return just to be in West Cork, the place of my ancestors and kin, and to feel it soak into my bones. It is part of me now – I suppose it always has been – and I feel lucky to have such deep-seated connections. I also feel hugely privileged to have known the people I met and to have experienced all that I have.

I still wonder what became of that young man from Cork city though – I feel like I owe him a huge debt of gratitude, but he'll probably never know anything about his accidental, yet vital role in my amazing West Cork family story.

If anyone would like to get in touch with Paul regarding any aspect of this story, he would love to hear from you at pauloneill99@yahoo.co.uk.

Paul's article in full will be available to read shortly on www.westcorkpeople.ie

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We are facing our biggest test yet



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

As we tumble towards a second wave of Covid-19 and everyone in the country looks to blame the government, I am always struck by one thing: The failure to look at ourselves as a jigsaw piece in the blame game. Only last month I wrote about our role in choosing our politicians who represent us, and how we must share the consequences when we turn a blind eye and choose bad politicians. I wrote about how we expect our politicians to be cleaner than clean – and once again, they fail us. We correctly look upwards

at the top table and decry the failures of our leaders yet never think about our own misadventures. The blame culture deflects us from our own culpability. So here goes in my attempt to get under everyone's skin this month!

Let us begin with the attachment of blame for the so-called 'mixed messages' that have us all confused. We are a country of capable people. We have, for example, hundreds of thousands of university graduates, entrepreneurs, lawyers and farmers, who have to juggle a million things in one day; stay-at-home mums and dads, who have had to be tutors, carers, cooks and entertainers; tradesmen who impress us with their knowledge and knowhow. It simply amazes me how with all our capabilities, intelligence and experience, we can't handle the so-called mixed messages? We are told one day that we can have a limit of 15 in a house until the next week it changes to six. Masks were not compulsory in shops, now they are, and so on. We were advised not to travel to help keep out the virus, but if you had to, there was a green list of countries that meant a quarantine was not required on return. Then

the green list changed, and some of those messages changed. You cannot have a static set of rules like the Ten Commandments that are fixed and permanent. Circumstances change, messages must change, we must change – but here's the rub. It is we 'the people' who don't want to change.

Let us be honest here – we 'the people' treat the Covid-19 rules like a menu. We pick and choose what suits us. One day you are listening to Joe Duffy, enraged by how a bunch of twenty-year-olds had a house party, as you slip into your jacket before going off to the local GAA or soccer game, where you'll stand shoulder-to-shoulder with spectators and possibly attend a game where the crowd is in excess of the guideline limit. 'Sure, that's nothing compared to those 'yokes' at the house party!' Let us all clap the healthcare workers again and call them heroes and then go to a pub after – for some token of food (or no food) and a feast of pints. 'Sure, what harm is it doing – this was a silly rule anyway!' Let us be outraged if a hairdresser, waiter or a retail worker doesn't wear a mask when serving us, but think it's okay it

pop into a shop holding up the collar of a t-shirt because yet again, the mask was left at home. 'Sure, it's only a few minutes I'll be indoors – what's the hassle!' The numbers of Covid-19 cases are rising again because the rules are being broken every single day, long before the latest fiasco with Calleary, Buttimer, Hogan and co at the golf function. We do not need bad leadership to show us what not to do when clearly we are making a good go of it already. Apologies to the cohort of readers who have shown restraint. It is to you we must look for inspiration. It is a pandemic, it is unprecedented and it needs an unprecedented response. The simplest message of them all is – the virus has not gone away so do the right thing.

Education

As a society we are facing our biggest test yet. One million children are mobilising for school in September. In addition to this, hundreds of thousands of parents are transporting them to and from school. It is a massive body of people on the move, as well as mixing, and it will test us like nothing before. To put it in

context, there are more cases of Covid-19 emerging daily now in Ireland and worldwide than there was when the schools closed mid-March.

Anecdotal evidence and hearsay are unhelpful, so let's look at the facts. Denmark has opened its schools and there has been no explosion of cases. Berlin opened theirs and after just two weeks, 41 schools (at the time of writing) are closed down with the virus. So, will we be Denmark, or will we be Germany? A lot depends on how we behave, but also the health guidelines.

Principals and management have been working around the clock for the last number of weeks. They have been given the unenviable task of doing the impossible. We already have one of the most overcrowded classrooms in Europe and somehow the principals and boards of management have been asked to wave a magic wand to put students into rooms where they are a metre apart? (Let's forget the disingenuous Department of Education guideline, 'two metres where possible', which was never achievable.) Another guideline by the Department of Education

is that school buses will operate at 50 per cent capacity. Yet in the same breath told, if it isn't possible, students will have to buddy up daily with the same partner, in over-crowded buses. It isn't feasible to run half full buses, so where is the emergency investment for transport? Tell the public what they want to hear but do not deliver on the big issues.

Don't get me wrong, it's essential on every front imaginable; education, wellbeing, the economy, parents' sanity, that the schools are reopened. But let us be Copenhagen and not Berlin. We can do it, but we need a systematic, uniformed approach and genuine workable guidelines. Not Department of Education populist messages or laissez-faire public attitudes. We are in a maelstrom of political chaos and a rising tide of Covid-19 cases. We ourselves can take the initiative in how we, as a society, engage in the single biggest daily movement of people since lockdown. We can play our part even if those on high do not. Now it's our turn to show leadership.

Further submissions invited to national project chronicling life during the pandemic

Just a few months on from lockdown, questionnaire entries submitted in April and early May 2020 to the Cork Folklore Project's online 'Chronicles of COVID-19' project, reflect a different world.

On April 7, Cork Folklore Project launched a call for people to send in audio, text and images, or to fill in the online questionnaire, in order to create a record of what life was like for people in Ireland during the pandemic. Since then, the community-based folklore and oral history archive has received over fifty audio recordings,

hundreds of images and over a hundred questionnaire entries detailing people's everyday lives and routines, preoccupations, challenges, joys and reflection on what the crisis means to us.

Cliona O'Carroll, Research Director with the CFP updates us on the work and issues an invitation to all those interested to get involved.

"When the crisis hit, we had to ask ourselves if this kind of a project was worth carrying out at a time when everyone, including ourselves, was in a situation of uncertainty and under stress. One thing that this kind of 'in

the moment' documentation of the everyday can do is to record the thoughts, feelings and observations that we might forget in retrospect. It also provides space for experiences, details and viewpoints that aren't reflected in the mainstream media."

She explains how one relevant question is: 'What does this project do that isn't already happening on social media, with people sharing stories and images?' "Although social media was awash with personal accounts, we were aware that this material isn't likely to be available to ourselves in another decade, let

alone to future generations, and that the information that CFP gathers as an archive on the context of what we collect will become more and more valuable as time goes on," says Cliona.

It was Cork Folklore Project's first time using online – or indeed any kind of written – questionnaires in its work. "I have to admit that I had always viewed written questionnaires as a very poor relation of the face-to-face interview, wondering how they could approach anything like the same richness, and even whether they were worthwhile at all.

Now I have occasion to eat my words. The detail, the thoughtfulness, the surprises, the hope, the sadness, the view into other people's lives – for example, what it's like to live your life as 'extremely medically vulnerable' in the early days of COVID-19 – and the humour: all of this richness contained in the contributions has made me realise how the use of questionnaires can be very worthwhile, particularly in these kinds of circumstances."

You can sample some of the material that people contributed in a previous West Cork People article by going to the westcorkpeople.ie website and searching under the 'Coronavirus' section.

People of all ages and from many walks of life contributed to the project, but Cork Folklore Project is very aware that there were many who might have been



interested who didn't have the time or the access to participate at the time. "We're very aware that those in healthcare or service industries, carers, those without good internet access or computer literacy, and many others heavily affected by the situation, would not have had the same chance to put their experiences 'on the record'," says Cliona. Cork Folklore Project is inviting everyone reading this to consider taking part in the project, to visit the project webpage or to access the Irish-language questionnaire on corkfolklore.org. You can fill out the questionnaire, or send in material, in order to add your thoughts, photos, stories and reflection to this 'people's archive'.

The material collected so far has been archived, and it will be available as a community and research resource from now on. Cork Folklore Project has received a grant from UCC's College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences' Emergen-

cy Strategic Funding Scheme to share the material already gathered in the project. Cork Folklore Project is eager to find out more about life now that the newness of the situation has faded but also to follow up on major themes that emerged from this phase. For example, many people commented that the pandemic reminded them strongly of past epidemics and crises: remembered either from personal experience, such as the polio epidemic in Cork city in 1956, or through family stories, such as those about the 1918 Spanish 'Flu pandemic.

If you have stories, memories, reflection or description of life now or in the past that you would like to share, or are happy to facilitate someone you know who would like to contribute, please do get in contact.

For more information go to corkfolklore.org.



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pride in everything we do and will not compromise, and we feel this will stand us going forward."

SnugPub offer all the extras you could dream of for your very own pub. Draft beer, larger and stout, bottle fridges, traditional beer lanterns and

outdoor sound systems can all be seen in the catalogue on the company's website. Roller shutters are also available to secure your investment!

"We are constantly developing what we offer," says Donal. "We seek out quality products that will enhance the experience of your pub."

SnugPub offers a nationwide service and delivery is usually within two weeks of a confirmed order. When the company calls to fit your pub, social distancing is fully respected.

SnugPubs are also available for businesses and organisations that need assistance with social distancing. Donal explains that: "Our standard

unit is 8ftx5ft but we can custom build to any customers specific requirements. We have installed some units in schools as their 'tuck shops' and some of our bigger units are also being used as home offices... the possibilities are endless for GAA ticket offices etc. We also offer a discount to VFI

members.

"Our success so far has been a huge team effort and we believe that if a job is worth doing it is worth doing right. That's a belief that is now paying dividends. We plan to move our operation to new commercial premises shortly and will probably need to increase our

workforce to keep pace with demand!"

For more details call 087 237 4184 or email snugpubireland@gmail.com www.Snugpub.ie

The innovative duo, Donal Mulcahy and Billy Murphy, go back a long way; their fathers also worked together on various projects in the past. When the sudden sunny spell hit in lockdown, Donal, an insurance broker by day, started thinking about how glorious it would be for people to have their own garden bar, open anytime and serving their favourite tipples. He approached Billy, a builder, with his idea and SnugPub was born.

"We have been delighted with the response to SnugPub," says Donal. "People are loving the product, especially now that we are still unable to head down to 'the local' for a drink and a chat. SnugPub is snug enough to fit anywhere and more affordable than you may think!"

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A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

Storm Ellen did a superb job of flattening our beans but fortunately the tomato tunnel stood strong and our beautiful tomatoes are still ripening and bursting with flavour.

The feasting is endless. Tomatoes with everything!

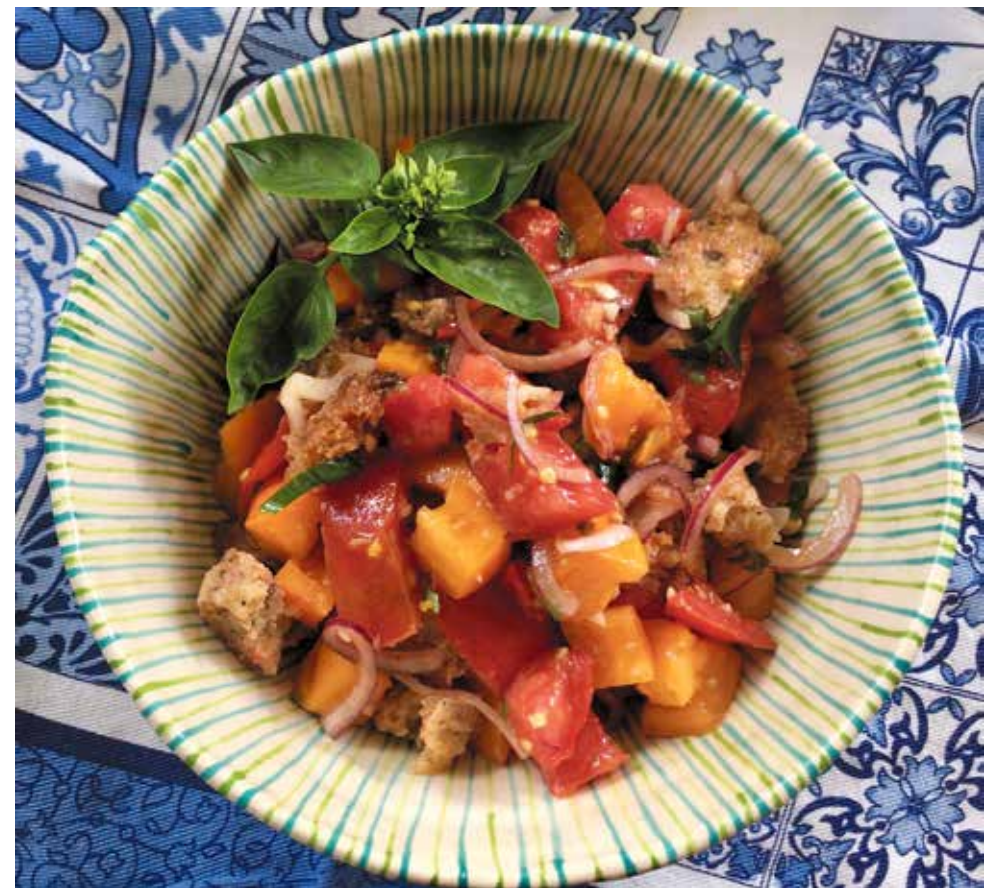
Whilst browsing for tomato ideas I came across a recipe for Panzanella. It was the picture that caught my fancy, as a salad using old bread that was dried then got wet again sounded odd. I checked out a few more recipes and realised this idea had real potential and no better chance of success than when surrounded by ripe home grown tomatoes.

Panzanella originates in Italy where there are ripe tomatoes and dry bread aplenty. These simple ingredients paired with the best olive oil and vinegar that you can lay your hands on make a stunning salad.

The first step is to dry out the bread, which proved easier said than done. I used thick slices of sourdough bread as recommended and spread it out in a breadbasket and left it in the kitchen to dry.

In the south of Europe where these recipes originate, bread bought in the morning is stale by the evening, hence the proliferation of recipes using old bread but no such luck here. Two days later the bread was still perfectly edible and far from dry so I turned the oven on for assistance.

I couldn't resist rubbing the slices of bread with a cut clove of garlic before ripping them into small pieces and tossing



with a drizzle of olive oil (if you like garlic bread, you will like this). I spread the bread on a baking tray, popped it in the oven and ten minutes later it was beautifully dry.

Now is the moment to make this recipe. The local tomatoes are ripe and at their full flavour potential; the only time of the year we can eat such tasty tomatoes without travelling. Check out the farmer's markets and small stores that sell home-grown vegetables

This recipe is well worth the effort – dry bread and tomatoes tossed together with olive oil, vinegar and basil makes a sublime combination however odd it might sound, a real flavour and texture bomb in the mouth. Simplicity at its best!

Panzanella

Tuscan Tomato and Bread salad

Ingredients:

- 4 large ripe tomatoes
- 4 thick slices sourdough or country bread
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 small red onion.
- 1 bunch basil

- 150mls extra virgin olive oil
- 50mls vinegar – the best you have
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and black pepper
- Anchovies in oil (optional)
- Put the oven on 180°C

Method:

Cut the crusts from the slices of bread and rub with a cut side of garlic – no need to peel it. Tear the bread into small pieces (2cm). Put it into a bowl, drizzle over a little olive oil 1-2tbs, toss well then spread out on a baking tray. Bake for ten minutes then check. The bread should be crisp but not brown.

Dice the tomatoes into 1-2cm cubes, sprinkle over a little salt and put them into a sieve or colander and set them over a bowl to catch the juices. Leave for 15-20 minutes.

Peel and finely slice the red onion. Massage in a few grains of salt to separate and soften the onion. Peel the remaining two cloves of garlic and chop very finely.

Put the garlic into a small bowl together with the Dijon mustard, vinegar and the juice that has run off from the tomatoes. Whisk these together then

drizzle in the olive oil whilst continuing to whisk until you have a creamy emulsion. Stir in the sliced onion.

Put the tomatoes and dried bread into a bowl – approx. 50/50 of each. (Keep any remaining bread to top other salads or soup). Chop the basil and add to the bowl, pour over the dressing then toss together until well mixed. Leave aside for ten minutes to let the flavours to mingle before serving.

We are getting back into the swing of things at LKP and eagerly awaiting our awning to provide shelter outside the shop. We're grateful to all our customers who wait patiently and with such good humour. We are happy to take pre-orders so that your food is ready for collection without queuing – just holler in the door and we'll bring it out. The menu is on Instagram and facebook daily or just phone the old-fashioned way and we will be happy to tell you what we have. This is our number 023 883698

Here's hoping for an Indian summer!

Tastes Like Home returning to RTÉ

The popular TV series, Tastes Like Home with Catherine Fulvio will return to our screens on September 7 for eight delicious weeks. Sponsored by Belling, Tastes Like Home will air each consecutive Monday at 8.30pm

on RTE ONE. Catherine returns to eight incredible cities cooking dishes with a passion the perfect recipe for this year's fifth season of Tastes Like Home with Catherine Fulvio.

Catherine Fulvio like everyone else has been unable to travel abroad due to COVID 19, so in this new series of Tastes Like Home, Catherine creates and cooks brand new

recipes inspired by some of the places previously visited as well as recipes that were requested by viewers and fans of the show as their 'taste like home' dishes. The show also catches up with some of the families that have been visited across the series.

Over the fifth series Tastes Like Home revisits Cape Town and Johannesburg in South

Africa, Vancouver and Tiny Township in Canada, San Sebastián and Barcelona in Spain, as well as Dubai and Portland, Oregon to capture eight (eight episodes) individual stories, from contestants who refuse to let the physical distance from home curb their appetite for home-cooked meal that 'Tastes Like Home'.

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Employflex leads the flexible work revolution

During lockdown most of us experienced the challenges and also the benefits of remote working. Covid has in fact accelerated us ten years forward in the space of a few months removing many of the barriers we thought existed to flexible working solutions like working from home.

In 2018 the Grow Remote movement estimated that around 216,000 people were working remotely in Ireland. This is now an upwardly advancing figure. Employees are enjoying the time saved in removing the daily commute and employers are reaping the financial benefits, seeing increased productivity in their workforce and massive savings on overheads. It's a win-win situation, particularly if you live in West Cork and the view from your work window now takes in green fields or the blue of the Atlantic. It's also the reason that Karen O'Reilly of Employflex set up her recruitment business in Clonakilty five years ago.

A qualified accountant who, after returning to Ireland after being abroad for nearly 20 years, found it difficult to find flexible work, Karen has since been leading the flexible work revolution.

"Remote working gives employers access to a larger pool of talent and can breathe new life into small rural communities," she says passionately, having just returned from a two-week holiday in Allihies where she also spent time working remotely.

It's also a very cost-effective solution for employers. "The average savings are about 11,000 per annum per employee," Karen points out. "As a result, some of the bigger companies are taking a further step and investing money saved into office pods for their employees, an action that fosters great loyalty in employees."

Prior to Covid there was a fear that workforce productivity would go down if employees worked from home. "The ironic thing is," says Karen "all the studies have shown that people actually work way harder from home and the main risk is an employee suffering burnout from working too hard!"

While many companies put a freeze on hiring during lockdown, Employflex is now seeing a pick up in hiring activity.



Juggling life and work are Tánaiste Simon Coveney and Employflex CEO Karen O'Reilly.
Pic Darragh Kane

The recruitment company has over 5,000 candidates registered with them, all highly skilled, and after a quieter-than-normal summer (traditionally it's the quietest season anyway for recruitment), is looking forward to a hopefully busy fourth quarter. "All of our plans for 2020 of course came to a grinding halt with Covid," says Karen "but I do believe we are seeing some light at the end of the tunnel now. Of course it will take a while for the hardest hit industries like hospitality and aviation to bounce back but there are others like the pharmaceutical and food-production sectors that are doing well. We'll bounce back; it's just difficult to gauge when until the dust settles!"

Employflex has always believed in finding solutions. "Lockdown has shown that the barriers or the 'excuses' that companies had prior to Covid, for example around technology and trust, were never really the issue," says Karen. "We've proven that remote working can be done but now we need to get the policy and procedure in place, build the scaffolding around the remote work culture so to speak, so that everybody is happy."

"Companies need to develop a remote work policy," she emphasises "so that employees aren't punished for choosing a flexible or remote working option. They should still feel part of a team and have the same access to promotions and career progression that people in the

office have."

Developing the right culture in the workplace will make everyone feel part of the team, whether they're working from home or in the office. "That culture needs to be very strong so that people don't feel they need to go into the office to be seen," explains Karen.

However, she points out that remote working is different to working in an office environment, which means that different skills are needed. "You have to be a quick, independent thinker, organised, self-motivated, with good problem solving skills and able to think on your feet," she explains.

In some cases those skills need to be learnt and Employflex has met this demand by developing a training module for both remote workers and managers of a remote team. "What's involved in managing a remote team is something that I feel a lot of companies have overlooked," she says "and it's a very different ball game managing a remote team to an office-based workforce; one where communication and motivation are both key."

"This is the time for companies to get feedback from staff as to what is working and what's not and get their policy right."

Remote interviews are another challenge of this new working climate and one that Employflex can also help employers and jobseekers with. "As the interviewee you have to

be comfortable with the technology and portray your personality through your body language. At the other end, the interviewer needs to have excellent communication skills and know what to ask and look for in a candidate." All of the Employflex team are also coaches so can help with developing these skills.

Karen believes that the future of flexible working is a hybrid type situation, with time spent remotely and in the office. "I think it's a great solution and for anyone in West Cork with connectivity issues, there are lots of hot-desking and co-working options out there, for example the Ludge in Skibbereen," she says.

"People who are adapting and changing and embracing remote work with the future in mind, they're the ones who will survive and thrive."

For more information on Employflex go to employflex.ie.

EmployFlex

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Local Enterprise Office

Local Enterprise Office Cork North & West

Your Local Enterprise Office is continuing to support small businesses

Business Advice Clinics:

These online support clinics are to provide someone with a business idea, a new start-up or an established business general free business advice. One hour appointment times are available to book from our website.

Trading Online Voucher:

This website grant is to help small businesses to sell online. Funding of 90% is available up to a maximum of €2,500. This current scheme is open until the 30.09.2020. To apply for the scheme a client must partake in an online information webinar on the scheme. Upcoming September webinars are available to book from our website. Eligibility criteria applies for the scheme.

Online Training:

A number of new online training webinars will be launched from September. Please refer to our website for up to date availability on up-coming training.

Cork County Council's Local Enterprise Offices provide a variety of business supports to the micro-enterprise sector, please contact us at:

A: Local Enterprise Office Cork North & West, 8 Kent Street, Clonakilty

T: 023-8834700 E: westcork@leo.corkcoco.ie

W: www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest

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Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

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Bantry Credit Union ahead of the lockdown in working from home set up

Like so many others, Assistant Manager at Bantry Credit Union Siobhán Geoghegan, found herself working from home in Rosscarbery during lockdown. The Dunmanway native's role covers responsibility for Risk Management, Compliance, AML, Data Protection and Operations. "My function is assurance and operational governance," she says. "Sounds more boring than it is!"



Siobhán explains.

As Siobhán's work is done mostly behind the scenes and Bantry Credit Union was ahead of the lockdown in the set up for working from home, the transition from the office to working remotely was seamless.

"Our computer capabilities and telesystems were in place two weeks before the lockdown so the transition was quite smooth, all things considered," she says. "I did feel quite conscious that I could work from home when others couldn't," she admits. "But staff members are above and beyond co-operative and adaptable in the credit union. We split into three teams for succession; should anyone be exposed to the virus the other team could step in – we had (1) the sub office counter staff in Castletownbere, (2) the main office counter staff in Bantry and (3) all back-office functions (with the exception of the Manager Finbarr) working remotely from March 13."

With staff working remotely in Glengarriff, Clonakilly, Rosscarbery and of course Bantry, the range of functions that were being done remotely for three to four months included: Accounts; Risk management; Marketing; Credit control; Data protection; AML; and Online services.

"Staying ahead and preempting the evolving situation was, and is, a constant concern,"

from the remote system," says Siobhán. "No files or documents are allowed leave the office, so all printing by remote workers prints to the office."

For the first couple of weeks, Siobhán worked at her kitchen table. "That was much too close to the fridge," she laughs, "so as the days went on, I set up a proper office in a spare room." She found that this made structuring work at lot easier, as she could close the door in the evening and be done instead of facing the temptation to check emails or finish a task.

"It was quite an adjustment at first, as I'm never at home; I'm always out or working, but my dog was delighted...and I found that I was more focused as there are less distractions at home!" Aside from getting the separation between work and home right and missing the structure and camaraderie of the office, Siobhán found not being able to visit family and friends or go to gigs the biggest challenge.

And although she didn't miss the daily commute, she really missed Bantry. "I live in the countryside, so I missed being able to pop out of the office to grab a coffee, or lunch, or having a look around the shops in the town."

Now back working in the Bantry office, Siobhán says it's "a new normal". "We have PPE and extra precautions in place but it's now become part of the routine to sanitise frequently and check temperatures every morning. There are aspects from the lockdown that improved our practices that we will continue with."

In terms of risk assessment, Siobhán's advice to businesses that have staff members working from home is to assess the IT risks, data protection risks and health and safety, as well insurance for staff working from home.

When she's not ensuring that the credit union is maintaining compliance with legislation and best practices and minimising risk exposures, Siobhán can be found on the beach with her dog or out with friends – restrictions permitting!

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Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Rapid Broadband fully invested in West Cork's online future

Rapid Broadband is a West Cork owned Internet and Phone Service Provider (ISP) that has been delivering fast, reliable and economical broadband in West Cork since 2005. With Mícheál Twomey as Managing Director, Rapid Broadband has grown into a trusted and established ISP by providing the absolute best customer service and products available on the market.



“People are now more dependent than ever on their broadband service,” says Mícheál. “Rapid Broadband is working hard to ensure that when you’re working or studying at home, your internet connection is not a concern. During our present Covid-19 reality, it is imperative that we, as broadband providers, continue to adapt to meet the changed social and economic needs.”

Mícheál says people don’t have to wait for the Government’s National Broadband Plan; Rapid Broadband has already launched superfast broadband in West Cork, and there is still more to come. “West Cork can’t wait on the National Broadband Plan, which is still years away,” he says.

Rapid Broadband has built its own independent broadband network, which has evolved and been enhanced over the past 15 years to cover a large area of West Cork. It offers extensive coverage from Cork Airport to Cape Clear, Kinsale to Coppeen, in urban and rural areas alike.

“Using fixed wireless technology, we provide broadband to both urban and rural areas, where others can’t,” Mícheál explains. “Drop us an email with your Eircode to info@

rapidbroadband.ie and we will quickly reply as to whether you would have coverage.”

Mícheál advises that in order to work from home you need to ensure that your bandwidth is sufficient to utilise online video conferencing applications such as Zoom; support a virtual private network and send important documents securely via email.

“The Irish Government has just announced that schools and universities should implement some element of online learning in the upcoming academic year. Our Home Extra package is the ideal package for studying and learning from home using virtual learning environments (VLEs).

“We would recommend our Rapid MaxWave Home Extra package for working and learning from home. The fast download and upload speeds are ideal for online video-conferencing with applications like Zoom. You can view all our residential and business packages on our website for the package best suited for your family’s needs or please contact us by phone for more advice.”

As more people work, study and connect with loved ones from home during Covid-19, Mícheál is very pleased at how Rapid Broadband’s network

has been able to deal with the surge in traffic on its system: “The increased demand for connectivity was met by our experienced and dedicated customer service team Lynda, Voytek and Josephine and our skilled technicians Andrzej, Arek, Martin and Ray on the road. We have invested in extra network capacity to cater for the increase in traffic over our network. Ryan our network engineer agrees that “It is imperative that our wireless network is able to manage the increased daytime demand as businesses, schools and colleges reopen.”

All companies have been presented with myriad new challenges in the last six months and Rapid Broadband has been no exception. The company has facilitated remote working for its own employees and allocated more time for installations. It places a priority on the health, safety and wellbeing of its workforce, customers and visitors and is fully compliant with all HSE physical distancing and safety guidelines. “We are experiencing a high demand for installations, so please call us as soon as possible to get your slot,” Mícheál advises. “We appreciate our customer’s cooperation and understanding and hope that you stay safe during this challenging time.”

Rapid Broadband is trusted by all its users from multinational corporations to people working from home – providing reliable connectivity coupled with swift, personalised customer support is the company’s strength.

For queries or tech support contact the Rapid Broadband office on 023 8869000. 24hr text support is also available on 087 1712404.

Rapid Broadband’s Top Tip:

Locate your router where you use the internet most - the signal is stronger near your hub.

rapid broadband

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Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Amazon allows Lydia to 'work hard and have fun' from her home in Ballydehob

Remote working is nothing new to Lydia Little who has been working for multi-national technology company Amazon from her home in Ballydehob since joining the company in 2012. Lydia, who is also a writer, works 20 hours a week in a virtual role in Amazon Selling Partner Support.

Not everyone may be aware that Amazon founder Jeff Bezos (now the 'richest man in modern history') started off selling used books from his own back garden shed at home. "I look out at our similar space," says Lydia "and am grateful to the man who had the courage to run with a 'crazy' idea and set up an online business. I am now part of that business too (albeit in a very small way) and love what my job has given me, my family, and our community. I also love the idea that I work for a massive global organisation from a little corner of my home in Ballydehob."

Lydia now helps sellers who 'sell' on the Amazon UK catalogue. "Sellers need to use the platform 'Amazon Seller Central' to sell their goods this way and manage their on-line Amazon business," she explains. "I help sellers to resolve any issues they experience along the way when navigating Seller Central." This support is provided via chat, phone and email.

The head office for Amazon Selling Partner Support UK is based in Cork airport. "When they needed to expand, someone there copped onto the wide range of skills and broadband that would be available rurally, so they came up with the idea of Working From Home as a way of meeting their business and customer needs," says Lydia.

Following recruitment, 27 new support staff from all over West Cork, from Leap to Castletownbere, met at the eCentre Bantry in September 2012 for six weeks training. "At the end of the training we went home with our work kit and I haven't looked back since," she says.

Lydia is keen to point out that lots of people mistakenly

believe that Amazon is all about the big sellers and/or Amazon. "There are in fact thousands of small businesses or sellers who sell on Amazon too," she explains.

She particularly enjoys supporting the small to medium businesses that make up the 'handmade' sellers. "Living in West Cork and having friends who are artisans, I appreciate the skill and time that goes into handmade products. There is great satisfaction helping a seller and/or get to the bottom of issue." Over time Lydia has gotten to know some sellers by name and there is that 'friendly' human side of the job that is not lost despite the huge platform that is the case with so many online business.

With good IT support behind her, Lydia says the "cold sweat of panic" that she experienced in the early days when something went wrong is now a thing of the past. "I used to have a complete meltdown if the Internet dropped, or if I experienced any technical issues and couldn't log into the secure Amazon site. Then there were the family interruptions and household noises. But I soon learned that was all in my head," she explains. "There is fab support through Amazon IT department and of course, they are very understanding if our network goes down, as it can do a lot in West Cork. There are many other associates who 'have my back'."

With Covid and everyone working from home, interruptions are part and parcel of the day-to-day side of working from home. "Sellers understand if they hear a dog barking or hen squawking in the background. We hear it too when a seller calls us on their side – machinery going in the back ground, door bells ringing, their dogs going frantic over a squirrel – so it is the new norm I think of working from home."

While she admits to experiencing some loneliness in the early days, Lydia says she very quickly adjusted to having the banter or craic online through the company's internal communication systems.

She also says that whether working from home or office-based, Amazon are very supportive of anyone wanting to progress up the ladder. "I don't have big career aspirations but I do know that if I did want to progress, the opportunities are there for me." Covid has shown



that now more than ever there are roles that can be worked online and Amazon, among so many others, is embracing that.

Lydia's 'kit' involves two monitors, a desktop hard drive and headphones for phone support, which means she does need a designated workspace designated workspace. She also finds that having a proper desk height and adjustable office chair really helps. "Amazon were great from the get-go in making us aware that we needed

"Sellers understand if they hear a dog barking or hen squawking in the background. We hear it too when a seller calls us on their side – machinery going in the back ground, door bells ringing, their dogs going frantic over a squirrel – so it is the new norm I think of working from home."

to set up our work space ergonomically so we wouldn't have back or repetitive strain issues,"

she shares.

A very petite 5ft 1, Lydia, more than most, finds it difficult getting all the angles right for her back, elbows and legs. "I need a foot rest and fancy-ass office chair to adjust for my desk height so that I am sitting straight and comfy."

While many people make the mistake of thinking they will be fine working from a couch or bed, Lydia says that after a but a few days of this will result in bad back, neck/shoulder strain, headaches etc.

When you are spending 8 hours at a desk it is important to have the right equipment. A lot of people make that mistake, thinking they will be fine working from a couch or bed but a few days of this will result in bad back, neck/shoulder strain, headaches etc. This doesn't do you or anyone else in your household/team any favours. While a good chair can be expensive, it is worth it in the long run."

Are there advantages to working from home?

Absolutely! My commute is down stairs and with the click of a mouse my working day begins/ends. There is no stress with getting to/from work. No one steals my lunches/mug, there is no bitching/gossip at the water cooler.

I get to look out at my own garden/pets/décor and I get to choose the interior design of my office space. I can wear what I want to work – I could wear a bikini or a sleeping bag if I wanted to (I haven't but I could)

For the family, while I am still here, and albeit working, there is a reassurance for the kids/ my husband, that I am here at home for them all. Lost glasses, missing shoes, a dog that needs a belly rub – I am still here for whomever needs me.

What do you like best about working from home?

I am working, but am surrounded by everything I love – house/ garden/family/pets. If I am on a stressful call or handling a difficult issue for a seller, my eyes just need to look up and watch a hen pecking in the garden, or a dog sleeping in the sun. Already I am at ease. I get to spend my breaks with family/ pets or if everybody is away at school/work, I have the house to myself to dance in the kitchen with nobody watching me.

What are the disadvantages/ challenges of working from home?

For me it is the tech issues. When broadband drops and/or there are too many users that are slowing my systems down.

If the kids are having an argument, or the dogs break out into a barking frenzy, that can be a bit awkward too. But I have learned how to handle those with humour when on a call and Sellers are very understanding. After-all, they are (mostly) working from their homes now and usually have their own family experiences too.

Tell the truth...do you work in your PJs?

No. I think this is a very bad idea. Actually, a great idea as long as they are not the pjs you slept in. What I mean by that, is that I think it is important to have that 'switch-on' for work mode so that we go through the motion of getting undressed from bed to getting dressed for work. Now, this might involve throwing on a tracksuit or similar, but it is important to go from bed head to business head! From a mental health point of view, for anyone working from home, and maybe even working from their bedroom, it is important to have that different mind set. So by all means wear your pjs, just not the ones you rolled out

of bed in.

What do you do on your daily breaks?

Our shifts differ to ensure there is coverage for the sellers who are contacting us, and so we have to 'log in' to work at our given time and then stick to the roster schedule for breaks (15mins) and lunch (30 mins). When you log in you are pretty much 'tied' to your computer so I use my breaks to catch up on house stuff or walk the dogs, grab some lunch/coffee. I might get in a laundry turn around, fill the dishwasher, hang some clothes out to dry. It is amazing what you can fit into a break!

Do you have a pet and are they enjoying having you at home?

We have two dogs, a cat and 4 hens. Even the dogs at this stage understand when I sit down at my work station (as opposed to my writing/lap top) that I am working and will come in for a quiet rub or ear scratch and will tip-toe away again. On my days off the air is different and they sense that, knowing there will be a long walk. When I am working, it is lovely to look out the window and see the hens waddle and scratch about the garden (they are free range) and all of pets lounge in the sun and get on well together – there is great entertainment watching them all. So whatever about them enjoying me being at home, I certainly enjoy being at home with them.

If you had the choice would you prefer to continue working from home, work in an office fulltime, or a mix of both. Why?

My contract from day one was for working from home so I ain't goin nowhere! Occasionally I would go up to head office for a meeting or social event but otherwise I am set up and will continue to work from home. Before COVID there was the pressure if you wanted to progress career wise that you would have to work from head office and work full time but that has changed now since COVID has shown that all roles can be worked from home. Training can be given online and upskilling too. That being said, I am very happy with my 20 hours a week allowing me to be at home for the family and also time to write.

Continued on next page...

Lydia Little ..Cont'd from previous page

What do you like about working for this company?

Not everyone knows this, but Jeff Bezos started off selling used books from his own back garden shed at home. I look out at our similar space and am grateful to the man who had the courage to run with a crazy idea and set up an on-line business. I am now part of that business too (albeit in a very small way) and love what my job has given me, my family and our community. There are many of us who have been working for Amazon from home for years now and our money is spent locally, supporting local business and leisure, we have enjoyed stay-cations even before it became a COVID thing (why holiday abroad when you live in West Cork eh?)

Amazon's motto is "Work hard, have fun, make history." And we do.

Have you any tips/advice for other people working from home?

Mental and physical health is so important when working from home.

- Set up your work space so that you are sitting comfortably and if possible with a proper chair/desk etc. even if this means you have to set it up and 'dismantle' it every day. Your space for work should be a work space and not your downtime space too. I know some folk these days are having to use bedroom and may even be use ironing boards. If this works for you ok. Jeff Bezos was known for using a door as his desk in the early years. Just do what actually works for you that doesn't give you any long term pain or depression.
- Your employer, as much as yourself, has a responsibility to ensure your work environment is set up in a healthy way both from a physical set up but also mental health. Talk to your employer if you are experiencing issues/pain.
- People underestimate the importance of resting your eyes, if you are looking at a screen all day. Have something to look at in the distance when you lift your eyes from your

screen. If you don't have a view out a window, make it a landscape picture/poster on the wall of your room, looking at this can help rest your eyes.

- Make your workspace just that – not the same space used for down time. Even if you have to take a few extra minutes to set yourself up with moving a table/chair but make sure it is not the same for when you watch Netflix or eat your meals.
- Get dressed. Change into something else. Even if only wear Channel No5 in bed, put on something for work. If you have a video meeting, then maybe you need to wear something work appropriate but otherwise even if it is a tracksuit, just make sure it is not the one you slept in. This will help your mind switch on for work. Better still to exercise/shower before hand to really get you work ready. I get up a bit earlier on my work days to walk the dogs or do some Yoga (very West Cork!). I always feel the

better for it.

- Get up from your chair every hour or so to stretch and/or walk about. Sitting at your desk/computer for long periods is not good for the mind/body.
- If there isn't one already, try and set up a work chat group for your team/colleagues, so that you can 'ping' them every so often, share knowledge, ask a question if stuck, share a bit of craic. Everybody needs a work buddy to laugh/cry with.

Tell us a bit about yourself...

As a kid/teen our family came to West Cork for holidays every year and my parents eventually retired here. I sailed, swam, played with friends, just as my son is doing now still (working it all around COVID these days). The pace/quality of life really hasn't changed I don't think after all this time, even with COVID.

When I want some time for myself I walk the dogs, read, or write fiction. (the first two books in my Irish boarding

school teen series, 'K-Girls' and K-Girls Plus One have been optioned for a TV/Film) and I have just finished a crime novel that I hope to publish in the next year or so too. My job allows me to fit all that in.

Working from home can be lonely sometimes, being a writer can be lonely. COVID has been tough now too, with all the restrictions. I have forgotten how to be social, might even go so far as to say I have lost the art of 'street side chat'. We have no news to share, no updates. Having had to 'circle the wagons' has made me more mindful of time with family and how precious the simple pleasures are. It might be just an 'age and stage' thing too, at 49 years of age I appreciate much more the 'what I have' as opposed to the 'what I want.' I am very happy with my work/life balance. That being said, I do miss sharing a G&T and music with friends in Levis' bar in Ballydehob.

When working at home it's easy to forget to step away from your computer for regular breaks. Take a tea break in style with one of these mugs from Chalk & Easel in Ballinaspittle. Berica pion cup €9.95 and handless mug €8.



High Resolution comes to the rescue of businesses around West Cork



The High Resolution van has travelled every West Cork highroad and byroad over the past six months, coming to the rescue of businesses and workers who suddenly found themselves trying to set up offices at their kitchen tables. Panicked calls for printers, cartridges, office furniture and stationery supplies quickly flooded in and owner Trevor Kingston has met every request with efficiency and speed.

High Resolution has supplied companies large and small, as well as schools and colleges, for over 14 years and in that time Trevor has always known that big businesses can be found operating from small houses hidden at the end of lanes. It's no surprise to him that remote working is proving so successful to many more businesses now.

"As long as they have a good

office set-up and connectivity there's nothing stopping people," Trevor says. "but people quickly found that working at their kitchen chairs and tables wasn't good for their back or family mealtimes!"

Consequently Trevor has seen the demand for good quality office furniture soaring, particularly for ergonomic office chairs and desks. High Resolution has a huge range to choose from in their online catalogue (www.highresolution.ie) and can also provide everything from keyboards and monitors to lamps and storage solutions.

"I know my catalogue inside out and what products would be most suited to what the customer needs – be it furniture, stationery or in particular, printers," Trevor confirms. "We stock all the brands but I offer impartial, clear advice to make sure it's the right printer for the person's workload. We also supply the printer consumables to match – cartridges, inks, toners, ribbons etc – All delivered to your door."

"Although I'm a smaller operation, I have the same range as the big operators, often at keener prices because of my lower overheads. I've built up strong relationships with suppliers over the years so I can avail of priority ordering. And I know my customers ordering

habits so there's no waiting on hold to talk to an advisor who needs your customer and product codes."

Distance and order volume doesn't present a problem; orders can also be delivered nationwide using a courier service, whilst online ordering/payment options and a mobile card machine are available for convenience.

Trevor says most people are surprised at how many businesses remained open during Lockdown keeping the 'show on the road'. Besides the new homes offices, High Resolution also kept pharmacies, food producers and more, fully stocked with their usual supplies but also with PPE equipment such as masks, visors, gloves and disinfecting products. "That's a side of my business that has definitely grown hugely and continues to do so," says Trevor. "We also have a range of temperature checkers from simple hand held devices up to hospital grade devices, starting from just €45+VAT. This is something that gives peace of mind to businesses as they reopen."

See www.highresolution.ie to view the catalogue of products or call Trevor on 023 8858888 if you are looking for advice.



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Global Shares

Global yet local

Global Shares is an employee-owned company. Explain

An employee owned company is where staff are either given or offered the option to buy shares in the company, meaning they have a stake in the future success of the company. By owning shares, when the company does well, employees do well. There's lots of research that shows when employees own shares, they start to behave like owners – they have 'skin in the game', so to speak. They are more motivated to work harder and work together towards the company's overall goals.

Statistically, employee-owned companies out-perform others in terms of productivity, growth, profitability and employee retention. There's also improved culture – a 'we're all in this together' mentality that really creates a spark and positive workplace. Global Shares is a private, independent, significantly employee-owned company – meaning a significant proportion of the company is owned by its employees.

Employee ownership is also Global Shares' core business. Its fintech solutions help companies of all sizes across the world manage their employee share plans simply and seamlessly.

Describe the personality of the company?

During our recent rebrand, we actually spent a lot of time discussing this topic and really examining ourselves and establishing who we are as a company. We wrote our core values and re-wrote our vision and mission statements. It was fantastic to be able to do this in collaboration with our new HR Director, Stephen Tabb, to set out what is important to us as a company, reset our goals and work towards achieving them together. What emerged from that process is that people are at the heart of who we are and what we do.

Our staff, our clients, our partners and our community

– nothing would be possible without the people behind it all, so that is central to who we are. We also established the 'Global Cares' initiative, which is the company's new wellbeing programme. It focuses on employees' emotional, mental, physical and social wellbeing and there are huge supports in place to support our employees, professionally and otherwise.

We would say that for anyone who doesn't know Global Shares but who knows Clonakilty or West Cork in general – Global Shares is almost like a microcosm of that. It's forward thinking, diverse, vibrant, friendly and always wants to be a step ahead.

Probably the best way to sum up the personality is the company's core values:

- People: We care about our people
- Bravery: We dare to do things differently
- Global: We are one global network
- Integrity: We are committed to professional integrity
- Service: We are client focused.

As for what a day in the office is like – we're a hugely diverse company with lots of great characters and an appreciation that playing pool is an important way to communicate and get away from the computer screen for a while. Global Shares is a regulated company so it's very professional. A place where, with hard graft in the right role, there is no limit to the opportunities. It's fast moving, diverse and massively ambitious.

A recent senior new joiner in London described it as "an extremely forward-thinking, highly motivated, tech and service orientated company, with great people at its core".

How easy was the transition for employees from working in the office to at home?

But for Global Shares employees, and for the rest of the world, life is not normal, or even very recognisable at the

moment. One day we were an organisation that was 100 per cent office based. The next we were fully remote. Working from home has advantages, sure, but it also has a lot of challenges. Even experienced remote workers are facing new challenges with schools being closed, as well the natural stresses associated with being in the middle of a global pandemic! But we've worked really hard to make sure that employees are supported as much as possible. Communication has been critical during this time. The technology took care of itself but the HR and management team really stepped up, with a notable increase in communication, sharing helpful information, being flexible, empathetic. Staff have responded really well to that. There have been online mindfulness sessions, online exercise classes with Ian O'Driscoll who runs the gym at Global Shares, counselling is available for anyone who needs it and there have been socially distanced team walks as well.

As we've got two offices in China, we were dealing with the fallout from COVID-19 from the outset. We knew what was happening on the ground over there and our staff in Beijing and Hong Kong were impacted much earlier than the rest of the world. But that gave us time to prepare and put



Aine Bonner and her dog Henry, who is delighted to have her working from home.

When a global pandemic was announced in March, Global Shares was already fully set up for remote working with a fully flexible workforce. The company's offices in Clonakilty, Cork city and elsewhere have started to reopen now and a detailed Return To Workplace Plan has been put in place. With the company expanding across all departments, there has never been a more exciting time to work at Global Shares. **West Cork People** finds out more about this forward-thinking and successful employee-owned company, which calls Clonakilty home after taking on the world from there and enjoying huge success since its inception in 2005.



Some of the team in Clonakilty Headquarters at the ribbon cutting of the new staff kitchen last year.

best practices in place in our other locations and when the time came, we were all ready, educated and a little bit more at ease about it.

Our offices in Clonakilty, Cork and elsewhere have started to reopen now and a detailed Return To Workplace Plan has been put in place with fever screening cameras, 2m distance between desks, sanitisers, masks and one-way systems. We are ready to transition back to the office when the time is right.

From an infrastructure perspective the transition was as easy as getting up from the desk with your laptop, walking out the door and logging in at home. We've got a great IT team to take care of the strict security protocols, VPNs, cloud-based hosting and hardware that protects our data from attack and have weathered many storms in the past (the Beast from the East snowstorm, Storm Ophelia, etc.) from the safety of our homes while our business continued as normal, uninterrupted.

Is the workforce at Global Shares very diverse? What benefits does that bring with it?

With 25-plus nationalities, it's a melting pot of culture and diversity. Forty-two per cent of employees are female.

Employees in Clonakilty come from countries including India, Philippines, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Poland, the UK, Canada and more. When we made the decision to write a global software platform from scratch, it was difficult to find developers in Ireland so we hired developers from all over the world, who laid the foundation for the diverse multi-cultural workforce that exists today. It's something that everyone really enjoys about working at Global Shares.

Does Global Shares offer any type of assistance/support to employees relocating to Clonakilty from other countries?

We have helped many of our team members move here to Clonakilty to join Global Shares and start a new life in West Cork. We support candidates with flights and visas prior to arrival and then also support them with accommodation, transport and local information while they find their new homes.

Is the company involved in any local groups or activities? Explain why this is important to Global Shares.

Global Shares has been involved in many local charity fundraisers – from walks to swims to golf tournaments and more. We love supporting the local community in any

way we can – be it getting all our printing done at Walsh's, buying furniture from Tom Sheehy's or getting our lunches from Beano and Ginger. Clonakilty is central to our community and we love being based here. We have big plans to be even more involved in some exciting projects coming up.

What kind of support is in place for employees working from home?



Global Cares
Emotional | Mental | Physical | Social

Now more than ever we are championing our employee wellness initiatives. We have a very active wellness programme called 'Global Cares', which we use to support our employees during these difficult pandemic times.

While working from home we've enjoyed online mindfulness sessions every Wednesday (drop everything and meditate), free lunchtime HIIT sessions, parenting advice webinars, nutrition talks, leadership training, a 'Work at Home with Your Dog Day' and much more. In addition, all our employees have access

Continued on next page...

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Global yet local ...Cont'd from previous page

to our Employee Assistance Programme – a confidential counselling service that provides support to our employees and their families.

Has the pandemic driven any other changes/developments in the company?

We thankfully haven't been negatively impacted by the pandemic in the way that some industries such as tourism, the airline industry etc have been. We have been lucky enough to be in a good place to meet our targets for this year but of course the many restrictions that have been in place have impacted us in one way or another. We had a fabulous Clonakilty client event that we had to cancel, where clients were going to come and stay in Inchydoney, go to Clonakilty Distillery for gin-making classes, go whale watching, listen to trad in DeBarra's etc – all that had to be called off. And our sales team aren't currently flying all over the world meeting people and selling, so there's more of a lean towards digital and virtual events. Our AGM will also be held virtually for the first time ever.

Is having a base in West Cork important to Global Shares? Explain.

One hundred per cent. Clonakilty is our home, it's where we were founded in 2005, and it's part of our success. We set out to write a global technology platform in West Cork and take on the world from here. We export 98 per cent of our software and last year we opened seven new offices in places like Nashville, Barcelona, Lisbon, Tokyo and Miyazaki. We've done all of this from Clonakilty and are extremely proud to have our roots here. We are delighted to provide employment opportunities for so many locals within our community and to welcome so many people to live in Clonakilty with their families enjoy the amazing work-life balance.

As it has grown, Global Shares has given a huge boost to the local economy, creating permanent high-skilled roles such as software engineers, share plan analysts, trading specialists, multi-lingual service desk analysts and more, as well as given staff the opportunity to transfer within its global network of overseas offices.



Local Clonakilty girl Dominique Coughlan photographed at the official launch of Global Shares' software platform in 2015 giving a demo to Minister Richard Bruton.

Global Shares has grown substantially in the past five years. What has driven this growth and how is the company planning on developing further?

A decade ago Global Shares was a service only company and this wasn't a great model for scaling and growth. We were using other companies' software to manage share plans for global businesses, but not one of those pieces of software was good enough and it wasn't a productive way to operate. It was then that we made the decision to change from a service

company to a fintech company. We set ourselves a mission: build our own software and to become the global software provider for the share plan administration industry. We had to build it from scratch and that was a huge challenge but it's what has led to our success today. We also became regulated, so this made it possible for us to compete with the likes of Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, UBS and others on the global stage. The challenge was for Global Shares to succeed in developing a global platform, where the large multi-national

banks had failed.

Employee numbers have risen from 68 in 2015 to 360 today: 202 staff are based in Cork – 165 at our Clonakilty Headquarters, and 37 at our new Cork City office on Penrose Wharf.

Global Shares has now fully completed its transition from a small startup in Clonakilty to become a global fintech leader for employee ownership and share dealing solutions. We are on course to reach a 'unicorn' valuation in excess of \$1Bn by 2024. Also, we are 2020 Finalists in the prestigious EY Entrepreneur of The Year Programme and we have some exciting announcements coming very soon.

What type of Government investment, infrastructure, connectivity etc. would Global Shares like to see in West Cork that would benefit companies such as them and increase employment in the area?

Having proper broadband in place for people working from home in West Cork is probably the number one thing. With proper speeds, there are no limits to what employees can do from home. Some of the more

rural areas of West Cork don't have adequate connectivity, which means some staff have had to work from the office to complete certain tasks that require bandwidth. Of course the pandemic will (hopefully!) go away at some stage and we'll be returning to our offices, but having that flexibility is key.

As well as this, as we grow and expand, one of the things that people who are moving to Clonakilty have struggled with, is the lack of housing in the area. This is something that we'd love for the Government to look at and invest in.

Why would I want to work at Global Shares?

We are a Clonakilty company with a global reach. There has never been a more exciting time to work with Global Shares. We are enjoying huge global success and expanding across all departments. Career advancement opportunities are many, with the potential for professional growth ever present due to our hyper growth phase. As an employee centric organisation we recognise our success would not be possible without our talented and valuable team of employees. We have a relaxed and friendly

working environment. Pool tournaments, 'Bring your Dog to Work' days, and Friday Nibbles 'Fribbles' are all part of our day to day here in Global Shares.



Vipen Kumar Saini moved to Clonakilty from India in 2014 to work for Global Shares. Below he is pictured with his son, Arnav, who plays U7 GAA with Clonakilty. He enjoys living in a friendly, calm town with his wife and their two sons.

Canadian born Colleen McDonagh lives in Clonakilty and is a Settlements and Partner Relationship Manager with Global Shares. She has been working remotely since March.



Originally from Ontario, Colleen grew up in what, by Canadian standards, would be considered the small town of North Bay (pop. 60k), which lies

3.5 hours north of Toronto. At the age of 18 she relocated to Toronto to study interior design before working a variety of fast paced roles in design, project management and administration.

In 2016 Colleen, and her now husband, decided to move to Ireland and she joined Global Shares to work on the US Operations team, before moving to the Reconciliation Department and then into her current position as Settlements and Partner Relationship Manager.

Colleen would describe her role as multi-faceted: "Part of my work in Settlements is to oversee and ensure all cash and shares settle as instructed on the back of a trade, share transfer, or client event."

"The busier side of the role is the Partner Management where my responsibilities include new partner onboarding, developing key relationships with all partners, client account openings etc. The position allows me to work closely with most departments across the business and every day is

different.

"I've also been involved in a wide range of projects including the migration of our banking provider, custodian changeovers and our new US License."

When asked what she enjoys most about working in Global Shares, Colleen says number one has to be her colleagues whom she describes as "consistently spectacular!" She also really appreciates the ability to transfer to different departments without leaving the company. "The work is always challenging and I continue to learn and grow every day. I strive for greatness!"

She also thoroughly enjoys living in West Cork. "Moving to Clonakilty from a place like Toronto was a huge change – in every way! There is a sense of community that provides a feeling of security and support that a big city could never offer. Before the current situation there was always so many events happening around Clonakilty and West Cork that we enjoyed like parades, festivals and markets. The things I

miss about Canada are mainly family.... And a reliable public transit system. Toronto is brilliant in that way as you have your pick of subways, streetcars, Uber and more."

Working remotely since March, Colleen is discovering there are many advantages to it. "My husband is in the construction industry so he was only home for the mandatory six-week lockdown. Other than that I've had the place to myself, so I work in our open plan kitchen/living room, which has tons of natural light. I am also facing our patio so when the sun is shining I'm able to leave the door wide open; it somewhat feels like I'm working outside or I can also just step outside for some sun while the kettle boils. I did have to go into the office to get my computer chair though – sitting on a dining room chair was not great!"

"Other benefits are a quiet working environment, no dress code and that by not commuting I'm saving money on diesel and contributing little less pollution."

She finds her main challenge is switching off and walking away, even for simple things like breaks or lunch. "I am always tempted to log on and get more done and out of the way before facing into another day. With the peace and quiet at home I find myself forgetting to stop. When I do, it is for house stuff such as cleaning, laundry or taking out the recycling. We got chickens during the lockdown so I also go out to collect the eggs. Doing these little things and having the small day-day jobs done has allowed more 'me' and 'us' time when I do switch off, which has provided a little more work-life balance."

"And I do miss the social aspect of working in the office."

Going forward Colleen thinks she would enjoy a mix of working from home and going into the office. "I think there are huge benefits for most people who can work from home from a cost and environmental perspective – for both employee and employer!"

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Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle



Pat Culhane is a Senior Learning and Development Manager, writer and researcher. He is currently completing a Doctor of Management degree (part-time). He has recently relocated with his family from Dublin to West Cork. For more, see patculhane.ie

In March, I had to make the sudden shift from working in a busy, city centre office to working from home. This transition was a relatively smooth one for me. I have always engaged with the latest technology developments and how they can facilitate enhanced work practices. Getting to grips with working from home was not as straightforward for many, especially those who are not comfortable with technology.

According to UNESCO's Digital Literacy Global Framework (2018), "digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies." The government's Future Jobs Ireland 2019 visionary document highlights the importance of digital literacy for sustaining meaningful employment and entrepreneurship. Moreover, those that are digitally illiterate cannot access basic services and information, which impacts negatively on their quality of life. Of course, access to appropriate technology and infrastructure (e.g. broadband) is half the battle.

En masse, West Cork appears to be embracing the challenges and opportunities of digital living. The shining example is the realising of Lord Puttnam's – an exceptional advocate for digital literacy – vision for the Ludgate Hub. It is a mechanism for sustaining the Skibbereen community and its hinterland. Like the other hubs that have

sprung up in the region, it offers space to work remotely, with a proper internet connectivity and without the pressures that can come with working at home. What is happening there is inspirational; the new Google for Education schools' initiative under the direction of Castlehaven native, Dr. Kieran Collins, looks promising.

Coronavirus or not, our increasing dependence on technology to live and work, is inevitable. If in doubt, have a look at the work of Professor Séamus Davis (originally from Skibbereen) in UCC on quantum computers. Also, climate change will increasingly impact on how we live. Our carbon emissions and consumption of imported goods will need to reduce. This will result in less travel and more of a return to local self-sufficiency and sustainability, as prompted by our response to Covid-19. The interdependence between people and technology for supporting our health, how we communicate, how we learn (e.g. how to grow your own food) and how we work is becoming the new normal. And with demand for work and living space in cities already oversubscribed, working from the home and remotely are here to stay.

What follows are some useful tips, that may make your home or remote working a little more productive and enjoyable. Students might find them helpful, as they too are moving to blended learning. Note that some of the descriptions are basic, to cater for varying levels of knowledge.

Extended Display

A lot of time can be spent switching between email, documents, webpages etc. on your computer screen – especially when you'd prefer to have two or more open simultaneously. Of course, you could print one of the documents (expensive) or split the screen, if it is big enough. Or you could extend your display.

Extended display means connecting another screen or monitor to your computer. Your computer interprets both screens as separate devices. You can drag items with your on-screen arrow from one screen to the other, for example, a Word document on one screen and your email on the other. I find it useful when presenting or editing a document during a video call, i.e., people's faces on one screen and the shared document on my second screen.

The second screen is usually connected via a wire (HDMI

cable) and by changing the display settings on your computer. This option is standard on most Windows and Apple operating systems. A few years ago, I purchased a second monitor to extend my display: the HP Pavillion 22xi for around €100. There are loads of screens/monitors to choose from at higher and lower prices. Most modern TV sets are HDMI-compatible and would work as a second screen



too. For those who happen to have a newer Apple Mac and iPad, Sidecar is a free, wireless extended display feature. Other wired and wireless extended displays can be facilitated by some third-party apps, such as Duet Display.

The Cloud

Terms such the cloud, cloud computing, and cloud storage have become part of the vernacular. So, what is this thing called 'the cloud'? Basically, the cloud is the internet; it's all of the things you can access remotely over the internet. When something is in the cloud, it means it's stored on internet servers instead of your computer's hard drive, i.e., your actual computer. Think of how your email works and how it can be accessed and used from any number of devices, anywhere with an internet connection. The same applies to your contacts, documents, files, folders, photos, videos and more.

How many times have you heard something like, "I lost all my numbers as my phone broke"? There is increasingly less of an excuse for that these days. There's a variety of free cloud storage services available to backup and store your stuff. Without knowing it, many

people already have access to these cloud services, if using @gmail, @hotmail, @live or @outlook email addresses. Google Drive (linked to gmail) and Microsoft OneDrive (linked to the other email types mentioned) each offer 15 gigabytes (GB) free storage. This is the capacity to store around five thousand photos or two million Word documents. This free storage is, essentially, an enticement to

one another wirelessly within the home or workplace. These wireless radio waves are usually transmitted via a modem/router in your home to your device, approximately within range of the home or workplace itself.

The unit of measurement for the speed at which you download from the internet or upload to the internet is megabits per second (Mbps). Most people can get their work done with about

well for email, social media and browsing the web. A 4G connection is preferable for uninterrupted video calling and video streaming. If using this option, be careful of data usage limits. Even 'unlimited data' is subject to fair usage policy and can be expensive if you exceed the data limit. SIM Only plans, which are 30-day rolling contracts, are excellent value for money. Eir, among other providers, offer customers unlimited calls to any network, SMS and data from €10 per month. It's tempting to get a fancy smartphone as part of a contract, but it ends up being far more expensive over the two years at around €60-plus per month. You will make significant savings if you can afford to buy the smartphone upfront and opt for a SIM Only plan. This is especially the case if you have two mobile numbers – a personal number and a work number. For those that do, consider purchasing an unlocked Dual Sim smartphone online. This allows you to have two sim cards or mobile numbers active at the same time on the one handset. You can turn either of the numbers off at any stage and the other will continue to operate as normal.

Timesavers

Here are a few shortcuts that could save some time when using your computer:

- **Copy and Paste:** Press and hold the Control button (Ctrl) and the letter C button to copy selected text or images. Ctrl and V to paste the copied text or images; Ctrl and P button to print. The equivalent of Ctrl on Apple devices is cmd Ctrl and V to paste the copied text or images.
- Open a new document: Ctrl and N (e.g. Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc.)
- Keyword search: If trying to find a word in a document or a webpage, press Ctrl and F; type the words in the textbox that appears, and press enter. The words will be highlighted on the page.
- To keep records of a meeting, Zoom offers an automated transcription service as part of their business plans. An audio file can be uploaded (privately, if you like) via YouTube Studio. Unlike Zoom, this is free but with less transcription accuracy. It would be important to ensure that this would be done is participant consent and is in line with relevant data protection policies and GDPR.

subscribe to enhanced storage capacity and features, such as Microsoft 365 and Google G Suite, which many employers do. This can be more secure than storing all your files and folders on your computer/tablet/smartphone hard drive only, especially in the case of a device being stolen, damaged or hacked. Also, you can save your work (e.g. a PowerPoint presentation) on one device and access and edit it again on another device.

Broadband, Wi-Fi and Mobile Data

I have often found that people – even those with basic digital literacy – get confused about the difference between broadband, Wi-Fi and mobile data connectivity. And if you are relying on an internet connection to do your work, especially from home, then it's important to know the difference.

Broadband is high-speed internet access that is always on, unlike its predecessor, dial-up. It is usually fed through a wired connection, like the old landline telephones, to the home or workplace. Although, it can be via satellite too. Wi-Fi allows computers, tablets, smartphones, or other devices to connect to the internet or communicate with

20 Mbps. A 2 Mbps download and upload speed will work for email, social media and audio conference calls on one device at a time. Video calling apps like Microsoft Teams and Zoom only use about 5Mbps download speed. For uploading and downloading large files such as videos, download speeds of 10 Mbps should suffice. For those who have multiple people working from the one premises or people using streaming services at the same time, a download speed of at least 25 Mbps would be preferable. One free service that I find useful to upload and share files of up to 2 GB is WeTransfer.com. A good way of testing your broadband speed is via broadbandspeedtest.ie.

Mobile data is also known as the mobile internet and is provided by your mobile phone service provider. It requires a SIM card. If you have mobile service, you can use mobile data on the go. Much of West Cork has a healthy 3G connection and you can often get 4G in the larger towns.

As access to broadband can be patchy, many people are using their smartphones for hotspotting, i.e., diverting the mobile data signal to their tablet or computer. 3G will generally work

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Enhance your work life and garden with an office space from Big Man Tiny Homes

Big Man Tiny Homes is a West Cork based, sustainably driven, construction company that makes cost-effective, energy-efficient, beautiful, tiny (and not so tiny) homes, offices and studios. At the start of 2020, modular homes were the bulk of the company's order books. However, since March, it has seen demand for garden offices rocket.

Owner JP Simpson understands why: "My own partner is now working from home and although we haven't kids thrown into the mix, the computer and books are out the whole time so we're going to build one for ourselves shortly. There's something about leaving the house through a front or back door that psychologically prepares you for work."

You don't need planning permission to put a 25sqm building in your back garden but you do need to have an additional 25sqm of garden space remaining once it is in. You can then go up to 3m with a flat roof or 4m with an A-pitch or mono-pitch roof.

"It is important that your office enhances your garden space; they can be quite big buildings so they need to add to your garden, not take away from it," advises JP, who can also do all the hard landscaping



required to achieve this. "A recent project that we worked on had a very steep garden with little usable space. The house was at the top of the slope so we installed the office at the bottom and connected the house to the office roof with decking, with steps then down to the office door; it tripled the size of usable garden space!"

"We installed another garden office at a house with an ugly concreted back garden. Now the office is surrounded with decking, planters and a gazebo area with a fire-pit."

As for the offices them-

selves...Big Man Tiny Homes structures are made with insulated super strong SIP panels and are A rated energy efficient and airtight. These panels are clad in cedar, Siberian larch or metal, depending on required finish. The electrical package includes interior and exterior LED spotlights and radiant underfloor heating.

These buildings are made to last because they are built to housing codes. All structures have a 20-year guarantee, whilst the roofs and cladding have a 25 year guarantee. "They are lifetime job," JP



promises.

The units are 100 per cent customised to a customer's preference for features, materials and layout; you can have a home office with a bathroom and kitchenette; with a recep-

tion area and treatment room; or with storage if you also need space for bikes or garden tools.

JP is finding that the most popular size is 17sqm because it is big enough to be multi-functional, with office

space used by day and a kids chill-out sofa and TV area for the evening. This size unit starts at €27,000, including the base and electrics, and arrives in 'turnkey' condition – all you need to do is move your computer in! If you are on a tighter budget the 8sqm option starts at €12,000 and is suitable for a small office.

Unlike many companies, with Big Man Tiny Homes your entire unit is constructed in its Bandon workshop before being craned into position in your garden, which takes about two hours so you aren't disturbed by workmen for weeks on end. All in all the turnaround time is just three weeks.

If you would like to see some more floorplans for inspiration visit www.bigmantinyhomes.ie.

JP also invites enquiries from companies seeking quotes for multiple units.

Clockwise from top left: A fully finished unit is craned into place; A unit is custom built to fit an awkward garden space; A suggested floorplan for multi-use.

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Ludgate continues to facilitate jobs in West Cork



Skibbereen native Gráinne O'Keeffe, who took up the role of CEO at Ludgate in July, believes that this is a pivotal moment in the history and evolution of Skibbereen's digital hub, which has been recognised as an 'exemplar project' by the European Commission.

While obviously Covid has had a devastating impact on everybody's life," says Gráinne "it has propelled forward by a decade that discussion on the future of work.

"We know that efforts have been made in the past to get people working remotely but these were very tentative, with big questions around trust and connectivity.

"If we look at Ludgate's evolution over the past five years, it has already offered people the opportunity to experiment with that model.

"Now is the time that Ludgate can rise up and be a part of that workplace solution. Whether it's a large enterprise, a scaling up company, or individuals, we feel the offering at Ludgate satisfies those different channels," she explains.

On course to facilitate 500 jobs in West Cork over the next five years with the full support and involvement of the local community, the Ludgate 'movement' has become the model for rural Ireland's future.

Now with Gráinne O'Keeffe at the helm, bringing over over 20 years of international financial and innovation experience to the position, the continued development of Skibbereen's digital hub is in good hands.

Gráinne has a very clear vision, which sees Ludgate, currently a social enterprise, moving to a model that allows for self-sustainability with the community at the epicenter of its success. "We need to create revenue opportunities, while also ensuring that everybody in the community feels that



Ludgate CEO
Gráinne O'Keeffe

Ludgate is theirs," she explains. In the past, there might have been a perception that Ludgate was just for technology-based companies but Ludgate is for everybody," she emphasises. "There's no reason why someone in farming and food production who markets their work through digital channels shouldn't feel at home there.

"We know that people who work out of coworking spaces tend to thrive because of the sense of community found within such spaces, the flexibility, the potential for innovation, ideation, learning and collaboration, the opportunity to build strong personal and professional relationships, and the spaces' focus on great design and wellbeing.

"Ultimately, we would love to see successes similar to what Kevin Buckley and Matt Lawlor have achieved at Spearline, where they have outgrown their original home over the Credit Union and have moved to their own fabulous building, a renovated St Fachtnas De La Salle Secondary School," says Gráinne.

Six West, a world-leading

provider of support services to aircraft lessors, airlines and private aviation, acquired an office at Ludgate in 2019. Finance Director and Skibbereen native Áine Scully says that the Ludgate Hub has offered great networking opportunities to the company, as well as giving access to an exceptional pool of talent. "The Ludgate's IT infrastructure is exceptional, which is crucial to our business... Being present in West Cork has also allowed us to snap up some extremely talented, hard-working individuals who have proven to be instrumental to Six West's success."

TravelMaster, a licensed nationwide concert travel bus and coach service, has a customer service team of six based out of Ludgate. CEO Damian Long says that Ludgate helped him move from being a very traditional bus company to a fully-digitised and award-winning enterprise. "We learnt very quickly," says Damian "and in a short timeframe had moved from a desk to an office space." Ludgate provided the connectivity and technological support that Damian needed to get his company off to a very successful start. In their first year TravelMaster transported 4000 concertgoers, last year that number had jumped to 40,000 and prior to Covid the 2020 projection was 70,000. Describing his business as the 'Uber' of the bus industry, Damian says that while the company has been 'torpedoed' by Covid, he's taking it in his stride and focusing on the positive. "It's given us the time to focus on building our technology," he explains "we hope to release one of the most advanced apps in the industry in Europe by the end of 2021."

As part of Ludgate's Location Strategy going forward, plans for expansion include creating two new bases in Skibbereen; the first of which

Remote working has become a feature of life during the pandemic but working from home isn't always the best option for everyone with access to connectivity and other amenities posing challenges for many remote workers. While coworking spaces took a hit during lockdown, digital hubs such as the Ludgate in Skibbereen, which boasts a gigabyte broadband connection, have an important role to play in the future of flexible working in Ireland. Hubs such as Ludgate act as a stimulus in rural regions such as West Cork where it allows local economies to prosper and thrive. Since its inception five years ago, Ludgate has been able to support 25 businesses and approx 130 direct and indirect roles from a myriad of industries including tech, bio-economy, aviation services, and media production. It has become a magnet for startups such as local success story Spearline, who now employs over 100 people in the region.



Ludgate Board Members with President Higgins. Pic Emma Jervis



Ludgaters - TravelMaster (Winner of Best Business 2019), The Ludgate Hub (Best Not for Profit Organisation 2019) & Six West (Most Innovative/Unique Business 2019).

(Ludgate 1.5) will be located in what was the Roycroft bicycle shop in Field's carpark. The seven single or double occupancy private office spaces will be available before the end of September.

The major part of this expansion will be the opening of Ludgate II, with capacity for over 100 people, by Summer 2021. It's hoped that the refurbishment of the Mercy Heights building will commence in

November 2020. "We're very excited about Ludgate II, where we will also have space for an innovational educational outreach unit for second and third level students," says

Continued on next page...

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

The Ludgate ...Cont'd from previous page



Grainne. "There is also a lot of land around the building so hopefully in the future we will be able to leverage our outside space."

A new Study Space at Ludgate I (The Old Bakery) is also in the pipeline for this September, to accommodate third level students, who won't be attending lectures fulltime in the current Covid climate.

"We know that many students potentially won't be needing accommodation in the city for 2020/2021 because of schedules incorporating some days on campus and some remotely so for anyone with connectivity issues at home, this study space will be ideal for them," explains Grainne, who hopes this will also foster a loyalty towards Ludgate in graduates and future entrepreneurs.

Ludgate has also recently rolled out a Google for Education programme in West Cork schools. Financed and

managed by the Ludgate, with Dr Kieran Collins at the helm, the pilot programme aims to develop 21st century educational skills across primary and secondary schools, providing a range of online tools to support and revolutionise teaching in terms of access and sharing of resources. "This could change and accelerate the digital literacy of children in primary school and secondary schools and be a blueprint for other areas," says Grainne.

"Our Board is one of our key success factors and includes many of the Who's Who across Irish national corporate influencers," she says. The board members include Kevin Buckley of Spearline, Oliver Farrell of Vilicom Engineering, Dee Forbes of RTÉ, Ronan Harris of Google, Brian McCarthy of Fexco, John O'Doherty of AIB, Anne O'Leary of Vodafone Ireland, Rosaleen Blair, CBE former CEO of AMS, Professor John O'Halloran of UCC,

Anne Philips, formerly of HSBC and Adam Walsh of JJ Field as well as John Field and Sean O'Driscoll who were the original founders. Lord David Puttnam has also been heavily involved in supporting and promoting the work at Ludgate.

John Field and Sean O'Driscoll, who have been there from the very beginning, are the cornerstones of it all," says Grainne. "Both men want to make sure that West Cork has a local economy that prospers and thrives where people don't have to leave to find work."

Grainne herself symbolises what Ludgate set out to achieve – the return to her home town in rural Ireland which can now offer career opportunities and resources on a par with anywhere else in the country.

"We settled in Clonakilty after coming home as, at the time, I thought Skibbereen was too far west to offer us any job opportunities. Ironically, it's where most of my jobs have been based since coming back," she says laughing.

"Ludgate is an international success story in terms of modelling how remote working, with high-speed broadband connectivity, can support the creation and migration of high-value businesses and jobs to any location...and I'm very excited to be a part of that and it's future evolution."

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Six West continues to offer its world-class support services to the aviation industry

Six West is a world-leading provider of support services to aircraft lessors, airlines and private aviation. Working alongside its clients to safely manage their aircraft during lease transitions, deliveries, demonstrations, and distressed recovery operations, the company has offices in Skibbereen, Dublin, Malta, Hong Kong and the Cayman Islands. Six West's office in Skibbereen is run out of the Ludgate Digital Hub.

Skibbereen native Áine Scully says it was a blessing to find such quality work in Skibbereen with Six West. Áine joined the company in May 2017 as Finance Director and it has been full systems go for her since then. And although the past few months have been



strange, due to the impact of Covid-19, it's been very much business as usual for Six West.

A young, dynamic company that is at the forefront of global aviation support services, Six

West joined the Ludgate community in 2018, initially renting hot desks but with the rapid expansion of the company, acquiring an office at the hub in 2019. "The Ludgate Hub is a prime location for start-ups, established businesses, artists, and creatives to work from, so it was a natural (and easy) choice for Six West to establish itself there," explains Áine. She also emphasises the great networking opportunities that being based at the Ludgate has brought about. "The location, premises and services offered at the Ludgate Hub are first class... and the Ludgate's IT infrastructure is exceptional, which is crucial to our business, as we communicate with other parts of the world via conference or video calls on a daily

basis."

Áine says that having a base in West Cork is extremely important to Six West. "Being present in West Cork has allowed us to snap up some extremely talented, hard-working individuals who have proven to be instrumental to Six West's success. On the flipside, Six West has given our Skibbereen employees the opportunity to work in their hometown, thereby avoiding long commutes or having to permanently move to find quality employment."

While this is obviously a challenging time for the aviation industry, Six West has been extremely fortunate in that the company's flight operations department has remained active throughout the pandemic. Áine explains: "Due to the border

closures brought about by Covid-19, the team has had to find innovative ways to operate ferries in parts of the world that essentially were closed to foreign nationals and airlines. Their ability to think out of the box was indeed put to the test.

"With regards to private aviation, this mode of transportation is predicted to increase in popularity and we expect to benefit from that too."

The nature of the company lends itself to remote working so it is business as usual for the finance team and the wider Six West team. "We performed a company-wide, two-day stress test before the legal limitations came into force, giving us an excellent opportunity to see if any issues would arise from working remotely," says Áine.

All Six West employees have been given laptops and two screens for maximum comfort while working from home and the company has always been supportive of flexible working hours, especially for anyone with care-giving responsibilities.

"The health and well-being of all Six West employees is absolutely critical," says Áine. "Everyone's personal circumstances are unique, and we are happy to support all our employees as they find their own equilibrium in this new reality. Additionally, the Six West management team is being as transparent as possible to ease any worries staff may have during this period."

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Dunmanway's Brookpark connects local business with the rest of the world

Brookpark Enterprise Centre in Dunmanway has really come into its own this year, providing a professional environment and connectivity to companies and independent workers in a rural area. With office spaces now fully booked by eight tenants, and many more availing of hot desking, conferencing and training facilities, Committee Chairperson and Centre Manager Peter Walsh is proud of the support the Centre provides to the local economy, especially in these difficult and uncertain times.

Installing 1GB broadband speed at the building stage was a game changer for the viability of this project, explains Peter. "From day one fibre optic broadband has attracted the attention of companies limited by poor connectivity in their current location. Now that companies are forced to look at remote working options, that is proving to be one of the open secrets of our success."

One such company is the Carbery Group, whose non-essential employees have been working remotely since March in order to create more space for production workers at the company's Ballineen plant. Some staff, from the IT, Finance and Admin Departments, re-located to two office units in Brookpark and the arrangement is working extremely well says Office Manager Fiona O'Leary: "Some of our team members don't have sufficient broadband or a quiet enough working envi-

ronment at home, so we set up remote offices here. Dunmanway isn't far from our plant and its a very central location, on good roads, for our employees to travel to.

"The Centre's management has been fantastic; Peter quickly installed blinds, sanitisers, extra fridges...everything we needed... and organised pin code access so our security needs were met. At times the rest of our home-based staff need to come in for meetings, or we conduct training by Zoom, so the meeting room facilities are also used.

"It's a lovely environment to work in and we have the canteen or can walk up to the town centre at lunchtime."

One of the founding tenants of the Centre, Thomas Gray, is an animator who creates children's cartoons for TV. He also finds the professional environment and fast broadband speeds essential to his work.

Thomas moved to Dunmanway town from Dublin six years and initially worked from his spare bedroom. On the birth of his second child, that room became otherwise occupied and the house became much busier so, "I was practically knocking on the windows as the Centre was being finished," he says. "It's great as it's only five minutes from my house so I can pop back home anytime and because I have my own key, I can go to work anytime, 24 hours a day, which is great when I'm working dealing with people in different timezones or with horrific deadlines!

"From Brookpark I've worked on many projects – at one stage I was managing a team of animators, which included people in the Philippines, Dublin and Chicago, which just shows what can be achieved online. I think I was ahead of the curve and this pandemic has actually

normalised remote working so that companies no longer feel they are 'taking a gamble' on someone who isn't working in the office."

The organising committee was also delighted to recently welcome Dunmanway businesswoman Mary Ross of CiCi boutique in Clonakilty, who is now running the online support and dispatch unit for her website www.dressesonline.ie from the Centre.

Whilst there is a waiting list for the office suites (you may still add your name for upcoming vacancies), companies large and small can take advantage of the large hot-desking suite, where there is plenty of space for privacy and social distancing, although due to Covid-19 guidelines it is important that interested parties contact Peter first to discuss their needs.

Other benefits not already mentioned include ample external parking, 4G coverage available on most mobile networks, an internal lift in the Enterprise Suites, and finally the backup support of the Brookpark Enterprise Centre Committee and the Local Enterprise Office.

Contact Peter Walsh on 087 2676411 or the centre Manager on 086 4410484 or email brookparkenterprise@gmail.com.



Thomas Gray is an animator based in Brookpark.

Earn up to €25 per hour by teaching English online

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, so much has changed in the way people across the world work, with millions discovering the benefits of being able to work remotely. Many Irish people are now keen to seize job opportunities that will allow them to continue to earn money from the comfort of their own home – something that TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certification offers.

Traditionally, people studied for a TEFL qualification with an eye on travelling the world, something that isn't possible right now. But did you know that the TEFL Institute of Ireland has partnerships with online platforms where, as a teacher, you could earn up to €25 per hour? And of course, when travel restrictions are

lifted, you can teach English abroad through the Institute's many other partnerships.

Estimates suggest that approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide study English. It is, by a long distance, the world's most commonly studied language and approximately 375 million people speak it as their second language. As global connectivity grows exponentially, so too does the world's appetite for learning our language. The advantages of speaking English have become even more apparent during Coronavirus and demand for native English speakers has risen by 80 per cent since March!

English teacher Kate Popova from Cork started her own small business teaching English through Skype and highly recommends it as a career:

"I decided to teach English abroad in 2014. My first destination was sunny Malta, where I taught at a school in Malta's busiest region, Sliema. As time went on I built relationships with students who, once they had finished their schooling, asked me to continue giving them lessons via Skype. At the time, teaching English online wasn't that big and at first it seemed strange to me but I did end up teaching several students online.

"Eventually I realised I could earn a much bigger salary doing Skype lessons full-time. That was my a-ha moment! Since then, I've worked with numerous online employers and I have gone on to start my own small online teaching business.

"Through the years, I have taught all ages and all national-



Kate Popova

ities. At the moment, I am mainly focusing on teaching adults with a particular focus on Exam English (IELTS and TOEIC exams). With COVID-19 the online teaching market has

never been so buzzing. It is a great chance for students to buckle down and really focus on improving their English.

"Online teaching is fantastic because you can be anywhere in the world and make money – it is freedom. Salaries vary from company to company. What happens with most is that you build your way up to a bigger pay scale. The more lessons you give, the more your 'rating' goes up and so on and so forth. This is why it is so important to deliver the best lessons possible – you will be rewarded.

"Don't let life pass you by without enjoying it. In my opinion, it is very difficult to have a boring day at work when you are an online teacher. You always leave work with at least one exciting, funny, or interesting story to tell!"

If you'd like to try teaching English as a foreign language, the TEFL Institute of Ireland offers the chance for people from the ages of 17 upwards to become fully qualified with a reputable and trusted accredited provider. With so many providers offering different options, making the right choice can seem hard but the TEFL Institute has over 20 years experience and will make the process as simple as possible.

The TEFL Institute of Ireland is the only Irish-based provider to offer the Government Regulated 180-Hour Level 5 TEFL course - RQF: 601/5234/5, which is the equivalent of a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) course.

Visit www.tefl.ie or call 01 5563038 to find out more.

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These aren't American-style log cabins that you'll find

hidden away in the woods – instead, Loghouse cabins are functional buildings that can add value to your life in many different ways. If you need extra space to live, to work, to exercise, or just to have fun, log cabins can provide that space in a stylish and comfortable way.

It has been a damp summer and we can expect more of the same for the rest of this year so it's reassuring to know that all of loghouse's products have been specifically designed for the sometimes harsh Irish climate with damp proof membranes, extra window seals, end trims and sealants. Foundations are designed to keep dampness away from the structure ensuring a longer lifespan of the building. These measures allow Loghouse to offer a written 10-year guarantee direct from

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Loghouse's dazzling offering includes granny flats, home



office log cabins, playrooms, garden rooms, log cabins for schools and residential log cabins with stunning interiors; all these buildings are guaranteed to last for generations thanks to the resilience and longevity of the wood used.

To discover more visit www.loghouse.ie, call the Cork office on 021 243 9151 or visit the Cork City Showroom in Hanley's Garden Centre.



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So far 2020 has been challenging and stressful for us all in some way. However, Lisa Curran says that a common reflection she has heard from people post lockdown is their appreciation and heightened awareness of nature in their life, be it a garden, public park, coastline or woodland.

Lisa was supposed to launch her own Forest Bathing business in March, just as Covid hit and everything came to a standstill. "Thankfully, since the restrictions have lifted, I can slowly begin again, but things are different," she says.

"I am very grateful to live in the forest in Glengarriff, where I guide my Forest Bathing Experiences, so my situation is the same. For some in this new work from home scenario, finding a proper balance between work and personal life may have become more difficult as both of these worlds have now collided. Working from home can present some unexpected stresses."

According to Lisa, now, more than ever, it is so important to give ourselves restorative time,



to look after our mental health, empower ourselves and increase our overall wellbeing as much as we can. Spending time in the forest does exactly this. Forest

Therapy is rapidly spreading worldwide due to its incredible health benefits. It has been scientifically proven to decrease anxiety, stress levels and lower blood pressure while boosting our immune system and increasing our creative, mental and physical energy.

As a certified Forest Therapist and Forest Bathing Practitioner Lisa has seen the transformational power of nature therapy many times. "The difference in people's energy and mood after spending two and half hours on a guided forest therapy experience is incredible," she says. "The insights people receive from the forest are truly wonderful; after all, being in nature is

our natural state, which is why it feels so good."

Lisa offers forest bathing experiences for both public and corporate bookings in Glengarriff Nature Reserve through all seasons. She also offers one-day forest therapy stress management workshops and six-week forest therapy interventions designed to support people with specific needs. She is available for private group bookings and work events in West Cork and beyond.

To contact Lisa or for more information on Forest Bathing and Forest Therapy check out her website Glengarriffforesttherapy.ie



Overcoming home office challenges



Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

Office ergonomics in the home is now something that many more people have to consider. The most important thing to be aware of in this situation explains chiropractor Eoin Roe, is that sitting all the time is not very good for us. Getting up and moving around is far more important than what you are sitting on and has a huge influence on your overall health.

I don't want to scare you but sitting has been associated not only with cardiovascular mortality risk but also mortality from all other causes (Stamatakis et al, 2019). So if you find yourself sitting in front of a computer for work and then

moving from there to sitting in front of another screen i.e. the play station or TV, it would be a good idea to change this habit.

The good news is you can mitigate the effects of sitting with moderate exercise. One of the benefits of working from home is that you should be able to find the time to add exercise into your daily routine, as you no longer have to commute. For most people walking will provide enough exercise. Aim for 40-60mins per day of walking at a good pace, preferably up and down hills. If you just don't like walking then running, swimming, cycling, dancing or any other physical activity is fine as long as it makes you breath a bit heavier and gets your heart rate up and you do it daily.

Interestingly a Stanford study in 2004 found that walking increased creativity both during and shortly afterwards (Opezzo & Shwartz, 2004). So going for a walk before work or taking calls whilst walking may actually improve your problem solving ability and make you more productive.

Some other strategies that may help you reduce the time sitting are to invent reasons to get up. Just by standing you will



increase the amount of calories you burn. Standing desks are becoming very common and also, even more interesting, desks that can be adjusted from sitting to standing for different tasks. If you have the space and think that working from home will be a more permanent situation for you then making an investment into the right equipment will pay off. I find that many people leave this decision too late and end up with a standing desk because they are already suffering with back or neck pain.

Here are some ideas that will help you to reduce your sitting

time:

- Every time you answer a call get up and walk around whilst on the call.
- Put printers or other things that you need access to away from your desk
- Set up to take your Zoom calls whilst you are standing
- Perhaps the simplest – set an alarm and walk to the kitchen to get a glass of water every hour.

I know that everyone's situation is different but hopefully I have got you thinking about ways you can increase the amount of activity you are doing whilst still being able to get the work done.

Secondly a good seating position will reduce the amount of effort it takes to sit up straight and reduce pain and discomfort.

A seat with a good back, screen at eye height and a keyboard just below elbow level are important so you may find it challenging if you are trying to work at the dinner table.

By far the most important thing to get right is seat height. I would encourage you to use a seat height where your knees are slightly below the level of your hips and your feet are on the floor. This will have the effect of tilting your pelvis

forward, which will help you maintain the natural curves in your back. You will therefore be able to sit straight with much less effort. If you sit on a seat that is too low, you will have to use a lot of muscular effort to sit upright. That is a battle you might win for 30 minutes but you will not be able to sustain for the day.

Obviously the ideal is to have a seat that has an adjustable height; if you don't have an adjustable seat, just use a cushion, pillow, rolled-up towel or anything to raise your bum up and get a slope down to your knees. You can buy wedge cushions that will do this for you; they are normally either eight or 11 degree wedges. If you are trying to convert a flat chair, like a dining chair, eight degree wedges are usually fine; 11 degree wedges are good for the car where the seat may already be tilted backwards. If doing this means that your feet can't touch the floor then you will need to find something to rest them on, this can be anything but needs to be solid, for example something like a block of timber.

Third most important is screen height. A desktop screen can be raised to eye level by

placing it on top of a secure shelf made from blocks of wood. If you are working with a laptop screen, height is more difficult. The problem with laptops is if you raise the screen the keyboard goes with it; the best solution to this is to get a separate keyboard so that you can raise the laptop to eye level and have the keyboard at a more relaxed height where your wrists are lower than your elbows when typing.

The last thing to say is that if you are finding yourself tightening up in your shoulders neck or back then something is wrong and your posture may be aggravating this – take it as a clue to look at what you are doing, make some simple changes and see if this goes away. If it doesn't, then seek help. In my experience poor posture is rarely the cause of a problem but will definitely aggravate one, so if you have an underlying neck or low back issue, getting them resolved will make posture less of an issue.

If you would like an appointment please call 087 9582362; I am available in Skibbereen at Market Street Clinic.

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Open Out eliminating connectivity blackspots in West Cork

In recent months West Cork based OpenOut Ltd has received a surge in enquiries resulting from increased numbers of employees and businesses working remotely. The issue of connectivity has never been more crucial, particularly in rural areas where broadband and phone services are often unreliable, or unable to cope with the demands of our new digital world. OpenOut was established in early 2019 to 'bridge the gap' and, as the

need for reliable broadband services grows – for remote working, learning, online exams and tutorials – so too does the demand for Open Out's services.

OpenOut began by mainly installing mobile phone boosters/repeaters in rural houses but has now extended this service to commercial customers; you can now choose from a variety of boosters to match your circumstances. As Sales Director of OpenOut, Peter

Walsh explains: "Our objective is to find a solution to our customers connectivity challenges. OpenOut operates a 'No Fix No fee' policy and consultations are free of charge."

Following many requests OpenOut is now also offering a Mobile Broadband and Wifi package where traditional broadband is not available.

Currently based in West Cork, OpenOut is working on plans to offer its services to homes and businesses nation-

ally. To this end the company has entered into a partnership with Digital Business Ireland, a newly formed representative body to support Ireland's digital economy.

Lorraine Higgins, Chief Executive of Digital Business Ireland said: "We are delighted to team up with OpenOut to help rural businesses who are finding it difficult to avail of all the possibilities that going online presents because of the lack of effective connectivity

in some areas. We are all aware of the many challenges faced in bridging the digital divide between urban and rural Ireland. If nothing else, the current COVID-19 crisis has taught us that digital infrastructure, in our businesses, educational settings and at home must be robust enough to meet the challenges of the future. We look forward to working with OpenOut to achieve this and to ensure that each and every business has the capacity to fully realise their digital potential."

If you need to improve your mobile phone or broadband connectivity, Contact Peter on 023 8845599 or email inbox@openout.ie.



Strike a balance for all day comfort

It is well documented that sitting at your desk all day is bad for your health with excessive sitting linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, an increased risk for diabetes and chronic back, neck and shoulder pain. Studies have even found that too many hours spent sitting can increase memory loss

and decrease brain function.

For a while now experts have been advising people to stand for 15 minutes an hour but new research shows that people should actually be standing for at least 30 minutes per hour to get the health benefits.

This is where a sit-stand desk from Donworth Office Interiors

in Cork can help. With the touch of a lever, a sit-stand desk allows you to switch between seated and standing positions while you work.

The sit-stand desk can help you maintain good posture and proper ergonomic alignment with your workspace to help prevent back pain, ensure

healthy blood flow and fight fatigue while standing.

Rome was not built in a day. When you start using your new desk, slowly build up your time spent standing. Stand for short periods in the beginning to build up tolerance in your legs, back, neck, arms and core, then slowly increase the time you

spend standing as your strength grows. The easy adjuster on Donworth's desk allows you to switch positions quickly and simply.

A good tip is to add a layer of cushioning with a floor mat, which will encourage subtle leg movements that work your muscles and improve the body's blood flow.

Finally, a sit-stand desk becomes even more beneficial when paired with an ergonom-

ic chair. Comfort, alignment and proper posture are just as important when we are sitting as when we are standing.

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Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle



Dynamic technology company sees demand grow during Covid



Established in 1991, PGi began with a simple goal: Empower people and businesses to connect and collaborate. The company provides organisations with secure, professional technology that inspires and connects audiences worldwide. Through its cloud-based and feature-rich video conferencing and webcast technology, PGi empowers virtual events that enable the future of work.

PGi established its EMEA base in Clonakilty in October 2001, with the support of IDA Ireland. Clonakilty serves as a shared services centre incorporating a number of functions to support the global organisation. The Clonakilty office employs 200 people in; customer care, IT / Operations, finance and compliance, sales, marketing, product management and HR.

Earlier this year, PGi started building out a new customer support team in Clonakilty, as part of a shared services venture with a company based in North America. The company has already hired 50 people and will be filling more roles between now and the end of 2020.

Brita O'Connor, Director,

Human Resources EMEA at PGi explains how more than 60,000 enterprises worldwide trust PGi and its GlobalMeet product suite to deliver high quality virtual events and everyday communications. "Our products are built to use on every device in every corner of the world, and every year more than 330 million workers use GlobalMeet to drive productivity and communication," she says.

Brita explains that what attracted the company initially to Clonakilty was the availability of skilled and educated talent in the area. "Having third level institutions such as UCC and CIT close by means that there is always a pool of highly qualified talent to draw from," she says. "The proximity to



Brita O'Connor, Director, Human Resources EMEA at PGi

Cork airport with international connectivity is also a key attraction of the location. West

Cork is such a fantastic place to live that we find people stay with us and they really value the work-life balance that working in the area affords them."

Over the years the team in Clonakilty has proven themselves to be critical to the success of the company. "We can go up against any other location in the world and demonstrate the value of the site," says Brita passionately.

By its very nature, PGi is a very dynamic company, continuing to change and evolve in response to the needs of its customers and the changes in technology. "People who work with PGi are customer-focused, innovators and great team players," says Brita.

There are over 12 different

nationalities working in the team in Clonakilty. "From the perspective of inclusivity, we have always worked hard to create an environment where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their potential," she explains.

PGi has gained customers during the pandemic, which has resulted in a record demand for all its collaboration solutions; particularly video and webcam functionality, as organisations looked to substitute the face-to-face meeting with an alternative.

To support the demand, PGi brought on board circa 20 additional temporary resources in Clonakilty.

"Six months ago, organi-

Continued on next page...



Corporate IT Manager Michelle Callaghan has been working at PGi for 16 years. Her role involves looking after corporate

systems, so essentially, any server or services that internal employees need, for example email, phones, files services and lots more.

The Clonakilty native, who lives in Kilbrittain with her husband Ger and three children Ciara (14), Cathal (12) and Cillian (8) is partly responsible for providing the means for users at PGi to work from home. She says that while homeschooling during lockdown proved a challenge, she found that she very much enjoys the flexibility that working from home allows and would like to continue to do so. "It helps me to be a little more organised!" she explains.

"It was so difficult trying to work my eight-hour day and

look after my family and have to find time early in the day to do the school work, while concentration levels were still fresh," she says. "It meant that my working day was dragging out too late in the evening. I was glad when that ended!"

Now however, with the kids back at school, Michelle has time to take a proper break!

"With the kids at home over the summer, my breaks were spent sorting their meals and hanging out the washing! I'll never again complain about making a packed lunch in the mornings!" she says laughing.

"I love being here for the kids when they need me and no commute means less fuel consumption."

The downside is that after 16

years working out of the office in Clonakilty, she does miss the daily face-to-face contact with her colleagues. "Because I've worked for PGi for such a long time, I know almost everyone and I have made a lot of friends throughout the years, so I do miss the office chats. However, we do have instant messaging, which we use quite a lot as an organisation, so that helps!"

The opportunity to work from home may also now allow for a family dog, which Michelle has always felt wasn't fair with the family out of the house all day.

"Needless to say, the kids have been putting the pressure on over the past few months!" she says.

One of the many benefits to working at PGi is the flexibility of the company. "My job doesn't involve anything customer facing so I'm very lucky to have the flexibility to work later in the evening or earlier in the morning if I need time off during the day," says Michelle. "I also work with a great team and my boss, Lowell, is really understanding."

Prior to working at PGi, Michelle started off in the Technology Park in Clonakilty in 1999 for a company that closed in 2002. She went on to work in the office of the late Mr. Joe Walsh for a year while he was serving as Minister for Agriculture, then O'Leary Insurances in Clonakilty and after upskilling through a

FAS course in 2003/2004, she secured employment at PGi.

When she's not working, Michelle enjoys spending time with her family. She also volunteers in the local Camogie, GAA and Scouting organisations, all of which her children are members of.

Michelle's advice to anyone working from home is to treat the morning routine like you are going to work. "So get dressed, brush the teeth or hair, make a cup of tea as it aids concentration and keep structure to the day."

She also recommends having a quiet workspace, a comfortable chair and a clean desk. "Every little bit helps when working from home!"

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

PGi ...Cont'd from previous page

sations were largely supporting the office-based worker. Right now, it is primarily the @ Home worker," says Brita. "So where the office had everything you needed to support your collaboration requirements (huddle rooms, video endpoints, fast internet connections), the @ Home worker has a laptop, a mobile phone, and possibly some consumer technology like an Amazon Echo or Apple TV. So supporting both office and consumer technology is now important."

PGi utilises its own audio, web conferencing and web-casting solutions. The company's audio and web conferencing solutions are perfect for one to ones, interviews, team meetings, project meetings, etc, while its webcast solution allows tens of thousands of people to join the same call for meetings such as important company announcements, or investor updates.

As a communications company, PGi was able to adapt very quickly to the changed environment that lockdown

brought.

"Being a technology company and specialising specifically in the kind of collaboration technology that everyone is now dependent on was a big advantage for us," says Brita. "Our teams were very comfortable with the technology so communicating with customers and colleagues virtually was not a massive leap."

The company made sure that employees had everything they needed at home and then invited regular feedback from teams to continue to support

them as they adapted to their new working environment. "Communication is massively important when everyone cannot be in one place," she emphasises "so we are very regularly reaching out and making sure everyone knows who to reach out to if they have any concerns whether that be related to work, health or otherwise during this time."

All of PGi's current vacancies can be found on our website www.pgi.com

Brita says the roll out of the government's National Broad-

band Plan is going to be crucial to facilitate people working remotely in West Cork in the longer term.

"High speed broadband is critical. That was one of the unknowns when everyone moved to remote working initially – would they have the connectivity to continue to be able to do their jobs. Fortunately, the vast majority of our team have adequate broadband for business continuity during the pandemic but longer term.

An added bonus she says would be the completion of the



greenway from Clonakilty to support employees when they go back to the office.



Kildare native Mark O'Quigley is a Senior Support Technician at PGi. He is currently working for the company from his parent's home in Kildare. He says the main advantage to working from home for him is work-life satisfaction. "Everyone has their circumstances and reasons for working from

home," says Mark. "In a lot of office jobs, there is no need for employees to be go to an office five days a week. I am winning back more time in my day for the other parts of my life and I can enjoy a little extra comfort that home provides."

Mark started at PGi in June 2016, in Care team tier 1 level providing support to customers using the company's automated service while also running high level conference calls as an operator. After two years he progressed to a technical support role. "Day-to-day, I resolve technical issues for our users," he explains. "We contact users to make sure we understand the circumstances of their issue and then we investigate in our systems if necessary." The role requires demonstrating empathy with users and making sure they are happy with the overall service. Technical knowledge and analytical skills are important too.

While he does miss the social aspect of the office, meeting with his colleagues in person, PGi provides Collaboration tools so employees make use of that and meet for 15 minutes daily to see faces and run through daily operations.

"Things are still quite social with chat and talking online but it helps to be physically next to someone," he explains. "Taking a cup of coffee with a colleague is an easy way to de-stress something that might be happening in work. When someone is physically next to you, you connect more at a human level."

Mark's role is very structured so he has to present for certain duties at certain points in the day. "I think this has made my work from home structured and has contributed to the initial and sustainable success," he says.

He also believes there is something to be said for

leaving one place of work and returning to home, so he sometimes takes a quick walk after his shift is over to let the mind re-adjust.

Mark has a dedicated office room at his parent's home and says the one thing he really relishes about working from home is the view out the window!

One of the main challenges at the beginning of lockdown was working with poor Internet connection but that issue has since been resolved; Mark was lucky enough to get upgraded to a fiber connection.

His feeling is that a hybrid type situation, part working from home, part in the office, is the ideal work solution.

"There is a little bit of a logistical effort to having a mix but it is well worth it," he says. "It means that you are increasing your employee candidate pool since those further away will not be daunted by a five-day

commute. People are getting a better work-life satisfaction and offices can reduce their size and so on.

Mark loves the connection with people from different walks of life that PGi fosters. "At PGi we help people around the world connect. I enjoy speaking with customers from different countries: Someone from Saudi Arabia in the morning and another from New York in the afternoon. Our organisation is not too big either, I can have an impact and the right idea is always encouraged. Our customer care follows the sun, which means the wheel keeps on turning, which is cool when you think about it."

Mark moved to West Cork from Kildare and before that he lived in Paris. He admits to a passion for the French culture, way of life and language. "I am happy that I was able to use my French in West Cork."

Currently living with his parents in Kildare, his hobbies include Latin dancing and staying active with short runs and hill walking. In West Cork, he was part of the triathlon club in Clonakilty for a couple of years and enjoyed the sea swims, something he doesn't have in Kildare!

While he'd love to take advantage of working from home by adding a puppy to the family, mum and dad will have to be on board! "Hint-hint," he says laughing.

Like so many others working from home, the advice from Mark is "a correct office standard chair is essential." He also advises making an effort to go out for a quick walk to stretch your legs and if you're on your own in the house, "try to pop down to the shop for your lunch if you can."

Enjoy the sound of seagulls as well as high speed connectivity at Bantry's new remote hub



The Grow Remote Bantry Chapter has recently launched Bantry Bayworks – a brand new, purpose-built remote hub, in the heart of Bantry. Located over the new SuperValu supermarket, overlooking the inner harbour in Bantry town, the very natural setting that the space enjoys encapsulates the remote working culture in West Cork.

The Grow Remote movement is dedicated to transforming the working landscape of Ireland by encouraging and enabling more people to work remotely.

The not-for-profit group started in 2018 when a group of like-minded individuals who wanted to see change in our communities got together in a WhatsApp group.

That first year, Bantry Chamber President and retired business person Neill Clarke got wind of the movement and attended the Grow Remote inaugural conference in Tralee. "I saw the enthusiasm and the interest by companies in the whole concept. I thought it might be a way of Bantry having an entry path to the IT scene, which I felt was crucial for the town's development," he explains.

"Our major problem at this stage was slow broadband speed, so I started registering Bantry with all of the providers. During this

time, despite connectivity issues in the area, Amazon trialed Remote Working down this direction. This worked out for them and it was an eye-opener."

Neill made contact with Tracey Keogh and Rose Barrett, co-founders of the Grow Remote movement and registered the Bantry Chapter.

After attending a number of events at the Ludgate Digital Hub in Skibbereen, it was obvious to him that large companies were prepared to consider the concept and in fact were already making it work.

He started looking for the right premises and after speaking with Jim O'Keeffe of SuperValu in Bantry, the current space over SuperValu was identified.

In July 2019, a committee formed to drive the project forward: Neill was joined by Gillean Guy, Kathryn Kingston, Eleanor Macri, Cathriona Tobin, Tara Seawright, Michelle O'Keeffe, and Florence Newman.

"In the meantime there was a big change in the Broadband provision in the town and surrounds," explains Neill, which guaranteed the success of the project. "Digital Forge was the local provider and

doing great work. Eir upgraded their offering and Imagine came on the scene."

Around Christmas time last year, the Chapter was approved for a grant and Peter Coppinger, Teamwork Cork came on board; this was the final impetus to setting up a Hub. Local businesses then came on board with more finance.

Although businesses have had to find a way of dealing with Covid and most recently dreadful flooding in the town, the spirit of Bantry is, as always, innovative and forward thinking.

"Big things are planned for the future in Bantry, so hopefully the whole country will be able to get back to some form of normality soon," says Neill.

Bantry Bayworks has 10 socially distant workspaces, fully compliant with Covid-19 safety measures. For as little as €10 for four hours (or €20 for a 12-hour day) you get dedicated desk; entry code for access throughout the day; super-fast Wi-Fi; and use of a meeting room (pre-booking required).

To book call Bantry Bayworks on 083-027 7474 or email bantry-bayworks@gmail.com.

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Making new connections



MENTAL HEALTH & MINDFULNESS

Susan O'Regan

Susan O'Regan teaches mindfulness and self-compassion courses and workshops throughout West Cork. For more information contact: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com Mob: 087 2700572.

As more and more of us are asked to make the move online for either work, education or to take care of our wellbeing, it may be a good time to have a look at some of the benefits, along with the fears and anxieties that many of us experience about going online. Based on my own experience and observations, I will share some tips on how to stay well while working, studying or taking part in a class remotely.

I never imagined myself guiding meditations online at any

stage in my life. I would have thought that I didn't possess the technological expertise or equipment. I would also have assumed that online work would lack that strong connection with others that I normally feel during face-to-face, in-person, interactions. One way or another, I am convinced that I would have talked myself out of it. But when Covid-19 entered the picture, everything changed, and I made the move online, as much for my own wellbeing, as to continue my professional mindfulness practice.

Because I teach mindfulness as a means of making a living, meditation already had its place in my daily routine, so when we locked down in March, mindfulness meditation was something familiar that I practised for steadiness of mind and to help manage the array of unsettling emotions that I was feeling. This helped my hugely. However, I still found myself wanting to connect with others, who were, no doubt, experiencing similar emotions. So, because we could not meet anyone in person at that time, I went online.

I turned initially to my training organisation, to hear the familiar voices of my teachers at the Mindfulness Association. I attended their daily meditations on Zoom regularly, as well as several teacher training sessions and online retreats over the summer, all of which provided me with great support and

solace during these challenging times. I was surprised at the very real connection I felt, across physical distance and from the comfort of my own living room. This experience, plus my firm belief in compassion-based mindfulness meant that I had a deep urge to share what I have learned with others, to help us all move through each phase of this pandemic.

On March 30, I opened a Zoom account and began offering free, guided meditations three evenings per week. People showed up, from my mailing list initially – people who have participated in courses or workshops with me, who would already be familiar with my method of guiding meditations, but then word spread through word-of-mouth. People began dropping in on evenings that suited them. The groups have ranged in size from three or four people up to 17 or 18. At first, it felt a little strange, getting used to this new way of being seen and seeing others on screen, but the shared experience, energy and commitment of participants, all of whom were impacted by Covid-19, helped me and others to keep going.

I am fortunate in that having just one other person in my house and my little dog; it was fine for me to set myself up in a relatively quiet space to work. I am aware that this may be more difficult for some, but I think we can still do the best we can

with what we have. I guide all my classes from the same spot and seem to have created a little grounding ritual to precede each class, whether as teacher or participant! I sit facing a window, which I think really helps your eyes when facing a screen. Your eyes can shift from the screen to the window now and then, which creates a feeling of open space, as well as space in the mind.

I make a hot drink and show up early to my seat, giving myself some time to arrive both physically and mentally, by making myself warm and comfortable and simply allowing myself a few minutes to take a few breaths, grounding myself in my body before the session or meeting begins. I light a candle and sometimes drink my tea just watching the glow from it.

It is important for your body, as well as your vocal cords, to remain well hydrated so I would always have some water close by too. The sessions I run last about 45 minutes, so a break is not necessary, but if you are involved in longer sessions be sure to take regular breaks. Taking some time for some fresh air and a walk or stretch before and/or after online sessions is also beneficial, as is balancing our time. It is important not to 'overdo' the time we spend online.

People drop into my sessions from all over Cork and West Cork, as well as several other counties. We have even had people coming and going from the

States, Iraq, Norway, Scotland and the UK. This, to me, is one of the huge benefits and sometimes it is quite moving to reflect on the fact that we are all sitting in our homes in various towns, villages, parishes, counties or countries, yet all sharing the same online space. Even though we are miles apart, we are connecting in a very genuine way.

When I began these sessions in March, I had not planned too far ahead, and I am both surprised and delighted that they are still running, as we make the transition now from summer to autumn. They have a sense of familiarity about them now and a real sense of community even across the miles. They have provided a structure and routine to the week at a time when so many things have changed quite dramatically for all of us.

Setting up a routine is so important for wellbeing and now is the time to put a few things in place for the autumn to keep us well. I would encourage everybody to give an online class a shot. There are many to choose from. If you are not sure how to get set up online, for example on Zoom, ask a teenage relative or friend to help set you up and practice a little beforehand. It isn't perfect and most certainly does not replace the wonderful reality of meeting people in person, but the feeling of support and community that can be cultivated online continues to amaze me!

Online mindfulness meditation sessions via Zoom continue on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8pm. Donation-based, these 45-minute drop-in sessions are a great way to cultivate our ability to pay attention to the present moment, keep up a steady mindfulness practice and provide a way of connecting in with others in a friendly and supportive environment.

I am currently taking expressions of interest for an eight-week Mindfulness Based Living Course (MBLC) this autumn. This will be a morning class, based in Baltimore.

Regular nature and forest bathing at Glebe Gardens provide a safe opportunity outdoors to slow down and connect with ourselves though nature. Each two hour experience costs €30 per person. Group bookings are welcome.

Look out for 'ReTreat Yourself' in Baltimore on Saturday, September 12, a day of rest and nourishment at the lovely Glebe Gardens, including mindfulness, yoga, essential oils, nature and forest bathing, nutritious food and drinks.

Please get in touch directly for more information on any of the above.

Email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com or Tel: 087 2700572 www.mindhaven.ie



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

I guess we are all well aware of the fact that 'things' have changed; for how long or forever is yet to be decided. Chatting to a friend online the other day, I said "We will all be lucky to come out of this with our sanity intact" and she responded with "What sanity?" I

Zooming in on the perfect attire

think this describes exactly how most of us are right now and the people who look like they have it all together are bluffing.

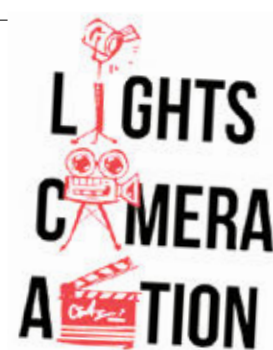
One thing for sure is that life goes on and the key to navigating it successfully is to be adaptable. We have most likely surfed choppy waters at different stages in our lives but the longevity of this uncertainty and sometimes weekly new restrictions is proving to be unsettling; meanwhile 'normal' daily challenges need to be overcome. No matter what the day is going to fling or fire at you, make an effort in your appearance. Don't think for one second that I haven't spent days looking like someone who fell out of a ditch after polishing off a bottle of a vodka – I most definitely have and it is soul-destroying. You just feel all wrong and anything and everything can get you down. Looking like hell and knowing that you don't

need to look like that has a massive effect on the psyche; it's a bit like 'shitting on your own doorstep' – you just can't avoid feeling like crap or stepping in it. So how anyone can conduct a business call and perform at their level best while wearing a top covered in pancake batter splatters and a pair of leggings with a hole in them with mismatched fleece socks thrown in (just to tip you over the edge) is beyond me. Obviously the person at the other end of the phone is blissfully unaware of what you are wearing or maybe has never even met you but the confidence you get from looking and then feeling your best is most definitely translated over the phone. With more and more people working from home, there is a need to re-organise your 'work wardrobe' and it is essential that you 'step into them' for the duration of your

working day. While you may not dress up as much as before because most days you might not see anybody, sitting at your desk at home well groomed should be like a daily ritual. You just never know when a zoom request will come in! For those of you who don't know – Zoom is essentially a group Facetime that is a bit more corporate and complicated to set up. The last thing that you want is to look like you spent a few months stranded on a desert island, dishevelled 'castaway-ish' when the person on screen is used to seeing you stylish and well-manicured.

Obviously the dress code for any online visual interaction is less formal than what is required for work, other than an interview, but it still requires thought and planning. Despite the fact that Zoom is usually filmed from the waist up, having to venture out of

comfortable sweatpants can be and is a challenge. Push yourself, drag yourself kicking and screaming to your wardrobe and continually remind yourself that staying in that deliciously comfortable 'grunge' look will lead to an unproductive mindset and could possibly swap you for a 'glass half full' to 'no glass at all' type of person. The routine and discipline of going through a series of things before work every morning has been proven to get the brain ready to focus; it is ritualistic almost. Professionally dressing up raises your opinion of yourself and your actions (work-wise) will rise to the occasion whereas staying in yesterday's sloppy clothes leaves you with the headspace that you are not up to anything mentally or professionally challenging. This will reflect in your work ethic. Believe it or not the 'science' of all of this



is called Enclothed Cognition and it examines how clothing influences our psychological state and is the main reason why I do what I do.

Not everyone has an 'office' room in their house so lockdown would have nudged a lot of people into getting creative and making space where they could. It's always best to choose a space that has good light, as we all want to look our absolute best online. You need to take the background or wall colour into account when choosing your colour palette for the day.

Continued on next page...

Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Image...Cont'd from previous page

While black is a great 'go-to' professional colour, sitting at home at a desk, would black be your colour of choice? A splash of colour is always wonderful and uplifting and if you choose your best shade then your entire appearance glows online. For some reason, scarves just don't work for online interaction; they can look sloppy (if it's a big scarf) or stuffy (if it's a small neck style one). We all know what kind of neckline is most flattering, so go with that. Keep the jewellery as neat as possible. Obviously you don't need to go all out with your bottom half but wearing your pjs or slouchy leggings is just not good enough. It doesn't matter that no one else is aware of what is on your legs or even if there is anything at all on

them, YOU ARE!

I saw a lot of bright red foreheads that you could have toasted marshmallows on; the screen seemed to accentuate it! In future, be prepared – either wear enough sun block, wear a sunhat or pick up a cream that reduces high colouring.

There will be different levels of 'dress up' required depending on who you need to engage with online. It takes more discipline and commitment to stay productive in our new working environments so if you are used to presenting yourself in a certain way to your clients, keep those standards when attending video conferences. Your clients and co-workers will continue to see you as the professional that you are. You will be demonstrat-

ing a conscious effort to remain focused and, most importantly, you will be subconsciously reminding yourself that you are still at work...just in a different setting. If you want to appear authoritative, competent and trustworthy, then continue as normal with business attire but if you need to reassure staff in a friendly manner, smart casual is perfect. Common sense should dictate and just because you are only visible on a screen, wrinkles on a shirt do not disappear unless they are ironed out!

There is no avoiding the fact that people make snap judgements and like it or not, your appearance says a lot about you even before you speak. Make it so when you appear on screen, people feel like they might miss something important if they don't listen to your every word.

Whatever is ahead of us, we are all in this together; the uncertainty, the distance, the fear, the waiting, the sanitising and the weather. Be patient, above all

else be patient and kind – not everyone is coping as well as they may appear to be. Here's to the day that we can HUG again, may it come soon so that we can

cling on to each other and laugh and cry at the same time.

More time and space fosters professional and personal creativity for Bronagh

Bronagh White runs B-Line Marketing in Clonakilty. Originally from Carndonagh in Donegal, Bronagh spent 10 years in Dublin, at university and in various sales and marketing roles for Mars, Ferrero and Nike, before making her home in West Cork a decade ago with her husband and two children.

Bronagh counts herself lucky to have spent most of her life in two famously scenic places (Donegal and West Cork): "I absolutely love them both. I am thrilled to find myself back near the sea in a small town, especially one as welcoming and friendly as Clonakilty."

As a Marketing Consultant, Bronagh's job involves all aspects of marketing for business, everything from design and social media to Search Engine Optimisation and Google Analytics. Her clients are Cork and West Cork based.

She is also part of a buying team for one of her clients, buying product ranges such as Homeware and Seasonal. "It's extremely varied and interesting work," she says. "No two days are ever the same."

Prior to the pandemic, depending on which client she was working with, Bronagh was either office-based or home-based so she was well set up to work at home full-time when the

lockdown happened.

"Personally, I've been lucky in that my children are a little older and home schooling hasn't been a toil, as I know it has been for many. Working from home was a relatively easy transition for me. The only drawback of lockdown was the loss of freedom to visit my family in Donegal.

"The upside of the pandemic was that all of us were at home together a lot more, there was a lot less running and racing and we had time to eat together, exercise and have more downtime as a family. I think it has given me more time and space which I think has resulted in more creativity personally and professionally."

Bronagh finds that her main challenge is less face-to-face contact with clients: "We are lucky that technology is good enough to allow us to still continue with meetings and sharing of information. I do sometimes now visit clients for consultations about various things but that's much less often than before. A lot of my regular meetings have been moved to Microsoft Teams.

"It can be tricky to gauge people when you can't see them in real life, but I think if everyone keeps it brief and to the point, we can actually get more done in a shorter time. Unfortunately, you do lose some of the camaraderie and banter that us Irish are famous for. My job is very busy and I tend to work alone a lot anyway, so it hasn't been as

challenging as I'm sure it has been for many others."

"On the buying side, that has changed a lot as showrooms are closed and trade shows are cancelled. Generally, suppliers have adapted really well. I do miss the buzz of meeting people but many of my colleagues have been great at keeping in touch over phone and Whatsapp, so that helps to ensure that isolation doesn't creep in."

Bronagh advises anyone newly working from home is to keep it simple: "Set up a dedicated space for which you don't need much more than a desk, a good chair and a computer. Do invest in a good chair, your back will thank you for it. Keep to a routine of working at the same times as before. Take breaks and don't multitask. Try to stay positive and make the best of the situation that you find yourself in."

Bronagh thinks she will continue to mix both home and office based work in the future: "I imagine a lot of people will be more enabled to fit their jobs around their lives and I think that will be good for everyone. I believe a lot of companies were afraid to let people work from home. However, in time, they will reap the benefits, as undoubtedly the increase in flexibility will make people less stressed.

You can contact Bronagh at b.linemarketingclon@gmail.com or [linkedin.com/in/bronagh-white](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bronagh-white)



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Bronagh is joined by some alpacas in one of her favourite spots on the Inishowen peninsula in Donegal.



Special Feature REMOTE WORKING WEST CORK

Enjoy the work, enjoy the lifestyle

Setting up a home office to suit your needs

For many of us our home has now become our central work hub, whereas prior to Covid-19, a home office would not have been seen as an essential ergonomically planned space. In fact our home environment has been completely turned on its head. As workers, we understand that in order to do a good days work, a quiet and distraction-free working space is necessary. As an interior designer, I know that in order to define a professional work area that separates your business from your personal life, there are a number of factors that need to be considered; location, lighting, confinement of clutter and the ergonomics of the space

are all essential.

You might think that a desk and a chair is all you need to set up a home office but honestly this is not true. Space of course comes into play but choosing the right location for your office, buying the correct ergonomic office furniture and setting up a comfortable space with enough natural light and fit-for-purpose surroundings should be top of the list.

Location

In terms of location, choose a space in the home with enough power sources and where you can isolate yourself without too many distractions to disturb

your focus.

If you have the luxury to convert a full bedroom into your office, then that's great, but if you don't, perhaps you could place an unobtrusive or easily stored away desk in the bedroom (a quick search online will show up a number of options from Irish companies that can be put together and taken down in minutes). You could also consider slotting a desk into the alcove out of the way. Just ensure you are sitting at the correct height in a chair with ergonomic fixtures and are comfortable in that space. It may even be possible to hide the desk and chair in a wardrobe. This option means you can close the door and turn it back into your bedroom in an instant. If the room is already painted you can make the space feel brighter by perhaps changing the halogen bulbs to a warm white, adding a bright rug (this also helps with noise absorption), a floor lamp, and a piece of art on the back of your desk. If you do not have enough natural light in that space, choose good desk light and a few shelves for storage if needed.

Office Furniture

If you have space to go all out with your desk, look at adjustable height desks, which you can sit or stand at. Don-worth's in Cork City and High Resolution in Clonakilty both supply sit-stand desks. Studies have shown that employees who alternate between a sitting and standing position will have more energy, experience reduced fatigue levels, and reduce their risk of injury caused by working in one body position too long.

An ergonomic chair should have a lumbar adjustment (both height and depth) so each user can get the proper fit to support the inward curve of the lower back. Most ergonomic chairs have armrests, and these should also be adjustable. A footrest and keyboard wrist rest may be necessary, depending on your seating arrangement and posture.

If privacy is an issue, invest in a good filing cabinet for storage (a plant trailing down over the side will soften the hard metal edges).

Your desk takes central stage so place it in the right area in that room, ensuring that there is enough space on it for your laptop, monitor and keyboard. Keep in mind that if you're holding online meetings, whatever is behind you will be easily seen; place a bookshelf with a



INTERIORS

Maura Mackey

Maura Mackey is a Cork-based interior and retail display designer. A professional with an eye for detail and interior styling, she thrives on giving any home the 'showhouse feel' when up for sale or rental from a home staging point of view. On the other hand, if you are looking to give your home a makeover or restyling, 'Maura Mackey Design' will help you achieve the home of your dreams. P: 087-7699714. maura@mauramackeydesign.ie

nice display, including a plant or two, or an appropriate piece of art on the wall (there are so

Mood

Next decide on the mood of the room. If you're painting, decide if you want a warm or cool, restful or stimulating colour? If you dare, perhaps choose a colour that suits the personality of your home! As an interior designer, I believe that colour can dramatically affect your mood, feelings and emotions. Wassily Kandinsky once remarked that 'Colour is a powerful communication tool and can be used to signal action, influence mood, and even influence physiological reactions'.

Take into account which direction the room is facing. Choose warmer tones of white, grey, green or blue for example for a North-facing room. A suitable paint colour, for example 'Pointing' from Farrow and Ball (one of my favourite off whites) will give your room that perfect warm glow that can usually only be achieved with natural sunlight. Rooms that face south enjoy strong natural light so most colours will work well.

Storage

Creating a space that is clutter-free is key to productivity. You may need to invest in some

carpenter a call and investing in some built-in furniture that's both functional and beautiful. Keep in mind that the last thing you will want to be looking at is an ugly printer or photocopier, so make space for this in your bespoke cabinet. If you can't go completely wireless-tech, think about how you'll hide your cables away. Keep important folders stored close-at-hand in an attractive mesh tray on your desk.

Lighting

Natural light is best so be mindful when placing your desk of where the window is located. Try to have it in front of you, so you won't have to deal with the glare and you can enjoy the view. Choose smart artificial lights with adjustable colour temperatures so you always have the best light at different times in the day. Add a desk light if required.

Going that bit further...

If you decide to add on a room to your home for your office, remember to check with the planning office before construction. Take into account what you need in this space – you get to build it only once so make it bigger rather than smaller if your budget allows. Always ensure that there is enough natural light, add in enough power outlets, light points and go for durable flooring (Amtico, luxury vinyl tile, laminated flooring). Also take into account the aforementioned points on mood, lighting and furniture.

There are a number of companies in Cork supplying and fitting home offices of all shapes and sizes and these can be the perfect solution if you want a professional office space outside your home but don't want the stress of having to take on a building project. Most will come fully insulated and wired and some companies will build completely bespoke to suit your needs. It's a great solution for anyone with the budget, who wants to completely separate home from work, but still save on the daily commute.

Working from home isn't for everyone, but if it's for you, then recognise that there is no such thing as one size fits all and designing an office space in the right location to suit your needs will go a long way towards improving productivity, aiding job satisfaction and ensuring overall wellbeing.

floating shelves; add a plant or two for office chic. If you don't have the room to hide storage boxes away, then take the time to find some with pretty patterns or colours that may also double as a coffee table or even become an art piece in their own right. If you have the budget, space is limited, and this office is a permanent feature in your home, it may be worth giving your local

A suitable paint colour, for example 'Pointing' from Farrow and Ball (one of my favourite off whites) will give your room that perfect warm glow that can usually only be achieved with natural sunlight.



many talented West Cork artists you could purchase an original piece or print from).



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people Environment : Making a difference

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ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda. Its role includes implementation of the environmental dimension of the United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals and to serve as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UNEP's mission is to provide leadership; and encourage partnership; in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

UNEP plays a vital role in shaping International Environmental Agreements or Protocol, however therein lies part of the problem.

The Kyoto Protocol is a great example. It sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community for reducing emissions of six greenhouse gases. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted on December 11, 1997 but didn't enter into force until February 16, 2005. 184 Parties of the Convention have ratified its Protocol to date. The major distinction between the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change is that while the Convention encouraged industrialised countries to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions, the Protocol commits them to do so.

Sadly, however the Kyoto Protocol allows 'carry-over credits', which are a carbon accounting measure by which nations count historical emission reductions that exceeded previous international goals towards its current targets. In essence, carryover credits represent the volume of

Any scheme that creates pollution permits and sells these to polluters will fail completely to stop pollution or to halt, or even slow down manmade climate change. These 'permit' control measures have simply monetised pollution and enabled trading of pollution credits via the various international systems for trading greenhouse gas emission allowances.

The way the agreements are structured enables allowances to be given to those countries who are the biggest polluters of the atmosphere and who

future generations; and it is our duty to create systems that guarantee planetary health and well being.

In the UK in 1863, a pollution control Act called the 'Alkali Act' was passed by parliament in response to the extensive damage to vegetation caused by soda industry factories producing, amongst other gases, hydrogen chloride. This hydrogen chloride was converted into hydrochloric acid in the atmosphere. The Alkali Act required that 95 per cent of the emissions should be

new act has provided the foundation for air pollution policy in the UK to the present day, with the result that currently an industry is required only to use the 'best available techniques' not entailing excessive cost'.

As Polly Higgins, barrister, and environmental lobbyist, pointed out in her book 'Eradicating Ecocide', the original intent of the legislation of 1863 was the complete eradication of a pollution problem, however over the years the intent to stop pollution was replaced with a compromise. Cost became the deciding factor and companies can now argue that it is not 'reasonably' practical to pay for additional measures to stop pollution. Legislation for the environment simply modifies the right to pollute rather than prohibiting pollution.

This UK practice with regards to pollution has set the standards across the world, with industry itself making the decisions on what entails 'best practice'. In effect, the polluters make the rules.

Polly Higgins co-founded the 'Stop Ecocide Foundation', a growing international movement of 'Earth Protectors' based on a legal document, the Earth Protectors Trust Fund document. Going beyond first generation crowd funding, this is the first time that a trust fund backed by international law has been used to crowd fund for a new international law to be put in place.

The Law of Ecocide would amend The Rome Statute to add a Fifth Crime Against Peace, such that extensive damage to, destruction of, or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory would become a crime.

In effect it will prohibit Ecosystem Destruction in the same way that the 1863 Alkali Act in the UK prohibited the soda industry polluting the air. This International Crime would force industry, financiers and governments to support and employ clean methodologies, many of which already exist but are lobbied against by powerful polluting companies, because initially, employing these would be disruptive to their company and would cut into their profits.

Building a global community of Conscientious Protectors for the Earth supports lobbying for this new law at International Level.

We are running out of time. Destruction and Degradation of the Environment and increasing Man Made Climate Change are each creating societal divisions and emergency across the world. The future is fundamentally in the hands of the mass of the people. We must take action.

You can learn more about the proposed Law of Ecocide or join the growing number of 'Conscientious Protectors' by going to www.stopecocide.earth.



emissions a country could have released, but did not. It also allows for greenhouse gas emission reductions to be carried out in projects implemented or financed in other countries, in exchange for credits that can be used towards achieving the Kyoto target.

Dalradian Gold, for example, the company who are currently applying for planning permission to mine the Sperrins in County Tyrone (see last month's West Cork People) boasts of using a comprehensive carbon offset scheme, supporting a water purification project in Cambodia, to render its considerable carbon emissions 'net zero'.

have historically contributed the most to man made climate change.

Indeed Climate Negotiations, where the focus has been on ownership markets to buy and trade the rights to emit the very pollutants that are destroying our planet, demonstrate bleakly, a distinct lack of care and non-engagement in the future for our children and our children's children.

It is impossible for rich nations, wealthy companies and wealthy individuals to buy and trade their way out of climate change and ecosystem destruction; rather WE the PEOPLE of the EARTH have a duty of care towards the planet and towards

stopped and the remaining five per cent diluted.

Prior to this act being passed almost 14,000 tons of emissions were produced by alkali factories per annum; however once the act came into force this was rapidly reduced to just 45 tons annually, a 99.7 per cent reduction in that type of pollution.

Just 11 years later, in 1874, a second Alkali Act was passed to police ALL heavy chemical industry that emitted any smoke, grit, dust and fumes. Sadly however this second act watered down the solution that had been so effective in the 1863 act, requiring industry simply to apply 'Best Possible Means' to tackle pollution problems. This

Funding boost for Active Travel and Climate Adaptation in Cork County

Cork County Council has welcomed the allocation of more than €6.6m for Active Travel and Climate Change Adaptation measures in Cork County under the Government's July Jobs Stimulus Plan. The allocation is part of an overall €115 million package for sustainable transport and transport infrastructure renewal nationally.

The Active Travel grant scheme will bring an investment in excess of €5million for enhancements in Cork County's towns and villages and will

see communities benefit from improved accessible walking and cycling infrastructure. This investment compliments and builds on projects already commenced by Cork County Council under its project ACT initiative. The Climate Adaptation funding will support Cork County Council to alleviate flooding to roads and property, through the future proofing of vital infrastructure against the effects of climate change, improved drainage as well as essential road, bridge and embankment repairs associated

with recent severe weather.

Deputy Chief Executive of Cork County Council, James Fogarty said: "Cork County Council secured this significant funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in order to implement a range of targeted measures to enhance Active Travel and to put in place some of the necessary climate adaptation steps to protect our county's infrastructure and build resilience. Cork County Council's Project ACT has been delivering great improvements for our towns and villages and

while the recent impacts of severe weather events hit our communities hard, this funding will allow us to build on the work of Project ACT while future proofing our communities and our infrastructure. This funding, in addition to the recent investment of over €950,000 from the National Transport Authority, will help significantly in achieving our sustainable travel goals for towns and villages in Cork County."

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people Environment : Making a difference



PERMANENT CULTURE

Allison Roberts

This month's theme has been coming up everywhere I go. Permaculture's seventh principal asks designers to steer away from monocultures – be it plants or demographics. In a garden or forest we know that by planting mixed species to create biodiversity we can naturally avoid many problems with pest and diseases, build resilience in case one species doesn't thrive and also provide a much

more aesthetically pleasing end result. By adding animals to that mix you have fertilisation, pest control and extra yields of meat and eggs eliminating the need for harsh chemicals or hard labour. Numerous studies have been done the world over to show the increased productivity of integrated planning on farms, and farmer/educator Joel Salatin in Virginia, USA is a prime example. Joel has committed his farming practice to this principal, and by rotating animals and crops and seeking out co-workers with different backgrounds and complementary skill sets to help his farm grow, he has grown from a being a conventional farmer to managing his 2000 acre farm organically, using integration, and the farm now grosses \$2 million a year and employs 20 staff.

We human beings often cluster together, in groups of

like socio-economic classes, backgrounds and stages of life, but we see the magic when all those clusters mix. When we moved to Clonakilty twelve years ago I noticed that in this town there is a lot more integration than I was used to seeing in other countries I lived in (namely Australia and Canada); here you can find residents of all ages and interests mixing at our community garden, stopping to chat in the street or at a gig in DeBarras – something we now all dearly miss. There is a richness gained from chatting to people who have different life experiences, and of course it will only serve us better to encourage even more integration. If there is one thing the Covid-19 restrictions are teaching us, it is that we are a social species; we miss our daily interactions dearly. Though we are reconnecting with close friends and family,



our unplanned interactions have been curtailed and so we have been turning to technology like Zoom and Skype to connect

with old friends and gather community.

In terms of town planning and 'Cool Clon', this Permacul-

ture principal encourages us to design our towns with houses to suit all household sizes, from bachelor pads to five-bedroom detached homes, and to layout the houses so that the sizes are mixed together, affordable houses and luxury homes side by side to encourage socio-economic mixing. This ensures all residents are provided for, and no residents are 'shoved aside'. The same can be said about transport integration. We need our pedestrians and cyclist infrastructure integrated into the design, so no road user is left out, and all are considered equally.

By designing our systems and structures with the mindset of 'access for all' we can create towns where all residents can mix and discuss ideas and create projects, drawing on the rich combined experience and perspectives.

Until next time!

Baltimore-buit wooden sail cargo vessel offers an eco-friendly sustainable alternative

Ireland's only surviving wooden sail cargo vessel revived a tradition lost a century ago when it embarked on a symbolic series of sustainable wind-powered supply trips to islands on the south and west coasts last month.

The Ilen, which was built in Baltimore in West Cork in 1926, is Ireland's last wooden cargo vessel with a hold, and heir to a centuries-old trading tradition, which is now being revived worldwide as an eco-friendly sustainable alternative.

The two-week voyage of cargo and community left Baltimore with a cargo of locally produced cheese, coffee and whiskey to pick up gin at North Harbour on Cape Clear Island – from where the vessel originally left for the Falklands, crewed by locals Con and Denis Cadogan.

The cargo ketch served for over 70 years transporting sheep and goods between the Falkland Islands before being brought back to Ireland 20 years ago and restored by a team led by Limerick man Gary MacMahon.

The rotating crew of four will sail to Kilrush Creek Marina on Thursday and then on to Foynes Island on Saturday, home to its original designer Conor O'Brien who died there in 1952.

The Ilen then travels up the Shannon estuary to Limerick on August 31 where locally craft produced Ishka water, Limerick beer and whiskey will be loaded for the journey to Kilronan in the Aran Islands on September 2.

More supplies will be unloaded at Dingle on September 5 before the Ilen completes its journey to Cork Harbour on September 7 to deliver the remainder of its cargo.

Ilen now serves as a community floating classroom and cargo vessel – last year visiting 23 ports and making a transatlantic crossing to Greenland as part of a relationship-building project to link youth in Limerick City with youth in Nuuk, West Greenland.

"The Ilen is a community and training project, and is part of a growing fleet of sailing ships around the world providing an alternative and more environmentally friendly way of delivering cargoes," said Gary MacMahon.

"Here in Ireland we have loads of wind, but just one ship that can harness it and the tide to deliver products in a sustainable manner.

"This symbolic voyage is looking to educate people that we have a network of small ports arounds the coast and the islands which were built in the 19th century for this purpose,

and can be used again for eco-trading.

"This method of cargo delivery was phased out due to the expansion of the road network in the 1920s and 30s, with the last delivery under sail alone taking place in the Shannon Estuary in 1953.

"All over Europe, sail cargo deliveries are springing up and people are using the trade winds to travel to Madeira and the Caribbean, bringing back rum and coffee.

"Worldwide, eco-trading is a growing movement and serious design time is being put into designing full sized modern cargo ships that can harness the wind and reduce fossil fuel use and air pollution."



Ireland's only surviving sail cargo vessel the Ilen. Pic: Gary MacMahon

SuperValu launches Back to School Eco Range with 250 products

SuperValu's Back to School Eco Range is available now in 120 stores nationwide. Since launching Ireland's largest eco-range in 2019, SuperValu has doubled the number of products in the range, which now features 250 products, including for the first time SuperValu own brand 100 per cent compostable Paper Sandwich Bags.

Ray Kelly, Interim Managing Director of SuperValu, said of the launch, "We are delighted to expand the Eco-Range in SuperValu stores. SuperValu are committed to providing customers with more sustainable choice and recognise the importance of green alternatives to both our customers and the environment. We will continue to work towards our goal of 100 per cent recyclable, reusable or compostable packaging on certain ranges by 2025."



people Farming

What could be next?

FARMING
IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

In his farming diary, West Cork suckler farmer and columnist with the Irish Farmers Journal, Tommy Moyles covers the lay of the land across all agri and farming enterprises – news, views and people in farming across West Cork and further afield.

In association
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Where do I start on the goings on of the last month? Rain, storms, golf, Covid clusters in meat plants, rotating agriculture ministers: There was a time when the media used to refer to late summer as the silly season with worthwhile news hard to find. 2020 feels like it's trying to squeeze a decade into a year.

I don't need to remind readers of the two-week washout in the second half of August. In a period of 12 days, we experienced rainfall in excess of 30mm four times.

Roads were washed away in the locality, multimillion euro flood defences were flooded, and even the beach down the road was washed out to sea. The fact that ground conditions were relatively dry up until two weeks ago has been a saving grace.

I've been running the cattle in smaller groups so combined with strong winds drying ground; this is keeping any damage to a minimum. As a result, grazing conditions are holding up better than expected.

Saying that, a spring developed in one of the fields that I've only ever seen once before in the washout summer of 2012.

Silage

An upside from the combination of warm temperatures and moisture has been grass growth. It's been excellent and, as a result there was a higher-than-expected late cut of silage taken.

Usually, I like to have our silage season wrapped up before the end of July, but a few lessons were learned from the late cuts in 2018. The plan at the start of the month was to take a light cut off 8ac this week where the young stock are win-



Raymond and Killian Moloney cutting winter Barley at Brownstown Ardfield.

tered. With growth driving on, an extra 2ac were added and by the time the mower arrived Sunday, another paddock was added to the mix.

Hopefully, we should be well stocked with silage now. The latest cut yielded a similar result to the first cut back in May. I could have cut another few acres on the home ground, but if the weather continued as it was, I might have ended up feeding bales the week after instead.

Grain losses

The travails of a livestock farmer at the moment pale in comparison to the challenges faced by grain farmers. Between drought early in the year and now this wind and rain, it's going to test their resilience yet again. Reports from Teagasc are that the recent storms have caused serious damage to crops, with a proportion blown and beaten into the ground.

Many crops have suffered grain losses through shedding

and ear loss separate to the impact of lodging or the ability to get them off the ground whenever harvesting can take place. Wheat and barley heads on the ground aren't of much use. There are suggestions that there have been yield losses of up to 20 per cent already.

Dairy

The year is turning out better than expected for dairy farmers.

While there were concerns earlier in the spring that the milk price may fall dramatically, the base price in West Cork has remained above 30c/l since Covid measures came into force.

Carbery maintained their base price for milk supplied in July at 30.26c/l while Dairy-gold increased theirs to 29.1c/l.

Beef

On the beef side, weanling sales have kicked off and prices appear to be a little better than recent years.

Prices for the lighter animal

under 330 kilos are holding well with many selling in a range from €2.65/kg to €3/kg. The heavier weanling in the main is making between €2.10/kg to €2.30/kg with a shake more available for the top end animals.

Base price for beef at the factories has remained steady at around €3.70/kg up on last year.

Some politicians who were offering support to farmers outside beef factory gates last autumn now find themselves in power. Lucky for them the bad weather has distracted farmers somewhat from what appears to be one political cock up after another.

Farmers might have expected a different form of green to cause trouble for the new Government, which finds itself firmly in the rough. Long before events in Clifden came to the fore, there were plenty of cracks visible in the "we're all in this together" approach to tackling COVID-19. The

fallout from the Oireachtas Golf society dinner will be felt for a while yet. Politicians who should have known better felt they were above the law and some have now paid the price.

The fact that a global pandemic dominates the headlines doesn't mean Brexit or CAP negotiations have gone away. There's been enough turmoil in agriculture over the last 18 months and having a monthly Minister for Agriculture over the course of the summer isn't helping the situation.

Surely, some common sense will prevail and a minister found.

Even then, there's going to be an uncertainty among farm organisations, the heads of whom will be meeting their third new minister in 10 weeks.

In the meantime, farmers will wait and see who our Minister for Agriculture for the month of September will be.

Farm Life: Jer O'Callaghan, Colla, Schull. Suckler and dry stock farmer.

Interview by
Tommy Moyles

Describe your farm?

I farm about forty acres. I've a suckler herd and do some contract rearing.

It's a very dry farm with a lot of gravel in it and I'm able to get 70 per cent of my slurry out in January. That slurry gives you good results for the rest of the year. Over half the farm is used for first cut silage in the second half of May. The remainder of the bales for the year are taken from paddocks that get strong. I've no bother getting contractors, as they're my first cousins! They look forward to the phone call, as they'd be anxious to get the gear going.

Tell us about the herd?

There are 10 red Limousin cows. They'd be almost



purebred at this stage. I have a Limousin bull and the beauty of the bull is I've never had to pull a calf of his.

When do they calf?

Some are autumn calving and they're calving at them moment. Those weanling would be sold around St Patrick's day.

The bulls would be averaging 330kg and the heifers about 360kg. Over the winter I separate them from the cows in the house and let them back into the cows to suck in the morning and evening. The calves have a lie back near cows. They're on rubber mats and are very content. The rest of them calf from

February 1 to Patrick's day. I sell those ones in early October in Macroom mart.

Do you run more stock?

Once calving is finished, I buy in about 18 calves and bucket rear them. I buy Angus bull and heifer calves every year from two dairy farmers near me. They come in at about three or four weeks of age and they're fed twice a day. I keep them for a few about four months and then sell them on to a farmer who has become a regular customer. I'm happy enough with that system. It works out super for me.

You also do some contract rearing for a dairy farmer. What does that involve?

I started contract rearing dairy heifers about three years ago. The heifers come into my herd after my annual herd test

in April. They come to me at about 13 to 14 months and I run my own bull with them. I had them scanned at the end of August and all were in calf. They are with me until the first week of December. Once they're gone I buy in some continental heifers and run them with the bull in July and sell them as calf heifers. I used to find the bull got agitated in July when breeding season was over but this helps keep him relaxed. This system works well for me.

Farming with a disability hasn't held you back. Could you tell readers what happened you?

Following a motorbike accident, which resulted in my left hand being amputated just above my elbow, I was in CUH for six weeks and the National Rehabilitation Centre in Dun Laoghaire for three weeks. That

was a big eye opener.

When I saw people in worse circumstances, I thought there is nothing wrong with me once I can walk and get around.

Farming with a disability didn't hold me back as, aside from silage, I do all my own machinery work and fencing. When I'm fencing at the roadside, I could have a lot of spectators looking on when I'm driving poles with one hand.

As my cousins always say, they can't go wrong when they follow their right-hand man.

Do you enjoy farming?

I find farming life very relaxing. I'm overlooking Long Island and Cape Clear, which is a busy spot. The young calves are great when they're here, I keep them in the paddocks near the house and my 95-year-old father enjoys walking out to see them thrive.

people Health & Lifestyle

Techniques to help children deal with back to school anxiety

As children return to school, many parents, children and teachers are anxious about what to expect in the coming weeks.

It is normal to feel anxious about unknown situations, however it is important to be aware that how we feel about a situation can also influence how

children feel about it.

When faced with an unknown situation, focus on the things that you know and the things within your control. Schools are doing their best to reduce the risk of any spread of infections. Bus Eireann and schools are making contact with parents to make them aware of new policy and requirements to minimise risk. It is important to read through these policies and then to sit down with your children and talk through the information so they are informed and know what to expect.

In the future, primary school children (with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs reasons can not) may be asked to wear a facemask or face covering. You can make this fun by letting your child choose his or her own mask. Having a spare one will



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

mean less stress when the first one is in the wash.

Talk to your children about how they are feeling about going back to school. Ask how they are feeling about masks and hand cleaning being mandatory. If they have asthma or do not like having their face covered find out if they can use a visor. Ask your child if having a practice school day where you both wear a face covering would be helpful. And then most importantly listen to their reply.

Children are very good at problem solving when adults have the time to listen. Help children to find answers to their concerns by asking them "How do you think we can make this easier for you and other children?"

If they are not sure you can give them an example by saying "if it was me I might..." (Give them an example of what you might do) then ask them what they think? Could that work for you?

Remember to also have conversations around what they are

looking forward to i.e. seeing their friends again, and the subjects that they enjoy. If your child is still feeling anxious ask them "where do you feel that?" Anxious feelings are most often felt in the tummy and can feel like butterflies or nausea. There are many practical things that parents can do to reduce these feelings.

First ask them "what it will be like when that yucky feeling is gone?" Acupressure is fun and easy to do at home. In Chinese medicine there are acupressure points that bring comfort to the body and the mind. Tapping gently under the eye (see diagram) is good for relieving anxiety in the stomach. Show them where to tap and tap gently with them for 30 seconds, then ask "is that helping the yucky feeling go away?" If it is helping you can repeat this until the feeling is gone.

Giving your child a hug and drawing a figure of eight on your child's forehead as you hug them can also help them feel better as it calms the mind and stimulates many of our body's innate relaxation and healing processes. These techniques will work for all ages including adults so try them on yourself.

It is difficult to manage emotions when tired. So support your child to get enough sleep. Aim for nine to 12 hours of sleep per night. As the evenings are still very bright, a blackout blind will help you to re-establish sleep patterns.

In the morning make them a breakfast that contains protein. Protein will give children the energy they need for the school

day and provide fuel for their brain. Cereal is high in carbohydrates and sugar and can make anxiety worse so try something like scrambled eggs with bacon or french toast.

Exercise will also help to reduce anxiety; going for a walk after school, playing a fun game of football or encouraging them to bounce on the trampoline will all be helpful.

A lot of adults feel that children will grow out of anxiety, but in my experience it might take many years and the support of a therapist to do so. Why wait? Imagine how much more fun they could have had free of anxiety and worry. If you notice your child is anxious, constantly worried, easily startled or developing everyday fears it is time to get help. There are lots of interventions that parents can learn to support recovery at home. But please remember if you are a teacher or parent dealing with your own anxiety or worries, resolving these issues first will reduce the emotional affect on others around you, and leave you in a better position to support those you are caring for.

Emotional problems, trauma, addiction and fear impact on our behaviour, health, weight and hormones. I support adults and children to take back control of their mental, physical and emotional health through a range of therapies, which include dietary advice, hypnotherapy and acupuncture. If you are curious please do get in touch, I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Amanda 087 6331898 / amanda@marketstclinic.com



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School's in for winter...apologies to Alice Cooper



DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Dr Jeff Featherstone

Dr Featherstone is a highly experienced medic and award-winning doctor who works in a busy GP practice in West Cork, as well as at Mercy University Hospital and Cork University Hospital, as an A&E doctor.

This month I have been asked by our concerned editor to say a few words about our children returning to school.

Well the bottom line is – it has to happen! We know that during the lockdown emotional and psychiatric problems have soared. I believe only so much can be learned from a laptop; it fills a gap but does not replace the full school experience – the friendships children develop, the competition and general craic. It's a no-brainer; so few of us could fully educate our children alone.

I have listened to all the discussions about the impossibility of fully following HSE guidelines at school, but we have to do our best; we cannot build new bigger classrooms overnight, and nor do we have the money for major retrofitting. How can you teach a

preschool child about social distancing and not getting a cuddle from teacher when needed – impossible!

We are where we are! We have to trust the teachers, as we trust the doctors to do the right thing. Times are uncertain, that is for sure, but our teachers have had months to plan this inevitable return to school.

So what are the changes we are likely to see? Our children are now well used to regular hand washing, hand sanitisers and social distancing. They either wear or see mum and dad in facemasks.

They know all about cough etiquette, even though they might not be able to spell it! Everyone agrees that these are the most important measures.

There will be staggered drop-offs, open windows in classrooms (so children should wrap up well), one-way traffic

at school, avoiding congestion during breaks, and a sick bay should a child become unwell at school. PPE will be available at school to protect a teacher coming into contact with a child with a new cold, temperature, or early Covid. Deep cleaning of classrooms is another measure that is so important. If a classroom is contaminated, it will be deep cleaned immediately.

As parents we also have to use our own common sense with regard to assessing whether our child is well enough to attend school and washing their uniforms and clothes and so on.

Changes and protocols should now have been well advertised by schools.

Under difficult circumstances we all have to do our best!

I feel, given that few children develop serious Covid or need hospitalisation, that the big risk

is to the oldies, or susceptible, that the child might come into contact with.

I would go further. As a microbiologist friend of mine said, the elderly should limit social interactions long-term. Covid will be here for years.

I hear enraged people on the radio berating Government and everyone else; yes things are not perfect but come up with a better plan I say and I will listen.

I also fear the threat of litigation, which is bankrupting the HSE and NHS in the UK, as the blame culture proliferates. Do teachers need to write disclaimers to say they are doing their best under very difficult circumstances; please work with them and not sue them!

Children are very adaptable and resilient – let us see what they say and how they get on.

On a happier note, the

precautions we are taking have been shown to reduce seasonal flu by over 95 per cent in Australia. This is very encouraging, as our flu spreads from down under and we base our vaccinations on the Oz flu viruses that are circulating during their winter. However it's still important to still get your flu jab, as from September/October.

One last word about the recent clusters associated with highly publicised coverage in the media on how "Covid loves to party". I hinted at rebellion in my last article; this is not the time for celebrating. A serious battle is being waged.

Our children are our future and need a fully rounded education. They are not just 'bricks in the wall'.

people Health & Lifestyle

How to build up your immune defences with Patrick Holford



HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

I hope you have had a healthy and happy summer. I love the summer, and this summer has been particularly lovely here in West Cork. The pandemic has made me really value where I live. As a family we have been outside a good deal – we got some fabulous good weather, which we hadn't expected, but really enjoyed. However, heading into the autumn and 'back to school' is concerning.

One thing that has really struck me since the start of the COVID is how many people have said they were much healthier compared to the previous Spring seasons. When you have young children in school, you learn to expect a certain number of coughs and colds, and maybe stomach upsets, but this spring in our family we had none of those. Many other families I know had the same experience. So going back to the school setting deserves some careful consideration in terms of building up our children's immunity, so they can deal with the inevitable onslaught of bugs, let alone COVID.

To help you to work out what's best for you and your family, we have enlisted the

help of one of the most knowledgeable nutrition experts, Patrick Holford. We have invited Patrick to join us on a Webinar to discuss his recommendations around nutritional supplements and lifestyle tips for keeping the whole family in good health. Patrick has written a new book out on this topic – called *Flu Fighters* – and he really is a specialist in using targeted nutrients to maintain optimal health.

The details on the Webinar and how to sign up are at the end of this article (and if you can't make the live event, don't worry, we will record it and we can send it out to you).

We also have a tentative plan to have Patrick visit Bantry for a one-day health workshop on October 25, but current restrictions mean that it might not be possible. We will keep you updated on that through Facebook and our newsletter.

To get us started, he has also sent us this article on the importance of remembering your daily Vitamin C – how much to take, why you are taking it and how much you should increase your dose by if you encounter a virus or infection.

"There are two ways to not suffer from a virus. The first is to not get infected. That's what masks and social distancing are about. The second is to have a strong immune response. That's what vaccines and vitamins are about.

Vitamin C is one of the most powerful anti-viral agents without side effects. There is no virus yet tested that isn't either eliminated or substantially suppressed if exposed to high enough levels. The issue is how to get your blood levels high enough when infected.

Before exploring this there's some background to vitamin C you need to know. Almost all animals make vitamin C (from

sugars in plants) at remarkably high levels, and have the ability to make much more if exposed to a virus. Goats for example, make the equivalent of 15 grams (300 oranges worth) a day. Rats triple production of vitamin C if exposed to a virus. Why do they make so much? That's why we're not worried about our dogs, cats, sheep and cows. They're all exposed but don't succumb to infection.

Animals that don't make vitamin C include primates, most bats and guinea pigs. That's how the guinea pig became the experimental animal of choice. These species share a period of jungle-based evolution eating a diet with very high vitamin C intake. Gorillas, for example, eat about four grams a day. The loss of ability to synthesise vitamin C is thought to have been an evolutionary advantage, leaving more available sugars for energy, at a time when these species had a high dietary intake.

Animals that make vitamin C are much less susceptible to the harmful effects of viruses. They may still carry some viruses but generally don't die from viral infections. Bats catch and carry but don't succumb because they do the equivalent of interval training when they fly, with their heart rate soaring to a thousand beats a minute. They are super-athletes with strong respiratory systems.

Should we be doing what animals that make vitamin C do, e.g. massively increasing our intake under viral infection? Yes. Look at the sharp end. Intensive Care Units in the US and the UK who use intravenous vitamin C have a fraction of the mortality. The average mortality is over 40 per cent. In London, one ICU used two grams of intravenous vitamin C and dropped this to 33 per cent. In the US, two ICUs using

six grams of vitamin C with steroids report 6 and 3.5 per cent mortality. They've also measured vitamin C levels in their patients and they were often undetectable, diagnosing scurvy. Vitamin C levels drop precipitously under viral attack. That's why animals make more, and you need to take more.

I take one gram of vitamin C twice a day – the equivalent of 40 oranges – but up my intake to one gram an hour when under viral attack until symptoms disappear. Studies giving six or eight grams in the first day of a cold show that half are symptom free within 24 hours. I also supplement zinc, which is in my vitamin C tablet, and make sure my vitamin D level is good. I purposely expose my skin every day to twenty minutes of sunlight to make vitamin D and supplement 1,000iu of vitamin D a day from October to March. These simple steps can make the world of difference whenever you get a viral infection."

On September 23 at 7.30pm we are hosting a Webinar with Patrick Holford on the best way to fight the flu this winter. To get a complimentary invite to watch the webinar (and ask questions if you wish) sign up to our newsletter (there's a simple sign up box on our website, www.organico.ie). We will be sending out the link to all our subscribers the week before the Webinar.

COVID restrictions permitting, we are also hoping to welcome Patrick to Bantry on October 25 to teach you how to stay healthy and disease-free in his Seven Secrets of 100 per cent Health workshop on October 25. Places are limited, and we will be announcing the workshop if it's possible, after the regulations are reviewed on September 13. It is planned for the large conference room in the Maritime Hotel.

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WEBINAR WITH
PATRICK
HOLFORD

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Wednesday 23 September, 7.30pm

WEBINAR IS LIVE & FREE: To register & get the code, sign up to our Newsletter @ www.organico.ie

Bantry Bay Lions Club Diary August 2020

The Bantry Bay Lions will be conducting a bucket collection on Saturday, September 5 at SuperValu and Lidl in Bantry. Proceeds from this collection will be allocated to their charity fund and will be distributed locally for flood relief and the homeless.

The Bantry Bay Lions have collected thousands of used spectacles over the years. These spectacles are refurbished and distributed to allow people in the third world to see. There are drop-off locations in Bantry General Hospital (inside the front door), Bantry public library, Kenneally eye centre Bantry, Newtown Pharmacy Glengarriff road, Mealagh

Valley centre, Glengarriff Pharmacy, Drimoleague Pharmacy, Bara House Glengarriff road and St Finbarr's Catholic Church. Please donate your used spectacles, without cases, at any of these locations. If you have any queries, please contact Joan O'Donovan at 086-0563185.

The Bantry Bay Lions would like to thank Nora Lynch for her outstanding contribution during her two-year term as President of the Club. Past President Marion Rouse assumed the role again from Nora in July. The club wishes Marion all the best in her new role. Pictured is Nora (left) handing over the Chain of Office to Marion.

Provided by John Dervan, PRO,
Bantry Bay Lions Club



UNITY YOGA
WEEKLY TIMETABLE
BOOKING REQUIRED

Mon	9.30-10.30am 10.30-11.30am	West Cork Pilates West Cork Pilates	Lorraine Dufficey Lorraine Dufficey
Tue	7.30-8.30am 10-11am 6.30-7.30pm 7.45-9.15pm	Sunrise Yoga Morning Yoga Sunset Yoga Yoga for Anxiety	Jeff Gonet Jeff Gonet Jeff Gonet Amy Russell
Wed	7.30-8.30am 10-11am 12-1pm 6.30-7.30pm 7.45-9pm	Sunrise Yoga Morning Yoga Chair Yoga Pregnancy Yoga The Joy of Yoga	Jeff Gonet Jeff Gonet Bairbre Crowley Clodagh McGuirk Bairbre Crowley
Thu	7.30-8.30am 10-11am Noon-1pm 6.30-7.30pm	Sunrise Yoga Morning Yoga Gentle Therapeutic Yoga Beginners Yoga	Jeff Gonet Jeff Gonet Bairbre Crowley Jeff Gonet
Fri	7.30-8.30am 9.30-10.30am 10.30-11.30am 11.30am-12.30pm 6.30-8pm 7-8.30pm	Sunrise Yoga West Cork Pilates West Cork Pilates West Cork Pilates Spiritual Development Restorative Yoga	Jeff Gonet Lorraine Dufficey Lorraine Dufficey Lorraine Dufficey Amy Russell Bairbre Crowley

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people Health & Lifestyle

The nurturing power of touch in a world of social distancing – is it really safe?



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We provide a safe and nurturing space to support you through massage and reflexology

Right now life is a bit of logistical nightmare for us all. How far is two metres? Is one metre ok if we are outside and have our masks on? Do I have the right mask and should I wear it all the time? What are the mask rules and etiquette? ...never mind the stress of forgetting your mask! Then there is the hands worry...Did I disinfect my hands? Which disinfectant is the best or should I just use soap and water?

Are you exhausted yet?

At some point the stress of it all becomes overwhelming and exhausts your nervous system. At that point, help and support is needed and this support can be achieved through touch therapy explains **Joyce O'Sullivan**, Solace Holistic Centre.

Touch therapy incorporates massage and/or reflexology and provides numerous benefits to physical, mental and emotional health, including:

- Reducing heart rate and blood pressure;
- Increasing serotonin levels, which calm the nervous system;
- Improving circulation and helping to remove excess toxins from the body;
- Balancing hormone levels, which can improve sleep and thought processing;
- Improving digestive function

and clearing a foggy head

At Solace, myself, Ana and Sarah are here to support you and to provide a safe, nurturing (and disinfected!) space to have massage therapy and reflexology. We are members of the Irish Massage Therapist Association (IMTA) and the National Registrar of Reflexology Ireland (NRRI), which have both provided clear guidelines on how to practice safe therapy. Abiding by these guidelines ensures that we are providing a safe space for you, and that we, as therapists, are maintaining our own health during these uncertain



times. This allows us to be fully present with you during your session, to support and guide your nervous system to return to its own state of equilibrium.

On booking your appointment we do a 'check-in' with you, to see how you are currently feeling and what, if any, are core issues that need to be addressed during your session. Arriving in Solace we give you a consultation form that help us to ascertain key issues and which incorporates our Covid Consent form. We also have staggered appointment times to reduce traffic in the reception area.

A lot happens in the

background at Solace, and in between sessions, to ensure a safe space for you. These procedures have been in place since we opened and we ensure that they do not interfere with how present we are with you during your session. After all, it is your time to come back and be present with yourself, to allow balancing of mind and body to take place.

For more details on session times and for queries please visit www.solaceholisticcentre.com or contact Solace on 087 9510554

Don't judge

WALKING IN MY SHOES

Elizabeth Walsh

Elizabeth Walsh is a founding member of Clonakilty Access Group and current Chair. She fosters the idea that there is a whole range of business opportunities being lost as a result of lack of accessibility; people with disabilities, their friends and family, will give patronage where they can access. Out of this 'Clonakilty' was born, an initiative between Clonakilty Access Group and Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce, whereby, simple steps are laid out to enhance business opportunity through providing access to customers/visitors, encouraging tourism.

Each and every day our lives impact on each person's life whose path we cross, metaphorically and physically, positively or negatively!

To really walk in another individual's shoes, it has to be possible to really visualise how a PWD is challenged, how they interact with the environment, how the public environment impacts on their life and their ability to access those areas, streets, facilities, which everyone without a disability can.

Most people will identify with the concept of discriminating against a person with a disability; it happens all the time, intentionally and unintentionally. Most people will be horrified at the concept of discrimination, yet will they speak out when access is denied to PWD in the urban/town environment? This

is discrimination.

What about ableism? Ableism is a form of discrimination and prejudice against individuals who have or who are perceived to have a disability. It assumes that PWD are inferior to 'able bodied' individuals and discredits PWD in a myriad of situations including but not limited to; work opportunity, education, having a voice, having personal privacy and having access to the environment.

Ableism assumes that PWD strive to be 'normal', that is 'able bodied', and therefore cannot achieve a 'quality of life' or a 'good life', as a result of their inferior physical or psychological disability. This is based wholly and totally on a prejudiced perception and judgement of another's life and another's internal emotional state, while 'able bodied' people, generally, do not choose to make judgements regarding other 'able bodied persons' internal emotional states.

An example which occurs quite regularly is that of a PWD being approached inappropriately by an unknown person, who will demand to know 'what is wrong with you?' or 'what has happened to you?' Apart from it not being anyone's business, this is exceptionally rude and ableism, as it occurs daily.

Walk in the shoes of a PWD. How do you feel to be treated as inferior? How do you feel to be judged as less entitled? Less intelligent? Less happy? By a complete stranger who has no knowledge of you and with whom you do not wish to share personal information!

Everyone is equal!

Herbs can help stem the flow

Menorrhagia is the medical term for abnormally heavy periods.

If you are unfortunate enough to suffer from this, you will be unable to carry on with your daily activities as bleeding is heavy, you are passing blood clots and cramping is severe. Also, if you have menorrhagia you will need extra sanitary protection to cope with the flow, which will have to be changed every few hours and during the night. To add to this litany of misery your period may last longer than a week and you may also have symptoms of anaemia such as tiredness and fatigue. On a scale of one to ten, menorrhagia is at the top, but very heavy menstrual periods can hit the scale at the upper end also. Many women suffer from these and cope in silence thinking this is normal. It is not.

Before I look at some ways of relieving heavy menstrual bleeding it is important to know there may be underlying factors causing it and these need to be addressed if present. Also, if the pattern of monthly blood loss has changed, it needs to be investigated, as does any bleeding between periods and after the menopause. The underlying factors that may cause menorrhagia, or very heavy menstrual loss, include, uterine fibroids, hormone imbalance, anovulation, polyps, adenomyosis, an intrauterine form of contraceptive, inherited bleeding disorders and cancer. However, in approximately 50 per cent of women with heavy menstrual bleeding



HERBAL HEALING

Dr. Rosari Kingston

Dr. Rosari Kingston PhD, M.Sc (Herbal medicine) is a medical herbalist practising in Dr. O'Reilly's integrative clinical practice in Clonakilty, Co. Cork as well as Church Cross, Skibbereen. Dr. Kingston's area of research are the healing modalities present in Irish vernacular medicine and she incorporates them, where possible, into her clinical practice. In her clinical practise she specialises in infertility and digestive issues.

www.rosarikingtonphd.com

no underlying cause can be found; so what helps to relieve the bleeding and cramping?

One study from the South African Institute for Medical Research in Johannesburg found that low levels of vitamin A was found to be an important cause of menorrhagia, and a statistically significant difference between the fasting serum vitamin A



Yarrow is in flower currently, even though it has got a battering from the recent bad weather so is looking fairly shook.

values of healthy controls and patients with menorrhagia was noted. Other studies have also found that taking bioflavonoids and increasing vitamin C intake can reduce menstrual loss in many cases. Quercetin is a highly concentrated form of bioflavonoids and is found in broccoli, citrus fruits, and red and yellow onions, so incorporating these vegetables into your diet may help.

Turning to herbs, the more well-known ones are chaste tree (*Vitex agnus castus*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa pastoris*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and cranesbill (*Geranium maculatum*). Yarrow is in flower currently, even though it has got a battering from the recent bad weather so is looking fairly shook. It can be found in stony ground. Make tea from it and drink two to three cups per day. These herbs are also available in your local health food store or pharmacy if unsure how to identify them. Apart from chaste tree, the other herbs are astringent and will help reduce blood loss. Chaste tree, on the other

hand, acts upon the hypothalamus and pituitary gland causing a shift in the ratio of oestrogen and progesterone, which oftentimes is all that is needed to bring the hormonal profile back into balance.

Yarrow will also help with cramping as will meadowsweet (*Filipendula*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) tea, marigold (*Calendula*) tea and Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) as they are all anti-inflammatory.

Another interesting, and recent, clinical trial from Iran has shown that the traditional treatment of using pomegranate peel for menorrhagia is beneficial. The results of this triple-blind randomised controlled trial showed that the pomegranate peel extract reduced bleeding, improved quality of life, and increased the blood Hb in women with menorrhagia.

Finally, regular aerobic exercise over an eight-week period has been found to reduce painful periods so this may be helpful also in reducing the cramping accompanying heavy menstrual bleeding.

people Health & Lifestyle

Do we understand our one-year old?

So the first year of life is over. At the age of one, babies who are still very physically and emotionally dependent on others, face different kind of developmental challenges and joys.

How do conversations start?

Many parents are convinced of the value of talking to preverbal babies. Even if the children don't yet understand what all the words mean, they will be getting the message that words have meaning and that words can relate to an experience of being emotionally held in someone else's mind. Eventually the time will come when the first words are spoken. Generally the time is somewhere towards the end of the first year.

For our one-year old, every new move forward comes at a cost. The world of language is a joy and can link the young child up with others in a wonderful, enriching way. At the same time making new links with others inevitably means being more separate from the intensity of that first mother-baby relationship. This is an emotional leap, as well as cognitive, and babies need to do it in their own time.

Through stories, books and nursery rhymes, parents are introducing their babies to the creativity of language and narrative. They are reinforcing an understanding of the way language can be used to hold a story together – their own story or perhaps someone else's.

First steps and building up confidence

Everything does change when our baby starts moving. The feeling of being in charge of

where you go must be wonderful. The world gets bigger. The process of learning to walk and feeling confident enough for those first steps is psychological as well as physical. It is another major emotional leap, full of conflict for the baby. Our baby may need to come to us again and again for hugs and reassurance as they start these first steps. The baby can build in confidence only through repeated experience of moving away from us, returning for reassurance and finding it in us, and then moving away again

The value of exploration

The first important relationship a baby has is with the mother. Quite naturally the mother becomes the first object of fascination and curiosity. One can imagine the kind of questions: What is the mother on the inside? How does her breast come to be full of milk? Who does she love? And so on. If this kind of intense curiosity can be tolerated without too much worry, by mother and baby, then the baby will feel confident to take such curiosity even further.

For a one-year-old, what first began as a fascination with everything about the mother can now be transferred into a fascination and curiosity in everything else. Parents who encourage this curiosity are at the same time supporting their one-year-old's emotional and psychological development – helping them to move on and engage with enthusiasm in the wider world.

Play

Play is a wonderful arena in which curiosity and imagination

**DO WE UNDERSTAND OUR CHILD?**

Diana Radeva
Child and Adolescent
Psychotherapist

In this series of articles Diana Radeva sets out to consider the emotional life of children from birth onwards; and how relationships between children and parents evolve over time. It is a view of human growth, which recognises the importance of strong feelings experienced at each stage of development; thus offering ways that parents might find helpful when wanting to better understand their children's growth.

This is the extraordinary story of the 'ordinary development' as seen and experienced by a parent and a child psychotherapist.

can thrive and develop. Whereas the baby's first fascination is their mother and all she contains in her heart, mind and body, this progresses to something more symbolic; a fascination of containers in general. Finding a container or a containing space and putting things inside


it seems to be a baby's way of exploring the potential safety of the world.

Playing with our baby and paying close attention to following his or her lead can help us understand something about their current feelings and preoccupation as they spread out before us in the drama of the game.

Different kinds of families

Families are different in many ways. In some families both parents are living together with the children. Other families have single parents and the emotional and practical support of an extended family, while some single parents rely more on a close network of friends or local services. However the group is made up, its family has its own culture and ways of thinking about children.

All families undergo strain at different times; this is part of life. The pressure might be emotional or financial: the marriage might be in difficulty, one of the parents may have left the family, there may be a bereavement or a long-term illness to cope with, unemployment, long periods of absence from home and so on. Whatever it is, children are never immune to what is happening in the family even when they are too young to put their feelings into words. This can often be a very painful realisation for parents who have, above all, wanted to protect their children. But, in fact, recognising that family issues will affect all its members, and so allowing yourself to be in touch with your child's experience, is the first step towards helping them digest any painful



Why do we sometimes find it hard to understand children?

When we struggle with our child's emotional distress or behavioural problems what can we do or what can help us?

Child psychotherapy practice is a proven and reliable method of addressing and treating a number of issues including:

- **Pre-school children:** difficulties within mother-infant relationship, eating, sleeping, and toileting, separation and developmental difficulties.
- **School-age children:** social difficulties, difficult behaviours such as defiance and aggression, ADHD, ASD, learning and attention problems, emotional problems such as anxiety and fears, family breakdown issues and relationships at home and at school.
- **Adolescents and young people (up to 27):** trauma, anxieties, worries, depression, low self-esteem, peer and family relationships problems, gender identity difficulties.

DIANA RADEVA BPsych (Hons) MPsych Clin Mpsych psych
Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist
Over 15 years of experience. ICP Registered, MACP
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or confusing feelings.

For pre-verbal children this kind of thoughtful adult containment is an essential step to helping them deal with a crisis in the family. They are not mature enough to emotionally digest problems on their own and their uncontained distress will inevitably spill out in other ways – behaviour, eating, sleeping, bed-wetting, physical symptoms and so on. Young children who have some words may want to talk about the problem. Being open and receptive to this does not mean going into detail with our child, especially when the problem essentially involves

adult concerns. It doesn't help a young child to know the ins and outs of financial difficulties, a marital disagreement or blow-by-blow accounts of a parent or sibling's illness. However a simple, honest presentation of the situation can do much to unburden them.

During such times, some families find another perspective helpful and will often contact their general practitioner (GP) who can refer them to local services.

Continued next month.

ADVERTORIAL : CNM

**“CNM opened the doorway to personal transformation...I could never have imagined”**

By Xochi Balfour,
CNM Nutritional Therapy
Graduate

I was doing street food and journalism before I came across CNM. I burnt out running a street food truck and the search for alternatives, from a place of extreme depletion and exhaustion, started me on a new career path and, more importantly, a deep healing journey.

The CNM course was highly recommended by friends who had studied there. I was attracted to studying due to the com-

prehensive course content and the thorough clinical practice CNM offers.

I really loved the practical experience of holding clinic and the innately holistic approach of the course content. I found my studies at CNM empowering, and healing and the journey has changed my life in every way! I began to blog about my experiences and create recipes and then published my book, *The Naturalista*, which has been described as “A book for the kitchen, the bathroom and the heart”, an offering for collective vitality.

My CNM studies inspired me to take a holistic approach to my whole life. First it was food and then natural beauty which led me to inner female wellness, womb wisdom and connection to nature. I have ventured deeply into women's healing and all forms of medicine, exploring what creates true vitality and wellness. Taking real care of my body and myself has allowed me to become free from so much more than just an unhelpful diet and chemical skincare: a vast web of wellness and self-care. Ultimately true self-love is

available to us all and a key path in the modern world.

Since I qualified, I have been working with women to create sacred space for healing and for a loving sisterhood. The powerful medicine of reclaiming our wisdom through our bodies and taking our healing into our own hands is what I love most about my practice.

Studying and practising naturopathic nutrition at CNM opened the doorway to a journey of personal transformation that I could never have imagined...



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ASTROLOGY

Kate Arbon

Kate Arbon is an astrologer, writer and spiritual teacher. Living in West Cork for over 20 years she gives personal consultations locally and internationally using traditional natal and Horary astrology.
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September Sun Signs

The Full Moon at the beginning of the month brings the speculation of the last two weeks to fruition. Venus, planet of social connections, sharing and pleasure, makes a conflicting angle with Saturn, planet of limitation, boundaries and authority. So this week could see opposition to further limits on our ability to socialise. As Venus moves along she challenges Mars on September 4, we can expect a lack of social harmony with signs of contention and unrest emerging. Before the first week is out there is a shift in the general tone of things when Venus moves into the sign of Leo within hours of Mercury moving into Libra. Communication, information and social connection get to have more traction as these two planets move away from the influence of the difficult and restrictive planets Mars and Saturn. More positivity and a brighter outlook becomes appar-

ent later at the New Moon mid month, when Mercury in Libra, the sign of justice and balance, connects positively to Jupiter, the natural ruler of law. There is a twofold pattern emerging this month; the force of restriction, limitation and control on one side and justice, righteousness and morality on the other. Until next year these two will battle for priority and the lines between the two will frequently be blurred.

We also have an ongoing challenging aspect between the fiery and assertive Mars in its own sign of Aries and the stubborn Saturn in its own sign of Capricorn. This is another pattern with us for several months ahead. These two archetypal forces act like a fast moving energy hitting a solid object. Eventually one gives way to the other and both are changed in the process. We have a lot of assertive fight energy, Mars, in

conflict with the resistance and established structures of Saturn. This month will see this energy dynamic acted out on the world stage but also in our own communities and even our homes as opinions and ideologies collide. Mars spends a much longer time in its home sign Aries this year due to a retrograde that begins on September 9 and continues to mid November. This retrograde Mars has us rethinking the battle plan, and if we have the courage, we can turn our attention inwards to focus on the battle of confronting the self and our own inner conflicts. At worst we will simply blame those closest to us as the source of our discomfort and discontent.

The sense of tides, or more accurately, undercurrents turning may become amplified when the big beneficial planet Jupiter finally moves out of its retrograde, or apparent backward phase. This planet of goodwill

and positive expansion has been retrograde since mid May and this has contributed to the sense of frustrated plans and an inability to reach any goals. The main theme of the month becomes clear now as Jupiter starts to make ground again in the zodiac sign of Capricorn. There could be a slow increase in common sense and a desire for more practical solutions as we begin to understand to what extent our choices are limited now. We are likely to see additional regulation and further promotion of certain ideals, in the effort to control and limit popular expectations or social aspirations. We will be under pressure to choose self-discipline and austerity to meet the requirements and goals of those in authority.

The Virgo New moon on the 17th connects with the two heavy weight planets Saturn and Pluto, which highlights the trend towards greater

systematisation. Mercury rules the sign of Virgo and acts as a go-between or herald of news and information. In the last two weeks of the month it connects with Saturn, Pluto and Mars so it may bring out the true intention of the people or organisations that these dominant planets represent. Mercury is in Libra for most of this month and that puts the focus on our social lives and relationships. But in the last week of September it moves into Scorpio. This is when hidden truths come to the surface and all manner of taboo subjects get an airing. To end the month we see Saturn come out of its retrograde phase and head towards the end of its time in Capricorn and the end of an era in mid December.

The September Full Moon is at 11° Pisces on September 2 at 6.22am and the New Moon is at 26° Virgo on September 17 at 12pm



Aries: Doing your best work and taking pride in it are a focus for you now. You should be able to make some worthwhile career moves or at least secure your current position so that you don't have to worry about your financial future. This is a good time to examine

how you use your time and energy, with an eye to improving your efficiency and productivity. Watch out for health matters as you are concerned with your body now, and you may be inspired to begin a self-improvement program, create better habits, or begin a new diet or fitness plan.



Taurus: You're energised and inspired, creatively and emotionally approaching this month's New Moon. You want to bring forth all that's deep within you. You express yourself more freely, playfully, and spontaneously and are more willing to take chances. Lady Luck is in your corner so be sure to look for good deals. Social activities, travel and attending different cultural events will all lead to meeting people who can help further your goals. The dramatic and performing arts, sports and games, or other forms of self-expression and entertainment appeal strongly to you now. You can accomplish much if you set your mind to it.



Gemini: From the beginning of this month you will have been enjoying the success that you worked hard to achieve. Don't be too quick to put your energy into new projects as you approach the New Moon mid month, wait until the end of the month. All kinds of creative

work are favoured and you might find yourself more closely involved with children at this time. There is likely to be some conflict between your personal enjoyment and what others think you should be doing for kicks. Those things that need to be discussed and settled with the family can be dealt with in the next few weeks.



Cancer: Take a trip back into your past and you will find the answers you are looking for. Now it's time to make changes instead of doing a repeat performance. Taking time to talk with neighbours and folks you cross paths with daily may result in more positive and smoother-running relationships generally. You'll want to fritter away your time on fun and social events over the New Moon, but this may not be at all bad, things have been serious enough for you to want to take a break now. This is a good time to participate in or contribute to any community events in your area.



Leo: Money, possessions, financial security, and practical matters are a focus for you now. You can make some very interesting professional or business moves this month. Be ready to put your money on the table in order to get ahead. If you have tended to be generous or extravagant with your resources, you may begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. At the least, it should become clear to you what your next steps should be regarding your finances. Your astute vision will enable you to correctly assess the right investment, job or any other money matter that arise after this next New Moon phase.



Virgo: During this time you can make an impression on others by making a strong statement to the world about who you are. People recognise you and are likely to follow your lead, or at the least they stay out of your way. You are likely to feel more confident and vital

now. However, you may be so preoccupied with yourself and your own desires that you unintentionally ignore other people and their needs. Include the ones you love in your plans and things will get progressively better. You should be able to strengthen the bond with someone who has been an influence in your life.



Libra: You'll be torn between what you want to do and what you have to do. Retreating from the world for a while and spending some quiet time alone to relax and rejuvenate appeals strongly to you now. You may feel like you are at low ebb and as if nothing is happening or you may simply not want to be 'where the action is'. Don't overreact, overdo or over-indulge to compensate for things not going according to your plans. Sometimes it's best to do what you must, get it out of the way now. You'll get your turn to please yourself. Competitive ambitions and ego drives are on hold now.



Scorpio: Get involved in charity events or social action groups that interest you and you will make headway in many different areas of your life through the people you meet and the information you discover. You may be asked to take responsibility or even a leadership role or to contribute and participate more fully than you have in the past. You will enjoy being part of a team or group effort now. Being part of a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time. Benefits from past efforts come home to roost.



Sagittarius: As you approach the mid month New Moon, don't mix business with pleasure if you want to avoid trouble. Not everyone will be on your side over the next few weeks so you may want to choose your friends carefully and keep your personal thoughts and opinions to yourself. With your career and reputation very important to you at this time, you can make significant gains regarding your ambitions. Recognition for your efforts and receiving credit for your accomplishments are likely now, but only if you've 'done your homework'. This is an excellent time to look for promotion, or to engage the support of those in positions of authority.

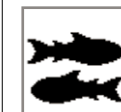


Capricorn: This is a time to lift yourself out of your usual mundane concerns in order to get a larger perspective on your life. Although it may all seem overwhelming for a while remember that as long as you keep plugging away you will make gains. You really can get things up and running if you try. A chance to do things a little differently will make all the difference in the world. Don't slow down because someone can't keep up with you. You have to maintain the momentum. A teacher or mentor who appears this New Moon may be particularly important to you later.



Aquarius: Don't push your luck now. Joint financial affairs and investments are likely to be an issue at this time, and it is a good time to clarify each person's expectations and to take care of any legal business, insurance, wills, and so on. On a personal level, there

is a desire to intensify the level of intimacy and honesty in your closest relationships and to clear away anything in yourself, which is impeding that deeper union you seek. Any temptation to make abrupt decisions and changes could lead to additional problems that you can do without. Stick to what's clear and avoid taking on other people's responsibilities.



Pisces: Partnerships, marriage, and one-to-one relationships get your attention now. You'll be called upon to co-operate and perhaps to relinquish some of your own personal interests for the sake of harmony and mutual benefit. You may end up questioning yourself

as well as the motives of the people around you. Get to the bottom of things before it's too late. Once you have all the facts you will be in a much better position to make a decision. Don't let anyone pull you in a direction you don't want to go and do what's best for you but the emphasis is on 'we' rather than 'me'.

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How to avoid 'maskne'



INSIDE OUT BEAUTY

Sherna Malone

Skincare and beauty expert Sherna Malone shares her knowledge and expertise of all things beauty – from skin care do's and don'ts to the latest products out there.

Yes, 'maskne' (mask acne) is a thing and unfortunately an all too common skin condition I'm seeing in clinic as result of mask wearing. The technical term for maskne is 'acne mechanica' and it is the result of the mechanical friction of fabric against the skin. This friction can lead to inflammation and irritation of the skin, triggering clogged pores, blemishes, dermatitis and redness or rosacea. This can be exacerbated further by moisture getting caught in the mask from perspiring and humidity, and wearing makeup underneath also adds to the problem. While maskne isn't going away anytime soon, a few simple changes to your mask wearing and skincare routine can make a big difference in easing the effects of it and helping to stop it from forming in the first place.

Consider the type of mask you wear

Ask any dermatologists and most will agree that you should stick with a lightweight cotton or washable silk, even silk lined, both of which are gentler on the skin and create less friction than synthetics like polyester. After that, it's ensuring you keep it clean, especially as the temperature rises and you perspire more. I always advise clients to treat their mask like underwear and wash it daily. You don't want all the bacteria, dirt, and other pollutants to sit there only to reapply it to your face constantly. I prefer to use a non-biological detergent, or one that is suitable for sensitive skin. Nothing too fragranced as this can irritate skin further. Ecover has a great washing powder suitable for sensitive skin. Also make sure you buy enough masks to last between washes.

Cleansing

If you don't already have a morning and evening cleansing routine, now is the time to start, as it's essential for removing unwanted bacteria, dirt and dust particles, which can cause irritation and sensitivity and pores to become blocked, which will only exacerbate the breakouts. When it comes to choosing a cleanser for maskne, look for gentle cleansers that will target the acne or breakouts but won't irritate your skin or compromise your skin's barrier function. If you have a combination-oily skin type, a great one for this is 'CeraVe SA Soothing Cleanser' which will remove excess oil if present, gently exfoliate dead skin cells and debris but won't strip your skin or leave it feeling tight, €12.50, available in selected pharmacies nationwide and on-



line. Using microbiome-friendly cleansers are a great option too, as they will focus on restoring the balance of the skin's microbiome, which will calm and soothe irritated skin all in a gentle way whilst also strengthening the skin's natural barrier. Some of my favourite microbiome friendly cleansers are 'Murad Prebiotic 4-in-1 MultiCleanser', 'Skingredients Prebiotic Cleanser' and 'Gallinée Prebiotic Foaming Facial Cleanser'. You will find these online and in selected pharmacies/salons nationwide.

Hydrate your skin

While gentle cleansing is an additional way to protect the skin, always follow with some hydration to keep the moisture barrier healthy. Opt for a lightweight barely-there feel of an oil free moisturiser, as these are a very effective option and will help to minimise oil production which can clog pores and increase breakouts. Some budget friendly options include 'The Inkey List Snow Mushroom Moisturiser' €12, a super-hydrating, lightweight

jelly moisturise that helps to soothe and calm skin while providing an instant cooling effect. 'The Ordinary Natural Moisturising Factors + HA' €7.70 (100ml) provides your skin with a complete combination of natural moisturising factors, made of up amino and fatty acids, urea, hyaluronic acid and more. Its lightweight and non-greasy formula is a simple but effective moisturiser. Lastly an oil free moisturiser that does that little bit more for the complexion, 'Avène A-Oxitive Antioxidant Water Cream' €29, helps to provide a protective shield for the skin, along with helping prevent early signs of ageing, visible pores and improving the overall appearance of your skin. Containing a unique combination of powerful antioxidants, pigment correctors and a high percentage of moisturising agents, including hyaluronic acid, skin is left hydrated, protected and restored. All available from selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

Avoid wearing makeup

If at all possible, avoid wearing makeup under your mask. A great alternative to a face full of foundation is to wear a tinted SPF that will not only even out your skin tone and any minor imperfections, but it will also protect your skin from the harmful UV rays. Some of my favourite non-pore-clogging tinted SPF's include, 'Helio-care 360° Colour Oil-Free Gel SPF50' €36, which comes in a few shades, making it easier to match to the tone of your skin. 'La Roche-Posay Anthelios Shaka Ultra-Light Fluid Tinted SPF50' €18 and 'Dermaceutic Derma Defense SPF50' €34, which comes in two shades, light and medium. All available from selected pharmacies/salons nationwide and online. And if you are concerned about going foundation free, remember half of your face is covered and people will be naturally drawn to your eyes, so perhaps pay a little more attention to that area of your face – a slick of mascara and a well-defined brow will balance out an otherwise mask-free look.

Quick fixes

For those pesky blemishes that won't budge look for a dedicated spot treatment product, one that contains ingredients like salicylic acid, which will exfoliate, dissolve any gunk and help break down the debris that's clogging pores, which causes the blemishes. Make sure to only apply it to

those areas that need it, rather than your whole face. 'Juliette Armand Claryfying Stick' is a targeted spot treatment that will speed up the healing process, while tackling the irritation and redness. Containing Azelaic Acid, Salicylic Acid and Canadian Willow Herb, these key ingredients will effectively reduce inflammation and the blemishes while regulating sebum, €32 from skinboosters.ie and selected Juliette Armand Salons nationwide.

'Clinisep+ Skin Protect Fast Acting Skin Cleanser and Antimicrobial Solution', is a cleansing pH neutral antimicrobial solution without containing alcohol. Extremely useful in treating and managing skin

conditions such as acne thanks to the anti-microbial action, it gently disinfects skin to deliver exceptional protection against infection and provide the ideal conditions for skin recovery and regeneration without any stinging or irritation. I apply to the inside of my mask (let it air dry), I also spritz my face with it, as well as applying it to any blemishes that are present, €12 from Boots Ireland.

All details of my facial treatments, skincare consultations and classes are on www.shernamalone.ie. Call 086-1451551 to make an appointment. You can also follow me on Instagram and Facebook @shernamalone.ie.

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COMPETITION

Join 'Trad Success' to learn to play an instrument from home

Two brothers from Cork are on a mission to revolutionise the learning of Irish Traditional Music so that anyone can learn to play from the comfort of their own home, at their own speed and to their own schedule.

Eugene and Hugh (also known as the Walsh brothers) are both trained primary school teachers and can play more than 10 instruments each! They have put their combined experience, knowledge and expertise into creating the most comprehensive and cutting-edge online courses, available worldwide, for anyone wishing to learn how to play Irish traditional music.

The Walsh brothers believe that learning music should be at the student's convenience, not the teachers. With Trad Success, you can learn online from anywhere, on any device and at any time that fits your own schedule. You can revisit any



lesson as many times as you want and you will never again have to worry about running

late or missing a lesson.

Hugh says, "Our hope is that, before you know it, you'll

be able to play well-loved traditional Irish songs such as 'The Wild Rover', 'Whiskey in the Jar', 'Spencil Hill' and many, many more. It's also a great opportunity to impress your family and friends with your new skills at your next get together."

The Walsh brothers emphasise that playing a musical instrument can have many positive benefits for your physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Did you know that learning to play music is proven to reduce stress and anxiety, as well as improving memory, cognition and mood? Playing music is also a great way to make new friends and to meet people from all walks of life.

Eugene says, "Our main aim is to make learning how to play an instrument as easy as possible. We want people to feel like they can succeed by progressing step-by-step. One

of our key innovative features is that you can follow the lyrics and chord changes on screen in real time so you won't get lost or confused. We have also sub-divided our course into three separate sections which are Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced."

Hugh further explains that, "Our members also have options of viewing and downloading PDFs of songs, chords, strumming patterns and fingerpicking patterns as well as instrument diagrams. We really feel that now is a great opportunity for people to learn an instrument online, as people are spending more time at home due to the pandemic".

Anyone can sign up for a Free 30-Day Course at www.tradsuccess.com (which you can repeat as many times as you like) or check out some free sample videos on the Trad Success YouTube channel.

Both brothers finally add,

"To celebrate the launch of Trad Success, we are currently giving 60 per cent off all of our courses. And we also offer Gift Vouchers, which people can use to treat family or friends for any occasion. We hope that we can help people begin their musical journey today!"

Trad Success has given West Cork People readers a fantastic opportunity to win one of three One-Year Courses.

To be in with a chance of winning email info@westcorkpeople.ie with your name, address and phone number before September 14. Please put 'Trad Success Comp' in the subject line of your email.

'Idle Words' from West Cork singer-songwriter Míde Houlihan

West Cork bred singer-songwriter Míde Houlihan, who has captured the hearts of many an Irish audience over the last number of years, has just released a new single.

As part of a new song-writing initiative established during

lockdown by IASCA (Irish Association of Songwriters, Composers, and Authors), Míde has teamed up with the award-winning double platinum-selling artist Mick Flannery, and Canadian producer Danny Ledwell, to take part in a song writing camp, resulting in the

release of the single, titled 'Idle Words'.

'Idle Words' is about taking someone for granted. Someone who's not around anymore. You know when someone is in your life every day, and you start getting annoyed by little things they might say or do; it's about wishing you could have those things back. What you once considered 'Idle Words', you'd give anything to hear again

Because of recent events and during this period of social isolation, IASCA began trials allowing members to collaborate with each other via video platforms from their homes and/or home studios, to create new music together.

Speaking about the experience, Míde says: "I didn't really

know what to expect as I began this experience, it's definitely new territory writing a song over a video call. But as soon as we started it felt very natural, we agreed pretty quickly on what subject we wanted to write about, and then went off for 15 minutes at a time to write lyrics and call each other again. Mick had a lovely chord progression worked out and soon after that the song was ready. I'm really proud to have been a part of something like this."

Sinéad Troy, IASCA's General Manager said: "It was a joy to connect Mick and Míde as our first virtual co-write session to trial. The feedback from both was so useful to us and will be to other songwriters."

Songwriting for many can be



an isolating time, and Covid-19 has brought so much uncertainty for the future, that IASCA wanted to do something small to connect Irish songwriters and encourage them to do what they do best together – write and

record music!"

'Idle Words' by Míde Houlihan, co-written by Mick Flannery, and produced by Danny Ledwell, is available now: www ffm.to/idlewords

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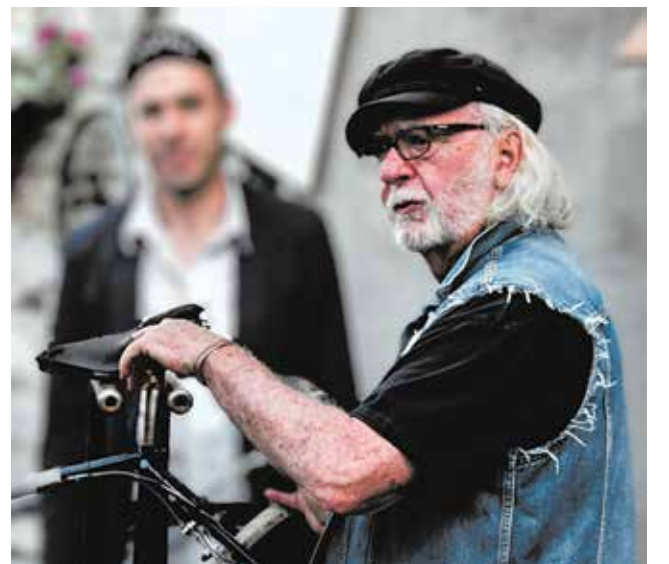
Clonakilty Community Arts Centre

PLEASE ENQUIRE FOR AVAILABILITY

Class numbers capped to observe social distancing so booking is essential.

National Bike Week comes to Clonakilty

This year National Bike Week (September 19 – 27) has had to adapt; like all other festivals and activities they are using the web to spread their message, host virtual events and organise national competitions. The Bike Circus Clonakilty will be hosting a series of live and virtual events and workshops including a photo hunt, intro to e-bike conversion, how to check your bike for road worthiness, and how to make your own bike carrier box or skirt guard. They will also be launching an e-bike conversion course, as well as promoting their on-going apprenticeship program. Jack Kelleher (pictured right) has been chosen as a county ambassador for e-bikes, so look for him on billboards next time you're in the city! For all the details visit www.clonakiltybicyclefestival.org.



people Arts & Entertainment



NEW SEASON STARTS TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 22! in Screen 2 Clonakilty Park Cinema

8.30pm, €10 per film at the door, all welcome. Follow us on for updates.
Please note numbers will be limited due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Tuesday September 22
THE TRUTH
Dir: Hirokazu Koreeda
France



Tuesday October 6
THE COUNTY
Dir: Grímur Hákonarson
Iceland



Tuesday October 20
SAINT FRANCES
Dir: Alex Thompson
USA



Tuesday November 3
THE PERFECT CANDIDATE
Dir: Haifaa Al-Mansour
Saudi Arabia



Tuesday November 17
A WHITE, WHITE DAY
Dir: Hlynur Palmason
Iceland



Tuesday December 1
LES MISÉRABLES
Dir: Ladj Ly
France

Enjoy a night out this Autumn with Clonakilty Film Club and help support an international independent film industry

by Mark Holland,
CFC Secretary

COVID-19 has upended the global film industry, for a time halting film production, closing cinemas and cancelling film festivals. Normality will resume but, in the meantime, some distributors of completed big budget films have pushed back their release dates, sometimes into next year, to maximise profits. The risk is that by then audiences will have lost the habit of visiting local cinemas regularly and many independent cinemas could face closure; a strategy that risks 'biting the hand that feeds'.

When we think of the film industry, it's the big name actors and directors that spring to mind – the Leos, Scarletts and Spielbergs – and they can afford a year of not working... right? However, Hollywood blockbusters are only part of the industry. The independent sector, mostly smaller budget films that are produced outside the major film studio system, is a global industry that supports many hundreds of thousands of livelihoods: actors, directors,

writers, makeup artists, camera and sound people... even film set caterers! Many of those jobs are right here in Ireland. What is a year of not working to them?

Clonakilty Film Club is just one tiny cog in the wheel that ensures the viability of independent film. Like thousands of clubs and independent cinemas across the world, we provide the link between film makers and local audiences. Over the season, which runs from September to March, the Club shows 12 films that run the gamut of drama, noir, comedy, mystery and even occasionally thriller. Our committee works with access>CINEMA, the resource organisation for regional cultural cinema exhibition in Ireland, to select films that, from many years of feedback, we know our audience will appreciate.

This year has thrown up some challenges but we are going into the new season with optimism. Obviously we hope that cinemas will be allowed to stay open and that we can show our full season but there are no guarantees in these times so films are subject to change.

Even with social distancing, Screen 2 in Clonakilty Park Cinema can still safely hold 35 viewers so we will be operating on a first-come, first-in basis. For these reasons we are suspending membership for the 2020/2021 season and all films are €10 at the door with everybody welcome.

Independent films have not been subject to delayed releases in the same way as some mainstream cinema so access>CINEMA provided us with their usual challenge of narrowing our favourites to just 12 films! The selection and dates are:

Sept 22, The Truth: For his first feature outside his native Japan, Hirokazu Koreeda unites French screen legend Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche in a charming and moving story of family dynamics and human relationships.

Oct 6, The County: Eminent Iceland filmmaker Grímur Hákonarson follows up his acclaimed, award-winning crowd-pleaser Rams with another deadpan comedy of agricultural strife and community uprising.

Oct 20, Saint Frances: After her decision to end an

unwanted pregnancy, 34-year-old Bridget (Kelly O'Sullivan) reluctantly agrees to nanny the bright and rambunctious Frances (played by the scene-stealing Ramona Edith-Williams), forming an unexpected bond with her and her parents.

Nov 3, The Perfect Candidate: A revealing look at the changing roles of women in Saudi Arabia from director Haifaa Al-Mansour (Wadjda), The Perfect Candidate follows Maryam, a determined young doctor who runs for city council after the male incumbent repeatedly ignores her request to fix the muddy road leading to her clinic. Despite her father and her community's struggle to accept her as their town's first female candidate, Maryam's creative and ambitious campaign builds momentum, becoming a symbol for a larger movement.

Nov 17, A White, White Day: In a remote Icelandic town, an off-duty police chief begins to suspect a local man of having had an affair with his late wife, who died in a tragic accident two years earlier. Gradually his obsession for finding out the truth accumu-

lates and inevitably begins to endanger himself and his loved ones. A story of grief, revenge and unconditional love.

Dec 1, Les Misérables: Stephane, only just arrived from Cherbourg, joins the anti-criminality brigade of Montfermeil in a sensitive district of the Paris suburbs. Paired up with Chris and Gwada whose methods are sometimes "special," he rapidly discovers the tensions between the various neighborhood groups. When an arrest starts to get out of hand, a drone is filming every move they make. Les Misérables

has compelling ideas and an infectious energy that boils over during a thrilling final act.

Films start at 8.30pm. Doors open from 8.20pm. Follow Clonakilty Film Club on Facebook for updates.

Clonakilty Park Cinema is a fantastic 3-screen cinema, which we are lucky to have on our doorstep. They also have some fantastic titles coming up this autumn for all the family – with not a lot else happening for the foreseeable, at least we can get our weekly fix of great film.

West Cork Toastmasters returns

by Siobhán Cronin,
PR for WCTM

The West Cork Toastmasters will be back in action after its summer break on Saturday, September 5. Although temporarily out of its usual lovely home of the Celtic Ross Hotel in Rosscarbery, due to social distancing restrictions, the group is

continuing to meet online via Zoom.

The new term will kick off on September 5 at the normal time of 11am, with hopefully as many 'zoomers' now, as joined before the summer recess in June. Back then, there were up to 30 people joining in every week with even visitors from abroad on some weeks. Any other Toastmasters members are welcome to join in, or

non-members can also apply for a link to the meetings. Even if you're just TM-curious, please come and visit. Simply email westcorktm@gmail.com for details of links to upcoming meetings or see the Facebook page under West Cork Toastmasters.

Toastmasters is an international club with thousands of members who all want to learn how to speak confidently and

gain leadership skills. It is a safe space and a welcoming environment where positive feedback is encouraged and an excellent mentoring programme.

See Facebook to confirm dates for future meetings.



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people Home & Garden

Hoping for a long hot Indian summer

Over the last week we have seen torrential rain and gale force winds on several occasions. Last night 45mm of rain fell and gale force winds blew through all day. I walked about the garden sighing at the runner beans blown over and sweetcorn strewn across the ground. Down in the meadow cobwebs swung between high-standing dock seed heads, several with garden spiders sat waiting for their prey, blackberries going mouldy in the damp. I really had to remind myself that this is only the last week in August. It seems that autumn

has arrived.

Hanging over our conservatory is an old purple Beech tree. I often wonder if it was planted when the house was built but I don't think it is quite that old. Half of its leaves have fallen already, and the rest are burned and tattered. We can only pray for a long hot Indian Summer.

The summer crops have done very well; we are still picking lots of French and runner beans. I did two sowings of the runner beans and hope the later sowing will recover from its battering from the wind and rain to keep producing for several more weeks. Courgettes are suffering from the constant rain and a couple of plants have rotted away. Nevertheless, we still have plenty. Salad has been more of a problem, the second sowing of lettuce went to seed very quickly and regrowth of the salad leaves has been slower as the summer has moved on. I'm (almost) looking forward to the cooler days for the salad. Ironically, it is much easier to grow through the winter, in our



A COTTAGE GARDEN PROJECT

Jean Perry

Over the coming months Jean Perry of Glebe Gardens will share the ongoing successes and failures of growing a small cottage garden using no-dig and organic principles to see just how much food she can get out of such a plot. Join her on this journey...

temperate climate, anyway. I have sown more spinach

and chard to fill gaps in the garden. The tomatoes ripened early, but are also finishing early. With the muggy weather in August we struggled with blight even in the tunnel. I haven't had this problem before but with so many different varieties it is obvious that some are more susceptible than others. We will still have tomatoes for a good while yet, but I am taking out plants that are finished as we go along. Any reasonable sized gaps will be planted up with spinach.

As for my experiments – the green lentils were a definite miss. The plants were really pretty and delicate. They bushed up well and flowered for weeks but not one pod. We did have a very wet late summer but as I pulled up the plants I was very surprised at the total lack of fruits. So that is something that I can dismiss for the future. I imagine that our indigenous dried pulse was peas. Next year I will have another go at a drying-pea. The Lupins are worth another try though. There



aren't many good size pods but those that have developed look really good. They didn't get much of a chance, as I was short of space and squeezed them into odd corners, but some did better than others. I will cook a few and, subject to flavour and adaptability, I will try them again next year.

The late cucumbers are now pumping out fruit and the (very) late Kuri winter squash are growing away well; no sign of fruit yet but the tunnel is still very warm, so I am still

hopeful.

Peter is already busy making cider from our (many) windfall apples so we should be set fair for the winter.

Sadly, we have decided to close the garden for the rest of 2020. The changed circumstances this year and the recent weather conditions have left it looking less than its best. We are already planning and working towards opening Easter 2021 and look forward to welcoming visitors back then.

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GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

September is a month of sowing, planting, harvesting and making the best of the fine weather (we hope).

Jobs for the month

Keep a watchful eye for fungal diseases especially in damp or humid weather. Blackspot and downy mildew will be more prevalent in humid and damp weather. Watch out too for botrytis (grey mould) on a range of ornamental and vegetable plants. If growing in a glasshouse or polytunnel, do ventilate well when fine weather prevails.

Keep watering in the morning. Excess water left hanging around overnight in the cooler, damper air of autumn will contribute to more prevalent incidence of grey mould and fungal diseases. Clean up dead and diseased/fungal-contaminated leaves at regular and

frequent intervals. Watch out too for blight on late main crop potatoes and tomatoes.

Slugs

Take precautions against slugs who will be hyperactive during periods of damp, humid weather.

Lawns

September is the preferred month for lawn sowing. Prepare well prior to sowing, creating a fine, level seed bed and getting rid of persistent, perennial weeds prior to sowing. Early autumn is a good time to scarify the lawn removing debris and thick thatch. If a large amount of thatch has been removed, it will be necessary to apply grass seed to the bare areas. The removal of thatch in early September stage will stimulate the production of the side-shoots and runners, which the grass plants develop at this time of year. Apply an organic moss killer a week or two before scarifying.

Plan/plant ahead now for spring-early summer

Ensuring a dramatic succession of display next spring starts with planning, choosing and planting now, to guarantee a bright, cheerful display next spring. It is a good idea to plant while the ground is still warm and the days still relatively long so the plants get off to a good

start and get well settled in and established before the onset of the cooler and more challenging weather of winter.

Plant colourful Aubrietia now, which will provide vivid displays of cascading colour in shades of blues, purple and red in sunny banks, rock gardens, hanging baskets, window boxes next spring. Aubrietia thrive in sunny, well-drained soil. Add ground limestone if the soil is acid. Protect against slugs throughout the autumn, winter and spring. Aubrietia may be combined with other spring flowering rock plants, dwarf bulbs and winter/spring flowering Heathers.

Choose dwarf bulbs to extend the season of colour and plant in the sequence of flowering.

Suggested calendar of flowering.

1. Snowdrops.
2. Narcissi 'January Gold'
3. Iris – dwarf early varieties/species.
4. Outdoor Hyacinths.
5. Narcissi 'Tete a Tete'
6. Crocus – species and hybrids
7. Narcissus 'February Gold'
8. Muscari – grape hyacinths.
9. Dwarf Tulips.
10. Late dwarf Narcissi.

Most bulbs can be planted in September. However, Tulips are best left until November for planting. Crocus may be planted from September onwards.

Lilies may be used in large terracotta containers, tubs and in the open ground. Don't let Lilies hanging around too long after purchasing; keep in a cool, dry place if you can't plant right away.

Plant Sweet William and Wallflowers for colour and rich fragrance next spring and summer. Get these into the ground as soon as possible to ensure quick establishment and secure they are good and strong going into the winter. Add plenty of well-rotten farmyard or stable manure prior to planting. If these aren't available dig in some of the excellent Co. Cork manufactured 'Gee-up'. Fork in some organic fertiliser prior to planting.

Winter Heathers, which include Erica carnea and darleyensis types will provide persistent colour from late October/November to April or May. Add ericaceous compost when planting. Plant in bold, informal groups of three, five, seven or nine of the one variety. Most gardens will (and should) provide space for heathers. They offer tremendous value and are hardy and free-flowing in the most adverse of weather conditions Choose sunny, open positions for heathers to provide their best displays.

Autumn colour in Borders / Containers

Keep colour going with



Chrysanthemums and Dahlias. You will extend their colour by regular deadheading. Watch out for caterpillar and slug damage. Continue regular liquid feeding of summer containers at weekly intervals.

Sweet peas will benefit from an organic seaweed based liquid feeding at least once a week. This will feed a continuity and profusion of flowers. Cut Sweet Pea blooms at regular intervals, bringing them into the house.

Fruit Garden

Pick late strawberries, autumn fruiting raspberries, blueberries, damsons, plums, peaches, figs, early and mid-season apples. Protect late fruiting crops against bird attack and theft with netting or a fruit cage. Complete summer pruning of apples and pears. Continue planting strawberries. Prune plums and damsons immediately after picking. Remove dead wood on wall-trained cherries, shorten pinched back shoots and complete tying in. Cut out or tie down strong vertical shoots. Prune blackcurrants. Complete pruning of wall-trained peach and nectarines.

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people Home & Garden

The beauty of the late flowering Hydranga shrub

By Mags Riordan
of Bumblebee Farm

Hydrangeas are the staple of so many late summer gardens and a group of shrubs I wouldn't be without. The variety, colour selection and shapes fascinate me and most meet two of my three criteria in being a fantastic cut flower and a brilliant food source for our pollinators. For ease I'm going to split them into two groups – Hydranga paniculata and mophead.

Hydranga paniculata varieties flower on new wood so can be cut back hard in spring giving you long straight stems with huge flower heads; they can grow quite large but are easy to keep to a desired height because of this. Paniculata 'Limelight' and the lacy 'Unique' are two beautiful varieties that I would highly recommend and are easy to maintain, suiting a semi-shaded position, although both will happily grow in full sun too.

The mophead variety flowers on the previous year's growth, so if you're cutting back only go to the first or second set of double buds, otherwise you're cutting off next year's flower. Larger, more mature shrubs will benefit from thinning out weaker crossing stems and it really pays off to go deep into the plant as close to the base as you can. 'Ayesha' is a stunning



variety, which looks like small trusses of Lilacs. I can't recommend this variety enough, for it's changing colour over the season to it's long-lasting flowers in a vase. For me, it's the beautiful shape and texture of the flower heads and my pollinators LOVE it!

I don't deadhead or tidy up until late spring for a few reasons, mainly because the spent flowers give shelter to a wide range of insects, which emerge safely in spring to act as a natural predator. It's symbiotic; I provide them with shelter and they provide me with pest control.



The garden can begin to look a little tired by now but there are still plants worth investing in to give a great show next autumn like Sedums and Michaelmas daisy. Both of these flower late in the season and if you give some the 'Chelsea chop' you can extend this well into October. As a bonus all the trimmings can be potted up and used to create new plants thus increasing your crops. Win Win!

A garden evolves so you're always planning ahead but that's part of the fun too. Our next open day on September 27 will be much more plant-focused with recommendations on getting your garden ready for winter and what to plant to support our pollinators to ensure a beautiful garden for you and food for them. They've been busy this year and we have surplus of seed left over, so as a thank you we will be

putting a mixed selection in with every bouquet ordered – you can have a little bit of Bumblebee magic in your own garden!

If there are any voluntary groups that possibly work with disadvantaged children or other such groups that could benefit from our seeds then please do get in touch – we are only too delighted to help.

We have a selection of short videos on seed saving and deadheading on our YouTube channel, which may be of help, I know that for me seeing something always makes things

clearer. We do add regularly and, if there is anything specific you'd like to know, then please get in touch.
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Progress resumes on delivery of Clonakilty homes

Construction work has resumed on the development of 57 homes in Clonakilty following a temporary cessation due to Covid-19 restrictions. The recommencement of work will see the estate at Beechgrove, Fernhill Road in Clonakilty and associated site development works progressed to completion in 2021.

Cork County Council signed a €12.5 million building contract with MMD Construction Cork Ltd for the development of the 57 units in October 2019. Consisting of a mix of one, two, three and four bedroom homes, the development will also see a historic protected structure brought back into use.

The protected structures of the Lower Tawnies Cottage which dates to the late 1800s and is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, has been incorporated into the housing development and is being brought back into use



as residential units and store rooms with due attention paid to best conservation practice.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Mary Linehan Foley, said,

"This housing project is being brought from detailed design to realisation by a multi-disciplinary team led by Cork County Council. The development will make available a large number of high-quality, energy-efficient homes, which will go a long way towards addressing housing needs in

the Clonakilty area and I am delighted to see the further progression of this project."

Deputy Chief Executive of Cork County Council, James Fogarty, commented,

"This housing development demonstrates best practice in sustainable design and the homes will achieve an A-rating on completion. Using highly energy efficient modern air to water based heating systems provides dual benefits of a reduced carbon footprint and mitigates potential impacts of

fuel poverty for future tenants.

As a local authority we have responded proactively to the restrictions associated with Covid-19 and have maintained our delivery of housing with due care to public health considerations. Cork County Council's continuing commitment to meeting housing needs through the Social Housing Capital Programme will see over 3,000 social houses provided in the period 2018-2021 throughout Cork County."

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Drinagh Rangers crowned Premier Division champions



SPORT

John Bohane

Drinagh Rangers were crowned Premier Division champions recently after defeating reigning league champions Dunmanway Town on the final day to clinch a dramatic championship title. Ace striker Tomas Connolly captained the team to league glory. The experienced player, who played a key role in helping his beloved local soccer team capture the championship title, speaks to **John Bohane**.

Tomas was thrilled to play his part in helping Drinagh Rangers win another top-flight championship title. Drinagh maintained their composure when the season resumed following the hiatus

owing to the Covid-19 pandemic to deservedly seal the premier league title. Tomas explains how this was a season like no other given the long break. "We have been very consistent over the course of the season," he explains. "Our backline has been immense this year and we have only conceded something like ten goals in 14 games, which says it all," declares the proud captain.

The Connolly family are steeped in Drinagh Rangers folklore; in fact the Connolly name is synonymous with the successful West Cork League soccer club. Tomas follows in the footsteps of his elder siblings, also club players, while his parents are great supporters. Extremely proud to lift the cup on behalf of his family and teammates, Tomas credits their success to the experience on the pitch. "To be fair, it is an easy job considering the amount of leaders on the pitch," he says. "It is a real privilege to play alongside such experienced players week-in week-out. There is no doubt I come from a soccer-obsessed household. My parents Joe and Marie have always encouraged us to play from a young age. They also facilitate an important social aspect in The Gaelic Bar where we often have some important post-match analysis!"

The West Cork Soccer League season ended in dramatic fashion. Drinagh Rangers required a point or a win to regain the championship title from the



Captain Tomas Connolly

home team, Dunmanway Town, who needed a win to retain the Premier League crown. Drinagh Rangers had to produce an impressive performance, which enabled them to hold off a strong Dunmanway Town challenge. Tomas says he knew his side had to display plenty of resolve and spirit to emerge victorious. "Dunmanway have a very strong team with some excellent young attacking players. We knew a result in Mohona would be enough to clinch the league, so we were braced for a battle. That is exactly what we got. We were in a very similar position last year when we needed the three points to win the league in Dunmanway, but we came up just short that day. This certainly added some extra hunger to our game this year. Thankfully we

were able to dig deep and get that vital result."

The club is indebted to teenage star Robbie McQueen who netted the two goals, which enabled them to defeat Dunmanway Town. Tomas is full of praise for the ace attacker. "Robbie has had an excellent season and he played a crucial part in the team all year, especially in our last league game against Dunmanway. This is his second year playing junior soccer; because of his effectiveness in a game, it's easy to forget how young he is!"

Tomas explains how Robbie and other young players like Cillian Fitzpatrick have blended in to the team seamlessly because of their work rate and attitude. "We are lucky to have quality players coming through the various underage teams, which is a credit to the club."

Firmly established as one of the more experienced players in the stalwart Drinagh Rangers team, Tomas initially started out playing with the adult club's second team back in 2007. The 30-year-old has now won five league titles with his local club and this year's league title success ranks very high on his lengthy list of personal achievements. "I have been playing junior for over 13 years now, winning my first title in 2009," he says. "Compared to other titles, this is certainly up there as one of the memorable ones, given the difficult circumstances and challenges we've had during the year. We've had to call on a

lot of lads during the season and they have played a huge role in winning this league."

Drinagh Rangers were once again guided to premier league glory by club stalwarts Don Hurley and Declan Deasy. The long serving duo have played an integral part in helping establish Drinagh Rangers as one of the most successful clubs in West Cork. Tomas is lavish in his praise for the influential duo. "The lads have given so much to the club it's hard to put into words. Considering they have families and full-time jobs to cater for, it's incredible how they find time for it all. I have been involved with the two of them since U16 level and their passion for the club is exceptional. I don't think the club would be in the position it's in today only for them and they deserve huge credit for that."

Established in 1983, Drinagh Rangers boast a number of teams who compete successfully in the local West Cork leagues, both at adult and underage level. They also field a junior ladies team. With state-of-the-art facilities in Canon Crowley Park, their playing numbers are increasing on an annual basis; a strong committee also ensures that this progressive club continues in its victorious streak. "It's hard to put your finger on it exactly but if you look at the way the club is run, the accomplishments are a real credit to all involved," he says. "There is a huge amount of work which goes on behind the scenes.

The people helping out on the administrative side of things deserve as much credit as anyone for the sustainability of the club. From groundskeepers, to lotto ticket sellers, to sponsors, to underage coaches, they all play a huge part in the success of the club. There are also some great coaches in the club giving up their time to train young kids. Without them, the club wouldn't be in such a strong position."

Tomas and his teammates have one game left to play this season. This will be followed by a short break before the domestic season resumes once again in the coming weeks. Tomas is delighted to be back playing again following a very uncertain period post Covid-19 and he is looking forward to helping Drinagh Rangers defend their Premier League title once again next season. "We have one more Premier Cup final to look forward to this season, before a short break to recharge the batteries. The new season will be up and running before we know it and we will certainly be looking forward to that. It was really great to get back playing soccer after the Covid break. I missed sport big time and I was delighted with the West Cork League for allowing the season to be finished. It took a lot of understanding and forward thinking to ensure a successful return to soccer. The league deserves great credit for that."

Dunmanway Town earns hard fought cup victory

Dunmanway Town captured the Beamish Cup for the first time since 2015 after they defeated Clonakilty Town FC in the domestic cup final, which was played in Turners Cross last Sunday afternoon. **John Bohane** reports.

Two goals from ace striker Cathal Daly propelled Dunmanway Town to a hard fought cup victory. The young star, who only turned 20 a few days before the prestigious cup final, was thrilled to help his side to cup final glory. "It was a great achievement to win the cup. We knew Clon would provide a very stiff challenge and we had to work hard on the day. Even when we got the first goal, we thought we would push on, but they almost equalised immediately. We had to play well to win butt getting

the second goal so near the end helped us over the line."

It was a nice way for the two-goal hero to celebrate his birthday. "Winning this cup takes some of the disappointment away from losing the league title a few weeks previously," he reveals.

The sides were deadlocked at halftime following an entertaining opening half. Cathal emerged the hero with his brace of goals arriving in the second half. The modest striker was thrilled with the service he received from his teammates. "We were calm enough at the break. Andrew, our manager, just told me to get more involved and to get on the ball as often as possible. We all stepped up in the second half. We knew we would get chances. The whole team produced a great display. We know we are a good team. We were determined to keep the ball on the deck and keep it moving. We have so many talented players in our squad; I got great service from the two

goals. It was a team effort and I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time to put the ball in the net."

Playing and scoring two winning goals in a cup final represented a huge honour for the birthday boy. His second goal was a remarkable individual goal, as he weaved his way past a number of challenges, before calmly finishing with great confidence. Cathal loved playing in Turners Cross. "The pitch was like a carpet. It has been a great few days for me. I am over the moon. When I heard the game was being played in Turners Cross, I said to myself this was my chance to show what I am made of. It was a great day. Winning the Beamish Cup there was a great feeling."

Dunmanway Town were captained to cup glory by long-serving player Steven O'Donovan. Cathal is full of praise for the vital role the experienced captain played in their cup success. "He is a great player and leader. It was so fitting he got to lift



Two goal hero Cathal Daly pictured with Dunmanway Town captain Steven O'Donovan after they defeated Clonakilty Town FC to win the Beamish Cup. They last won this cup in 2015.

the cup. This is my fourth year playing with the adult team and he really showed me the ropes. He has helped me improve as a player. We were all delighted to win it for Steven, as he is a huge presence for us."

Team manager Andrew Healy guided Dunmanway Town to cup glory following an absence of five years. Cathal loves working with and playing for their manager. "Andrew is fantastic; great to play for. Every decision he makes is spot on; he is a great club man."

With the domestic season due to resume in the coming weeks, Dunmanway Town are eager for more success. Cathal and his teammates are determined to mount a sustained bid for league glory next season. "We want to win every match. We want to win every competition we take part in. We are hungry for more glory. We will do our best and hopefully it will lead to more success going forward."

people Sport & Fitness

Strong feet for a strong base



DIY FITNESS

Tania Presutti

Danish freelance journalist and fitness professional Tania Presutti, who now resides in Clonakilty, delivers a series of efficient DIY fitness exercises you can do at home.

This month I'm going to continue where I left off with the sexy calves – let's take a look at what's at the

end of those nice strong legs you've built this past month.

If you're new into training, one of the first things you should learn is to use your feet. And what I mean by that is start using those small bones and muscles that most of us take for granted.

One of the first things I heard when I took my first Kettlebell seminar many years ago, was 'grip the ground with your toes and press down as you do the swing'.

To my surprise many of the strong guys, who would lift double their weight in deadlift, looked a little puzzled, as they were trying to follow the directions. These gym rats, who were used to lifting weights like they were cupcakes and lived in the locker room and ate protein bars and chicken for breakfast, struggled a little with this.

They weren't used to training barefooted, and all of a sudden – for once – my decade walking the wooden floors in the local taekwondo club wasn't working

against me. As I ventured into the world of lifting, pressing and pulling – it was working for me.

One of the first things you need to control when you learn how to kick is to use the one foot you stand and pivot on, while kicking with your other leg. I had learned how to grip with my toes, land on my heel or forefoot, kick with my toes pointing forwards or bend backwards – and now I could also use my foot control for this, to lift better kettlebells with correct form.

But what if you're not into lifting kettlebells or other weight equipment? Or into barefoot (martial arts) sports – what can you use your strong feet for, you might ask.

Well for one, running barefoot in the sand, grass or just about anywhere will be much more fun. Also if you do get into running, you might spare yourself some ache and pain. Strong feet can help the rest of your legs to do their job better,

and while they don't prevent injuries, they do help make the chain stronger. Strong ankles help to stabilise knees and hips, as opposed to weak limbs, that often causes other joints to overwork.

What I am saying is basically: There's everything to gain and nothing to lose, by giving your feet a little attention.

So if you haven't had any barefoot training and rarely walk barefooted other than to and from your bathroom, you can try these two simple exercises:

1. Walk with your toes

The first time I encountered this exercise was when I was training in Las Vegas with Master Toddy (fight girls). It was the first thing he asked me to show him – not a punch, not a kick – but this walk across the floor by using my toes only. He wanted to see my root strength. Since then I have learned this is also an exercise elite runners use

to strengthen their feet, ankles and legs.

This exercise is best done on an even surface, whether this is carpet, wood floor or a kind of mat. Stand barefooted and start using your toes as small claws that reach forward and pull the rest of the foot (and you) with them. Be mindful that it is only your toes that make you move. It's easy to slide your foot across the floor, using your leg as the moving point.

Walk with your toes for one to two metres, a couple of times, whenever you feel like strengthening your foot.

2. Raise your arch

A strong arch means a springy foot that can jump, dance and run without problems. As we grow older and more inactive even a beautiful curvy arch can fall a little flat and thus start to cause problems both in the foot and further up the chain (in other leg joints).

To raise your arch, stand

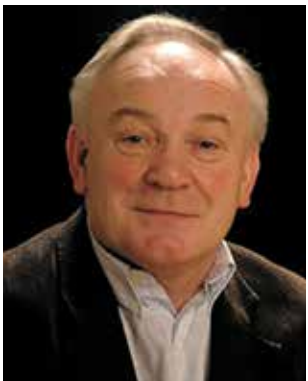
barefooted on a flat surface. Put a pencil, measure tape or book at the end of your toes so you can see how long your foot is. Retract your toes as much as possible from your end point (book, tape etc) without curling and clawing them. (So don't use the technique described above). Find the strength to retract your toes from the arch of your foot instead.

I've started to do both these exercises once a week, once every two weeks. If your feet are weak, it's something you can put into your weekly training schedule once or twice, but if your feet are fine, just doing it a couple of times a month will keep them strong.

I will hopefully have a little video of the exercises on my Instagram during the first two weeks of September, so please check in if you have trouble doing this – or feel free to write me:

taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com As usual comments and critique are welcome.

people Motoring



CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

A car with a big personality

Nissan came up with a winner a few years back when they produced their Qashqai, which every other car company unashamedly tried to copy. It was so popular it became known as a 'Cash-Cow' for Nissan.

Then ten years ago Nissan produced what looked like a smaller, but funkier version of the Qashqai with the Juke. It was voted Irish Continental Car of the Year for 2011.

Now we have a second version of the Juke. Nissan has toned down the sharply-raked sloping looks, but the

car is now larger than the first version. It's 75mm longer and 30mm taller and the wheelbase has been stretched by 105mm. Small figures yes, but they do make a difference, especially for leg and knee room for back seat passengers. There is also a 20 per cent increase in boot space.

At first glance you would think it's a four-door car, as the handles for the rear doors are very discreet.

So apart from those eye-catching looks, is the car much the same size as other compact crossovers? "The Juke has never followed the crowd. Instead it leads the way, with its big personality," said James McCarthy, CEO of Nissan Ireland at launch.

I suppose that's it in a nutshell, big personality. You will either love or hate the Juke when you see first see it. But take a test drive and I think you will be impressed with the high driving position.

I liked the dash, especially after a few weeks where most of the controls in my test cars were touch-screen. It was good to have old-fashioned knobs to adjust the radio controls. I drove the top of the range N-Design which had everything except running water!

My test car was white with a touch of black around the arches for an attractive look. Inside black is the dominant colour and I think the roof could have done with a lighter colour to lift the decor. However, there are 20 colour combinations available for body, roof and interior, so you should be able to get a colour that suits you.

The car is now only available as a 1.0-litre petrol, manual or automatic. I drove an automatic version, which also had paddles at the side of the steering wheel if I wanted more power.

The Juke is different from most small cars on the roads of Ireland. It's neat, but the high driving position and funky looking lights at the front and rear, make it a fun car to look at and to drive.

An improved ProPilot system is available; it semi-autonomously keeps the car in lane and maintains a safe distance from other vehicles. The boot has two levels and the good news is that there is a 'mini' spare wheel under the second level.

Prices start at €21,995 for the XE version and naturally the more goodies you want, the price will rise. My top of the range N-Design version will cost you €26,950.



We are told that up to now the Juke has been popular with young people and older couples, who may be downsizing.

In ten years Nissan has sold 1.5 million units of the

Juke, approximately 10,000 in Ireland. As the country gets back to normal, I think we will see even more Irish people getting acquainted with this funky-looking Juke.

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