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Nigel Daunt of Coolcullitha, Innishannon and representing Bandon Co-Op is one of four West Cork finalists to have reached the finals of the 2020 NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards. Nigel is pictured with his parents, sister and a curious member of his herd.

One of the Great Books of Ireland created in West Cork returns home

The Book of Lismore, created in the late 15th century, has been donated by the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement to University College Cork (UCC). This major medieval manuscript, created at Kilbrittain in West Cork, in a golden age of Irish literature, is rightly considered as one of the Great Books of Ireland.

The Book of Lismore, consists of 198 large vellum folios, and contains important texts, many drawn from Irish tradition and others that are translations of contemporary European works. The Book reflects an Ireland that was deeply engaged with the contemporary European culture of the time.

Compiled for Fíngínn Mac Carthaigh, Lord of Carbery (1478–1505), the book became known as Leabhar

Mhic Cárthaigh Riabhach. It begins with religious-themed material, mainly lives of the Irish saints and apocryphal tales associated with them, before passing on to material in translation: the History of the Lombards and the Conquests of Charlemagne.

The Book also contains the only surviving translation in Irish of the travels of Marco Polo, which adds to the exotic, outward-looking ambience of the manuscript. Marco Polo is followed by a collection of native, secular texts dealing with the theme of Kingship. The Book concludes with the exploits of the popular mythological hero Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna, as told in the lengthy tale known as Agallamh na Seanórach.

The Book of Lismore, which was welcomed back to Cork this week by

UCC, will eventually be displayed to the public in a Treasures Gallery that UCC plans to develop in its Boole Library.

The history of The Book begins in the late 15th century, when it was compiled for its noble patrons, Fíngínn Mac Carthaigh (McCarthy) Riabhach, and his wife, Caitilín. The writing took place probably at Kilbrittain Castle, home of Mac Carthaigh. It also has connections to the Franciscan house at nearby Timoleague, which was associated with the family of Mac Carthaigh Riabhach since its foundation.

The Book of Lismore has been in the possession of the Cavendish Family and their ancestors since the 1640s and kept at Lismore Castle, County Waterford, and in more recent times at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire.

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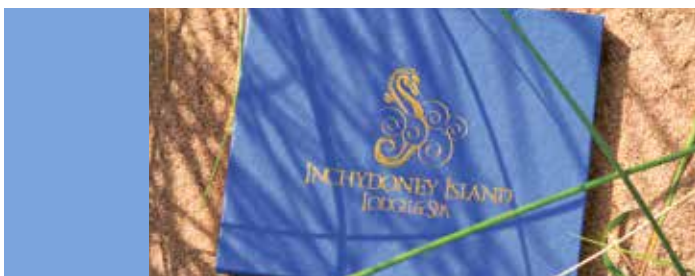
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Power of small acts of kindness evident during Covid

During the last lockdown Gardaí all over the country liaised with a variety of other statutory bodies to identify any gaps in services and find ways of overcoming them. The aim was to give assistance to anyone who needed it, in particular to those most vulnerable in the community. Bandon Community **Garda Damian White** shares his experience and gives some advice on what we can all do to help anyone isolated or lonely in our localities over the next few weeks. His feeling is that many people will find this time around more challenging than the first lockdown, mainly due to the time of year and weather conditions.

Damian says the volunteering spirit right across West Cork was visible in the last lockdown and definitely assisted in the challenges posed by Covid.

"From the outset, Covid created a real sense of fear and uncertainty, especially amongst those who were regarded as being in the high risk category. Not knowing exactly what we were facing into certainly posed additional worries, and perhaps the element of some panic buying of items in the beginning was a reflection of that fear factor," he says.

Initially, Garda Frances Murphy and Damian set about compiling a database of supports that would be available to them in the community. "These ranged from Community Alert groups, Foróige Clubs, Active Retirement Clubs, Sporting Organisations, Charitable Bodies

and so on," explains Damian. After completing the database, he said it was heartening to see the range of people and groups that put their hands up, seeking to support those in society that were less fortunate. "In a time of crisis, people rallied around and that real sense of community was evident."

With Community Gardaí stationed throughout West Cork, Damian says they had an excellent network of contacts to work with. "It meant that we didn't have to start from scratch, as our base was already well established."

The Cork Community Support Programme also had 10 Community Support Response Hubs established in the West Cork area, and Gardaí liaised with a variety of other statutory bodies to identify any gaps in services, and how to overcome them.

While making people aware that services were there to help them, the Gardaí were very careful not to overstep the mark during the first lockdown. "I think that it was important for us to realise that some people choose to live very private lives...and it was a personal choice for them, whether or not to avail of the services."

"We were lucky in that we had Garda Community Engagement vehicles available throughout West Cork, and these were not the ordinary 'marked' Garda cars. I think that was important, because people came to see these vehicles as playing a friendly and supportive role, not for the enforcement side of our job."

In the beginning people were somewhat hesitant to open the door to the Gardaí. "This might have been their first interaction with us. Traditionally, people



Felicity Howe of Howe Hill Flower Farm kindly donated some fresh flowers to the residents of Cramer's Court Nursing Home in Belgooly, delivered by Gardaí Frances Murphy and Damian White, where they met resident Mary Horgan.

associate the Gardaí with bringing bad news, and this has led to a fear factor of us," explains Damian.

As time went on, people became more comfortable with calls and for some these calls became a lifeline. "With one of our

home visits, in particular, you could really see the change in the person's whole demeanour

Continued on next page...

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over a period of months," says Damian. "What would begin as a simple five minute call to develop over time, and as they became more comfortable with these calls, conversations could stretch for a half an hour. These visits were a real lifeline, because the travel restrictions meant that their family members may have been unable to visit in person. It was very rewarding to be able to link in with these family members, and act as a go between at those times."

For anyone in the community who wants to offer help to someone in need, Damian's message is not to underestimate how powerful small acts of kindness can be.

"What we found during the first lockdown was that it was the simple gestures that meant the most to people. "We are social animals, and we missed the human contact. Pick up the

phone to those in need, reach out to them, your voice may be the only one that they might hear that day."

On a personal note, Damian shares that his family probably gained a better appreciation of the everyday things during the restrictions. "When all the matches, training and so on stopped, it made us realise how busy we all had been beforehand. Having some downtime isn't a bad thing, and spending extra with family has proved to be very rewarding. It was nice to get outdoors and enjoy nature, and to understand how lucky we are to be living in such a beautiful place as West Cork. There certainly would have been far worse places to endure any lockdown."

"This experience hasn't been easy for anyone, and it's also important not to be too harsh on ourselves either, these are

unprecedented times, there's no rule book for a situation such as this."

Although this lockdown may prove more challenging, Damian believes that we will get through it. "I've witnessed first-hand how resilient people can be. "Nobody likes having to endure these extra restrictions, and help is at hand if people require it."

"The main thing to realise is that what I do will affect other people, and that I will equally be affected by what other people do. Let's all protect each other as best we can. All we can do is follow the advice, and cope as best we can. Concentrate on doing the basics, like washing your hands, wearing a mask, keeping your distance. Just worry about what's within your own control – that would be my message."

Kinsale crowned Ireland's Most Enterprising Town



Kinsale has been crowned 'Ireland's Most Enterprising Town' at the Bank of Ireland Begin Together Awards 2020. This is the first time Kinsale has won the overall award, having taken home the National category award three years in a row!

This year the awards celebrated the many business and community groups who have come together to support their local area as they start to rebuild and recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The winners were announced on Ireland AM, with Kinsale claiming the prestigious title of 'Ireland's Most Enterprising Town' thanks to the success of the 'Kinsale Comeback Campaign' and the outstanding efforts of the local community to reopen and regenerate the historical Cork town after the outbreak of Covid-19.

One of the amazing initiatives undertaken by the town in the face of the pandemic was to make PPE visors following a nationwide shortage. Students of Kinsale Community School produced tens of thousands of visors, designed by one of the students and made with a 3D printer. These visors were then distributed free of charge

throughout the country to hospitals and care homes. And it didn't just stop at visors! When a consignment of masks received by Cork University Hospital from China did not have a sufficient seal, students and staff at the school devised a special clip which effectively ensured the masks were wearable!

Meanwhile, when lockdown was first introduced, local resident Niamh O'Connell recognised the need for the community of Kinsale to come together to help the most vulnerable members of their town. She set about creating the COVID Volunteer Group, which comprised of 80 people, who worked tirelessly to co-ordinate a sustained effort to support those people most in need.

As the lockdown eased and the economy began to open up once more, the Kinsale Chamber of Commerce launched the Kinsale Comeback Campaign and enlisted the expertise of global pandemic expert Dr Ian Norton to guarantee the safe re-opening of the town to visitors. Pedestrianising the town and encouraging on-street dining has meant Kinsale could successfully welcome back visitors to the brilliant array of restaurants, ac-

tivity centres, and retailers in the town. These enterprising efforts also ensured they were pioneers in Ireland in terms of rejuvenating business while promoting a safety first approach.

Speaking on behalf of the Kinsale Chamber of Tourism and Business, Chairperson Guna Patel said: "We are so thrilled and honoured to receive this award. After a four-year journey, we put our heart and soul into the competition this year to tell the story of both the business and community response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Kinsale is truly an incredible town and witnessing the collaboration and community spirit that took place during this extremely challenging year has been humbling. The Kinsale Comeback Campaign and the support it received from stakeholders such as Cork County Council and Fáilte Ireland as well as the business community here in Kinsale is proof that when we work together towards a common goal, we can come back stronger and achieve great things. This is the moral boost and vote of confidence that we needed to face the challenges ahead."

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'Locked down' and homeless

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The legacy of Good Shepherd Sister, Sr Colette Hickey, who today has reached the great age of 102, has gone from strength to strength since Good Shepherd Cork was founded more than 40 years ago. Under its umbrella, women, children and families who are vulnerable to homelessness are supported across a range of services.

The independent, Cork-based charity runs Edel House emergency shelter for women and children, Redclyffe family hub, B&B outreach services, Riverview (a residential centre for teenage girls who are out of home), Bruac (an education project for young women who are out of school), Baile an Aoire (long-term supported housing) and, through its Support and



Good Shepherd Mission Leader and Courtmacsherry native, Sr Jane Murphy (front) and Allison Aldred, CEO Good Shepherd Cork.

Advocacy service, also supports vulnerable women and families in the community.

It is the only homelessness agency in Cork that can accommodate children who are homeless.

Organisational challenges facing Good Shepherd Cork, as for most charities, centre on being able to secure sufficient income to provide the range and quality of services needed to make lasting positive change in the lives of the women, children and families the organisation serves.

Now under Level Five restrictions, the organisation faces new challenges; not least the probable drop in funding from its seasonal fundraising activities. "We're not sure what Christmas is going to bring this year," says Good Shepherd Mission Leader and Courtmacsherry native, Sr Jane Murphy. "Usually it's a very busy time of year for us and we get a lot of donations of food, gifts and goods for our service users, as well as people running fundraising activities such as the Courtmacsherry Christmas market, and Church Gate Collections, but I just don't know what's going to happen this Christmas. If people are in a position to donate, we would really welcome vouchers or money."

"Obviously we still want to create a sense of Christmas for the people we support," continues Allison Aldred, CEO Good Shepherd Cork. "People will still want to give and we have always relied heavily on the generosity of local people

rooms.

"Life can be even more challenging for families we support in B&Bs and other private emergency accommodation where they may be confined to bedrooms without any communal space and lacking basic facilities.

"For the women in our long-term supported housing and those we support in the community, Level Five will mean a lack of interaction with others and hence, for many, loneliness and isolation.

Usually it's a very busy time of year for us and we get a lot of donations of food, gifts and goods for our service users, as well as people running fundraising activities such as the Courtmacsherry Christmas market, and Church Gate Collections, but I just don't know what's going to happen this Christmas. If people are in a position to donate, we would really welcome vouchers or money."

"And for our staff, for whom building trusting relationships is central to the supports they provide to women, children and families in our services; the requirements of social distancing, of masks and remote interactions, and the endless cleaning regimes, make it much more difficult to deliver supports and to find the satisfaction they have always enjoyed in their personal

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interactions with our service users.”

Since 2014 there has been a 900 per cent increase in children in emergency accommodation across Ireland. In 2019 Good Shepherd Cork worked with over 950 women and children; this figure includes more than 400 women and children who stayed in Good Shepherd accommodation and over 130 families that the organisation supported in B&Bs and other private emergency accommodation.

Department of Housing figures reveal that at the start of 2020, there were 111 families, including 264 children, living in emergency accommodation in Cork and Kerry.

While one of the positive impacts of this pandemic has been to reduce the numbers of families in homeless services, Good Shepherd Cork does not believe that this reflects a long-term resolution of the homeless crisis and expects numbers to rise again, as and when, society moves on from Covid-19.

Allison explains: “As of August 2020, the latest figures available, there were 62 families homeless in emergency accommodation in Cork and Kerry, with 157 children. Whilst this is

As of August 2020, the latest figures available, there were 62 families homeless in emergency accommodation in Cork and Kerry, with 157 children.

still a shockingly high number, it is much lower than at the start of the year. We believe that the impacts of Covid-19 have reduced numbers of families in homeless services partly because there is more private rented accommodation available, as there are many less students and tourists, and also the ban on evictions has prevented many families moving into homelessness. Whilst this fall in numbers of families who are homeless is welcome, we don't believe it is going to last.”

Good Shepherd Cork is near completion of the first phase of a construction and refurbishment project that will see a major re-development of Edel House and its facilities.

St Jane explains that “It will provide residents with a much more dignified environment, with ensuite single rooms and one and two-bedroom family

units. There will also be more space for therapeutic, educational and other supports.”

Another significant development in 2019 was the formal transfer of the long-term supported housing project, Baile an Aoire, from the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters to Good Shepherd Cork in May 2019, giving the organisation 30 units of accommodation for vulnerable women.

Currently in discussion with the Presentation Sisters about a gift of land, Good Shepherd Cork hopes that in the future it will be able to move forward with a social housing development.

In 2019, through the support of charitable donations, the organisation made a number of enhancements to its residential services. This comprised of investment in a wider range of therapeutic, educational and developmental supports for service users, including a range of specialist supports for children who are homeless. A Dual Diagnosis (DD) Worker was recruited to support service users with mental health and/or substance misuse challenges. The organisation also expanded its Making Change programme in 2019, employing part-time

Making Change Coordinators in Edel House and Redclyffe.

“The Making Change programme is about building confidence and self-esteem and teaching lifeskills,” says Sr. Jane.

A Good Shepherd research project completed last year found that the homelessness crisis in Ireland is exacerbating the impact of domestic violence in Irish society. It also found that children who grow up in a family where there is domestic abuse or violence are more likely to go on to experience violence in their adult life.

While Good Shepherd Cork is working to provide improved services with the confirmed funding from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for the re-development of Edel House, this research shows the importance of continuing work, not just to tackle the immediate need for shelter, but also to invest in one-to-one supports in a safe and secure environment.

If you would like to support Good Shepherd Cork this Christmas, you can donate via the website: www.goodshepherd-cork.ie or by post to Good Shepherd Cork, Edel House, Grattan Street, Cork.

Mary's Story

As a child Mary recalls how she often had to leave her home with her mother, brother, and sisters due to their abusive father. Edel House, Cork's emergency shelter for women and children, run by Good Shepherd Cork, became their home from home. She remembers Sister Colette welcoming them each time they arrived and how she always felt safe and secure there.

During her teenage years Mary started to use alcohol and drugs to help her cope with her challenging home life. She left school early and spent time in Bruac, Good Shepherd Cork's Training and Education Centre. But the death of her only brother, due to a drugs overdose, had a big impact on Mary, and she went further into a life of addiction. Her relationship with her family was suffering at this time due to her addiction and she eventually left home. She spent time living with friends on couches and then in an assortment of rented apartments, but her addiction meant she was never able to sustain a tenancy. Mary went on to have two children, but found it difficult to care for them fully, so they were brought up by their paternal and maternal grandparents.

There were many times during these chaotic years when Mary made her way back to Edel House and managed a few months of sobriety and stability, through the caring support of the staff there and her own desire to lead a better life. However, the level of her addiction kept dragging her back into her chaotic life and Mary got hooked on heroin for many years.

Christmas 2012 saw a shortage of heroin on the streets of Cork and Mary again made her way back to Edel House where she began her road to recovery. The staff in Edel House welcomed her back without judgement and helped her to get onto a methadone treatment programme in a HSE addiction service. Mary hasn't looked back since. The team in Edel House supported her on her journey and helped her find private rented accommodation in the City. Once Mary moved on from Edel House she was supported by Good Shepherd Cork's Support and Advocacy team who helped her establish links within her new community and encouraged her to stay on her life-changing journey.

Fast forward to Christmas 2020 and Mary is still sober and living her life to the full. She has rebuilt her relationship with her now adult children and her family. Mary says she will be forever grateful to the staff of Good Shepherd Cork for their continued support to her and her family throughout her life. She believes if it were not for this support, she would not be alive today.

Note: Mary is not her real name. It has been changed to respect her privacy.





A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

It's six o'clock. Six hours to midnight. Six hours to Lockdown II. We have decided to pop into town and brave the cold for a pint. We have not been to the pub since Lockdown I. We have gone for three pints since March: twice along with a meal outside when the weather was still fine, and once, last Saturday, sitting under a streetlight, in the freezing, damp cold on the Square in Rosscarbery.

Even when the 'wet pubs' (dreadful name) were open again, we preferred to stay home, or to socialise with a small number of other households. Any other social contact has mainly been outside, or in the aisles of Lidl. Fleeting contacts caught on the fly. Even before level 5 we had decided that because we had very few outside contacts, we should limit our movements and interactions. It just seemed like the sensible thing to do, as we were in the lucky position to be able to work remotely, and had no school age children. Doing our bit, by making sure we don't take up a hospital bed. I'm not exactly high risk, but I'm not exactly low risk either. I

Lockdown redux

try to avoid colds and flus since the swine flu knocked me out for several months a few years back. In fact, I have carried hand sanitiser since then, especially when I worked in schools, or up in the city.

So, I have to admit that my heart soared when we got into town. It seems that many people had had the same idea; Let's get a last pint. What a joy to see so many familiar faces. There were people who I used to see several times a week, who I haven't seen since March. It felt like Christmas – if a somewhat subdued version, due to the social distancing and facemasks.

The novelty of seeing people whom I haven't seen in over seven months, as well as saying goodbye for six weeks to people who have been our small but essential 'friendship bubble' since March was a bit overwhelming. Though mostly jovial, you could also feel the tension as we braced ourselves for six weeks of isolation. Overall, however, I was delighted to hear the banter, to feel the pent-up craic bubbling just under the surface. What I wouldn't give for a good old session. Some craic agus ceol. As I said to a friend: "when this is finally over, I will never again roll my eyes if someone starts singing American Pie, no matter how badly they mangle the lyrics. As for the 45 verses of an old Irish ballad – I want to hear each and every one."

There may well have been more than 15 people gathered, but the beer garden is big. Everyone was trying to stay well apart, and many were wearing masks when not drinking. Still we did not linger, not wanting to pose a problem for the establishment. After about 20 minutes of glorious human

contact, we picked up a takeaway and went home to the 5km radius of Lockdown II.

5km isn't that bad if you live in a city. It's a little different when you live in what the ESB used to call a 'rural pocket'. If you draw a 5km radius around my house, the only shop is the service station in Ballinascorthy. Thank God for small mercies. A 5km radius around my house is no different from 2km: a green dot that is comprised of fields, trees and cows, dotted with a few houses. It is beautiful, but somewhat unchanging, especially in the Winter. I can, of course, go shopping in town, which in Lockdown I was a wonderful way to break the isolation. I don't need much more. During Lockdown I, I learnt that all I really need is 10km. That gets me into town. Better yet, it gets me to the coast. The ocean has been the great comforter during this pandemic. Of all the things, landscapes and people that I miss at Level 5, I think I miss the ocean the most.

So- Once more into lockdown, my friends! We'll get through it. If you are reading this in the West Cork People, we've already clocked up at least a week. Just a few more to go... I'm going into hermit mode. I have books to read, and Netflix series to watch. On fine days I will go out and investigate the fallen leaves and sprouting mushrooms outside. We'll put the garden to bed for the winter. We'll keep a watch out for the buzzard, who we have named Bingo. I'll potter. I'll cook. I might even go for a walk and check out the fields and the cows. I'm also going to make sure that I call my friends and family more. That I stay connected.

See you on the other side.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the November issue of West Cork People.

Who would have believed a year ago that we would be battling a worldwide pandemic? Yet here we are, into our second lockdown, the government has ordered us all to stay home, and Christmas is just around the corner! Usually at this time of year we are looking forward to getting out and about and calling in to businesses all over West Cork, as we put together our Christmas issue. This year is different; doors are closed and businesses have had to adapt to moving online to fit in with the restrictions we are all under to keep each other safe. It's an uncertain and anxious time for most. It's also a time where resilience and kindness has shone through. Communities have rallied to show support for the small businesses that are such an important part of the fabric of our society. Now we need to keep this momentum going. Remember that each 'non-essential' business is so very essential to its family. There is so much outside of our control right now so let's focus on what we can control... supporting each other. Throughout this issue you'll find many of the shops and businesses that make West Cork 'a place apart', all doing business in new ways this month. Each and every one of them wants to open their door again. It's up to each and every one of us to help make that happen. Support local this Christmas and make a difference.

I've taken to jumping into the ocean when I'm feeling overwhelmed but if that's too extreme for you, there are lots of positive words inside this issue that may offer solace. Susan O'Regan reminds us to be gentle with ourselves during a time of overwhelming anxiety for many. Tina reminds us stay connected to family and friends. Community Garda Damian White shares how important small acts of kindness are and sometimes it's the simple gestures that matter the most. Louise prompts us not to look down but to look up and around to find the gift in each day. April Dannan encourages us to listen to nature and allow it to guide us onwards. And Rev. Kingsley Sutton says that even as we feel a sense of loss due to this pandemic, it's important to find and focus on what gives us hope.

I want to sincerely thank all the small businesses who have supported us this month with advertising.

Until next month.

I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary



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Sea Memorial proposed for Baltimore village

A memorial to commemorate those lost to the sea is finally in sight for a coastal village in West Cork. For the past twelve months, Baltimore Rath and the Islands Community Council has been liaising with Cork County Council and the community of Baltimore and has now successfully acquired planning permission to erect the memorial within the village.

The memorial, 'Croí na Mara' (the Heart of the Sea), a sculpture of copper, bronze and stainless steel, is a collaborative work between the Community Council and two local artists, Helen Walsh and Paddy McCormack. The artists' sketch shows that the structure, made up of two waves (measuring 3m H x 2m L x 3m W), aims to reflect and capture the power and energy of the sea. Further detail shows the parting sea

forming two copper and bronze perforated waves rising from the ground into the shape of a heart. Copper rings of varying sizes, representing the souls lost to the sea, are drawn up through the heartstrings and released into the air.

The structure will be located adjacent to the Harbour Building overlooking Baltimore pier and harbour. The aim is to make the memorial area as inclusive as possible for people of all abilities to come and take the opportunity to reflect, contemplate, and remember friends and loved ones by looking at and through the heart shaped space between the waves, to the water in the harbour and beyond.

The Community Council is currently fundraising to reach a target of €35,000 to see the project completed. This has been a difficult year for everyone, but the community council

would be very grateful to those who would consider donating to this community project, which is a thoughtful opportunity to appropriately commemorate those that have been lost to the sea.

The various ways to donate are listed below:

- GoFundMe page: Baltimore Sea Memorial
- Bank transfer to PTBSB
BIC: IPBSIE2D IBAN: IE78IPBS99071730062364
Account Name: Baltimore Community Council
- By cheque: Made payable to Baltimore Rath and the Islands Community Council c/o Tara Cotter, 14 Harbour Court, Baltimore, Co Cork P81 PH30.

If you have any further queries please email baltimoreseamemorial@gmail.com



An artist's sketch of *Croí na Mara* (Heart of the Sea), the proposed sea memorial to be erected in Baltimore in memory of those lost to the sea.

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Skibbereen launches Love Local campaign

Skibbereen Loves Local is the message that Skibbereen and District Chamber of Commerce wants everyone to remember in the coming weeks. Taken from an idea of their sister city Scituate in Boston, Massachusetts, the Chamber, along with Access Credit Union in Skibbereen, is promoting this 'Loves Local' campaign through various channels including videos on social media platforms and a discount card for the town's traders, as well as advertising in many formats.

With new restrictions now

firmly in place, and many businesses forced to close their doors once again, Skibbereen Chamber wants to remind people, now more than ever, to shop local. These local businesses, most of them family owned, are the backbone of the town.

Speaking of the campaign, Sandra Gallagher, Chairperson, Skibbereen Chamber of Commerce said, "Over decades these businesses have been the ones that support the community, employ your family, friends and neighbours and provide donations to countless chari-

ties, schools and community fundraisers – and now is when they need us the most. Even if the doors are closed most businesses are now adapting to the current climate by offering Click and Collect or Click and Deliver services or by means of a virtual shop. Even if they aren't online, they are still there to fulfil orders via phone calls or emails.

"The Love Local campaign was an idea from our friends in our twin town in Scituate in Boston which is similar in many ways to Skibbereen. We all know that to keep local shops

open we need to support them. Times have changed and are changing by the day so we all need to shop more consciously. If we don't the future doesn't bear thinking about. The people of Skibbereen have weathered many storms by looking out for each other. Our wish this Christmas is that we can remain in

business for many Christmases to come. Local people can make our wish come true."

If you fail to get the goods you are looking for in your own town Skibbereen Chamber asks that you please remember neighbouring towns before you go online. Its message is clear – please remember over the coming weeks to Love Local, to Shop Local in Skibbereen and to help local businesses to stay

open.

The 'Love Local' initiative is driven by Access Credit Union in West Cork in conjunction with Skibbereen Chamber of Commerce, and Schull and Bandon Business Associations. The discount card will see dozens of businesses offer exclusive discounts and daily deals to the more than 28,000 Access Credit members.



Access Credit Union in West Cork is driving support for local businesses with the launch of a discount card to encourage more people to spend local in the run up to Christmas and in to the future. Businesses will also offer personalised virtual shopping for customers who cannot make it to town in a bid beat lockdown. Pictured in Skibbereen at the launch were l-r: Helen Dempsey, Finola Byrne, Sandy Gallagher, Sean Mahon, Sean Murray, Rachel Collins, Mags O'Donovan, Amanda O'Sullivan, Elma Casey, Rita O'Connell, Dominic Casey & John Delaney.

Pic: Emma Jervis.

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Google searches for 'shop local Cork' increase by 700 per cent as consumer support for local business soars

Staggering increases in Google search terms this week relating to shopping online show a wave of consumer support for Irish businesses that have closed their doors due to Level five restrictions.

Google searches for 'just buy Irish' peaked with an increase of a massive 3,495 per cent, the Google search term 'shop local Cork' increased by 700 per cent in the past week, while 'shop local Ireland' increased by 540 per cent, and 'buy Irish gifts' searches increased by 200 per cent, reinforcing Irish consumers' intention to support local businesses, creators and retailers as we enter the most crucial time of year in the retail calendar.

Alice Mansergh, Director of Small Business at Google Ireland said, "Our Google search data shows that Irish people are actively searching for ways to support Irish small businesses. The numbers speak for themselves; there is a very clear commitment by Irish consumers to shop local where they can, and it's very encouraging to see that more consumers are specifically looking for Irish gifts at this time of year that is crucial to local businesses."

As businesses prepare to face the lead up to Christmas with their doors closed, it's important that they are ready and willing to meet consumer demand, and most importantly, that they don't lose hope.

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Change for the better – make it happen



By Clonakilty Amnesty Group

Human rights change starts with the facts. Amnesty International (AI) does accurate, cross-checked research into human rights violations by governments and others worldwide. They use their analysis to influence governments, companies and decision-makers to do the right thing. Through petitions, letters and protests, campaigners worldwide press for action from the people and institutions who can make change happen. This works well – both as a support and solace for victims of violations and as an instrument of public pressure on violating authorities. 'Campaigners worldwide' can be just ordinary people – like you, readers of the West Cork People.

In order to harness this powerful process, AI's 'Write for Rights' campaign takes place annually around December 10, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights ('W4R') aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility

to those cases by organizing protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, public officials are bombarded with letters. Victims of torture, prisoners of conscience, and people facing the death penalty or other human rights violations receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten. Similar campaigns in previous years have been successful. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case. Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.

Because of Covid-19 constraints, Clonakilty Amnesty Group in 2020 cannot 'take to the streets' as we have done in past years, mobilising people to sign letters of protest or appeal

for various cases deserving attention. Instead, we will approach readers of the West Cork People in December and subsequent issues, asking them to act upon cases provided in the articles of those monthly issues. It works as follows:

The WCP article will contain a 'case card' – a summary of the story of the victim in question, and a 'sample letter' (or a web link to it) with address and/or email address – typically an appeal for clemency to the ambassador of the country in question or a request to the authorities of the country to guarantee proper legal process. The WCP reader can inform him/herself of the issue from the case card and can sign and send the sample letter directly. Sometimes an address of the victim will be available, which can be used to send a message of support directly to the victim.

As in past years – be a part of West Cork's contribution to the international Write for Rights campaign even in this difficult Covid time. Respond to the cases that will be presented in this article of the WCP in the coming months. For more info now, go to www.amnesty.ie/write-for-rights-works/. If you wish to contact the Clonakilty Amnesty Group call Sue on 023 884 5056 or Derry 086 222 7616 (our monthly Group meetings in O'Donovan's Hotel are cancelled due to Covid until further notice).

Bantry celebrates two 'Heritage Heroes' at National Heritage Awards

The efforts of individuals, families and community groups from County Cork to ensure the preservation, protection and promotion of Ireland's built, natural and cultural heritage were recognised last week at the National Heritage Awards 2020. Hosted by the Heritage Council, the event took place virtually and was presented by RTE broadcaster, Anne Cassin.

To take account of restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19, rather than focusing on the organisation of in-person events this year, more than 770 heritage experts and enthusiasts developed projects around this year's theme of 'Heritage and Education: Learning from our Heritage'. Comprising online talks and exhibitions, videos, podcasts, slideshow presentations, blogs, websites, social media accounts, as well as small, restricted social gatherings, more than 850 projects were submitted. Each one was considered for a National Heritage Week Award.

This year, the Water Heritage Award was won by the Ellen Hutchins Festival from Bantry, Co Cork for their project 'Explore the shore: Seaweeds

of inner Bantry Bay'. Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815), born in Ballylickey, West Cork, was Ireland's first female botanist, with seaweeds being her specialist. The Ellen Hutchins Festival project involved the production of family-friendly resources enabling people to explore, understand, respect and protect seaweeds and the natural heritage of the shores of inner Bantry Bay. High quality multimedia items, including photographs and a video were included in the resources.

The National Heritage Week Awards were also expanded this year to include an award for the best project in each Local Authority across the island, with the Bantry Historical and Archaeological Society claiming the prize in County Cork. Their project, 'Bantry Historical and Archaeological Society', looked back at all the events they have organised over the past eleven years for National Heritage Week, and showcased their work and the rich heritage of the Bantry area to new audiences.

The award for best project in Cork City has been claimed by Ruti Lachs, for his project, 'Cork Jewish heritage virtual walk'. Ruti is Jewish musician

who moved to Cork from Kerry three years ago. The 'Cork Jewish Culture Virtual Walk' is a video and webpage exploring some of the history and culture of the Cork Jewish community. The project is also a runner-up for the Heritage on Your Doorstep Award.

The volume and variety of projects received this year reflects the dedication of individuals and communities to capture, celebrate and share Ireland's rich and varied heritage.

Commenting, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, said: "The annual National Heritage Awards offer important recognition of the tireless work undertaken by people – not just during National Heritage Week, but year-round – to ensure the story of Ireland's heritage continues to be told in a meaningful way. I am delighted to see the interest and excitement generated by the Awards among communities across the country, and offer congratulations to all winning and nominated projects."

More information on the National Heritage Week is available at www.heritageweek.ie.



Bantry embarks on Age Friendly Town Plans



Launching the Bantry Age Friendly town Programme 2020/2021, Deirdre Fitzgerald and Winnie O'Sullivan, Bantry age Friendly Town Committee, Cllr Danny Collins, and Noelle Desmond and Mary Creedon, Cork County Council.

Pic Tony McElhinney

As part of Cork County Council's expansion of Age Friendly Initiatives, Bantry Age Friendly Town Committee has held their first socially distanced meeting to kick-start its Age Friendly ambitions for the town.

Following Cork County Council's recent call for funding of potential Age Friendly Towns, four new towns were successful in joining the existing Age Friendly network of Bandon, Cobh, Kinsale and Mitchelstown. Examples of age friendly initiatives implemented in participating towns include accessible public seating, promotion of age friendly businesses, age friendly parking and other public realm enhancements.

The Cork Age Friendly County Programme aims to support the development of a network of Age Friendly towns

across County Cork. The current fund cycle for 2020 – 2021 will provide financial assistance to the towns of Bantry, Millstreet, Charleville and Passage West/Monkstown. Inaugural meetings for these towns are currently taking place in line with public health guidance on gatherings and social distancing.

Chair of Bantry Municipal District, Cllr. Danny Collins welcomed the allocation of funding for Age Friendly initiatives in Bantry, "Bantry and surrounding areas have a very active retirement community, many of whom work voluntarily with different community organisations in the town such as Bantry Development and Tourism Association, Bantry Tidy Towns, Bantry Project Group and many more. I can envisage that this Age Friendly project through Cork County Council working with

the local representatives will only reap added initiatives for the town and I look forward to working together with them on these projects."

Niall Healy, Director of Services and Chair of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance congratulated Bantry on their success in securing the funding and noted that there was significant interest in the Council's 2020 – 2021 Age Friendly Towns Programme.

"Great work has been undertaken by the Age Friendly Town Committees in Bandon, Cobh, Kinsale and Mitchelstown and there was huge interest when we advertised the 2020-2021 programme. We are looking forward to working with the four new towns and welcome Bantry in their journey towards achieving Age Friendly Town status."

Tommy recognised for over 50 years of volunteering

Tommy Collins from Dunmanway has received the award for 'West Cork Volunteer of the Year 2020', presented by the Cork Volunteer Centre. Tommy has been volunteering in Dunmanway for over 50 years and this is the first time he has received such an award for his tremendous work. he is pictured with Cllr. Deirdre Kelly who nominated him.



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An Irish solution to an Irish problem – lock away the secrets



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

Imagine this. It's 1941 and despite the fact the world is plunged into the bloodiest conflict of mankind, tens of thousands of Irish men and women stream into the UK. The war economy is booming, and work is plentiful, despite the restrictions and dangers of working there. A young Irish girl away from home for the first time, no longer shielded by her family and culture, falls pregnant.

The story she brings home is vague. The father – a soldier, maybe a sailor, was killed, and the young woman without any supports is forced to come home after she gives birth. Because of the social and cultural

mores of the time maybe the story she tells will soften what must have been a horrendous decision to make. Knowing she will be shunned by her own parents, she is told take the child to her aunt Lizzy in the city. Lizzy will raise her. She is a kind woman with a family of her own, in a house where poverty always lurks at the door. It will be fifty years when mother and daughter see each other again.

There are many stories like this; it could be the story of countless young Irish women in that era. This one however, is my mother's story. Fifteen years dead this month, taken by cancer at the age of sixty-four; there are so many things I would have loved to ask her that are now lost to me forever. The heroine of this story is my grandmother Elizabeth, or should I say my gran aunt 'Lizzy'. Without her intervention, I hate to imagine what would have happened to my mother, Philomena Doyle, and indeed my own fate. Yet looking at the fate of so many 'fallen' women of that era, I don't have to imagine too hard the alternative: An orphanage, an industrial school, a Magdalene laundry.

I was struck with some strange cosmic sense of timing, when on the week of her



anniversary, the Seanad were debating a bill that the government are introducing. A bill that will seal from the public for thirty years, the findings of a commission into what happened to those poor women and babies in the care of our state and religious orders.

Thankfully, my mother was spared the horrors of what so many women and children faced in independent Ireland inside those mother and baby homes. To call them that is an insult to the survivors' memories. It's a ridiculous name given the babies were taken and the women were incarcerated. This was not a home – it was a 'prison'. Since the last of them was closed in 1996 (yes that recent), more and more survivors and children have spoken about their experiences on the record, so a simple glance on the internet will allow anyone to see interviews, newspaper articles, even films, about these darkest days of our history. So what can the report commissioned in 2015, tell us that we don't already know? This 4,000 page report will no doubt offer us details about how entangled the state, religious orders and society were involved. But we will not know for thirty years because of an act that allows the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs, Roderic O Gorman, to seal the findings from the public. An Irish solution to an

Irish problem!

Understandably, in order to get to the heart of the abuse, one of the terms of the commission stated that 'those who came forward were assured that they would not be named, nor would any institution.' While this makes sense on levels of privacy and the wish to protect a person's identity, one has to wonder why this 'term of reference' was not created on a basis of an opt-in or opt-out according to the person who volunteered the information? Regardless of the why and why not's, there has been a wave of calls from survivors and members of our communities, to make it public. Labour Senator Ivana Bacik has put forward two amendments to the government Bill that 'provide for access by affected individuals and families to records concerning them or their relatives, even if that means disapplying the 30 year sealing rule.' By the time this article comes to print, it may be too late and already sealed.

I'm conscious when writing about the Magdalene laundries, (operated by four religious orders The Sisters of Mercy, The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, the Sisters of Charity, and the Good Shepherd Sisters), the natural tendency for many readers is to be despondent with religion. The reality is the religious orders were part of a jigsaw piece that involved all of society – from the Government to the Catholic Hierarchy and yes...our communities, businesses and hospitals. While there are many decent priests and nuns, some of which, are good friends of mine; institutions run by the religious, both Protestant and Catholic, have had to hold up their hands at the cruelty inflicted upon the 'fallen women'. It is well documented by survivor groups, the beatings, hunger, humiliation, degradation and loneliness they had to suffer. But we must take a hard look in the mirror at the type of Ireland that was complicit in their suffering.

History can be used to justify anything. It's too easy to say times were different and that

we have different values today.

Yet human decency should prevail through all eras. If the logic becomes, 'well people were not as enlightened as we are today', you can excuse every crime committed against humanity. Throughout history, some people stood up against slavery, anti-Semitism and the incarceration of these women, when it wasn't popular to do so, but never enough people to make it count. The government betrayed the very people they were committed to protect. Not only did they collude with the orders on a morality level, they supported the institutions with capital grants, while ignoring the educational needs of the women and children. The laundries processed uniforms sent by the Irish Defense Forces, table clothes for local business and soiled sheets for hospitals. The Garda Síochána returned any woman who was brave enough to run away. The brave thing wasn't even breaking out, it was facing into a society that shunned you, without skills, education, family and connections to make a decent go of life. Parents who bought into the system, signed their daughters over; communities ensured the girls were returned if caught outside, or certainly didn't give them a hand up. If it really was simply about morality, sin and the cultural mores of the time, why were the fathers of the 'illegitimate' children not incarcerated, humiliated, or punished for their 'sins'? No doubt there must have been some men heartbroken by the chance of never seeing their child or losing their lover, but the evidence overwhelming is about the suffering of the women. Hundreds of baby remains have been found on the grounds of these institutions, such as the ones in Tuam and Donnybrook. How many more are there like those? Do we have to wait thirty years to find out?

Thankfully, the English curriculum for Leaving Cert, for the last number of years has included a wonderful play called 'Eclipsed' by Patricia Brogan Burke. Burke was a former nun who witnessed

the horrors of these laundries firsthand. She left the religious orders early in her vocation. It's easy to be brave when society is with you; Burke wrote this play in 1992, when the laundries were still running and Irish society was yet to emerge into a more forward-thinking and inclusive society. My English class, twenty-five years since the last laundry closed, are now learning about what Ireland was like for people on the edges, and they are touched by Brogan Burke's play. It's a great entry point if someone wants to investigate for themselves what happened to so many of our women and children.

The flag waving, drum beating of nationalism, focusing on the victory of our freedom fighters has drowned out the reality of the state we created when we were handed the reigns of power. It was sometimes ugly and often secretive. Now, as to emphasis that, we are locking up the secrets for another thirty years.

Update: President Higgins signs Commission of Investigation

President Michael D. Higgins, having given careful consideration to all constitutional and other aspects of the 'Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) Records, and another Matter, Bill 2020', and having considered all the options available to him, signed the Bill on October 26, one of four Bills submitted to the President late last week.

The President has followed the passage of this Bill through both Houses of the Oireachtas, and has listened carefully to the debate and the issues raised as to the rights of access to information submitted to a Commission.

While noting that important concerns were raised in the discussion on this Bill which are serious and must be addressed, the Bill itself did not directly raise a constitutional issue suitable for an Art 26.1.1 referral.

When considering any piece of legislation, the President must also be cognisant of Art. 34.3 of Bunreacht na hÉireann, which provides that no Court can question the validity of any legislation following a referral by the President to the Supreme Court. The President's decision to sign this legislation leaves it open to any citizen to challenge the provisions of the Bill in the future.

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Mary Moss joins Tria as General Manager

Tria is delighted to introduce and welcome the newest addition to its team – Mary Moss. As General Manager of Tria, Mary takes on a hugely important role and is already proving to be a huge asset to the business. Here, you can find out a little bit more about her and what she hopes to bring to this role:

Name and role: I'm Mary Moss and my role is General Manager at Tria, Cork's leading provider of home heating oil as well as commercial, agricultural and marine fuels

How long have you been with the company? I'm new in the door having started working with Tria in early September and have already settled in. I'm really enjoying every element of my role and couldn't ask to work with a better team.

What attracted you to want to work for the company? I love that the company has a lengthy history and continues to go from strength to strength. I was also impressed by the strong ethical culture of the company; that was a big factor that attracted me to the role.

How would you describe



the company in three words?

I would say strong, innovative and dynamic.

What do you aim to bring to your role? I intend to work extremely hard to drive (pardon the pun!) and expand the Tria group's current business. I'm also hugely motivated to push the boundaries even further, by helping to build a diverse and unique company to take advantage of the ever-changing environment. It's so important to do this, not only to ensure the best service for our existing clients, but also to attract new customers. I also intend to work closely with the brilliant Tria

team to secure and build the business into the future.

What excites you about your role? The huge potential to grow the Tria brand.

What is your favourite thing about your role? The variety of the day. From working with the Tria team, to engaging with customers, suppliers and stakeholders.

How would your colleagues describe you? I'd like to think they'd describe me as fiercely loyal.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given? Be true to yourself and your instincts and treat everyone else, as you would like to be treated.

Mary will be primarily based out of the Tria Caheragh offices but will be working closely with all of the team across Cork City and County. As a family business, where customers and local community are a top priority, Tria is thrilled to have someone on board who shares its values.

Tria is very excited about what the future holds for this team and the Tria brand.

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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.

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The three big-ticket uncontrollables affecting farmers of late remain Brexit, CAP and Covid.

In comparison to other parts of the economy, farming has been less affected by the lockdowns imposed this year. The most noticeable impact has been felt at marts. For now mart ringsides will be empty because of the Level Five

restrictions. With the development of online sales facilities during the year the current lockdown is less daunting compared to the March one. Online sales are accounting for between 20 to 30 per cent of mart sales. There have been issues though, especially with broadband capability not up to scratch and the server failing for one service provider, which saw 17 marts unable to conduct their business properly on Saturday, October 24. Some eventually got up and running while others cancelled, resulting in farmers having to go back and collect their stock. While prices have held up very well for cattle, the reliability of broadband in rural areas will have to be improved.

Milk Price

There was a bit of good news for Dairygold suppliers as the co-op increased its September milk price by 1c/l to 30.12c/l excluding VAT. The Carbery price remains unchanged and has held at 30.74c/l excluding VAT. That price includes a 1c/l support payment from its stability fund.

On the beef side there has been relatively little move on price over the last few weeks, while factory prices for sheep have remained strong over the last month.

CAP

CAP discussions are heading for the final furlong and it's looking like at least 20 per cent

of farmers' direct payments will be tied to green schemes and environmental actions under proposals for the next CAP struck in Europe this week.

EU agriculture ministers agreed to set aside 20 per cent of farmers' direct payments for eco-schemes. The European Parliament voted for a higher 30 per cent rate.

For Irish farmers, this would see between €237m and €355m ringfenced to environmental schemes. The schemes will be voluntary, but farmers who don't take part will lose that portion of their Basic Payment. A Department of Agriculture model of this scenario shows that a farmer on the average direct payment of €9,385 would lose between €1,900 and €2,850, assuming a flat-rate payment per hectare.

To secure these monies, farmers will have to undertake more environmental measures. The EU has suggested a carbon-farming scheme, reducing fertilisers and pesticides, and planting native trees.

Over the years, CAP policy has been to penalise farmers for non-productive land. This has resulted in habitat clearance, in some cases where it was justified for farming purposes and in others for marginal, if any gain.

As can be seen in the build up to the negotiations around the next Common Agricultural Policy, the wider public are challenging this practice, but as it stands, there's no incentive to



CAP policy over the years has seen farmers penalised for having non agricultural habitat areas such as this on their farms

change.

Over the years, I've been so drilled into referring to the agriculturally productive land we farm that I neglected to mention the rest. Most of it would be considered good quality land, so I got a bit of a shock when I totted up the quantity of ground deemed ineligible by Brussels.

No pun intended but I got a bit of a land when the total, excluding buildings and yards came to almost 12 per cent. How high would that figure be for farmers on more challenging ground or peripheral areas of the country?

It consists of rocky scrub, woodland, and marsh and doesn't even qualify as an Area of Natural Constraint (ANC). There are numerous species of flora and fauna, including viviparous lizards, at least a dozen species of mammals, four or possibly five species

of birds of prey and the one non-domesticated animal we receive a payment for, choughs. Part of the farm is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for this coastal member of the crow family.

The marsh area going down to the beach is a popular birdwatching spot, as it offers shelter to some rare migrating birds. Can you imagine the uproar if I was to attempt to pull it into agricultural production?

I'm only using my farm as an example for this, even though I'm not the first in the family to be frustrated about it. My grandmother told me it used to anger her mother that she had to pay land annuities for the same land in the 1920s and 30s.

In the course of my farm case study I discovered that, excluding wire only fences, I'm responsible for almost 20km worth of ditch and hedgerow.

New habitat creation is an option in most environmental schemes yet there is a penalty, not recognition, for existing farm habitats. A share of habitats created in REPS ended up being deemed ineligible for payment and subsequently some farmers returned them to production in order to be paid. Policy has driven much of this, not farmer choice.

Imagine if someone had the foresight to put a monetary value on the land that EU policy currently penalises farmers for possessing.

It would offer a form of economic opportunity to areas that have few alternatives.

It would stem biodiversity losses and hopefully turn them in the other direction. It's also one less stick to hit the farmer with.

The feasibility of such a move should surely merit consideration.

O'Sullivan urges farmers to avail
of Basic Payments Scheme

Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan says the ramping up of advance payments under the 2020 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is a vital support for farmers across the country and will contribute greatly to maximising income in what's been a very tough year.

The scheme, which includes greening, is worth €781 million to 118,000 farmers.

"I hope this scheme gives some peace of mind to our farmers during this very tough time," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"Some 97 per cent of eligible applicants for the 2020 BPS are receiving their advance payment at the earliest date possible.

"Taken together, the advance BPS payment and the advance Natural Constraints Scheme (ANC) payments mean some €974 million has been issued to

farmers in the past month."

The payment is set at a rate of 70 per cent, which is an increase on the 50 per cent normally allowed under EU Regulations. An additional 3,500 farmers have received an advance payment in the first run of payments this year, representing an additional €34 million.

In all, some 97 per cent of eligible applicants for the 2020 BPS are receiving their advance payment at the earliest date possible.

Farmers can ring the Helpdesk at 076 106 4420. Farmers can also submit any queries they may have online via www.agfood.ie.

Payments under the 2020 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme (ANC), which started in September, are also continuing as more cases are cleared for payment.

"Given the central importance

of the many schemes currently in place, my Department has recently written to all farmers outlining the payment schedule over the coming months for these schemes," said Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue.

"I am committed to ensuring that these payments continue to issue in the most efficient way possible to ensure that these vital supports are delivered to farmers in a timely manner."

Regular pay runs will be in place over the coming weeks to pay BPS and ANC cases as they become cleared for payment.

"Farmers who have been contacted by my Department with queries in relation to their applications should also respond at their earliest convenience in order to facilitate payment," Minister McConalogue said.

Farming is in the blood



William O'Donovan with his daughter on the family farm in Minanes, Drinagh. William, along with his father Dan, is a finalist in the 2020 NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards. The O'Donovan's were nominated by Drinagh Coop.

Credit Unions win Ireland's Best Customer Experience Award for sixth year in a row

For the sixth consecutive year, credit unions have been ranked Number One in Ireland for the best customer experience (CX). Credit unions have strengthened their reputation as the country's undisputed CX champions by not just taking the top spot again this year, but by also extending their lead at the top of the table.

The CXi Report is published annually by the CX Company based on a major survey carried out on their behalf by Amáarach Research. In July/August 2020, Amáarach surveyed 2,500 Irish consumers who rated their customer experiences of 151 brands across ten sectors. In all, over 32,000 experiences were evaluated using the CX Framework as well as loyalty, value for money, channel usage and Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Credit Unions achieved an overall CX Score of 7.99 out of 10. The rest of the Top Ten brands scored between 7.55 and 7.31. Credit Unions won: Best Overall Brand; Best Brand in Financial Sector; Best Brand for Loyalty.

In fact, the only award for which Credit Unions were eligible but didn't win was the Best

Brand for Value (won by Lidl).

The report succinctly comments on Credit Unions being ranked Number One yet again:

"From great to extraordinary. Six in a row for Ireland's CX champions didn't come easy during the lockdown. Extraordinary focus from a group that consistently give a real damn about every single member's needs."

Launching the report, Michael Killeen, Chairman of the CX Company, said: "Once again I have to congratulate Irish credit unions for their consistently high performance not only for winning for the sixth year in a row but for also widening the gap between themselves and the rest of the competition. This is a phenomenal achievement and really sets the gold standard for other Irish and global companies to emulate. The credit unions continue to set world records which I have no doubt is primarily down to their member or customer-centric approach. Other companies take note!"

Responding to the publication of the report, Bantry Credit Union Manager Finbarr O'Shea welcomed its finding that credit unions "give a real damn about

every single member's needs".

Finbarr said that this is the essence of credit unions. "We are very proud of the member experience we provide here at Bantry Credit Union. We care about each and every one of our members and put their needs at the heart of everything we do."

Finbarr noted that the title of this year's CXi Report is "Exceptional Times, Extraordinary People: Frontline staff's dedication has made them the real CX heroes". Echoing this theme, Finbarr paid tribute to the staff of Bantry Credit Union and all credit unions for their incredible commitment during Covid-19.

"Credit union staff have always gone the extra mile. But this year they have surpassed even their own high standards. Whether they are at the counter, in the back office or working remotely, they have all played a blinder. Their resilience, flexibility, good humour and determination to 'do the right thing' by our members knows no bounds. I can't thank them enough."

The report can be downloaded at thecxcompany.com/cxi-reports/.



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IMAGINE MORE

people Farming

Farm Life: Nigel Daunt, Coolcullitha, Innishannon

Interview by
Tommy Moyles

Nigel Daunt, nominated by Bandon Co-op, is a finalist in the NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards – known as the ‘Oscars of the Dairy World’

You’re a new entrant to dairy, what influenced your decision to change enterprise?

I was always mad into farming. Mum and Dad had a suckler to beef farm and they would have always been honest about the finances of it and that led me to look more into dairy. When I got a bit of experience in it, I liked it, and wanted to pursue it a bit more.

Following my leaving cert, I began the Dairy Business course in UCD.

I chose it because I had an interest even though I wasn’t sure if I’d go into dairy but it had more prospects at the time. I was always keen on going farming and dairy was the only



one that provided a full time income without the need for payments and schemes. There were better prospects and I could invest in the farm and still have an income after.

How did things progress after graduating?

I graduated in 2014 and worked on a dairy farm for six months. In spring 2015 I formed a three-way partnership with my parents, Robert and Dorothy, and

we bought dairy heifer calves. We did the same the year after and began supplying milk to Bandon co-op in spring 2017.

As the numbers of dairy grew, I got more responsibility and my parents trusted me with running the farm. We discuss things but they trust my decisions. They were very open to me making a lot of changes and trusted me.

Profitability increased and we have a lot of development done,

with more planned.

What sort of investment or changes had you to make around the farm?

We focused our investment on the parlour and roadways. Other than that, we used the existing buildings that were from the sucklers.

Initially we put in a new eight-unit parlour, but we did the concrete work to allow us expand it to 20 over time; something which we got around to recently. There are enough challenges when you’re starting and changing enterprise out, so there’s no point drawing extra pressure on ourselves.

We still use the straw bedded house from the straw. We’re hoping to build cubicles in the near future. There’s a bit of extra work in the straw bedding, I don’t have to go to CrossFit for now because of it.

Were you anyway nervous over what way milk price could have gone earlier this year?

Milk price has been good since we started and we’re thankful for that. Everyone was concerned on it early on in the year based on Covid but thankfully it held up well. You always have to keep price variability in your mind. You have to be realistic and not expect a high milk price the whole time. There will always be fluctuations especially now with Brexit and Covid.

We’re milking 80 cows on a milking platform of 103 acres this year and we’d be hoping to calve close to 100 in the spring. There are a few extra bits of ground used for silage. Last year they yielded 4,900 litres and produced 395kgs milk solids per cow. Because they are a young herd we can improve that a small bit.

We’d be erring on the side of caution with numbers. It’s fine in a good year but if you hit a drought, or it became too wet, your workload could come under too much pressure and that can be difficult. For us it would be about maximising the profit sustainably.

Did you ever expect to be winning milk quality awards when you began your dairy career? I wouldn’t ever have expected to be winning awards we just set out to do the best. My parents would have raised myself and my two sisters to do the best we can, no matter what we do. You’re happy if you know you’ve done the best you can. If things go wrong after that you can’t do much more. It was a big honour for us to be nominated by Bandon co-op and it was an unexpected bonus to win the Carbery milk quality award.

The West Cork finalists of the 2020 NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards are Nigel Daunt, Coolcullitha, Innishannon, Bandon Co-op; Jerry Keohane, Clonakilty, Barryroe Co-op; Michael Lordan, Newcestown, Bandon, Dairygold; William and Dan O’Donovan, Minanes, Drinagh, Drinagh Co-op.

‘On Feirm Ground’ programme launched to support farmer health and wellbeing

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive, Teagasc and IT Carlow have come together to fund a programme of research

that has now resulted in a training programme that will see agricultural advisors engage with farmers on their health and wellbeing over the farm gate.

The programme ‘On Feirm Ground’ will be led by charity,

The Men’s Development Network, as part of Engage, the National Men’s Training Programme and will train 800 agricultural advisors. The research and resource development stage of ‘On Feirm Ground’ has been on-going for the past twelve months with the first training scheduled to be delivered to agricultural advisors in early November 2020.

Launching the initiative recently Minister of State with responsibility for Research and Development, Farm Safety and New Market Development, Martin Heydon TD and Minister of State for Public Health, Well Being and the National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan TD, discussed the importance of such joint collaborations between Departments and other stakeholders allowing for innovative thinking and the development of holistic approaches to addressing the sensitive issue of farmers’ health and wellbeing.

Minister Heydon reaffirmed the crucial importance of health and wellbeing in ensuring improvements in farm safety saying: “There is ample evidence out there to show that farmer health and wellbeing play a major role in farm safety. How can a farmer successfully look after crops or animals if they cannot look after themselves? How can you get an improvement in

physical safety if the welfare of the farmer is being ignored?”

“I know that the training of agricultural advisors to engage with and signpost supports to farmers over the farm gate will have a significant impact and I am delighted to be supporting such a collaborative initiative.”

Minister Feighan acknowledged the work of the initiative to date saying, “I am delighted to be here today with my ministerial colleague to formally launch this programme as working together across government to improve health and wellbeing underpins Healthy Ireland.”

He went on to say, “‘On Feirm Ground’ presents a genuine opportunity to equip farm advisors with a toolkit of supports in relation to physical and psychological wellbeing. Farmers, male and female, will directly benefit by being able to access reliable and consistent health information and support to improve their health and wellbeing.”

HSE Health and Wellbeing, who lead on the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Men – Action Plan to promote men’s health, has also funded this initiative and supported it through adapting existing men’s health programmes.

Dr Stephanie O’Keeffe, HSE National Director of Strategic Planning and Transformation

said: “‘On Feirm Ground’ has been enabled through partnership working and by building on the evidence developed working with the Engage Men’s Health training programme. It is very heartening to see a growing network of stakeholders for health and wellbeing coming together through this initiative to improve our reach to farmers.”

Seán Cooke CEO of the Men’s Development Network, and project managers of the initiative, said: “I want to thank the advisory and oversight committee whose members also include the Agricultural Consultants Association, Mental Health Ireland and the Irish Heart Foundation for their commitment and enthusiasm to working in such a collaborative fashion.”

Noting there is more work to do, Mr. Cooke highlighted that this programme was just one aspect of a suite of initiatives addressing farmer health and wellbeing that need to be supported.

As well as launching the initiative, an interim report was made available by the research partners at IT Carlow, led by Dr. Noel Richardson, Director of IT Carlow’s National Centre for Men’s Health.

Dr. Noel Richardson said: “It is well established that,

compared to other occupational groups, farmers in Ireland experience a disproportionate burden of health problems, which undermine the profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of farming. The report highlights a multitude of challenges concerning experiences with farming and the broader occupation of farming, including isolation and the decline of rural communities, issues relating to succession and inheritance, increasing pressures to scale up, changing farming roles and increasing paperwork demands, stresses associated with seasonal workloads, financial stress, and the pressures associated with being self-employed.

“The research findings recommend that when designing the ‘On Feirm Ground’ training programme it focuses on the individual social determinants effecting the health and wellbeing of both male and female farmers and adopts a strengths-based approach to farmers’ health and sets out clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries for advisors in their health role.”

CHRISTOPHER
O’SULLIVAN T.D.

If I can be of any assistance to you please do not hesitate to get in contact.

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Different paths to postgraduate study



LIFE & LEARNING

Pat Culhane

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 to West Cork. For more, see patculhane.ie

Too many adults I have encountered over the years have a fear of Higher Education (HE) – even among those that have a strong desire to learn and develop themselves and their careers. There appears to be an apathy or even a dislike towards HE among many Irish adults.

Could it be that indifferent views of HE are influenced by experiences of some form of rejection in the HE system? Maybe not getting the required Leaving Cert. points, dropping out of a course or not being in a preferred course or college. Additionally, feelings of inadequacy have been handed down from previous generations, when access to HE was generally reserved for the affluent, those in the clergy or for the few who attained exceptional Leaving Cert. results.

Thankfully, access to HE in Ireland has vastly improved in many ways. There are now considerably more course types and levels, places and access routes: see my article in last month's edition. Although there are some cracks in Ireland's HE system, like our health system it is fundamentally world class. Despite such advancements, the Irish HE system and that of the EU – programmes that we have full and equal access to – remain underappreciated and engaged with, particularly among adults in Ireland in their 30s/40s-plus.

A HE qualification in itself is no guarantee of getting your dream job or changing your life for the better. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their

programmes are about much more than preparing students for future roles in the workplace. Finding the right programme can be a catalyst for both personal and career development. This can be particularly the case for people in their 30s/40s-plus, who pursue the right postgraduate programme.

HEIs in Ireland offer a wide variety of postgraduate courses. Increasingly these are structured in a flexible way to accommodate students who may already have major life commitments. Part of the government's 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' is to engage with the wider community. More and more courses are being delivered in blended or fully online ways. With the onset of Covid-19, this trend is likely to continue. Full-time postgraduate courses delivered face-to-face on campus are decreasing. What's also changing is the way you access these courses.

For many postgraduate courses, the main entry requirement is a minimum of an upper second-class honour's degree (NFQ/QQI Level 8). However, applicants who do not hold an honours degree can often be considered on a case-by-case basis. These applicants should have significant relevant work experience and involvement in the discipline. This generally means that if you have a leaving certificate or equivalent and professional experience, you can get access to a postgraduate programme. Your life experience and volunteering achievements are often taken into consideration too.

This is significant for many people who think that you need an undergraduate degree as a prerequisite for postgraduate study. For those who feel that they may not have the academic capacity to get through such a postgraduate programme, it is important to note that many programmes are designed and delivered with that in mind. Courses are generally broken up into a number of modules with ongoing assessment (e.g. written assignment and presentations). Big, written exams have become less prevalent at postgraduate level.

It is also important to point out that there are many specialised postgraduate programmes that cannot be accessed by related experienced alone. If unsure, the best thing to do is to read the programme webpages and get in touch with the programme director to arrange a meeting, maybe by phone or video call. It is part of their job to liaise with people enquiring about the programme, especially potential course participants.

If you are not eligible to apply on this occasion, you can seek advice on what you could do to become eligible, perhaps doing a particular short course or gaining work or voluntary experience in a specific area.

One thing that may be worth considering is the level that the postgraduate programme is at, e.g. higher diploma, postgraduate certificate (NFQ/QQI Level 8), postgraduate diploma or master's (NFQ/QQI Level 9). It may also be worth checking if your course of interest offers an exit award, in case you do not complete it as intended, i.e., that you can exit with a postgraduate certificate or diploma from a master's programme on completion of certain modules. Postgraduate courses/programmes usually take between a year and two years to complete.

What follows are brief stories from three West Cork-based people, each from a different background, who completed postgraduate programmes in their 30s/40s in recent years. Daragh's story is inspirational in that he has no undergraduate degree. He completed a master's degree in Business Studies (MBS) in 2018 via the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and University College Cork. Starting in a local bank branch, he worked his way to hold senior leadership roles in Bank of Ireland Wealth, and then in Johnson and Johnson. Recently, Daragh joined the team in the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, with responsibility for leading rural remote job creation.

Daragh Whooley, Clonakilty



Not going to college straight from school was never something I was embarrassed about. I never felt I had to explain why. The bank came calling and I started my career. "A job for life" was what I was told at the time. I worked hard, gave everything I had and moved up through the ranks. As I progressed to senior management roles, I felt that a piece of my personal jigsaw may have been missing.

I am intrigued by why people do what they do and what makes the best the best. Why does one

person want to excel more than the other? What motivates them? Is it intrinsic or extrinsic? These questions are some of the drivers that keep me searching for ways to continue to improve.

A colleague of mine shared a prospectus for a master's programme at IMI and UCC. I read it through in detail and took the plunge! As a mature student, I had a deeper insight from my life experience to help me choose what subjects were right for me. As an 18-year-old, I hadn't a clue.

My studies involved three days every month over a two-year period. I drove a round trip of 650km from Clonakilty to the IMI, Sandyford, Dublin. I handed in my monthly assignments, attended my lectures on site, took copious notes and applied my learning practically. I was blown away by the depth and delivery by presenters! On top of this I held down a busy job as Provincial Manager in Munster for Bank of Ireland Wealth and was acutely aware of not dropping the ball here, which thankfully didn't happen.

If advising any potential mature postgraduate student; it is to do something that you are really interested in, be very disciplined, set aside time every week to get your work done, join study groups (invaluable!) and reach out to programme facilitators for some guidance.

This master's has given me extra confidence in my own self-taught ability and perspective of the bigger picture. It has clarified that every individual and organisation has the same day-to-day challenges and it has given me lifelong friends and connections across many different sectors. I was very fortunate to have a supportive employer throughout and wonderful support from my family, which made this happen. If you are considering returning to or starting third-level education later in life, it is a big yes from me.

Susan O'Regan, Baltimore

Looking back, I wasn't sure of what I wanted at Leaving Cert stage, so I initially completed a two-year business studies course at CIT. I returned in my early 20s, completing an honours degree in Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University, followed by a H. Dip. in Community and Youth Work at N.U.I., Maynooth in 1998. This led me to a wonderful and exciting twenty-year career working alongside the Traveller community, young people, rural, and urban communities and in the area



of family support and adult education.

I can honestly say that it was never my plan to return to third-level education in my mid-forties! I was not ambitious in any sense and thought that my formal education was done. I had always loved my work as a youth and community worker and felt so fortunate to have already achieved my degrees.

Yet, in September 2015, I found myself stepping off a little commuter bus, a few miles from the Scottish town of Lockerbie, surrounded by rolling landscape and walked, with some trepidation, up the laneway towards the Buddhist Monastery Samye Ling, for my first weekend of a three year M. Sc. in Mindfulness Studies – a three-year programme run by Aberdeen University in partnership with the Mindfulness Association. I have never once looked back.

I chose this programme as it places huge focus on compassion-based mindfulness, which fits well with youth and community work. I also wanted to immerse myself more fully in mindfulness over a long period of time in order to deepen my understanding of it and enhance my sense of integrity in teaching it. The academic requirements were sometimes challenging but, thankfully, mindfulness itself is an incredible study aid, which kept me focused and steady throughout.

This deeply experiential programme changed everything for me, both personally and professionally. I never imagined the doors it would open. I continue to work in the community, teaching mindfulness skills to groups like the Irish Wheelchair Association and Cork Deaf Association tinnitus support group, as well as a wide variety of groups in school, community and adult education settings. I also train staff teams for companies and local authorities, run mindfulness retreats, workshops, online classes and have this year launched my own website, mindhaven.ie. It feels like I am only beginning, and I am very grateful that I followed my gut

instinct and returned to higher education. For me, education represents freedom and is most definitely a lifelong process, as is mindfulness.

Sandra Flynn, Skibbereen

Like many people, I undertook my master's degree when I was in my 30s. It was a part-time distance-learning programme at the Centre for Project Management, University of Limerick (UL). In those days, a courier would turn up at the start of the semester with a box of books and materials. As it happened, I never really left postgraduate education after that. After graduating from this programme, I began to tutor on it and supervise research students in the years that followed.



I still worked full-time in an industry role practicing project and programme management, while teaching part-time. In 2017, I decided to leave industry to focus on my teaching career and, more importantly, to pursue a lifelong learning goal of a PhD in education. It took a while before I found the PhD programme that I'm currently enrolled in at Lancaster University. In that time, I completed a postgraduate certificate online in Digital Education at Edinburgh University – a fully online programme. It was hugely valuable as, in addition to the interesting coursework, I made new friends among my peers and learned so much about what it is like to be a successful online learner – particularly having been an online teacher at UL for a number of years. I can safely say that I am a better teacher because of my experiences of being a student.

It was a huge adjustment to no longer have to juggle full-time work, part-time teaching and part-time studying. In my industry role, my working week would start at 7am on a Monday and not finish until 7pm on a Friday. I have to say that I am now loving the balance in having a little more time for my volunteering activities, as well as my PhD studies. My advice to anyone thinking about undertaking a postgraduate programme in mid-life is simply, you're never too old and it's never too late.



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.

West Cork People history columnist Shane Daly is currently working as a schoolteacher in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Back in May, Shane gave us an insight into life under curfew in the UAE during the pandemic. Now all business and schools in Abu Dhabi are operating, albeit with restrictions. A COVID-19 vaccine has been administered in Abu Dhabi since September.

There have been two large changes in the functionality of the Emirates in the UAE since my last post on the topic six months ago. The first being that upon the decision being made to reopen schools in August, the government body ADEK (Abu Dhabi Department

Covid-19 in the UAE

of Knowledge); along with MOE (Ministry of Education), have implemented a mandatory Covid-19 PCR swab test for all staff in schools. The second and probably more applicable to life in Ireland at the moment is that in September Abu Dhabi became the first country in the world to begin administering a vaccine to its residents.

The mandatory Covid-19 PCR swab test is administered every two weeks. The working week in the UAE is Sunday to Thursday and at the end of the school day, every second Thursday, we get a PCR swab done in school. The result is returned to us within 48 hours and a negative result must be presented to management before anyone is allowed to return to work or enter campus on the Sunday morning. This is the same for all staff and students. The theatre in the school on Thursdays is turned into a medical testing facility and times for testing are staggered so there is no more than 15 people including nurses in the room at any one time. Precautions are still taken in school for students that are feeling unwell. We have a nursing department on campus and any student that feels sick or is presenting with symptoms is sent to the nurse. If the nurse's recommendation is to send the child home, then all students are removed from class. We also have a sanitisation team on campus; this team is then brought in the spray the room and all surfaces with disinfectant before we are allowed to go back into the classroom. This happened in my class last week; the process takes 15 or 20 minutes.

The Emirati people have

been exceptional in adhering to guidelines. Masks are mandatory here and you will not see anyone in public without one. It really is incredible to walk the street in 42-degree heat and everyone, without question, will be wearing a mask. You are not permitted into shops without a mask and your temperature is checked in all shopping centres and grocery stores, where you are also offered both masks and gloves on entry. The border between Abu Dhabi is manned by the Abu Dhabi Police Department on a 24-hour basis. You cannot pass through unless you present an Emirates I.D and negative test result that is no older than 48-hours-old. The collective effort to contain and manage the virus here has been incredible.

However, despite this, within our first four weeks on returning to school we had four teachers test positive for the virus. All teachers are in their mid-twenties and all four were hospitalised for two weeks. Routine tests were carried out on a Thursday evening and within 36 hours those four results returned positive and the school was shut for two weeks. After hospitalisation, all teachers had to return four negative tests before being allowed return to work. All have now returned to work and we have not had any positive result since.

Vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccine administered in Abu Dhabi since September has been developed by Chinese pharmaceutical giant Sinopharm China National Biotech Group. It requires two doses delivered three weeks apart.

The UAE kicked off Phase III trials for the vaccine in July. The vaccine has reportedly generated antibodies in volunteers during the first two trial phases in China. The volunteers received two doses about three weeks apart. Preliminary announcements about the Phase III trials in the UAE indicate that the vaccine is effective, and has not generated any major side effects, even in 1,000 people with chronic conditions. Before the UAE's regulatory approval, 31,000 people in the country had volunteered for the vaccine trials. Following encouraging results, the vaccine was granted emergency approval in September for use on frontline workers.

On September 21, teachers of public schools in Abu Dhabi were given the option to register and get the Covid-19 vaccine. Principals received an official circular that confirmed the inclusion of teachers, administrative staff and their immediate family members in the priority categories. A part of the circular said: 'The UAE has announced the emergency use of the vaccine for frontline workers who deal with Covid-19 patients, with the aim of safeguarding these heroes and protecting them from any dangers they may face due to the nature of their work... Teachers and other academic staff have been included among the priority groups for getting the Covid-19 vaccine. This also includes their family members (first degree) who are aged above 18 years. Taking the Covid-19 vaccine is optional for those who are eligible.' Volunteers were intensively monitored for approximately 35 days.

Personally, I made the deci-

sion not to take the vaccine. I didn't make the decision lightly, as if you do take the vaccine, there are also benefits that go along with it, such as crossing the border to Dubai. Showing proof that you have been administered the vaccine mitigates you from having to take a Covid-19 test 48 hours prior to crossing; and paying for the test each time, at a cost of 370 dirhams, which is equivalent to €90. My partner lives in Dubai so this would have been a considerable perk. Despite this, I just felt it was too early and have decided to wait until more testing is done and instead be more cautious of my day-to-day behaviour.

After emergency approval was granted, UAE Minister of Health, Abdulrahman Al Owais, also received his first dose. On October 19, Sheikh Saif Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, is the latest UAE official to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Other UAE ministers who have taken the COVID-19 vaccine include Obaid Al Shamsi, director general of the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA), and Sheikh Khaled Bin Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Member of the Executive Council and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Office.

Despite all the precautions and the excellent adherence to guidelines within school. It must be said that since the return of schools cases have gone up exponentially. In the Summer months – June, July and August – the country was reporting between 200 and 400 cases daily. Since the return of schools, this

number has risen to over 1500 cases daily. On October 17, we had 1538 positive cases here and it's been sometime since that figure was below 1000 cases. What the next step is, I do not know. Everything is open, we do not have a lockdown, curfew has been lifted, and all business and schools are operating albeit with restrictions.

It is easy to dwell on the negatives in regard to the situation we have all been experiencing since our lives drastically changed in March. However, we do not have to look very far to see the many positives. That is true for life here in the UAE, as well as at home in Ireland. The adherence to guidelines here truly is remarkable, and the scale of effort in implementing government issues has been immense. The widespread availability of testing as well as a 48-hour turnaround for results is incredible.

At home, the resilience of the Irish has been very apparent. The willingness to accept change and adapt by the majority is a wonderful sign of the good nature of the Irish people. The online fundraising campaigns for various different causes, as well as people wanting to support local businesses rather than the bigger conglomerates, is heart-warming. Even more recently, the community effort in Cork after the flooding, at a time when the country has a Level 5 lockdown to contend with, is truly beautiful.

We're all in this together. Ní neart go cur le chéile. Éire Abú.

Fear and murder in Kilmichael in the aftermath of the Ambush

To coincide with the centenary of the Kilmichael Ambush, Pauline Murphy takes a brief look at the reprisals, which took place in the locality following the ambush.

A small black plaque on the wall outside The Kilmichael Bar records the murder there of Denis 'Denny' O'Sullivan, who was killed by British forces on November 29, 1920. The murder occurred the day after the Kilmichael Ambush as British forces flooded into the area to carry out acts of reprisal.

O'Sullivan was entirely innocent. He worked for Cronins of Cooldaniel and was collecting provisions on his horse and cart at Dromleigh when he met local woman Mrs Cotter, walking

along the road, and offered her a lift. The pair stopped at what we know today as The Kilmichael Bar and Mrs Cotter insisted on buying a drink for her driver, as a token of her thanks.

Not long after, three lorries of British forces arrived and raided the bar, smashing up furniture and purloining bottles of whiskey. The soldiers roughed up O'Sullivan before taking him outside, where they stood him against the wall. O'Sullivan pleaded his innocence but the British forces shot him dead regardless.

Up to 250 British soldiers had poured into the Macroom area the day after the Kilmichael Ambush where, along with the dreaded Auxiliaries, they went on a rampage; apart from the murder of Denis O'Sullivan, they carried out extensive damage to homes and businesses.

General Tom Barry called them "hard bitten terrorists".

The O'Mahony home, which was situated directly across from Dromleigh National School, was burnt to the ground, as was the O'Donoghue home and the Kelly home.

When General Barry led his Flying Column into position at the ambush site on the morning of November 28, he informed the Kellys, whose house overlooked the site, what was going to happen and advised them to find safety. The Kelly family instead chose to stick it out and provided the Flying Column with gallons of tea and milk, along with brown bread, as they waited all day in the cold and wet for the British.

Just after 4pm the sound of approaching lorries was heard and the scouts gave the signal. The Kelly family hid under the



A house near the ambush site that was burned by British soldiers.

large kitchen table as bullets knocked the whitewash off the walls, such was the intense fighting between 'the boys of Kilmichael' and the might of the British empire.

When the fighting ended, General Barry and his men again called to the Kelly home, this time seeking stretchers to carry their comrades who had fallen in action – Vice Commandant Michael McCarthy

from Dunmanway, the fatally wounded Lieutenant Pat Deasy, who was just 16-years-old and died later that night, and Lieutenant Jim O'Sullivan from Rossmore. Doors were taken from their hinges and used to carry the men.

Fearing a reprisal the Kelly family decided to flee the area, putting their belongings into a trunk and burying it in the nearby bog first. Eleven-year-old Nell Kelly was wearing her confirmation shoes but lost them in the frantic rush. To her dying day, Nell never forgot the day she lost her good shoes to the Kilmichael Ambush!

As news spread, other families also took their belongings and fled. They were right to believe the British would come back in savage revenge – the soldiers torched homes and haybarns from Johnstown to

Inchigeela.

In the aftermath, the Dromleigh National School decided to close as no students attended, having all run with their families. The school remained closed until December 13.

Proclamations were posted up in the area on December 1, ordering that 'all male inhabitants of Macroom and all males passing through Macroom shall not appear in public with their hands in their pockets. Any male infringing this order is liable to be shot at sight. – by order, Auxiliaries Division RIC.'

Kilmichael and its surrounding area suffered a great deal during those tense times of oppression and conflict but General Tom Barry would later recall the resilience of those local people: "those splendid people whom British aggression failed to break."

people A flavour of West Cork



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In the spirit of local

Gin connoisseurs will be delighted to hear about the latest offering from four distilleries along the Wild Atlantic Way, which is due to arrive just in time for Christmas. A beautifully packaged gift of four handcrafted gins from the West Coast of Ireland – three of which are bottled on Cape Clear Island by Cape Clear Distillery – will make a very special gift for someone this year. As it says on the box, 'From Donegal to West Cork, by way of Galway and the Kingdom of Kerry – take the Coast Road, the road less travelled; and time to enjoy four hand-crafted coastal gins, from Ireland's Atlantic coast'.

This initiative puts Cape Clear Island and indeed West Cork

at the epicentre of an exciting new product bringing the best of the Wild Atlantic Way to the world. Cape Clear Distillery has invested heavily in new equipment for this venture in the hope of continuing interest and support from the West Cork community.

The multi-pack will retail at €49.99 and will be generally available in off-licences throughout West Cork.

Cape Clear's personalised engraved bottles have been a constant seller for the island distillery since first introduced to Bushes of Baltimore in May. These include bottles featuring local landmarks, of which the Fastnet Rock has been the most popular; there are also bottles with friendship images and

corporate logos. Apart from the engravings, all these bottles come with a personal inscription of your choice.

Recently added, an attractive neck label featuring some delicious cocktail recipes adds something even more appealing to the product.

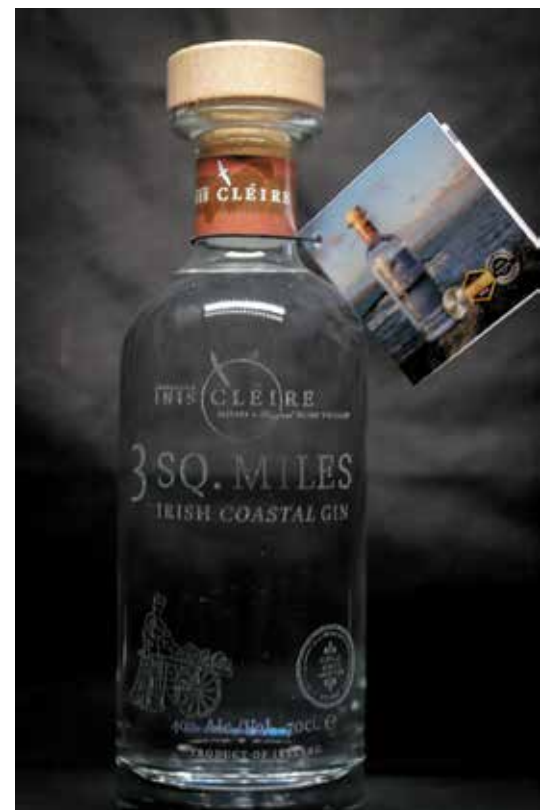
If you are looking for a very special and individualised present from West Cork this year, you won't find better than a personalised bottle of Cape Clear Distillery's triple award winning gin. This unique product, which is also the perfect corporate gift, costs €60 plus an €8 delivery charge and is delivered to off-licences for collection/payment.

When sending a bottle to a loved one, you need have no

worries about your gift arriving in one piece. All of these engraved bottles are packaged in air shock bags and sturdy boxes – just attach your own label and then post or send by courier to Ireland and beyond.

Cape Clear is Ireland's only offshore Island Distillery and has seen success after success since launching its Coastal Gin made with local hand foraged ingredients last November. These include silver medals in the 2020 International San Francisco and London Spirits Awards and a Gold medal in the San Francisco Bartenders Awards.

Visit www.capecleardistillery.com to view the range of designs and products on offer.



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people A flavour of West Cork



A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

Pumpkin loaf is the new banana bread

the one!

We had a good harvest and have them stored for the winter and while I do realise everyone is not as fortunate, they are available to buy now in the farmer's markets and some shops

Pumpkins are very versatile; they're great in soups, curries, roasted, pies, mashed, you name it, you can probably make it. I recommend finding yourself a proper pumpkin – not the Halloween type but a proper blue or grey skinned one and having some culinary fun – if you can't find one butternut squash will make a good substitute.

In the last lockdown everyone seemed to go baking mad, there were even flour shortages. Baking is a great activity, alone or shared. And if you have children it will keep them entertained as well as providing some mental gymnastics. Think of all that fun – measuring, mixing, stirring, making a mess and the final satisfaction of eating something that you have created yourself.

This recipe is easy – easy-to-find ingredients and very easy-to-put-together. You could fling all the ingredients in a food processor but I'd use an old fashioned bowl and spoon

or whisk. It'll be much more satisfying and won't create any more washing up.

So here you go, Pumpkin Loaf, the new Banana Bread – plenty of antioxidants and delicious spread with butter. One of the ultimate comfort foods!

To make the pumpkin puree, peel and dice the pumpkin then steam, roast or cook gently in boiling water until tender – drain well. Buzz or mash to a smooth puree

Pumpkin Loaf

Ingredients:

- 250g pumpkin puree
- 120g melted butter or olive oil
- 2tbs sour cream, crème fraîche or natural yoghurt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 220g sugar
- 250g plain flour
- 1 level tsp ground cloves
- 1 level tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 level tsp ground ginger
- half tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda

To sprinkle on top:

- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 dsp caster sugar



Method:

Pre heat the oven 180c.

Line a 2lb loaf tin (a big one) with parchment paper or grease-proof paper. Google 'How to line a loaf tin' if you're not sure how to do this.

Put the flour, spices, baking soda and baking powder together in a large bowl then stir to combine.

Put the pumpkin puree, eggs, melted butter, crème fraîche/sour cream/yoghurt, vanilla essence and sugar into another bowl and whisk or stir well to make a smooth puree.

Stir in the flour and spices and mix until combined – don't over mix.

Pour the batter into the prepared tin then smooth the surface to level out.

Mix the sugar and cinnamon for the topping together then sprinkle over the top of the loaf.

Bake in the oven for 55-60 minutes. Test to see if it's done by poking a small sharp knife into the centre of the loaf. If it comes out clean it's cooked. Moist is okay, but the knife should be clean.

Happy Baking!

Karen
Lettercollum Kitchen Project
22 Connolly Street
Clonakilty
www.lettercollum.ie

karen@lettercollum.ie

Our team in the kitchen will continue to cook fresh food daily (except Sunday and Monday). Please check our website, Instagram and facebook for menu updates

We are happy to take orders by email or over the phone. Our new yellow awning is proving to be the best giant umbrella so you can keep dry if you need to wait. We're also happy to pass food outside if you don't want to come in. Unfortunately we can't deliver but we have joined up with 'Neighbourhood' in Timoleague where there is a depot if you prefer to pick up there.

November needs treats (This one is for the kids!)



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Jacques Brennan is the author of Hungry Soul Cookbook and writes a blog, Le Journal, find it at www.hungrusoulplantpower.com. He is a frequent collaborator with the West Cork arts and health organisation, MusicAlive, and is also a guest food contributor to West Cork People.

cookies" The immediate reaction will often be, "no". Parents are like that, they think, oh no, more work, cleaning, etc.

Your parents work hard all week, so just say – "don't worry, I'll clean everything up".

These are some of the most wonderful words a parent could hear. Be gentle, as they may go into shock. They may not believe you, but persist, "no, really, don't worry, I have a new easy recipe and there won't be any mess. It only takes 15 minutes".

The best thing is that when you are done, you will have a nice stock of cookies to be snacking on while playing those games later! I suggest you double the recipe!

Hopefully, they have given you the Ok.

Let me tell you, when they taste these cookies, they may volunteer to do all the cleaning up for you.

Make them a cup of tea and give them only one. You can be sure they will ask you for another!

Oatmeal, Peanut Butter and Chocolate cookies
Enough for 12 small cookies

Ingredients

- 1 cup of oats
- Half cup flour
- Half cup peanut butter (use the type with only peanut in it)
- Half cup desiccated coconut
- Half cup brown sugar – Muscovado is good
- 1 tbsp. golden syrup or maple syrup
- Half tsp vanilla extract
- Half tsp ground cinnamon
- 3 tbsp. soya or oat milk
- A good pinch of sea salt (about a quarter to a half tsp)
- Chocolate topping – details below

Method

1. Put everything in a large bowl and mix it all together. It should be a dry enough mixture.
2. Turn the oven on to 180C
3. Wet your hands so the mixture does not stick to them.
4. Make small balls, place them on a baking sheet and squash

them flat with your hand. Not too flat, a little thicker than your smart phone.

5. Place them in the middle of the oven for 15 minutes or until they are browning at the edges.
6. Allow to cool, then drizzle chocolate over them and wait... if you can, for the chocolate to set.

Chocolate Topping

Not absolutely necessary but so good with it.

- 1 bar, 100g of dark chocolate
- 1 tsp vegetable butter (like Pure or Naturli)
- A few drops of vanilla extract

Melt the chocolate in a pot over boiling water, add the butter and vanilla extract and stir it all together.

With a spoon shake thin lines of chocolate over each cookie. Allow chocolate to set before eating... putting them in the fridge will speed things up.

people Health & Lifestyle: Focus on A Life Less Ordinary

1,000 old phones donated by Clon Gaelscoil to Chernobyl charity

Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin, Clonakilty, was delighted recently to present over 1,000 old mobile phones to the Greater Chernobyl Cause.

The phones were collected by pupils and families over the last year or so, and hundreds were also given to the school by the management and staff at the Clonakilty Recycling Centre who saved them from going to landfill.

Principal of Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin, Pádraig Ó hEathairn said: "We are delighted to have presented over 1,000 old mobile phones to the Greater Chernobyl Cause, a great Cork-based charity.

"We have been collecting old phones at the school for around 10 years whereby children in the school would deposit them in a special collection box. We are also very thankful to the Management and Staff at the local Cork County Council Recycling Centre, who over the years, have collected old phones there and passed them onto us.

"Up to last year, we collected

old phones for another charity but they ceased doing so.

"We discovered that The Greater Chernobyl Cause, based in Cork, also collected old phones and we were delighted to pass them onto the charity founder Fiona Corcoran recently.

"We are also proud that one of our past pupils, Dylan deBarra, who is now a pupil at Clonakilty Community College and his fellow TY student Mark Keohane volunteered with the Greater Chernobyl Cause last year and travelled to Kazakhstan where they spent 10 days working with the charity.

"During the eye-opening trip, they visited a Baby Home, an Orphanage for older children and what is now a deserted town which was a military accommodation centre for 40 years while nuclear bomb testing was carried out during the Cold War era.

"We are delighted with Dylan being a former student of ours to have contributed the phones to the charity he volunteered with."



Seen at the handover of over 1,000 unwanted mobile phones at the school recently were: Ó clé: Pádraig Ó hEathairn, (Príomhoide); Conor Ó Gormáin, (Rang 6); Fiona Corcoran, (founder Greater Chernobyl Cause); Chloe Ní Chinnseabháin, (Rang 6); Máire Ní Chróinín, (múinteoir) agus Michal Fudiar, (caretaker).
Griangraf: CÓS

What gives you hope in life?



With Christmas approaching and the current restrictions making life so difficult for so many, Rector of the Kilgariffe Union of Parishes, the **Reverend Kingsley Sutton** says we need to find and focus on what gives us hope.

As the winter evenings draw deepening darkness around us, what helps to give you hope in your life? Those who would normally look forward to Christmas are already feeling a loss due to the uncertainty being caused by the pandemic. 'Zoom' parties and 'Zoom' family gatherings seem a poor alternative to past festive cheer. We long for the warmth of Christmas hugs and kisses before sitting down to a memory making meal. Then again, for those prone to mental illness, Christmas is without doubt one of the hardest times of the year. There is not much worse than feeling miserable on the inside while pretending that all is well on the outside. Mandatory face coverings actually help to hide this from each other now. Whatever we are feeling on the inside, it's likely to be a tough winter.

So, what's the best advice I can give to you? Find out what gives you hope and kindle that fire within yourself. Maybe it's sowing daffodil bulbs in the hope of spring; maybe it's considering the birds and watching their migration patterns; maybe it's a novel you love to read;

maybe it's planning for the future, a new job, a new home, a new car? What is your hope?

For me, my hope is found in the person of Jesus. Historically he lived on this planet and knew what it is like, along with its illnesses and injustice – yet he was not thrown by it nor was he left downhearted. He radiated life, love, and an irrepressible goodness. Sometimes I feel him near to me, but probably more times I don't. My faith can rise and fall, but somehow, I still hold on to him. Maybe that's because he is actually a part of me, inside me by his spirit, nearer than I can feel or imagine. I was baptised into him and am part of his body. Maybe it's his faith that holds me, not mine.

So, what gives you hope in this life? Hold on to it and focus on it – kindle that fire so as to help you shine brighter against darkness. Bulbs, birds, books, new belongings and whatever your hope is, they are all blessings to behold. Hope springs eternal. To me, hope has a name – Jesus.

www.clonakiltychurch.ie
Facebook page: Kilgariffe Union of Parishes



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people Health & Lifestyle: Focus on A Life Less Ordinary

A September like no other at Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin

Pádraig Ó hEachthairn, Principal at Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin in Clonakilty reflects on how the pandemic has affected school life.

It would be very difficult to start any piece about the start of the current school year without first reflecting on the six months, which preceded it. Despite all the changes which have taken place in our Education System since the founding of the state, few have managed to have as much of an impact as the statement from, the then Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar on Thursday, March 12, 2020. Schools would be closing that evening for a two-week period but, as we all know, this extended right through until school was due to finish for the summer holidays at the end of June 2020.

When the announcement was made at lunchtime on Thursday, March 12, there was a scramble to prepare work for the two weeks, which followed, and also to make sure that the children had the books necessary to complete such work. Little did we realise that this was only the beginning of what was going to prove one of the most challenging few months, for pupils, parents or guardians and teachers alike. Easter arrived shortly afterwards and this allowed us the breathing space to put a long-term plan in place. Following many meetings on everyone's by now favourite 'social platform', Zoom, a plan was put in place to allow a two-way flow between the teacher and his/her class. Many evenings were spent, as pupils, parents or guardians



Príomhoide Pádraig with some of the pupils socially distancing at the pedestrian entrance to the Gaelscoil. With 355 pupils attending daily, the school has had to come up with different routes into, out of and within the school building itself for the different classes and groups to ensure social distancing. Colour-coded signage was put in place at the start of each route for each class. Around 35 staff members also work at Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin every day.



Múinteoir Máirín Ní Shuilleabháin who teaches one of the Naíonáin Mhóra (Senior Infants) classes, sanitising her hands outside her classroom with her own three boys Stiofán, James and Gavin who are also pupils at the school.

and teachers alike, resisting the urge to fire whatever piece of technology was in our hands out the window when various pieces of work failed to upload, download, attach or send. A new phrase was coined during this time – the new normal – but that is how we proceeded for the final school term. The closure robbed us of our favourite time of the year at school and all the

wonderful events we associate with it, school tours, school sports, Sciath na Scol matches, school talent shows, graduations, end of year barbeques etc. Following various online sports days and graduations, the school year wound to an end and everyone breathed a sigh of relief that we had all made it in one piece.

The sigh of relief was short

lived, as all eyes began to turn once more to the reopening of our schools in September. Announcement followed announcement as everyone wondered what would be required to open our schools safely. The documentation arrived 'pósa ar phósa' from the Department of Education and Skills and all schools set about the task of organising a Covid Plan. Organising a Covid Plan is one thing, putting it into action on the ground is another. Needs must however, and all the necessary PPE, sanitising stations, floor markings and signs were sourced and erected: Except they couldn't be erected, not in our school anyway.

As part of the Schools Remediation Programme our school building was handed over to a construction company by the Department of Education and Skills on May 18, 2020. Following two days of intense packing of school resources we handed over the keys of the building and were in effect homeless. The countdown clock was now ticking to have the building ready in time for our first day of school on Monday, August 31. Time flies when you are having fun



Príomhoide Pádraig at the main entrance door. All adults - staff and visitors – must wear a face covering when entering and sanitise hands going in and when leaving. Also, all visitors must fill up a Contact Tracing form on arrival.

they say; it also flies when you are watching a deadline, but true to their word the construction company delivered on the date they had promised, August 28!

'Ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid' is our school motto and never was it more exemplified than over that weekend. All staff were on hand and the midnight oil was well burned as the school was prepared and made ready for our new Naíonáin Bheaga (Junior Infants), who visited their new school on the Sunday, and all the children who returned to school on Monday, August 31. There were countless offers of help from parents/guardians and others within our school community but these had to be declined because of fears over Covid 19.

Excitement, nervousness, trepidation are only some of the words which could be used to describe what most households were feeling on that Monday morning. However we should have known better, as the smiles, laughter and cheers were the order of the day as the 'páistí' made their way up the steps of the school and headed off to meet their friends and new 'múinteoir' for the start of the new school year. The last few months have been both strange

and normal if such a thing is possible. Strange regarding one-way systems, mask wearing, sanitising, staggered breaks, deserted staff rooms, no visitors or extracurricular activities. Yet normal due to the familiar voices, the sound of laughter, children playing, cuts and bruises, the school bell, spellings, tables, paintbrushes etc.

As I write this piece more restrictions have been introduced, but fortunately for us schools can continue to remain open. This is a difficult time for our society and we as a school feel privileged that we can play our part in helping the youngest members of that society. Yes, it has been a September like no other, yet in many ways it has been a September like many before. 'Tabhair aire dá chéile mar is ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid!' 'Take care of each other because we live in each other's shadow!'

Note: 'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine' is an Irish saying that translates literally as 'People live in each other's shadows'. Meaning, we are shielded from the sun by each other, we rely on each other for shelter. People need each other.

Children thriving on back-to school routine

Múinteoir Máirín, who teaches Naíonáin Mhóra (Senior Infants) at Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin in Clonakilty, is delighted to be back in school where she can engage with her students, listen to their stories or worries, be there to answer their questions and teach them new concepts of the curriculum.

"Teaching online through lockdown was very necessary and important... however I believe teaching from a screen cannot take the place of face-to-face interaction with the children," she says. "The children are taught so many things in school, not just from books or hand-outs but by learning how to listen, to take turns, to respect ourselves and others, to wait, to play, to share, to work in a group or individually and by listening to each other's answers and hearing their opinions and so on.

"Technology can help to interest young children for longer and it is useful when a teacher wishes to show what the children are learning to parents, which enhances home-school links. However, I strongly believe that while it may enhance teaching and learning it will not take the place of face-to-face teaching and interaction."

There have been many changes in the classroom since the return to school but the children have "reacted brilliantly" to them all according to Máirín. "They seem to be delighted to be with their friends, to eat, to play, to learn, to listen, to share and to learn within the classroom."

Previously it was normal practice for the children to work in pairs, integrate with children from other classes in the school or have more visitors to the classroom. Today there is less mixing of children where possible. "We are extremely conscious in following the correct hygiene protocol by washing and sanitising our hands many times throughout the day and the children have adapted to this very well."

Classroom materials have to be sterilised daily. "Materials like playdoh, counters, cubes, maths resources, toys and so on cannot be shared and teachers have to think up of new ways to reduce the amount of times we handle copies or books. It takes longer for lessons to be planned and organised and tidied afterwards. We have three split breaks and lunches and so it is common not to meet some staff members during the day or the children in the other classrooms."

Wearing a mask during the school day can be challenging. "It gets very hot and it is more challenging for the children to hear what is being said. At times I notice that I may need to elevate my voice, which is not something I wish to do. However, if it helps to protect my own health and the health of the children in my class to wear a

mask, I will continue to do so willingly."

Most important of all is the emotional health of the children she teaches. "Many children may be anxious during this time but children thrive on routine, friendship and reassurance and so I believe they are happy to be back at school. I, as a teacher and an educator believe it is extremely important to teach the curriculum and this can be done when the children are reassured and happy in the classroom."

Máirín explains that children learn best when they ask questions, as they have a natural curiosity. "And when new material is explained to them using pictures, conversations, concrete materials and so on and when they get to practice new concepts." However children's emotional health needs to be catered for, as Máirín explains; "If a child is not given the chance to tell how they feel and to be reassured they will find learning more challenging. Their emotional health can be monitored more easily in the classroom by observing their facial expressions and listening to their worries and concerns whereby this would be more challenging to ascertain through a screen.

"I love meeting the children every day and getting to know their personalities. I love to see how the children are so adaptable and how they soak up new information so well. I love to see their progress each week and to see their smiling faces and hear their laughter."

The human connection is now the highlight of every day

Teachers at St. Joseph's Girls National School in Clonakilty share some of the highs and lows of 'school in Covid times'

How has Covid impacted on the way you teach now?

We have incorporated some online homework once a week since we returned to school – for example the children must upload one piece of homework onto Seesaw and the teachers then correct this online. We decided that this app was the best and most child-friendly platform to use for online learning and teaching in our school. The children have been given the opportunity to engage with Seesaw and to become more familiar with it in case we have another lockdown in the future. Also we have hosted some Zoom calls to the classrooms, as our whole school assemblies are not possible with new restrictions. These have proved a great success and have helped to keep all the rooms connected.

What challenges have your school and teachers overcome to create a safe learning environment for staff and children?

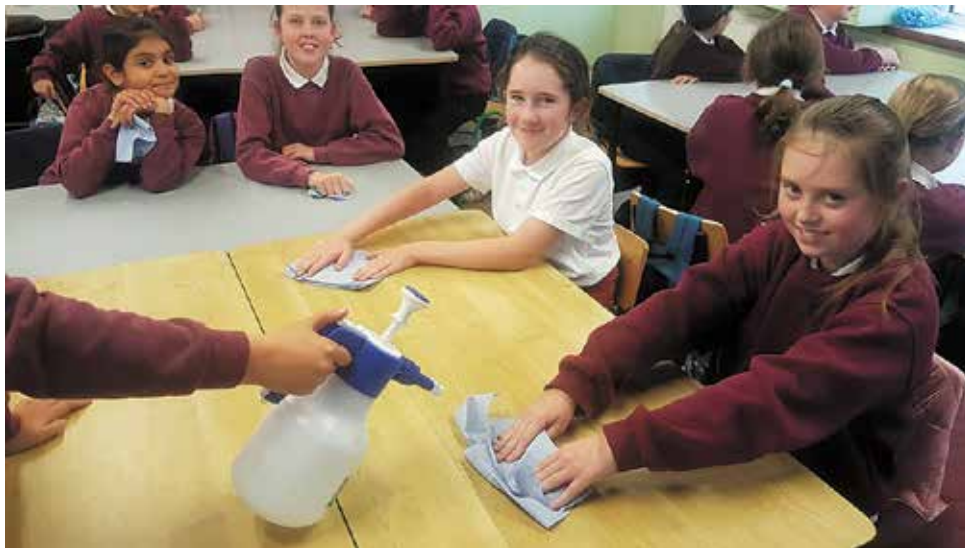
One of the main challenges has been the wearing of masks or visors while teaching. Teachers have found that the strain on their voices was immense when trying to communicate to the children from behind a visor... our solution was to invest in voice amplifiers for each class teacher and this has worked very well.

The issue of social distancing/pods/bubbles is ongoing and we have to review how our protocols are working regularly. Our building is challenging in that we don't have an exit door out of each classroom unlike other more modern builds, but by putting a lot of thought behind how we were all going to return safely, we have overcome this obstacle.

After the first week the pupils knew exactly what entrance to come into school and which stairwell to use to access their classrooms safely. So far so good!

Just like every other school in the country we had to put a lot of safety measures in place – hand sanitisers/floor stickers/signs in the bathroom and so on and we also had to stagger our break and lunch times. With careful planning all of this is now in place and working well.

Does IT now have a far greater role to play in the classroom, tell us about this?



Part of our work here in St Joseph's is to ensure that if we had to revert to online learning again because of a lockdown, we would be prepared. Because of this, practicing IT skills and using SeeSaw regularly (this is the online learning platform that we have selected for every class in the school) is vital. We try to ensure that the children have something to submit to their teacher on SeeSaw at least weekly. That way both parents and children are familiar with what is involved. Should another lockdown happen we would hope that it would be less stressful for both staff and families because of this preparation.

In what way have your teaching practices changed to fit in with social distancing in the classroom?

Less group work that involves movement, for example station teaching. Pods must stay together while in the classroom and each pod is spaced one metre apart.

Careful handling of equipment – cleaning and put in quarantine before any other class or group uses the equipment

Not as many teachers entering other classrooms unless necessary, not as much co-teaching as before

Is it very challenging to teach while wearing a mask?

We have headset microphones and speakers to help us project our voices and this has been a huge help while wearing a mask teaching.

How has life in the classroom changed post Covid?

Life in the classroom is different without doubt. The phrase 'sharing is caring' has gone out the window because the children literally cannot share with each other. They cannot share a pen or a ruler as before. Hands are sanitised entering and leaving the classroom as well as before and after eating, Library books that have been chosen and read

have then got to be put into a quarantine box until they are safe to put back on the shelves. Added to that we have teachers wearing masks/visors and voice amplifiers! Every teacher's desk has a screen and windows are flying open all day every day. Break and lunch times are staggered and in the yard where previously children had played happily together, they are now cordoned off into bubbles that cannot interact with each other. Yes life in the classroom has changed.

How have the children reacted and adapted to these changes?

While life in the classroom has changed for everyone some things stay the same. The children's positive attitude and resilience is a testament to how we sometimes underestimate their ability to adapt. They have taken on the challenge of 'school in Covid times' and have been remarkably resilient. They are happy to be back as are all of us teachers. From the day we opened our gates in September, they have been fantastic, following the new protocols without a word of complaint and making our lives so much better with their smiles and fun. They keep us going and show us how to change with the times. If small children can do it, so can us adults!

Unanimously on staff we are delighted to see the children back in the school. We welcomed them back with open arms (figuratively speaking of course!) and they have responded so positively to all the changes making our jobs so much easier.

In your opinion, what is most important, the children's emotional wellbeing or catching up with the curriculum?

For our staff here in St Joseph's, wellbeing has always been at the centre of everything we do and this continues today. The wellbeing of the children and to an extent how this reflects on

their families is our focus. The learning or 'catching up' will happen and has happened but the children's wellbeing is far more elusive. You can measure how many math concepts a child learns but trying to measure how lockdown has impacted on their sense of security/confidence and wellbeing is not so easy. It is a big part of our job in the current school climate to create a positive, welcoming environment with anxiety kept to a minimum

Is the school running any classes in regards to emotional wellbeing?

We have our SPHE programmes running this year as usual which includes the Weaving Wellbeing programme in all classes. We also have our 'mindful moment' during the week when the Principal plays a mindful meditation for a few minutes over the PA system. All pupils and teachers stop when they hear the 'gong' and take time to breathe and follow the meditation. For the month of November we hope to do 'Wellbeing Wednesday', which will include something that everyone will look forward to (it's a surprise so we can't say yet!)

What will the learning focus be on for the next few months?

As the Department of Education and Skills so fondly repeats 'slowing down to catch up'. Besides our SPHE programmes, we will be focusing on bridging the gaps that have arisen since lockdown, as well as moving ahead with the curriculum when we are sure that the children are ready.

Will there still be standardised assessments and how will this work if some kids are further behind others as a result of lockdown?

We don't envisage having standardised assessments this side of Christmas. We usually do our testing in May and so hopefully this will be our plan this year as well.

What have been the highlights of returning to school?

The highlights have been firstly meeting the children at the gate that first morning and seeing their enthusiasm as well as meeting all the staff again. I suppose when it comes down to it; it's the human connection that school gives us with parents, teachers and children that we missed so much during lockdown and is now the highlight of every day.

What the kids have to say:

"It is difficult being back at school, we must keep our distance, we have pods and bubbles and must sanitise a lot, but we are getting used to it."

Rose O'Donoghue

"I thought when we were back at school, it was really nice being around people again instead of on Zoom. I really enjoyed seeing all my friends." *Fifi Aherne-Bleakley*

"I was scared at first but now being back is much better. I much prefer the real life social interaction." *Erin Cahalane*

"I feel before we took a lot for granted, it's really good now coming into school and seeing all my friends; we must be careful but all the procedures are working really well."

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Starting college during a pandemic



Ballinascorthy native and UL student **Matthew Hurley** plans on going to as many GAA matches as possible when life does return to some form of normality post-Covid. “What I’ve learned from Covid is that life is too short,” he says frankly.

The 19-year-old sports enthusiast is in his first year of Journalism and Digital Communications at University of Limerick. Passionate about GAA and soccer, Matthew

owns his own social media account called @gaa_stats-man, which has close to 6,000 followers on Instagram.

Like for every Leaving Cert student, lockdown was stressful for Matthew. “Not knowing if the exams were going to go ahead brought a sense of confusion to my daily life,” he explains. “At the same time, I understood that people’s health comes before anything else and the lockdown was necessary in that regard.” Matthew was lucky enough to get the college and the course he wanted out of the calculated grades system, so he has no complaints. “I think it was the safest and fairest way the Leaving Cert could’ve been done. I don’t think it could’ve been done any other way.”

Starting college in the middle of a pandemic however has proven to be a very strange experience. “Not being able to see my peers, not going to the library, and meeting lecturers online are the main differences to how I imagined college. It is very difficult to make friends especially when we can’t meet face to face. We’ve recently created groups on Snapchat and Whatsapp, which has helped. I do miss going on nights out without a doubt.”

After college, Matthew hopes to continue with his social media account, as well as talking about other sports, for example

soccer, in more detail.

Right now he worries for his family and friends, hoping they will all keep safe in these times. “I also worry for small businesses that have struggled

throughout the pandemic,” he shares.

When he’s not watching big matches, Matthew enjoys spending time with his family, especially during holiday

season.

“Out of all this, I think Irish people will learn not to take normal life for granted,” he says.

‘Doing the loop’ lads raise €10k for local charities



West Cork Rapid Response and Pieta House would like to say ‘Míle Buíochas’ to Joe McCarthy from Drimoleague and Seán Gordon from Rosscarbery (pictured) who raised €10,045 by cycling around Ireland’s coastline in August.

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Clon student hopes that “Covid-19 will be a forgotten nightmare” by next Christmas

Sixteen-year-old **Harold Paulino**, a Fifth Year student at Clonakilty Community College, is trying to remain positive that Covid will be dealt with by Christmas next year.

“Hopefully there is a vaccine by then,” he says optimistically. “I’m hoping that the virus won’t be a problem by the time I am graduating Sixth Year.”

Harold believes that it’s important to keep looking forward to normality and a life without Covid. “My worry is that this is going to become the new normal but my hope is that Covid-19 will be a forgotten nightmare.”

Right now school is a real challenge. “Social distancing



in school is very difficult,” he shares. “The school is overpopulated with the facilities we have currently and our extension won’t be ready until January.”

“Currently the classes have too many students and the rooms are too small. The classrooms can only fit from 22 to 24 students but some classes have

more than that,” he says. “Although there is space between the desks, it is no more than a metre-and-a-half.”

The change in teaching style to accommodate social distancing is also challenging for students. “Teachers aren’t able to guide us in work as much as before. They also can’t look into our copies due to social distancing.” Harold is worried that the curriculum is being rushed because of how much learning was missed out on in lockdown. “And yet they expect us to do the same Leaving Certificate exam that everyone in the past has done,” he says. He hopes that some concession will be made to account for this learning loss.

“School life is just very much inconvenienced now by Covid,” he shares. “We’re not allowed to hand up tests; we have to take a picture and send it on to our online learning app. But if we

do hand up a test, the teachers have to let it sit for a few days before being allowed to correct it; then they have to let it sit for another few days. We get tests back slower. We also can’t ask teachers to check our work due to social distancing. We always have to wear a mask and can’t be near another student. We also have to sanitise our tables and chairs before and after every class.”

Fortunately Clonakilty Community College is well set up for online learning. “We all have our own personal school Microsoft Teams account, which teachers are able to communicate to us through.”

“We’re able to receive and hand in homework on the app and we can contact the teacher personally if needs be. We haven’t had online classes through it but the app has options that allow online classes to be held.”

Harold and his peers miss the social outings that were a part of their life pre-Covid. “We miss not being able to go out and enjoy ourselves with people our own age. Before Covid happened we had planned a trip to Longitude, a music festival in Dublin. It’s basically a Tran-

sition Year tradition to go and more than likely we’ll miss it again next year. But overall we just miss the night outs.”

Harold says he’s coping pretty well with the ‘new normal’. “At this point, life pre-Covid seems to be a distant memory,” he shares. “Even though it’s only been around for eight months or so, it has completely taken over life as we know it.”

The student stays well mentally and physically by going to the gym and occasionally meeting with friends. But now under Level five restrictions these small privileges have been taken away as well. “It will affect us all very negatively,” says Harold.

Harold’s school offers five wellbeing classes every week, which are very much appreciated by the students. “With the stress of Covid and being in school, it’s relaxing to have an easy two classes of wellbeing. It allows for some stress to be relieved in school. We also have a guidance counsellor, Ms Collins, who is available for counselling if needed.”

Born in the Philippines, Clonakilty has been home to Harold for most of his life. The student,

who has an interest in history and accounting, works parttime as a bar assistant in Inchydoney Island Lodge and Spa. He plays basketball outside of school with Skibbereen and says he likes to think that he’s a decent player. He also enjoys playing guitar and going to the gym in his spare time.

Harold was in Transition Year during the last lockdown so his workload was small compared to other years. “We had weekly homework and were assigned essays and projects and so on. But we weren’t pressured to do the work and I later found that most of the other students rarely did homework.”

He shares how his sleeping and eating cycle was completely thrown off during this period. “It didn’t really matter though because what did it matter what time I woke up. At one point, I was going to sleep at 7am and waking up at 5pm. In a funny way, I miss it. It was cozy!”

Note: A number of new teachers have recently been employed at Clonakilty Community College to alleviate the numbers in the larger classrooms, which has taken the pressure off in those classes.

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Lockdown teaches us how necessary the school classroom is but problems still to be sorted

Kieran Doyle, a teacher at Clonakilty Community College, shares some of the many challenges facing teachers and students in the classroom since schools reopened under the new restrictions. He says that although the Levels affect the schools in the same way as the rest of society, there are still many contradictions in the school system.

Like so many schools, Clonakilty Community College is full to capacity with students. It is currently awaiting the completion of the construction of a new multi-million two-storey extension.

When schools reopened, principals and management were given very little time and a budget for hygiene products, so just how does a school that is usually crowded, find space to implement the request for safe social distancing?

"In some cases, great measures have been made to try spilt class sizes and use spaces like our assembly hall and even the Clonakilty Hotel," explains Kieran. "However going to level 3, let alone 5, means we can't use those spaces outside school now. Does the government realise this?"

"Split lunchtimes have helped alleviate crowded yards, but even then, as we await the opening of our new school, we are really stuck for space."

Government guidelines are not always clear. Kieran wonders if, under level 5, the students can still go into town at lunchtime? "If not, then there will be unsafe and overcrowded schools everywhere," he says. "I

feel the government just wanted everyone in by September 1 and it's a matter of get on with it."

"The kids arrive in packed buses every morning (which I can't believe was ever allowed in the first place)," says Kieran "yet schools can't take children outside, for many reasons including transport and social distancing. It's bonkers and tough on kids."

Although the experts feel children of that age are low risk, as Kieran points out, it is the people who teach them who are susceptible to the disease. "We are working on the front line now and we can't have a 'normal' school during this pandemic," he says. "This means teachers have to be very careful not to be get into situations that may risk more exposure."

Perhaps the toughest challenge of all for teachers has been drilling into kids the importance of social distancing and mask wearing. "We have succeeded in doing that in the school. But when you see crowded buses dropping off the kids, and students mixing downtown after school without masks, you can't but feel that it's like keeping the tide out with a fork."

"The students have to eat and at breaks masks come off; and while the yard is patrolled by extra teachers, kids unbeknownst to themselves, are eating, being playful, and leaning into each other without the masks while they eat and need constant reminders and reinforcement to be careful. At the breaks, I think the kids naturally feel they can take a 'break' from Covid. I don't blame them but it's a constant work in progress at these times."

Teaching methods have had to change drastically to accommodate social distancing. "It feels like a throwback to

the old ways of teaching," says Kieran. "English classes need interaction, group work, walking debates, role play – essentially movement and co-operation. The students are confined to the same chairs, we are all social distancing as best we can, so all the aforementioned methodologies are on hold, for my safety and the safety of the kids. Work can't be displayed as it was before on walls and surfaces."

Kieran is also the drama teacher at Clonakilty Community College. "Imagine watching your favourite Netflix show and all the actors are wearing masks! It just does not go. Welcome to drama class in Covid. You definitely lose something and, with social distancing, the movement is curtailed and more prescriptive, Tough task."

At the beginning having to teach through a mask was difficult but this has gotten easier according to Kieran. "Teachers are used to projecting their voices and so volume for me has not been a problem. Although of course, everyone after a long day begins to get agitated with the masks on."

On the bright side, students have proven to be remarkably resilient and adaptable. "After initial cribbing about not being able to be sitting near pals, and grumbling about masks, the kids have taken it as an everyday part of life," explains Kieran. "The seniors know that they have missed a lot of school and tend to be serious about their work even more."

The school has also recently employed a number of new teachers to alleviate the numbers in the larger classrooms. "This has taken the pressure off in those classes," says Kieran.

Clonakilty Community College is no stranger to Information Technology and

was well prepared for online learning in March. In school, the classrooms are equipped with projectors, screens and wifi. The teacher has access to a range of sources, ebooks, audio and video clips to enrich the teaching experience for the pupils. Teachers also have ipads that can allow them to go from class to class with all their files, information, and anything else they need.

However the last lockdown still created a big gap in learning. "If online teaching worked as people think it should... we wouldn't need schools. We clearly do," says Kieran.

Teaching during lockdown was "difficult".

"Internet was a big problem," says Kieran. "Ideally people want a situation whereby a classroom is replicated online. Pupils had issues with the internet, access to laptops, space (remember everyone was at home drawing on the same space and same facilities!) It's impossible to really 'connect' with a student and difficult for many students to motivate themselves. Teaching is more than simply passing on information. All the things you do in a real classroom were impossible to replicate online... It's soulless stuff teaching online to be honest. Not what I signed up for."

One of the advantages it did bring for teachers was giving them the opportunity to learn to use online teaching apps like Teams. "It certainly has allowed me to upload notes, photos, articles that the pupils can access," says Kieran. "This is vital given the dangers of passing on photocopy sheets due to the virus. The students can also submit homework online too, which avoids the dangers of contamination due to handling physical work."

Covid has stopped any school activities that would allow the students to blow off steam when needed. "It's all work and no play. Same as society really."

However, Clonakilty Community College is fortunately well ahead of the curve in the area of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its students. The subject has been built into the timetable for a number of years.

Challenges aside, from a social and educational standpoint, teachers and students are enjoying being back in a school setting. "For me, meeting my friends and colleagues in the flesh (even if it's sitting in the

car park having lunch) is important," explains Kieran. "Also I enjoy the craic, interaction, and fun with the students. This can never ever be replicated online."

Kieran shares some feedback from his students on their feelings at being back in school:

Student: 'I missed your jokes.'

"Actually I think my jokes are just adding to their pain but I can't see it behind their masks," Kieran laughs.

Student: 'Hhhmmm mmmww, fffhh'

"Well that's what I think they're saying behind the mask!"



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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.

The Christmas countdown is on and if like me you tend to leave present buying to the very last minute, that festive cheer can very

Christmas Gift Guide

quickly turn into present buying panic and the potential to get things seriously wrong. Fear not! Here is my ultimate beauty gift guide to help you find the perfect pressie that's guaranteed to put a smile on the face of your loved one this Christmas morning.

Ella & Jo Ultimate Hydration Gift Set

Ella & Jo cosmetics is the creation of Charlene Flanagan Makeup Artist and Niamh Ryan Makeup Artist and Skin Therapist. Both noticed a gap in the market for functional products that made every day easier for women. This gift set includes their newest edition to the family, the Hydrating Hyaluronic Serum, and their soothing 3-in-1 Hyaluronic Skin Mist. The serum is super-charged with powerful collagen boosting ingredients, designed to increase skin firmness and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and along with hyaluronic acid, helps to

hydrate, condition and protect the skin. They recommend using the serum in conjunction with the 3-in-1 Hyaluronic Skin Mist, spritzing throughout the day to ensure you have the most hydrated and plump skin possible - a skin saviour, €60 available online from ellaandjo.ie

The Skin Nerd Philosophy: Your Expert Guide to Skin Health

Jennifer Rock is back with more essential advice and skincare secrets to change the way you think and feel about your skin. The Skin Nerd Philosophy delves into movements such as Skin Positivity and Skin Neutrality, discusses the link between skin and mental health as explored through the field of psychodermatology, and provides easy-to-follow skin protocols and rundowns on specific ingredients and products for different skin concerns and scenarios. With advice from experts in the fields of derma-

tology, healthcare, psychology, nutrition, wellness and beauty, The Skin Nerd Philosophy is your multi-disciplinary guide to accepting the skin you're in while taking care of its health, €24 available in selected book shops nationwide and online.

Lancôme Advanced Genifique Serum 50ml Christmas Set

Perfect for skincare lovers, this anti-ageing gift set aims to create a supple, youthful-looking complexion. Advanced Genifique is Lancôme's number one serum for glowing, younger-looking skin. This serum is a powerhouse, patented and enriched with hyaluronic acid and probiotic fragments, the firming formula enhances natural luminosity and radiance while smoothing uneven texture and boosting clarity for a glowing, rejuvenated complexion. The set, suitable for all skin types, contains Genifique Youth activating Serum, Genifique Youth Activating Day and Night Cream

and Advanced Genifique Youth Activating Eye Cream, €102, available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

Seavite Nourish & Glow Box

Containing a select line up of Seavite's cult products, the Nourish & Glow Box offers a beautiful introduction to the transformative powers of the super-nutrient face range. This 3-piece gift set contains the Cleansing Lotion to detoxify the skin and dissolve all traces of make-up. Seavite's Super Nutrient Toning Spray captures the refreshing energy of the sea to gently purify and tone the complexion, whilst the Soothing & Replenishing Face Cream nourishes skin deep down, leaving it glowing from the inside out! It also comes with a Rejuvenating Candle. Suitable for all skin types, especially sensitive skin, €100. Another option is the Revive and Glow Box, to exfoliate, cleanse and revive the body. This head to toe set contains Super Nutrient Illuminating & Firming Body Exfoliator to polish and smooth the skin,

Super Nutrient Revitalising Bath & Shower Gel cleanses, leaving skin instantly hydrated, balanced and soft and Super Nutrient Purifying and Volumising Shampoo with advanced marine actives, cleanses and detoxifies the hair while seaweed extracts boost shine and amplify the hair fibre, so hair feels fuller with a silky touch, €50, both available from seavite.com.

Pestle & Mortar Glow Drops

While we might not be tripping the light fantastic at the moment, there's nothing to say we can't get our glow on during the festive holidays. For the tan lover in your life, achieve the perfect tan, effortlessly, with these customisable Pestle & Mortar Glow Drops. Simply mix these magical drops into your moisturiser to achieve a natural-looking glow. While 1-2 drops provide natural radiance, 2-4 creates a sun-kissed glow. If you want an even more golden bronze, 4-8 drops will do the trick. Suitable for all skin types, the drops are also enriched with hyaluronic

Continued on next page...

West Cork called to build-a-box online for the Christmas Shoebox Appeal



The annual Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal has moved for the first time to an online-only appeal for 2020 and people across Cork are being asked to #TeamUpForTeamHope by donating gift-filled shoeboxes for children affected by poverty for €20 at www.teamhope.ie.

Schools, families, friends, communities and businesses across the county are encouraged to work together, in whatever way they can safely, to donate as many shoeboxes as possible up until December 23 and celebrate their efforts during the first ever Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal Week, which will take place from November 9 to 15.

Team Hope CEO, Peter Heaney explains: "Due to the effects of Covid-19 restrictions, it is not possible to send gift-filled shoeboxes from Ireland this year. But we know that the need for shoeboxes is greater than ever. So we have for the first time moved the campaign completely online, developed a brand new website to facilitate building a box and enlisted the help of our local partners in Africa and Eastern Europe to create and deliver shoeboxes on the ground."

Christine Dobson, County Cork Christmas Shoebox Appeal Team Coordinator added: "The people of Cork have always been great supporters of the Shoebox Appeal and this year, more than ever, every shoebox counts."

"The Covid-19 crisis has presented huge challenges for people throughout the country, so you can only imagine the immeasurable impact that Covid-19 has had in countries where basic sanitation and access to education is far from universal. This is a pivotal moment for us all to reflect, not about how we fill a shoebox, but why we do shoeboxes and the importance of basic education, self-care, warmth and joy for a child affected by poverty."

The new website at www.teamhope.ie allows people to build-a-

box online, personalise it by uploading a picture or image, and select gift items they would like to include, for example: Wear – Gloves, Hat, Scarf, Socks, Top, Underwear; Wash – Comb, Soap, Sponge, Toothbrush and Toothpaste, Washcloth; Write – Colouring Pencils, Notepad, Writing accessories; Wow – Fun Trinkets, Musical Toys, Puzzles, Soft Toy, ball, fun sunglasses.

The online shoebox donations will allow Team Hope's network of local partners in Africa and Eastern Europe to purchase items for shoeboxes, which will then be delivered directly into the hands of children. Often these shoeboxes are the only gift that a child will receive at Christmas.


During the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal Week, everyone is encouraged to celebrate the Christmas Shoebox Appeal by building/packing shoeboxes online, sharing pictures on social media, coordinating fundraisers to purchase shoeboxes, and learning about the Appeal and the importance of giving.

Team Hope's aim in 2020 is to deliver as many shoeboxes as possible to children in Romania, Transnistria (Moldova), Ukraine, Kosova, Albania, Belarus, Burundi, Democratic Republic Congo, Lesotho, Eswatini (Swaziland), Malawi, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Rwanda.

For more information about the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal, please visit www.teamhope.ie. Team Hope also provides a range of free lesson plans and online resources for schools and businesses to help you get started.

Follow Team Hope on Facebook at www.facebook.com/teamhopeireland and Twitter @TeamHopeIreland and Instagram @TeamHopeIreland

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...Cont'd from previous page

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Waters + Wild Perfume

When it comes to gifting perfume to your loved one, you don't have to look any further than Waters + Wild, based in Glandore. This 100% certified organic range of scents are created using only the



finest natural, raw, organic ingredients from around the world and made in Ireland in small batches, inspired by the nature and beauty of their West Cork location. I love Sweet Basil + Bergamot Eau de Parfum, fresh, peppery basil, sweet with delicate anise undertones, combines beautifully with the spicy citrus notes of Calabrian bergamot, warm cedarwood and wild rose. Good enough to eat! from €35, watersandwild.com, a full list of stockists is on their website.

The Silk Pillowcase 'Rest' Gift Set

Give the gift of a great night's sleep with this stunning gift set from Irish Company, The Silk Pillowcase. The set consists of a luxury 100% mulberry silk pillowcase, great for hair (bye bye bed head) skin and sleep, along with an indulgent slumber inducing 'Rest Oil' from luxe aromatherapy brand Flora + Fiona. Made in Ireland, the aromas of Rest Oil include frankincense to alleviate nervous tension and exhaustion, organic neroli and organic Lavender, the soft fragrance of sleep. Simply roll the oil in the palm of your hand, breathe deeply 4-5 times, lay your head on your silk pillowcase, and take your sleep experience to another level. Both products come attractively boxed, ready to be gifted, €75, available online from thesilkpillowcase.com



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Plant Based Protein – is it enough?

Open any magazine these days, and you are likely to find an article telling you to become plant based, for health reasons and also because the amount of meat we humans eat is a huge burden on our planet. Growing grain to feed cattle is one of the main reasons that the Rainforest is shrinking every day. But what about our protein needs? Don't we all

need meat and dairy foods in our diet to be healthy?

Protein literally means 'Primary Substance', an accurate description since all the tissues of the body are built and repaired with protein. The antibodies of the immune system, most hormones, the hemoglobin of red blood cells, and all enzymes have protein as a basic component. So yes,

protein is hugely important to our health.

While we do all need protein, it's a misconception that we specifically need animal protein – the reality is that many plant based foods contain more than adequate amounts of protein to keep up healthy, and there's actually no need to be concerned if someone in your family (or you yourself!) feels inclined to become vegetarian or vegan. You might miss cheese at first, but you won't suffer once you make sure to eat a variety of plant based foods.

Legumes/pulses are one of the best sources of plant based protein, but a lot of people have difficulties digesting them. I have two tricks to help solve that problem – one is really simple, it's to always cook beans with seaweeds. I always have a pack of dried Kombu at home, and I use a stick of it when cooking lentil soup or bean chilli. Throw it in the pot at the start and fish it out just before you serve. It won't make a huge difference to the taste but will make the dish much more nutritious and easy to digest.

Another way of improving the digestibility of pulses is to sprout them before you cook them. When I'm very organised, I soak a huge pot of beans (some you can mix, like the

black and red kidney beans, but mainly I do one type at a time) for 24 hours, then drain and leave them in a warm place for another 12 hours or so, till they just start to sprout. All you want to see is the tiny nub of the sprout poking through a split in the skin of the bean. Then you cook them in water, and when they are cooked you can freeze them in amounts that are enough for a soup or a chilli. If beans upset your digestion this will make all the difference – it's worth the effort I promise!

Tofu is another excellent source of protein, but I'm much happier eating the fermented one (we sell one called Feto, but there may be other brands). Fermentation helps to make Soy beans digestible, which is important if you are going to rely on tofu as your main source of protein. Tempeh is another source of fermented soy protein, as is miso.

Grains can contain surprising amounts of protein! Look out for amaranth and quinoa, which are seeds actually but cook like grains, and contain as much protein per serving as meat. Amaranth is particularly good for people who need extra nutrition – like breastfeeding mothers and children. You can combine Amaranth with bulgar wheat to make a pilaf.

Oats, Spelt and Kamut all



HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

contain very good amounts of protein, and are rich in healthy fats as well. Eaten in their whole form these grains are slow release carbs as well, so are good for blood sugar balancing. Spelt and Kamut are both older types of wheat and contain a much more nutrients than the overdeveloped durum wheat. Both can be used instead of arborio rice in a risotto – if you don't believe me, look online and you will see lots of Italian recipes for spelt risotto! Spelt is called Farro in Italian.

Nuts and seeds are rich in protein and fat, and are incredibly healthy when eaten in small amounts. One of my favourite ways of eating more seeds in particular is to lightly

toast them in a dry pan, then drizzle with tamari and sprinkle over salads (or eat on their own as a snack!). They really are delicious and nutritious.

Lots of people say they would love to be vegan, but they can't give up cheese and yoghurt. In Organico, the plant based yogurt and cheese section is a lot bigger than the dairy section! We have coconut, almond, rice, soy and oat yoghurts, and a huge range of cheeses for all dishes, from pizza to pasta to vegan gorgonzola. And it's growing all the time! Come over and see for yourselves...

Finally, we have an exciting date for your dairy in November – on November 12 Rachel and I are hosting a free live Webinar: Balancing Your Hormones Naturally, with Marilyn Glenville. You will remember we had Marilyn visit us in Bantry for an evening event a couple of years ago – she's a wonderful speaker. She will cover lots of women's health issues and you will have a chance to ask questions.

The webinar is happening on Thursday, November 12, 7-8:30pm. To join us, you need to be signed up to our Newsletter before November 9. We will be sending out a link on the evening of the 9 for you to register for the Webinar.

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Mental fitness for trying times

Do you feel burnt out? Feel like giving in or giving up? Did your training go out the window, as the restrictions and the darker days came back? Then this month's column is for you – and me, and everybody else who could use an extra tool to

make more lemonade of the many lemons life have thrown at us lately!

Life can be trying at times for the most of us. In our time right now, living with a pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus that science haven't cracked the code to yet, life can seem more than trying on top of everything else.

This is partly due to the fact that we are facing new challenges, which we didn't sign up for, yet have to live with and overcome. And of course some of us will feel scared or anxious in the face of all the unknowns. It's nothing to be ashamed or frightened of. Fear of the unknown is an ancient instinct that kept us alive throughout human kind's history. Fear for the unknown makes most of us think twice before we act; and that can save lives.

I've always thought mental fitness was important; back when I was into powerlifting, we often talked about having the mental upperhand on the



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.

iron. Meaning that if you started to think too much about the weight you were lifting, the iron would win, and you would fail your lift. Likewise being

too scared before stepping into the ring could be paralysing instead of sharpening of your senses.

In both cases, the mindset was the trigger point. All the practice was done, physically you were ready for battle, but the mental edge often decided if you won or lost.

Daily life doesn't often have 'pivotal moments' that culminate months of practice, so I used to only associate Mental Fitness with competition; however mental fitness or strength is important in everyday life as well, especially in a time with a lot of unknown factors.

My first step into everyday mental fitness, was reading a friend of mine Jeppe Aagaard's advice about overcoming fear. Jeppe is a successful coach and speaker into motivation, meditation and change, based on psychology and brain science. His advice was concrete and easy to use from the get go: 'If you find yourself scared or

Continued on next page...

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...Cont'd from previous page

anxious, ground yourself by feeling the ground under your feet. Feel your soles and feel how they connect to the ground beneath you. Feel the surface of what you're standing on and within, soon your fears and anxiety will have left you.'

I felt kind of blown away by this short, powerful message. It is so doable and when you think about it, a fantastic way to ground yourself, to lose the stuff that makes you scared or anxious; simply by moving your focus from what is causing the fear, to something as tangible as the soles on your feet and the ground that you connect with.

As time has passed since the first lockdown this year, like many others, I have lost some of the goals for my training. Races got cancelled and restrictions made it more difficult to train. Crazy destructive stress and other outside factors also entered my life, and for the last month or so, I've been at loss as to how to structure my training (and other life goals) and even how to stay motivated.

I've been looking more into the tools of mental fitness – especially as an aid for physical training and exercise, to help me out of this jam. I'd like to share with you some of the advice I've found that has made a difference for me.

1. Make a schedule and hang it up: A visual chart over the week's training sessions (or your normal week/work – study goals) will help you prepare mentally and practically for what's next. When you're prepared, it's easier to stay committed – and you can also cross sessions out, as you go through the week and follow your progress. Important: Hang it where you will see and read (some of) it every day. Mine hangs next to my coffee cups cupboard – a place I look at



every day.

2. If you're stressed, find peace by inhaling through your nose while counting to four; exhale through your mouth (make it into a round shape, as if you exhaled through a straw) while counting to four. Repeat until you feel your body is relaxing and letting go of the stress, now your mind and body are ready to focus on the solving the problem at hand, instead of being stressed out by it.

3. Teach your skills. Nothing sharpens our knowledge so much, as having to explain it to someone else. I've been lucky and found a running partner (who is relatively new to fitness

and training) who asks me a lot of good questions. Her questions have kept me on my toes, both remembering and looking into new knowledge to share with her. So share your passion, teach someone your favourite recipe, or garden with them. If you don't feel like you have anyone in close in your life to teach, look into your community. Maybe your knowledge is sought after somewhere? Or set up a blog, documenting and showcasing your skills. Both in real life and electronically – explaining your knowledge will be good brain fitness.

4. Find a community. I think that I write this in every other

column, but I can't stress how important it can be to have other people to share your passion with. And even if training is more of a necessary evil than a passion, sharing it with others will: Make it more interesting – thus more motivating, more committed, as if you skip, you not only let yourself down, but also your training friend(s); and if you do have a competitive side to you, training with others, will most likely make you train harder and better than you would on your own. Due to restrictions, it might be hard to find your tribe in your community, but if you got a computer or phone with internet access, look online. You are sure to find someone to relate to. Stimulating conversation can be good brain fitness too.

I'll leave you with a handful to other brain-fitness tools that are less related to physical fitness, some of them also perfect for indoor activities in the coming months:

- Memory games/ activities
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Learn a new dance (coordination and memorisation to

- music)
- Crosswords/ Sudoku activities
- Learn a new language
- Learn to play an instrument
- Use all your senses
- Get 30 minutes of daily exercise. Aerobic exercise such as running or biking is recommended, as it gets the blood pumping into all areas of the body, including the brain.

Stay active – both mentally and physically through the 'lockdown' and you'll come out stronger on the other side.

Questions, comments etc. are as always welcome at: taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com or via Instagram: @trainwithadane

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people Health & Lifestyle

Viewing this winter lockdown through a new lens

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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.

I found a poem recently in the beautiful book 'Benedictus: A Book of Blessings' by John O'Donohue. The poem was aptly named 'For One Who is Exhausted' and there was one line in particular that really jumped out at me, 'Be excessively gentle with yourself'. I have read and repeated this line at all my mindfulness classes since. I repeat it mentally to myself when I find myself tired or pushing myself too hard. Compassion-based mindfulness helps us to notice ourselves just as we are, and to meet whatever we notice in ourselves with kindness and care, rather than self-criticism. So, let us be excessively gentle with ourselves,

whenever we find ourselves rushing to get everything done or being hard on ourselves when we feel we haven't been achieving enough or indeed when we're feeling bad in any way.

The last few weeks have been hugely anxiety inducing for all of us, as we waited on decisions being made by government, with regard to changing the public health guidelines. Now we are all in the process of adapting again to a level five lockdown. These are difficult and challenging times and it is likely that we are feeling a bit frayed around the edges, especially due to the prolonged nature of these challenges. But what if we changed the lens through which we're viewing this Winter lockdown? What if we switched focus to how we can make this time of year – a time of natural hibernation anyway, a bit more comfortable for ourselves and our loved ones?

What are you already doing, or planning to do, to support your physical and mental health? Just as we need physical exercise for the body, we also need to take care of our minds, especially when facing adversity or uncertainty. It can help to take a medium or longer-term view of this situation and plan how we are going to navigate through this shared human experience together. And here is an important point; we are not alone in this. No matter how robust you have been mentally and physically up to now, we are all experiencing a level of vulnerability during this pandemic and this is part of being human. We can help and support ourselves and each other through this.

I feel it might be worth reflecting on a few questions when making your plan or adding structure to your week

over the next few months. Make some time and space for this, as it is important. Find yourself a comfortable seat and notice the breath in your body, see if you can feel the breath moving in your body. Now, slow your breath down and see if you can take three conscious breaths, gentle breaths, not forced, but just a little deeper and longer than you would normally take. Notice how you are feeling now. Then take some time to reflect on the following:

What worked for you during lockdown earlier this year? What kept you well?

Make a list, either mentally, or with pen and paper, of the things that you enjoyed during lockdown. They might be little things you did as something kind for yourself or others, or things that have remained intentions until now, but it is these little things and intentions that help in maintaining a sense of wellbeing. Can you continue to do any of these things, for example, being in nature, baking, walking, cycling, sea swimming, phoning a friend, connecting in with a group online?

What is it that usually brings you comfort and ease during the Winter months?

It might be useful to remind ourselves of the wonderful things about Winter that we already love, these are still here, even if we may need to adapt them slightly. For example, rather than viewing it as a chore, try lighting the fire with the intention of making your home cosy for yourself, if you live alone, or for you and your family. Simple steps or small comforts can go a long way as we plan our hibernation for the coming weeks. Light a candle and snuggle yourself in a soft blanket.

Read a book. Make a hot drink. Step outside and breathe in the freshness of the air.

How do you spend your downtime? And how do these activities make you feel?

Whether you are extremely busy and have little downtime, or whether you have lots of time on your hands these days, let's see if we can make wise choices in favour of wholesome activities, for example, choosing to reduce your time spent on social media and going for a walk instead. Try noticing how you feel after spending too much time on Netflix or social media or even after watching the news. Would you say you feel energised or drained by this activity? Notice this and compare this feeling with how you feel when you come back inside after a walk.

I began running free online mindfulness meditation sessions three evenings per week in March during the first lockdown and they will continue to run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8pm, please do consider joining in, whether you have tried mindfulness meditation before or are new to it. These small group sessions are personal, down-to-earth, informal and donation based.

Individual sessions on zoom are available if anyone would like to begin a basic meditation practice before joining the zoom sessions. Watch out for some short online introductory mindfulness courses coming up which may help reduce any anxiety around going online. Have a look at my Facebook page (Mindhaven) or website www.mindhaven.ie for more information or feel free to get in touch by phone: 087 2700572 or email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com.

Older adults taking active approach to pandemic

West Cork participants in 'Staying Fit for the Future', the weekly exercise programme supporting older people's health and mobility, can stick with their exercise regime, despite increasing Covid restrictions.

With the move to Level 5, 'Staying Fit for the Future' classes will transition to Zoom, in order to continue the weekly exercise groups online.

Already, class tutors are assisting some of the class participants in getting Zoom ready, and ensuring they have support to access their weekly exercise class online.

Part of Cork's WellComm Active initiative promoting healthy active communities, 'Staying Fit for the Future' is a structured exercise programme to suit different abilities and needs. It is particularly designed to improve

strength and balance in older adults, to help with co-ordination and mobility.

There are 23 exercise groups across 20 different locations in Cork city and county, with over 220 individuals taking part in weekly classes currently. West Cork locations include Ballinascorthy, Durrus, Ballineen, Dunmanway, Clonakilty, Kin-

sale, Union Hall, Bandon and Kilmurphy.

Eoin Kaar, who is the WellComm Active Project Lead at the Cork Sports Partnership, says class participants are encouraged to contact their tutor for assistance or to call the WellComm Active support line on 086 1409225 if they need support in getting online.

Family or friends operating a 'support bubble' with an older adult are also encouraged to help with setting up their online exercise option. Details of how to participate in online classes is also on the Cork Sports Partnership website, or advice on using Zoom is available from the Age Action support line (01 475 6989).

In recent weeks, some of the class tutors and exercising adults have moved their weekly routine to outdoor locations, including community centre grounds and local parks, to meet with restricted numbers for outdoor gatherings.

HSE physiotherapists are involved in developing the 'Staying Fit for the Future' programme and exercise content, which promotes healthy ageing through physical activity, Eoin Kaar says. "These are fun classes with very encouraging tutors. Apart from the exercise itself, participants are given useful tips and daily exercise routines that help with maintaining mobility and avoiding falls," Eoin Kaar explains.

Older adults, inactive individuals and vulnerable groups are encouraged to participate. People can register to take part

themselves or talk to their GP or health visitor for information. The next season of classes is set to start in January 2021.

Another popular strand of WellComm Active, Project WeightLoss classes are also continuing countywide, adapting to the new Covid protocols.

The 12-week weight management programme, developed by health and fitness professionals, is now also online with live classes covering nutrition advice, healthy recipes and fitness plans.

More information on WellComm Active and local classes is available at www.corksports.ie/wellcommactive.

Health professionals can contact Eoin Kaar at WellComm Active for more information: wellcommactive@corksports.ie or on (021) 434-7096 or 086 1409 225.



people Health & Lifestyle

LGBTI+
MATTERS

BRÓD

BRÓD is an LGBTI+ Community Group based in West Cork. A mix of LGBTI+ people and allies, the group's mission is to 'Support, Advocate and Increase Visibility' for the LGBTI+ community in West Cork.

We are BRÓD! Welcome to the first of our monthly columns in the West Cork People. BRÓD started life in the minds of a group of people in West Cork a few years ago. At the time it had no name, no structure, nothing but a strong sense of being and a will of its own to be heard. The Equality referendum of 2015 showed over a 60 per cent turn-out nationwide and a resounding Yes vote was passed at 62 per cent. These figures compelled action and in 2019, BRÓD was born.

From thought to reality, how did this happen? We all know that there are many good ideas for community projects that never reach the communities that they are meant for. BRÓD is the result of nearly two years of work between five core members of the group. John Fleming, a therapist and counsellor working with young trans people, Mark Holland, community worker with the Gay Project in Cork and studying in UCC, Abi O'Callaghan Platt, project manager and researcher for an environmental NGO, Lisa Brinkmann, Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist with a focus on sex research and LGBTI+ mat-



ters, and Fern Higgins Atkinson, Youth Development Officer with the Ability Programme in West Cork Development Partnership, working with 18 to 29-year-olds with mental health difficulties.

In July 2019, Cork Pride enabled BRÓD to host its first event, 'Clonakilty Pride by the Sea'. This event attracted a large number of people on the day and the committee organized entertainment, stalls and guest speakers. The response from the community highlighted the importance of ongoing support for the LGBTI+ community in West Cork and BRÓD became a reality through regular meetings, stakeholder engagement and discussion with key members of the public. Work in 2020 has been slow and steady. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, BRÓD are unable to hold an event this year but are hopeful that 2021



will bring a fresh outlook for all. The group have affiliated with the West Cork Development Partnership through support from its 'SICAP' programme. It has made all of the appropriate registrations as a community group at council level and has received a very positive response from our local representatives, namely Holly Cairns TD, Christopher O'Sullivan TD and Cllr. Paul Hayes.

BRÓD hope to facilitate a community where LGBTI+ people feel safe, included and equal. To this end, we brought the idea of a 'Rainbow Crossing' to our local representatives. This has been advocated for by Cllr. Paul Hayes at municipal council meetings and is now being put forward as a possibility for Clonakilty town centre, as well as the other municipal districts in the West Cork region. We



really feel this would highlight both Clonakilty and West Cork as a safe haven for the LGBTI+ community. A place where discrimination and bigotry have no stage. Every step across that Rainbow Crossing, would be akin to Neil Armstrong and his famous stroll, 'One small step for 'insert pronoun', one giant leap for 'insert pronoun'.' for both the LGBTI+ community, their families and allies.

BRÓD has values, they adhere to the ethos of 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Solidarity'. BRÓD has a mission, 'Support, Advocate and Increase Visibility' for the LGBTI+ community in West Cork and it aims to implement these areas through a mix of events, community engagement initiatives, education initiatives and support offerings. Follow us on our journey through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as in our monthly column in the West Cork People. Through our column we will discuss topics, issues and events surrounding everything LGBTI+. We aim to educate, involve and support through relevant, fun and informative offerings and we welcome input from interested parties.

Clockwise from top left: Mark, Abi, Fern, John and Lisa.

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“Yo-yo dieting was controlling my life – I knew I had to make some changes”



By Sarah Shakespeare,
CNM Nutritional
Therapy Graduate

I was tired, frustrated and emotionally drained from the repetitive, negative cycle of yo-yo dieting I had created. I desperately wanted to establish balance and not let dieting run my life.

After years of analysing my weight and starting a diet every Monday, I knew I had to make some changes. I threw myself into the three-year Nutritional Therapy diploma at the prestigious College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM) to learn more about the healing power of

natural foods.

Using myself as a guinea pig, I discovered a lot about myself along the way and I've finally established a balanced relationship with food. I knew food alone wasn't going to be the answer for me; to make a permanent change, I had to take a more holistic approach, addressing my whole body, mind and lifestyle to understand the full picture.

Studying Naturopathic Nutrition was the link I was missing. I've learnt how to identify the root cause of underlying symptoms and achieve balance using whole foods and lifestyle factors.

I chose to study at CNM as it offered the best in-clinic training. The course was comprehensive and also provided extensive clinical experience. Being able to observe and participate in the student clinics prepared me for real-life clinic; I gained invaluable experience which was I able to take into my own practice.

Attaining my Nutritional Therapy diploma transformed my life in so many ways. It's enabled me to conquer a life-long relationship battle with food and also given me the understanding and knowledge I needed to help myself and others.

I'd always loved supporting and helping people so when I became a Nutritional Therapist, I had finally found my calling.

The industry is so versatile and I've been able to use my qualification in many ways. I've contributed to various magazines as part of an expert panel, helped implement corporate wellbeing programmes and supported student clinics. I have lots of other interesting projects coming up; the opportunities keep growing. My qualification has given me the platform to achieve my dreams and goals, and be in control of my life.



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IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

Make the most of your precious time

I don't think that any of us can or want to get used to this strange world that we are now living in. My social media memories threw up photos of the Jazz weekend in Cork last year and I stared at them for the longest time. Did we take it for granted? Absolutely. Did we make the most of it? Oh yes we did, every day of it, afternoon and late into the night. I do believe that my feet would go into shock if I put on heels now, but I most definitely refuse to accept that there will not be any opportunities to wear them in the near future. Whatever discomfort or pain they may bring will be surely welcomed.

The part of those happy family pictures that I'm struggling with, that I really don't want to think about, is whether or not my daughter will be able to fly home for Christmas. What is the season really all about if not to spend it with those we hold most dear? If the last few months has revealed anything, then it simply must be that we all need to deal with life on life's terms; we need to hope for the best but also be prepared that what was once done without a second thought is now, at times, forbidden. We are all struggling and we need to allow this to unite us. The kids will still want and deserve their toys but our focus will be elsewhere and rather than believe that we have completely lost control of everything – look again, there is so much that each one of us can do to bring joy to others. Don't look down, look up and look around.

We are warriors now, every one of us. We have battled 'lockdown' once before and come out the other side, some carrying more scars and losses than others, but here we are again, survivors! The 'stuff' that you normally want for Christmas will most certainly take a back seat. This year we need to be proactive, make a plan, make lists, but a different type of list is required. Wherever you live, you are part of a community, a community that desperately needs your help now, so the list that I am asking you to make is one of all of the

businesses in your town. Realistically you might not be able to find a present for someone in every single one of those shops, but if you could make a family agreement that all 'present' shopping would be done in your area, that would be fantastic. We can all complain about the price of things and say that online options are cheaper; I can't argue with that, but when you look at how much money the big online companies made during the first lockdown, it seems very unfair. At the same time, some of our own local businesses struggled to try to get their shops online for the first time (at a cost) but they are ready this time around. Now it's our turn to make lists of gifts that our nearest and dearest actually want or need. I'm going to start off by reminding you all that our winters are damp, cold and wet, so rainwear, waterproof jackets, hats and umbrellas (of the highest quality) will never NOT be used. We are all out walking more, so vouchers for any of the above will also be most welcome. Well done you – that should cover a variety of local shops and whether you spend €10 or €200, your business will be greatly appreciated. After all, the expression – Mind the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves – is now more valid than ever, especially for those trying to keep their business afloat.

Seeing as we don't walk barefoot (even though the health benefits of walking bare-

foot on grass or the beach are quite remarkable), your local shoe stores have an incredible variety ready and waiting for you and everyone in your family. With a temporary curbing of our social life, we may all be choosing the 'walking around town heel' than going for height right now. Here's to hoping that won't last forever. I don't care how many handbags a woman has; she will always love another one, especially a leather bag or purse, so drop all the hints that you want, someone might be listening!

For many of us, it just wouldn't be the holiday season without a trip to the jeweller for something that sparkles. Jewellery is always a welcome gift; in fact it's a real 'feel spoiled' gift and even with the doors closed, many shops will have a selection in the window for you to peruse while you are strolling around.

Chunky sweaters, jeans, polo necks, jumper dresses and long flowing dresses are this year's must-haves, smothered in patterns and spots makes them all the more lovely, your local boutiques are sure to carry the very finest of lines.

Dare I mention the lack of hairdressers and beauticians at the moment? Agree or disagree with the fact that they have had to close up again, this is the predicament that we find ourselves in (I cannot understand the logic in it). Try not to panic about whether or not you will have 'Christmas' hair or look

like a piebald pony – we are all in this together. I do urge you to make sure that you buy hair and beauty vouchers, multiple ones, whether you give as gifts or use yourself for a much-needed boost down the road. All of these businesses have been hit for the second time around and they need you now, just as much as you need them.

Despite the fact that 'lockdown' might give some of us more time to ourselves, time that we were always wishing for, it has proven to be an unsettling experience for many, as they find themselves struggling to relax. Check out some of the top quality aromatherapy relaxing oils, burn in your own home and give as gifts to others. A voucher for your local health food store will win hands down with absolutely everyone, as more of us are reading up on how to boost our immune system in a natural way. I just finished reading an article this morning about how careful you have to be with perfumes, fabric conditioners and scented candles, as the fragrance component, unless completely natural, can cause hormonal imbalances, for men and woman, which can in turn contribute to other illnesses. At the same time, our skin is the largest organ in the body and the most porous, so be careful and make sure to 'google' the ingredients in whatever you smother yourself in, you will be shocked at how advertisers are allowed to

Continued on next page...

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Together we are strong

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!

Just eight short months ago, the fabric of society underwent a startling alteration, social norms evaporated, plans dissolved into memories and a new, challenging way of living presented itself, when in March 2020, Ireland went into 'lockdown' and then slowly began to emerge through varying levels of restrictions, dictated by and in response to COVID-19 levels. Currently, as Ireland reverts back into a 'lockdown' situation, it is difficult to believe, or even to comprehend, that many individuals with disabilities have not been in a position to emerge from the first 'lockdown' yet, due to compromised immunity.

However, this is a time in our lives for valuing what we have, not what it is we thought we wanted. Once again, the natural goodness of each individual who lives in our society, the inherent ability to empathise, the ability to value every human being as an individual, this is what will unite us as a society, what will demonstrate our will to move forward and in doing so, to include everyone, young and old, people with disabilities, all ethnicities, religions, all genders, all age groups, this will be a reflection of who we are as a society.

A gentle reminder to please be aware that:

Guide dogs do not queue, recognise one-way systems in shops nor do they social distance.

Social distancing applies to assistance dogs and their owners, please do not touch,

approach, or pet these dogs.

People with disabilities/wheelchair users, may find it difficult to move quickly to social distance, please allow them social space.

Be respectful of designated disabled driver/passenger parking bays; be aware of anyone violating these who does not display a disabled driver/passenger parking permit and report any violations to the Gardaí.

By keeping these points in mind, you are empathising with and supporting people with disabilities, you are considering what it is to walk in their shoes.

Challenges may be difficult, however, they also bring choice. Together we are strong, every-one, together.

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...Cont'd from previous page

use the word 'natural' when so many products are the furthest thing from it. Educate yourself to benefit yourself rather than aimlessly scrolling through social media and then you can pass that information on to your friends.

How lucky are all of us West Corkonians to have so many beaches within our 5km? So many people have taken up the challenge to swim in the sea everyday so your local surf shop will stock their perfect gifts to make sure that they have the very best of accessories to keep them on track.

If you do have an extra bit of time over the next few weeks, rather than just wait to send someone a Christmas card, write a letter to someone. I just had a very old letter framed from my grandmother's cousin (who had moved to Union Hall) to my grandmother (in Rosscarbery), dated 1939. Wouldn't it be a lovely thing for generations to come if we all started writing letters again? We all need to read more books and write more letters or even

write in a journal.

I think that it is important to say that this is a bizarre time; we are all struggling. The concept of always having something planned to look forward to has been ripped away from us, all of us. We seem to be in uncharted waters again and this is taking a toll on us. Cry if you must, the tears took me completely by surprise the day that I drove past the post office one Friday morning and I saw our most vulnerable and precious elderly, lined up in the cold to collect their pension. Some of them were leaning against the wall to stay propped up and the ugliness of this separation and lockdown hit me like I was slapped in the face. This story ends well, despite the fact that I felt helpless as to know what to do to help any of these people, that evening, I saw a post on social media from O'Donovans hotel in Clonakilty, reminding people, especially those queuing for their pension, that their toilet facilities were open and that they had take-out soup and so

on available. It warmed my heart to see that and I'm telling you because we need reminders that we are all there for each other. So keep an eye out, some people may never ask for help but might need help now.

It's said that the following are the things to do to help you appreciate life in difficult times:

Always get out of bed with a positive attitude; remember every day is a gift and if you can't immediately see it, spend all day looking for it.

Don't drown in confusion and contemplation.

Keep moving.
Appreciate the little things.
Look after one another.
Love unconditionally.
Soften and Simplify.

Act with honour, humility and grace.

I'm going to add on to that... throw on a smile, fix your hair and laugh out loud whenever you can.

This year we need to be proactive, make a plan, make lists, but a different type of list is required. Wherever you live, you are part of a community, a community that desperately needs your help now, so the list that I am asking you to make is one of all of the businesses in your town.

Experts tips for online interviews

Online interviews are here to stay and many people are terrified of them. As flexible and remote work experts, Employflex has been preparing candidates for online interviews for many years. Founder **Karen O'Reilly** shares her top tips for a successful interview.

Prepare: Put a do not disturb sign on your front door in case of deliveries. Make sure that noisy pets are at bay. Invest in childcare if you have young children and ensure that they are off-site. Turn off your phone and all other apps on your computer so that they are not ping and beeping and distracting you.

Practice: Get to know your video conferencing tool whether that is Skype or Zoom, MS Teams or google hangouts – have a few practice runs with a friend who can give you honest feedback. Use a professional user name – consider opening a new account if your user name does not give the right impression – We have seen some interesting ones! Hotma75, you know who you are!

Be aware of your environment: Ensure that you have the right lighting and that you are not a silhouette on the screen. Review your background – keep it clean with no distractions like clothes on a clothes horse or family photos – a blank wall or a wall with framed certificates/diplomas works very well. Obviously ensure that no-one is going to burst into your room looking for

the remote for the telly – find a quiet part of the house and lock the door if possible!

Your look and looking the part: 'Dress for the job you want, not for the job you have' Austin Kleon. The same rules apply in an online interview. Dress as if you were going to the physical premises – wash your hair and do your make up – dress smart and sit up straight – it helps to get you in the 'zone'

Do your homework: Know exactly who will be making the call from the employer's side and ensure that you are signed in early and able to connect with them. Make sure you have researched the company's website prior to the interview. Look them up on the internet and see if there is any recent interesting PR on them, e.g. Job announcements, new product launch or expansion. It also shows the interviewer that you want to work for their company, that you are not just looking for a job, you are looking for a career.

Use cheat sheets: The benefit of an online interview is that you can have notes in front of you (so long as they are out of sight). Pull up your CV, examples, talking points or other questions in the corner of the screen. If there are 10 points you want to get across in your interview, have them noted somewhere in front of you (e.g. wall behind computer) and mentally tick them off while you go. The STAR technique is widely recognised as a good interview tool (specific situation, task, action, and result) Write your example out and have it behind your computer to prompt you.

Body language: As in a traditional face to face interview, body language and first impres-

sions are very important. Sit up straight and endeavour to make eye contact with the interviewer. Don't slouch, fiddle or use your hands excessively. Don't forget to smile! Look at the camera and not at your own image.

You made it – The End: Once you have asked your questions and the interview has come to an natural end, remember to say Thank you and Goodbye and after the session make sure that the sound and video transmission are disconnected! This is a precious tip.

Important Note: Make sure that you've also got another way to contact the interviewer should your connection fail. An email address and phone number are essential should your app refuse to cooperate on the day of the interview. And if you have too many technical issues- simply be honest with the interviewer, suggest a phone call instead or rearrange the online interview for another time.

But always remember: An interview is an interview! Whether you are being interviewed remotely, over the phone or in person, all the general rules of a job interview apply. Research the company, know your CV inside out, read the job description thoroughly, have a few answers and examples prepared and be ready to ask your questions at the end. Also, don't forget to tell them you are interested in the role and display enthusiasm!

And Good luck!

For any more details, call Karen O'Reilly, founder of Employflex 087 9722498



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Update on annual Bantry Cancer Fundraiser

This year's annual Bantry Cancer Fundraiser, planned for March, was cancelled due to Covid-19. The Committee members wish to thank everybody for their great support since the very first fundraiser, on a table on the Square, in 2007.

"Since then we have raised very large sums each year for Cork Cancer Research," says Nora Cremen. "We also contributed €15,000 each last year to Cork Cancer Research, Cancer Connect and Cork Arc Support House, Bantry."

"This could not be done without the great generosity of the people of Bantry and surrounding areas. A suitable premises was generously donated, items surplus to requirements, unwanted gifts and unused purchases were freely available for sale, and a very willing volunteer staff worked in the shop on a rota basis."

Nora says the committee is looking forward to holding the fundraiser at a future date as soon as it is safe to do so. "Thank you again for supporting us in our efforts to help those who are diagnosed with cancer. Together we can make a difference."

Motorists over 70 can renew licence by post

Christopher O'Sullivan TD has welcomed confirmation that motorists over the age of 70 can now renew their driving licences by post.

Given the situation with COVID-19, the RSA, through its licensing service the NDLS, will temporarily expand the postal renewal option to those over 70 who renew their licence every three years.

At present only those aged 70 and over who renew their licence on a yearly basis are invited to renew it by post.

"Practical steps like this are necessary to help protect our elderly and most vulnerable during this pandemic," Deputy O'Sullivan said. "This takes away the need for them to present at an NDLS centre to renew their licence"

Those 70 years of age and over will be contacted directly by the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) and invited to renew their licence or permit by post. They do not need to provide a medical report when applying for their licence unless they have a specific medical condition. This is a temporary exemption which takes some pressure of the health system and is in place until the end of the year.



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Do we understand our two-year-old?



DO WE UNDERSTAND OUR CHILD?

Diana Radeva
Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist

In this series of articles ("Do we understand our child?") Diana Radeva, child and adolescent psychotherapist 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.

The two-year old is poised on the cusp between babyhood and childhood. Eagerly reaching out to be one of the big ones, he or she is filled with ambition and often can be sophisticated in understanding and achieving. But this achievement is fragile, the clever boy or girl collapses easily and we see again that we have a baby here, wanting a good deal of the intimate nurturing that the baby gets.

Toddlers are learning what they can and what they can't do. This is an age of extremes.

Nothing is so abject as a down-cast desperate toddler, and nothing is so full of pure delight as an elated one. Their method of dealing with life is by taking up extreme positions, and of course they are thoroughly unbalanced as a result. Part of the toddler's extreme view of the world is bound up with the reality of his or her age and stage. Toddlers are physically very small.

To begin with, two-year-olds are like people in charge of a big, crude machine. They lack subtlety. If something looks nasty, they may refuse it with all their energy, never mind that last time they accepted it eagerly. They do however, need, at least sometimes, to be treated with the thoughtfulness, which they themselves cannot achieve. It can be almost automatic to fall into the toddler's own mode and join the battle. When we join battle with a toddler there is a huge difference between 'taking over' when necessary and knowing within ourselves that we have 'lost it', really become deeply angry and stirred and not able to rein that in. The truth is that the raw nature of the toddler's feelings can set fire to something, which is almost equally primitive.

Many issues that children face at this age (sleeping, feeding, toilet-training) are potential areas of anxiety in the life of the two-year old as they all relate to the central point of development at this age: this is an age where some crucial facts about separation and loss have to be faced in order to for the development of independence and a sense of self to take place. Being able to feed yourself, face going into the dark on your own, take charge of your own toileting, all are points of growth. You have to say goodbye to the life of the dependent baby, a life where you were fed, rocked to sleep, your nappy changed.

Hard work

I think it is important to acknowledge how complicated and demanding the job of bringing up a two-year can be. Small children are hard to be with twenty-four hours per day. One reason for this is the link with our own earliest experiences – we have all been two-year-olds, and this is the experience that we draw on, even without realising it. When our children arrive at the toddler's stage, our own toddler years are re-evoked, ghostly and powerful, out of sight. On the plus side, this is itself an advantage. This is how we understand what it is like, to be them. We need to

of child's life. Is he eating? Sleeping? Getting on with other children? Enjoying himself? Learning new things? If the disturbance is in only 'some' areas, it seems reasonable to wait and see, or perhaps to give a touch of back to baby care.

However, if there are more considerable difficulties within the family we should take into account that two-year-olds often act like a gauge, a sort of thermometer, reacting to the weather or the temperature in the family.

It's important to keep in mind that human beings are both resourceful and adaptable. We need to remember, when we



be close to how they feel, but at the same time we must hang on to what we know as adults. The pull between the two produces a tension, which is tiring.

When to worry

Many parents of small children worry a good deal, on and off. Very small children can't manage their problems, conflicts, fears or anxieties; caring for them brings very specific type of mental intimacy. We feel with and for them, and we tend to up and down with them.

What about problems that don't go away? There is a simple rule of thumb which says, 'Look round at all the aspects

consider small children, how vulnerable and dependent they are. The lively, developing two-year-old is, at the same time, the point of hope in the family, a hope that things will go well and perhaps better than in the past.

Getting to grips with the idea that you are neither lord of the universe nor a lowly worm is a lifetime's job. Two-year-olds in this year of their lives are forging ahead to learn what they can truly achieve, what actual control they have over themselves and their surroundings; and they are continuing the process of setting the foundations of their grown-up characters.



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.

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Over 15 years of experience. ICP Registered, MACP
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Your actions will change how you feel



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

Unfortunately this month we find ourselves again in lockdown. So many people have had to close their businesses when they want to keep working and we have all been asked to work from home unless on the essential list and restrict our movements back down to 5km from where we live. The new restrictions will bring us up to December 1 and then hopefully businesses will reopen and families can be together for Christmas.

But we know that nothing is certain and the unknown is increasing stress, fear, anxiety and depression for many.

Humans are sociable creatures and need the company of others, some of us prefer one-to-one interactions whilst others need the company of lots of people to feel happy, content, and connected. This is in our nature, in our DNA, and compelling, so please be compassionate for those who are really struggling right now.

Stress, uncertainty and loneliness are triggers for anxiety, fear and depression. As intelligent individuals we can tell ourselves that what we are feeling is irrational but stopping those feels may take more than willpower. Fear and anxiety are strong emotions, which are triggered to signal danger and keep us safe; they demand that we take action to move away from a situation or stand up for ourselves. Unfortunately they may also cause us to be short-tempered and aggressive or feel overwhelmed with a sense of dread, frozen, unable to think clearly. Physical symptoms like a loss of appetite, stomach-ache, nausea and vomiting can affect our ability to rest and digest. Other signs like chest pain, shortness of breath or heart racing, sweating, muscle tension and headaches can intensify the feelings, making things spiral further.

If we lived in the wild and

were being chased by a lion, these flight and fight responses would be fully activated and we would respond appropriately. The danger would end and the body would reset our sympathetic nervous system (SNS) so we would rest and recover. But in Ireland the current levels of stress are not enough to fully activate and reset the SNS, so many are suffering from chronic anxiety and symptoms that are affecting our mood and physical health.

Worry takes our thoughts to things that can go wrong outside our control. To break the cycle and calm your mind, try to focus on areas that you can control.

Here are three areas where you can easily take action whilst at home

1. Breathe - Calm your SNS by breathing in and out through your nose all the time. If you feel anxiety or fear rising, sit comfortably, place your right thumb over your right nostril, close your eyes, and breathe long and deep only through your left nostril for three minutes.
2. Drink this - Glycine is an amino acid with calming properties; it is found in bones and connective tissues. Make

a meat broth or dissolve grass-fed gelatine powder in warm liquid, which you can sip on through the day or make a nutritious soup to snack on.

3. Relax - At the end of a stressful day treat yourself to an Epsom salt bath. Add two cups of Epsom salts to a hot bath and soak for 20-plus minutes; this 'relaxation mineral' will soothe your muscles and calm the sympathetic nervous system.

I hope you stay safe during lockdown and find these techniques helpful. If you feel you would like to talk with me in confidence, I am still offering virtual consultations and acupuncture for mental and emotional wellbeing.

Amanda Roe is a Holistic Trauma Therapist offering a range of therapies that include Life and Health coaching, Hypnotherapy and Acupuncture. If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment I am looking forward to hearing from you. Best wishes Amanda 0876331898 / amanda@marketstclinic.com

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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.

I don't know about you my dear reader, but the year has flown by. I don't want to dwell this month on the roller-coaster ride that is Covid-19. Saturation media reports deals with all that on a daily basis: R numbers, flattening curves, trajectories, and circuit breakers. You know as much as I do.

I am seeing people suffering from the stress of isolation' we are after all sociable animals,

The stress of it all

now coupled with uncertainty about the future. Let us face it; nobody living today has dealt with a pandemic before, so we are all learning.

I cannot provide all the answers to health issues. I am worried that we are turning to alcohol to de-stress. This is not good. Alcohol is packed with calories, the weight goes on, the liver suffers and so does every other organ in your body. Safe drinking is part of the answer but it is difficult to define safe. The levels are pretty arbitrary – 21 units for a man and 14 units for a woman per week.

I think drinking at home is particularly dangerous, as the drink is much cheaper and the measures more generous.

Doctors have a questionnaire to flag up a problem drinker. Try this CAGE questionnaire. Have you ever considered stopping drinking? Do you get 'angry' when somebody suggests you should cut down? Do you feel 'guilty' about your drinking, and lastly do you ever have an 'eye-opener' in the morning? If you are answering yes to any of these questions you might need to think seriously about stopping. There are much more detailed questionnaires and bloods tests may help but if you

are drinking heavily don't stop suddenly; that can be dangerous and withdrawal has to be controlled.

There are better ways to cope with stress. Why not try contacting old friends, exercise, a new hobby, and nature may have the answer. We live in a beautiful place in West Cork, try and get out and enjoy the beaches and walks.

I love the Long Strand and meet some amazing, inspiring people down there. I fish and people are drawn to a lonely fisherman for a chat. I met Alex just yesterday who is training to swim from Baltimore round the Fastnet and back – that is cool!

On the subject of fishing, it has been beaten as Ireland's most relaxing hobby by knitting! The survey was run by Fitbit. The survey involved 20-to-30 year-olds and the details... fishing reduced the pulse by 10 beats per min from 82 to 72 whilst knitting plunges it to 65bpm!

Other activities making it into the Top Ten included calligraphy, painting and candle making. Somewhat more stressful were cycling at 175 beats, running at 164 and DIY at 140bpm.

See you next month...Knit one, Pearl one!

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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.rosarikingstonphd.com

Looking at infertility

One of the most distressing realisations in a person's life, and one which causes a lot of heartache, is the awareness that conceiving a child is not straightforward and may, even, appear to be well-nigh impossible. Unfortunately, infertility rates have increased over the years with at least 10 per cent of couples in the United States now affected. This increase is partly explained by people starting a family at an older age than previous generations, but it may be also caused by other underlying issues. These factors may include problems with egg or sperm production, genetic factors, age, or too much exposure to certain chemicals and toxins.

Before I examine any of the elements that may prevent conception, it is important to know what factors are needed to bring it about in the first instance. These include:

- Ovulation, which is where a woman must produce and release a healthy egg from one of her ovaries.
- Fertilisation, which means a

man must produce healthy sperm to successfully fertilise the egg released.

- Thirdly, this fertilised egg must travel through the fallopian tube to the uterus and,
- Finally, the fertilised egg must implant itself inside the uterus.

So, there are four steps in this process, ovulation, fertilisation, transportation, and implantation and when there is a difficulty in becoming pregnant, each of these steps has to be examined to identify where is the possible cause.

Before the process of conception even begins, it is important to take steps to improve fertility. These include, a good, healthy diet, adequate and moderate exercise (not too intense), a healthy weight, and the avoidance of alcohol, too much coffee, drugs etc. It is also necessary to avoid an environment that may expose one to damaging pollutants.

A good diet is essential to increase the chances of conception. The one egg that is destined for ovulation has been developing in the ovary for as long as seventy

days prior to the current menstrual cycle of (usually) twenty-eight days. This means that any improvement in diet needs to be continued for at least three months to influence the health of the egg including the hormones influencing it.

Diet is also important for women who suffer from PCOS because if they are a normal weight and eat most of their calories at breakfast, their insulin levels may be reduced by eight per cent and testosterone levels by 50 per cent. High levels of either can contribute to infertility. In addition, on one study, women who ate a large breakfast and small dinner ovulated 30 per cent more than women who ate a smaller breakfast and larger dinner, suggesting that this approach may improve fertility.

A healthy diet should include foods that will supply folic acid, vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids. Iron in the diet is necessary, as it may reduce the risk of ovulatory infertility and may be obtained from beans, lentils, spinach, fortified cereals, long-

grain enriched rice and whole grains. To increase the absorption of iron, add foods containing vitamin C such as citrus fruits and berries.

It is also worth enquiring at your local pharmacy and health food store about pre-conception nutritional supplements. CoQ10 is probably the most difficult one to obtain from food, and in the body, it declines with age. It is found in sea food and organ meats but unfortunately, steak and kidney pie is no longer part of the regular diet. It is necessary for every cell in the body and it increases egg and sperm health. As a supplement it is available as CoQ10 Ubiquinol. Organic foods should be eaten as they contain more antioxidants and there is less danger of pesticide residue. For dairy products use organic also, and cold-water fish will supply essential fatty acids such as omega 3, as well as protein and vitamin A. Fortunately, in Ireland we mainly have grass fed beef and this too is good source of protein. However, anyone suffering from endometriosis

should reduce their consumption of red meat, as one study has shown a connection between high red meat consumption and endometriosis. Vitamin D is also essential as it helps hormonal balance and ovulation. Vitamin Bs as well as vitamin C and E are also beneficial, along with Lipoic acid, Selenium, Zinc and Essential Fatty Acids. Fibre is also important in the diet as it keeps blood sugar balanced thus helping with infertility issues associated with PCOS. It can be found in fruit, vegetables, dark leafy greens and beans.

Foods that should be avoided include soya in any form unless it is fermented. Fermented soya is found in miso and tempeh. Any refined sugars or fruit juices also need to be avoided as do any bottled juices (more concentrated sugar). Needless to say, water needs to be drunk, but not from plastic bottles.

To be continued next month.

Practical steps to reduce anxiety

As we all head into a new lockdown and an uncertain future, it is understandable that many people will be feeling anxious. Anxiety can cause some very serious symptoms such as chest pain and shortness of breath, which can often be confused with cardiovascular symptoms and need investigation by a medical professional to rule out a serious problem.

For those of you who are finding that your levels of anxiety are growing it can be very disconcerting and as your anxiety levels and symptoms raise it can cause

further anxiety and continue to fuel a loop of rising anxiety levels.

The good news is that there are simple things that you can do now to help manage your anxiety levels even coming into a lockdown: Sleep; manage blood sugar levels; and exercise.

The reason these three things will have a big impact on your anxiety levels is due to their effects on a hormone called cortisol, which is released by your adrenal glands.

The adrenal glands are small glands that are situated just above your kidneys and they

are responsible for the production of cortisol and many other hormones.

When you are suffering from anxiety you are having a real physiological response often referred to as 'fight or flight' or a sympathetic nervous system response. This response involves a cascade of neurotransmitters and hormones that cause your body to react in a certain way. Cortisol is part of this cascade and has the effect of increasing levels of glucose in your blood, increasing your brains use of glucose and up-regulating factors involved in the immune system and tissue repair.

Sleep: The reasons sleep has such an important role to play in overall health are numerous. In relation to cortisol, sleep is significant. Cortisol is not only

Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

released by the adrenal glands as a stress response but fluctuating levels of cortisol along with melatonin are responsible for your circadian rhythm – the ability to get to sleep and to get up in the morning. Put basically cortisol levels are naturally high in the morning, boost blood sugar and wake you up, melatonin levels are high in the evening and make you fall asleep.

You should be aiming for seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep every day. It is a complicated subject and there are many factors that can affect your ability to sleep, here are a few of the basics:

1. Most people do not get enough sleep because they don't go to bed early enough.
2. Caffeine and alcohol can affect sleep patterns by stimulating the sympathetic nervous system and therefore disrupting cortisol balance.
3. Eating a diet too high in carbohydrates and not enough protein can disrupt cortisol balance

Diet – Manage Blood Sugar:

Managing blood sugar levels is essential to help maintain cortisol levels and to help reduce symptoms of anxiety. When you eat a high carbohydrate meal, these are broken down into glucose so that your body can absorb them. Once in the bloodstream, glucose raises insulin levels, which promotes the uptake of glucose by your muscles, liver and fat cells. A rise in insulin levels will also cause a rise in cortisol production. All this is normal physiology but when we eat too many carbohydrates or sweets it is easy to get into a situation where your blood sugar is not stable being either too high or too low and neither is good.

As a rule of thumb if you feel tired or your energy drops after eating a meal you have eaten too many carbohydrates. If you feel groggy and slow and eating gives you more energy you are not eating frequently enough and need to eat smaller meals more frequently, make sure these meals are high in protein and essential fat not carbohydrates.

You should be looking to have a diet that is well balanced between protein, fat and carbohydrate. Due to decades of incorrect advice that fats are bad and the proliferation of low fat foods (usually fat is replaced with sugar) mean that most people end up with a diet that is too high in sugars and carbohydrates.

Exercise – Don't hurt yourself:

Keeping active is another great strategy for managing stress anxiety and your emotions in

general. Physical exercise can promote a reduction of cortisol levels. Frequency and intensity of exercise are important. It is important that everyone undertakes aerobic exercise such as walking, running, swimming, cycling, dancing etc. and should be aiming to do about an hour of exercise at least five times per week.

Intensity will be defined more by age and fitness level, but one thing everyone young and old, fit or not should be wary of is exercise-induced pain. Pain is a very significant stressor on the body and will increase cortisol levels to help with the resulting inflammation and tissue repair after over-exercise. Occasionally times of minor muscle soreness is to be expected especially in those taking part in competitive sports but it should not be the rule. If you find that you are in a situation where muscle soreness or joint pain is a constant you are over training. It doesn't necessarily mean you need to stop but you may need to reduce the intensity and the frequency of exercise for a while and fix any underlying issues.

If you are experiencing some of the serious symptoms of anxiety such as chest pain and tightness, shortness of breath and a racing heart make sure that you contact your GP and have these assessed properly.

Eoin Roe is a Functional Medicine Practitioner and Chiropractor based in Skibbereen. Please call for an appointment or if you wish to talk about any of the issues in this article.

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Clonakilty will be represented in Miss Ireland contest this year

Sarah Shoemaker, a UCC final year law student from Clonakilty, will compete in the semi-final of the Miss Ireland contest later this year, after being placed second in the Miss Cork contest last month.

The Miss Cork contest was streamed live from Little Island, where contestants were interviewed on a range of topics, including any charity work they had undertaken. Each contestant had to model casual wear, sportswear and evening wear. Sarah's casual wear outfit was kindly sponsored by Gooseberry boutique in Clonakilty.

The 23-year-old lived and studied in Copenhagen for a semester last year, which she says

was an amazing experience and influenced her fashion style, which leans towards muted colours, black, white, and comfortable, timeless pieces.

Influenced by Victoria Beckham's style, Sarah's favourite wardrobe piece is an oversized black blazer.

Sarah plans on taking a year out in 2021 to sit her FE-1 exam, the entrance examination to the Law Society of Ireland.

Right now Sarah is keeping her head down and focusing on her studies. "It is challenging with lectures online but with each week, it is getting easier," she shares.

West Cork students invited to take part in online writing competition

ActionAid Ireland is asking young people in West Cork aged 14 to 17 to submit a five-minute speech for its newly relaunched ActionTalks competition.

The competition, now in its seventh year, has had been relaunched as an entirely digital competition to make it accessible to as many students as possible during the coronavirus pandemic. Entries will be taken online and finalists will be asked to present their speech to a panel of esteemed judges during a Zoom event in February. The first prize will be a €500 voucher for the winning student and a €100 voucher for their teacher.

Young people will be asked to choose one of three topics relating to international development and the global coronavirus pandemic, and write a five-minute or 600 word speech. This year's topics are:

1. The coronavirus pandemic is an opportunity to imagine

a more equal and sustainable world, but we must act now.

2. With a shocking increase in violence against women and girls, the coronavirus pandemic has shown us that the struggle for gender equality is far from over.

3. The coronavirus pandemic has reminded us of the importance of global solidarity and international aid.

"The coronavirus pandemic has effected each and every one of us and we are developing new ways of working across of programmes. We are delighted to relaunch the ActionTalks competition as a completely digital event and to continue engaging young people in West Cork. We have also created learning resources to help teachers to get the most out of the competition." Siobhan McGee, CEO, ActionAid Ireland.

While students in Ireland have had to face lockdown and miss out on school for six

months, many students across the world, in particular girls, will never get to return following the pandemic.

In addition, ActionAid research has also found that global lockdowns and coronavirus restrictions have led to a shocking increase in gender-based violence worldwide.

ActionAid provides longterm support to the poorest and most marginalised women and children in developing countries, so they can overcome the obstacles holding them back. Its Women's Rights programme, funded by Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs), works to eliminate violence against women and girls by engaging with women and girls, as well as men and boys. Throughout 2020 the programme has also been supporting communities in Nepal, Kenya and Ethiopia to stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic. Irish Aid programmes are funded by Irish citizens and are part of Ireland's important global role.

ActionAid is hoping entrants will come up with innovative, well-researched, and creative speeches, using their own unique perspective from growing up in a pandemic.

To enter, students can ask their teacher for details or visit www.actionaid.ie/ speech-writing-competition for more information.



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Stay safe and have a nice Christmas.

Irish and Nashville musicians raise 'notes' for Cork-based charity

Local Cork musicians, a Nashville country singer, and some of Ireland's top Country Music stars have come together to raise much-needed funds for Down Syndrome Cork. The classic Garth Brooks hit, Callin' Baton Rouge, has been given the Covid-19 lockdown treatment in a bid to help support its 400 member families across Cork city and county.

In January of this year, two life-long music lovers and part-time musicians from Youghal, Richie Foley and Karl Prendergast, took the trip of a lifetime to Nashville, Tennessee with some friends. While there they met with many talented musicians and singers and stayed in touch with some on their return to Ireland.

In mid-March the world as we knew it was changed forever by Covid-19, and the people of Ireland were asked to isolate and stay indoors where possible. This meant an immediate cessation of all fundraising activities for countless charities across the country, including Down Syndrome Cork, who had no



Meeting KC Johns in AJ's Good Time Bar in Nashville in February 2020. (l-r) Mark Fitzgerald, Karl Prendergast, Niall Toner, KC Johns, Mick Mangan and Richie Foley.

choice but to stop all essential one-to-one supports for its members and their families.

Live music was one of the first industries affected by the lockdown, and many musicians found themselves at home with no work. It was during this time

that Karl and Richie decided to put together a track with a small number of the great musicians along with some of their new friends in Nashville.

"We are so thankful to everyone who gave their amazing talents to this track to help raise

some money for this wonderful cause," said the musical duo.

"We are appealing to everyone to donate as little or as much as they can on www.idonate.ie/DSCork2020, it will all help greatly."

With lead vocals from Irish Country stars Johnny Brady and Mike Denver along with East Cork native Caroline Fraher and Nashville's own up-and-coming star KC Johns, together with the superb talents of musicians and singers up and down this wonderful country, they have succeeded in creating a track that is worthy of any stadium across the world.

In true lockdown style they created a video to go along with the track to promote it as this month being Down Syndrome Awareness Month they wanted to include some great singers, dancers and musicians from the Down Syndrome community, you can see it on the Down Syndrome Cork facebook page or on YouTube.

READER COMPETITION

Win a €50 voucher to enjoy live audio broadcasts from The Everyman!

The Everyman, Cork has launched *Play It by Ear*, a programme of live audio streamed performances with a mix of rehearsed readings, comedy, and music – live from The Everyman stage and available through live audio broadcast to be experienced from wherever audiences are. The perfect night in at the theatre!

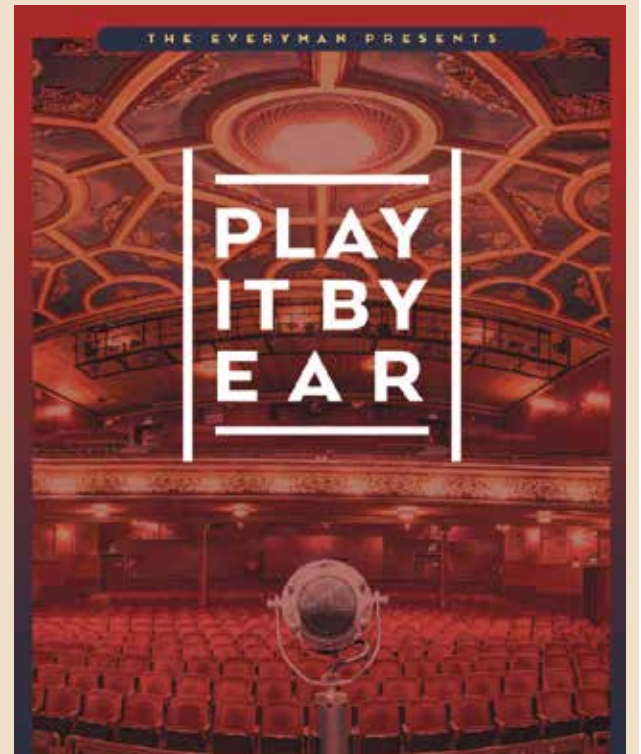
See the full programme of shows coming up in November and more to be added every week www.everymancork.com

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Be in with a chance of winning a €50 voucher to use for live audio broadcasts from The Everyman. Send your name and phone number with 'Everyman competition' in the subject line to info@westcorkpeople.ie before November 9.



Strictly Bantry 2020 winners announced online

As with so many events in 2020, the Strictly Bantry final was cancelled back in March, just two days before the live show. This was very disappointing for everyone involved, especially the dancers, their coaches and the organising committee.

This event was the annual fundraiser for St. Finbarr's Boys' National School in Bantry. Over

the last three years, Strictly Bantry has been an amazing community initiative, connecting people from all areas and of all ages. Principal Brian Gleeson, thanked everyone for their commitment and the wider West Cork community for their support, saying "The Strictly train has gone into lockdown not shutdown, we will be back, the strictly train is just slow-

ing down, it has not stopped." He added that the friendships formed and the community spirit that has emerged since Strictly started is remarkable.

Thankfully the semi final show was recorded. It was planned to host a cinema night to watch the show together as a group on the big screen, however the cinema screening had to be postponed due to restrictions.

It was decided to take the screening online and host a zoom party for the group, which the Strictly Bantry 2020 family tuned into zoom to watch together.

Based on the judge's scores and audience votes from the semi final, Mags Donaldson and Cathal McCarthy were announced as Strictly Bantry 2020 winners.

people Arts & Entertainment



Halloween

ACROSS

- 1 He swallowed the canary
2 Playground for ghosts
4 What a spider spins
5 Frankenstein has one

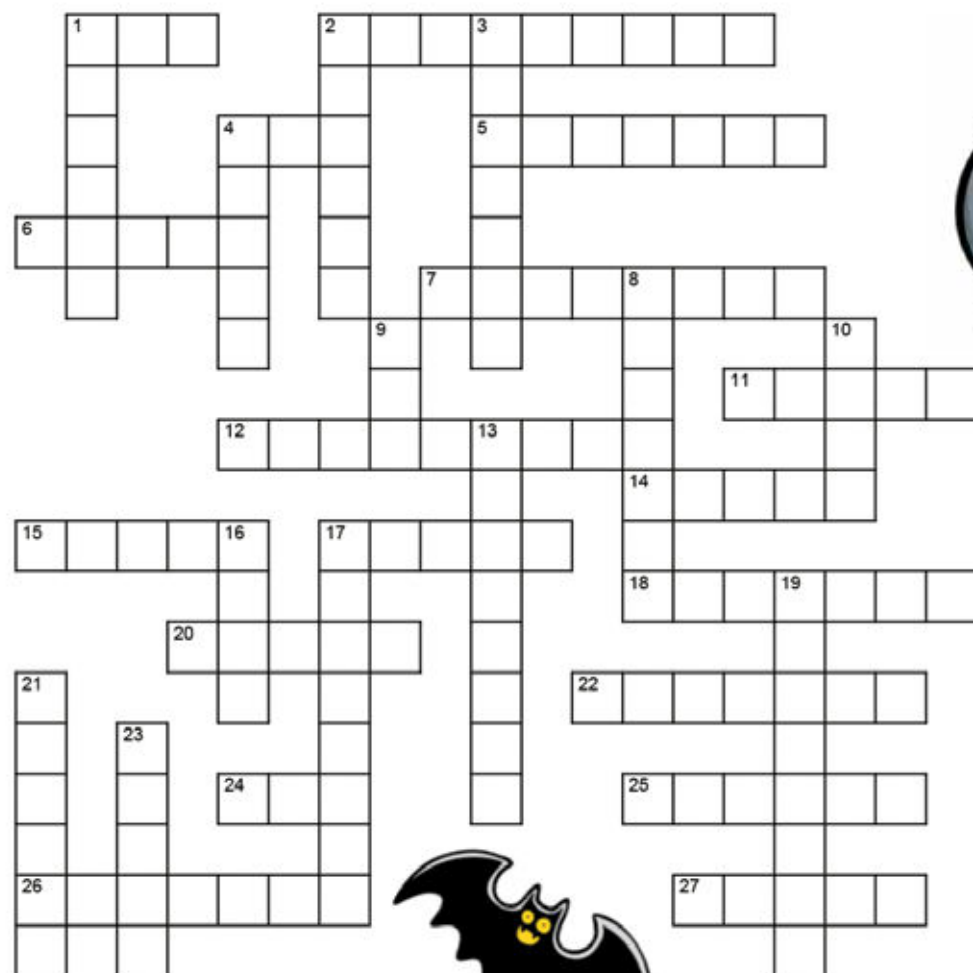
- 6 When ghosts come out to play
7 Scare
11 What the pot might call the kettle
12 October 31st
14 ____ or treat
15 Witch transportation
17 Frightening
18 The Count
20 A skeleton is just a bunch of these
22 Disguise

- 24 Lives in the belfry
25 Incey wincey is one of these
26 Main ingredient in a popular pie
27 ____ stories

DOWN

- 1 Where a vampire sleeps
2 Evil or mischievous creature
3 He hates garlic
4 Samantha for example

- 8 ____ house
9 Whoo? Whoo?
10 Mr O'Lantern
13 Comes out on a full moon
16 Might be full, half, or new
17 A boney sort of fellow
19 Fire burn, and ____ bubble
21 When something makes our skin crawl, it's this
23 Found in Egypt



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Down: 1. Coffin, 2. Goblin, 3. Vampire, 4. Witch, 8. Haunted, 9. Owl, 10. Jack, 13. Werewolf, 16. Moon, 17. Skeleton, 19. Cauldron, 21. Creepy, 23. Mummy.



On a dark winter night

Murky, short days creep up on us every year. Usually there is some form of compensation. For some, it is a cosy fire, drawing the curtains, shutting out the night. Not to mention the age-old festivals, customs, and traditions that bring some light into the darkness. Perhaps it is no accident that Halloween (and Guy Fawkes Night in the UK with its bonfires and fireworks) takes place around the start of the Celtic winter, i.e. in early November. As does All Souls' Day. When nature seems to have come to a standstill.

When most plants seem dead or dormant and branches are bare, while seeds keep their heads down. That is when we need light and heat.

It is also said that this is the time of the year when 'the veil is thinning'. As a manner of speaking or perhaps in a more literal sense? What to believe? Everything we see or sense may be the outcome of chemicals galloping around our brain or be as real as rain. And it is a fact that there are many areas where nothing is certain. Where do we go after death? What happens when we dream? These are

questions that may be scary to many people.

But it's all the more reason to play around a little with the objects and symbols that remind us of the uncanny. Maybe that is why skeletons, ghouls, witches, ghosts, phantoms, toothy and toothless monsters, spooky ships and coffins tend to abound at Samhain and Halloween events. Including the fantastic parades that we've seen in Clonakilty in past years or the annual Scarecrow Festival along the N71 in Leap that involved numerous volunteers and came with a big tongue in

cheek. Some acts were downright eerie. Such as the couple in Clonakilty without faces (wholly swathed in dark cloth), the three-faced tribe, wailing witches, or 'other-worldly creatures' blowing what looked like buffalo horns. The other side of the coin was that none of these beings were actually real, which made them quite funny. Who is afraid of a giant spider fashioned out of bin bags? Or a larger-than-life gorilla with fluorescent yellow eyes in a Hi-Viz safety vest?

Just laugh away the nightmares ...

Conceivably, the audience could do the same if there were to be a parade in 2021. Wear spooky masks and act out at a safe social distance. But that is a discussion for another day ...

For now we have to be creative within the limitations of a second lockdown. Try to recreate some of the 'buzz' online. DeBarra's Spoken Word will do just that in our November session entitled On A Dark Winter Night, which is dedicated to all things mysterious, woo woo, scary, and ghostly. If you have a tale to tell, a poem to read, a mask to put on, or a

pumpkin with a big grin you are very welcome to join in! Or watch from the Facebook page. Our special guests include Nuala Leonard, Maria Gillen, Anita Howard, Peter Tadd, Rae McKinlay, Mr. Fitzgerald Park, and perhaps John W. Sexton, all the way from Mars.

On A Dark Winter Night, November 4 at 8:30pm. Go to the event on DeBarra's Spoken Word's Facebook page just before it starts or email debar-rasspokenword@gmail.com for a link.



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.
email: astro@katearbon
www.katearbon.com

November Sun Signs

Late October events will set the tone for the first two weeks of November. The early days of November may be a time of integrating a new version of our life. We see a strong theme of change and an intensification as several patterns finally complete, or begin, a phase. Adapting at a fast pace is required to match the speed at which things are progressing now. There is also a bigger theme, one that spans the years of Uranus in the sign of Taurus from mid 2018 to mid 2025. Early November brings it into full focus.

The Full Moon in Taurus on October 31, exactly conjunct with Uranus, is the strong energy that carries us into this month and it brings an unstable and uncertain couple of weeks. We may see unexpected events or sudden revelations, which serve to wake us up to a reality that we didn't expect or foresee. Even if we have been preparing for the future we may be surprised at how soon it arrived to become routine daily life. Taurus is a fixed

earth sign and is inclined towards a peaceful and reliable lifestyle. It is most closely associated with our practical and sensual expression, the things that make life comfortable, as well as the ordinary but basic necessities of everyday needs. These are not simply the things we need to purchase but also the fulfilment of all human necessity, so there is a social level too. After all, it is a sign ruled by Venus, the planet that represents connection and sharing.

Uranus is a planet of change and redirection. It is the revolutionary, which overthrows the existing status quo and installs a new approach. It can bring sudden and unexpected shifts, as it seeks a freedom from the old or established ways. When it is acting on a material level it affects our systems and structures. It can bring chaos and disorder, at least temporarily during the shift into a new order. On a personal level it can set you free from any old conditioning and provide the means of breaking habits and entrenched thinking that bind you to the past.

It is a liberator and can potentially wake you up to the "higher truth" and a spiritual freedom so you can express your unique self.

Three planets, Mercury, Mars and Neptune, will turn to go direct once more after being in their retrograde phase. This also brings a swiftness to events and a change in dynamics as we get to make new ground and many of the themes of the past few months are now able to progress at high speed.

Mercury, still in retrograde, is in a really challenging position with Saturn and this happens to be exact twice within a few days. On November 1 and also November 6, in-between on November 3, it 'stations' to turn forwards once more. This is a rare sequence and indicates that frustrations and obstacles are everywhere. Mercury is all about communications and the everyday transactions we make. Saturn is the planet of limitation and restraint. Don't expect to get things moving or have a free flow in this first week. Blocks on conversation

topics and everyday movement are to be expected. This overbearing energy can run on into the second week until Mercury moves back into Scorpio on November 10 and then we may expect to hear some of what's been hidden as the truth comes out.

When Mars turns to go forwards on November 14, it can finally progress freely through its own sign of Aries. This fiery and assertive energy is not afraid of conflict and sets its own agenda with a determination to follow through. So we may see some of this energy unleashed over the next several weeks. It coincides with the New Moon of November 15, which sets the next trend. In Scorpio there is more intensity and depth of feeling behind our actions. Subtle means to achieving our desires may be the way now, as outward confrontation is not a Scorpio style.

The following few weeks have Mercury and then Venus in an opposition to Uranus. This pulls back in an unsettled tone that

continues into December. Shocking revelations can be disruptive to our plans, as stability is replaced by a more chaotic theme once more. There is going to be patterns of order versus chaos everywhere in the coming months. Finding stability on a personal and inward level will be the challenge.

The Month ends with a Full Moon and Lunar eclipse in Gemini. This is part of an air sign sequence of eclipses, which are the trend now, beginning June 2020 until December 2021. This pattern puts our minds to work alongside our emotional ebbs and flows. Gemini brings the everyday connections into focus. A Mercury ruled sign that has a lot of ideas and loves to communicate. There are two sides to a story and this eclipse may take us from one side into the other for a while.

November has a New Moon at 24° Scorpio on November 15 at 5.07am and the Full Moon Eclipse is at 9° Gemini on November 30 at 9.29am.



Aries: Now is a time for getting down to business, stripping away and discarding non-essentials or even memories of things past. The situation you are in manages to support some mental or physical housecleaning on your part. You can now separate the wheat from the chaff, concentrating on important things. You are unsentimental about all of this. There is no place in your life for outworn or flimsy goods, ideas or relationships. Innovations, new and possibly unconventional approaches to being productive or making money are all in order. Your response to life becomes more original and innovative.



Taurus: Perhaps this is a very social time, during which you receive all kinds of support from those around you. You may neglect individual concerns in favour of group or social affairs. Relationships are nourished and very much in focus. This is a time for turning away from your personal experiences by responding in a more spiritual and socially minded manner. You can handle your own past, and you want to share, especially by directly relating to others either intimately or through a joint project. You are able to love and care for both yourself and others.



Gemini: Efforts on your part to improve your health, diet, and physical condition show some results now. You are encouraged to attend to nagging details just to get them out of the way. This is a time of self-examination and re-evaluation. You are sorting through the experiences of the last several months, separating the worthwhile from the worthless and, in general, salvaging what you can. An inner drive may find you out and about, feeling like getting together with like minds. You may be urged to adopt a more open or impersonal attitude toward yourself or others. Expect important relationships to take up more of your attention now.



Cancer: The trend for you is to be more creative and expressive. Others may urge you on toward a more self-confident and outgoing attitude. You get a sense of having lived and experienced something important through these last months. Perhaps there is a dawning awareness of who you are and what you have of value. Together with a growing sense of self-discovery you may find yourself very appreciative of your more imaginative qualities. You enjoy expression from the heart and real life dramas. Children, animals and physical expression may appeal. Soon your mind will turn towards matters of health as you take stock of your physical condition.



Leo: The focus is on your home and private life, which could be very rewarding now. Your feelings and sense of security may find you seeking seclusion for a time or losing yourself in past memories. This marks the end of a phase of questioning. Now you can get a sense of where you stand, secure your position, feel whatever limits there are, and move forward. You have a base to build upon. You've sent down roots. This could be a creative time for you, in particular regarding ideas, concepts, and expressing or communicating yourself. You can put your experience and feelings into words and may be at your most witty and dramatic.



Virgo: Your ideas, words and ability to communicate works well and you find needed support or backing from those around you. Your ideas and thoughts may be very deep and rich and memories are especially vivid. You are exploring and searching now, linking things together, following up connections, seeing where the ends meet, until finally you find the limits to the sense of connection with others. You may come full circle and once again have a feeling of being on your own but you are clearer about the supports you have. Next, begin to consider what aspects of your past you would like to put behind you.



Libra: You may receive special attention from your friends and people around you. Maybe it's time to reassess the relationships you have with the people in your local area. Women, younger people, and your home environment may contribute somehow to improve your financial standings giving you a sense that you have some back up and reserves. This is a good time to respond to new ideas and find a footing on which you can build firm a foundation. You may be gathering your resources, with the desire to act on vital ideas or impulses that you've experienced. Projects benefit from nurturing and growth.



Scorpio: You may feel more self-oriented and concerned with appearances than usual. You can find yourself being put across in a good light or receiving praise. Friends and family unite to support you. Use that security to turn away from the outer world, focusing now on personal and inner changes. This is a good time to let go of anything that is worn out and superficial and only bring what you need into your improved personal life. New information available now sparks your imagination. Your mind and ideas may turn to questions of finance and material support. You could come up with new ideas relating to money, possessions, values, and potential investments.



Sagittarius: Understanding and generosity may be forthcoming from friends or family. Your own efforts to be helpful and give freely of yourself are well rewarded. Put up with minor inconveniences and irritations for the sake of what is really important in your life. Sacrifices made now will be more than repaid by an increased ability on your part to bring things to life and make dreams real. You could find yourself in an understanding mood, able to appreciate and value the humility and sublimation that goes into any effort with goals, which reach beyond the personal. You may generally feel more inclusive and want to create a harmonious environment by dissolving outworn defences.



Capricorn: Community concerns and altruism in general may get an added boost during this time. People around you unite to make long-term goals and ideals seem more possible. This is a good time for resolutions and attempting to put into practice your heartfelt desires. You may feel moved to co-operate and work together with others on community and long-term projects. You want to make your dreams a reality. Your business sense is enhanced, and you are able to really get down to what is important when it comes to making decisions affecting your material welfare. Superficial possessions may no longer

interest you. Instead, things of lasting value appeal.



Aquarius: There is a lot of support for you to make job-related and practical decisions. Your ambitions could receive encouragement from friends, co-workers, and those around you. This is a time when your practical vision may be at a high. You can see what needs to be done and just how to go about doing it. Long term goals and projects may benefit from the increased clarity you possess. You become aware that a little self-sacrifice and an understanding attitude on your part could have far-reaching effects on your own life-path and general direction during this time period. A little long-suffering and restraint now could really pay off later.



Pisces: This is a time to concentrate on essentials and to focus on the essence of your situation. 'Take care of business' is the key to your current situation. A good time for deep thinking, take a turn toward more lasting values. Right now, you can expect encouragement regarding all things candid and honest. A lack of superficiality finds you straight to the point, interested in the truth of things. Perhaps a re-kindling of personal philosophical and religious thoughts is required also. The foundations of belief you lay down now are there to be built on in the future.

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West Cork Creates Exhibition 2020 'Harvest' extended until end of the year!



Kathleen Holland
Acorn Studs
sterling silver €65

Exhibition curated by Alison Ospina runs online until January 31, 2021

It's been an especially tough year for the arts, with many organisations having to change tactics at short notice in order to 'adapt or die'. This was certainly the case for the annual West Cork Creates exhibition, usually to be seen in the O'Driscoll building in Skibbereen every August and September, as part of the Taste of West Cork Festival.

When the lockdown came into effect back in March, the selected artists had already started to prepare work for the show and for the first few months they and the organisers were left in a state of uncertainty as to whether or not the show would go ahead at all.

Discussions took place (via Zoom) and eventually the committee decided that the exhibition and shop would go fully digital for the first time ever.

Curator Alison Ospina said "We didn't want to let the artists and craftspeople down. They

work so hard and West Cork Creates is one of the major opportunities they have in the year to sell their work. This is something we probably should have done anyway, so we thought, why not give it a try?"

With the help of Cork County Council and Design and Crafts Council of Ireland funding, they launched into action, creating a website, online shop, virtual gallery and Instagram account between April and August. They also launched a social media campaign to promote the event and launch, took out online and print advertising and started an email newsletter.

The exhibition was launched via Zoom, with an introduction and reading from Cork poet Theo Dorgan.

West Cork Creates unofficial 'Digital Manager', Ana Ospina, has been a member of the WCC committee since 2017 and was responsible for creating the website and other online elements. She said "It hasn't been plain sailing by any means and sales were slow at first, compared to the physical exhibition. But we have been working on growing our online audience,



Margaret Dukeman,
Standing Ireland Strong
Oil on Canvas €1,450

including overseas customers that wouldn't have had access before.

Normally the exhibition would have ended in mid-September but the online format has allowed us to extend the show until the end of January 2021, making the most of the Winter shopping season."

A superb mix of unique fine art, sculpture, photography, ceramics, silver and gold jewellery, basketry and furniture can be seen and purchased from the



Diane Carton, Basket
3 Coloured Tote €240

site with no extra shipping cost within Ireland. The website also offers shipping within Europe for a fixed price. Shipping to other locations is possible by arrangement, subject to pandemic-related restrictions.

Without the constraints of a physical gallery, curator Alison Ospina and her team have not only brought the artworks online, but through creative use of social media and technology, their audience/followers can also enjoy videos; see interviews with the artists; and browse the gallery and shop.

The majority of items for sale are 'one-offs' so don't leave it too late to make your wishlist!

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West Cork filmmaker Pat Collins elected to Aosdána



The Mayor of County Cork, Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley has extended congratulations to West Cork filmmaker Pat Collins on his election to Aosdána, the affiliation of creative artists in Ireland.

Aosdána, founded in 1981, honours artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the creative arts in Ireland and assists members in devoting their energies fully to their art.

Pat Collins, a filmmaker with a long and distinguished body of work, has made over 30 films since his debut in

1999. Works include the feature film 'Songs of Granite' (2017), a portrait of Joe Heaney. Other portrait films include; 'A Private World' (2004), portrait of John McGahern; 'Tim Robinson: Connemara', (2011) a portrait of Tim Robinson and 'Taibhsi i mBeal Na Gaoithe', (2007) on Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Collins was co-director of the three-part series 1916, which broadcast on RTÉ, BBC and PBS in America. His award-winning feature film Silence 2012 received its international premiere at London International Film Festival in 2013. He has also

directed two political feature essay films What We Leave in Our Wake (2009) and Living in a Coded Land (2014).

In 2012, the Irish Film Institute curated a mid-career retrospective of his work. His experimental film work has screened at the Absolute Gallery at Galway Arts Festival 2013, at the ICA London, at Recontres Internationales London/Berlin, Visual Carlow and numerous Irish and international film festivals.

Speaking of the announcement, Mayor Linehan Foley said, "Pat Collins has been

making film for many years and his election to Aosdána is further recognition of the impact he has had on visual arts in Cork, nationally and internationally. To join the luminaries and visionaries of Aosdána shows that Pat is an immense figure in filmmaking. This honour is hard-earned and truly deserved."

'Henry Glassie: Field-work', Pat Collins' latest feature documentary, premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2019 and is due to be released in Autumn 2020.

people Arts & Entertainment

Irish series of short films explore the notion of life and death in the time of Covid

When producer Niamh Fagan brought IFTA winning director Tom Sullivan and BAFTA winning writer Kevin Toolis together to explore the notion of life and death in the time of Covid, 'Is Olc an Ghaoth' was born.

'Is Olc an Ghaoth' is an Achill Island Gothic Triptych – three sad-funny short films

that fold into each other, set on a slightly off-kilter, quirky Covid-bound Island.

Kevin Toolis, known for his bestselling book, 'My Father's Wake - How the Irish Teach Us to Live, Love and Die' wrote the three screenplays which were brought to life by multi-award-winning director Tom Sullivan (Arracht, Fir Bolg.). "There's a pathos in the

quiet, observational style of Kevin's writing and a gentle, dark humour, it's why I loved the scripts, that and the setting. There is something almost otherworldly about the West of Ireland particularly in places like Achill, it's what we set out to capture," said Tom Sullivan. He added, "I've always been attracted to the kind of defiant stoicism you see in rural Ireland – those who didn't get the fancy education, who didn't 'do well' in Cleveland or Chicago. The story is about those people that kept the, albeit at times smouldering, flame alight."

'Is Olc an Ghaoth' features some of the finest actors in the country, Stiofán Seoige (Murdair Mhám Trasna, Na Cloigne, Ros na Rún), John Finn (Cold Case, The Waking Dead, The Crown, An Bronntanas), Carrie Crowley (Fair City, Rásaí na Gaillimhe) and

Peadar Cox (Song of Granite, Fir Bolg, Ros na Rún).

Whatever about Life and Death in the Time of Covid, filming during Covid-Time was a very real challenge. Producer Niamh Fagan (Shooting the Mafia, Rásaí na Gaillimhe) commented, "Shooting on location is challenging at the best of times, doing so under Covid Rules is doubly so. TG4 were really supportive. They trusted us to take the Covid issue seriously and let us get on with the job in hand. We had a great team who all worked together to comply with the additional restrictions and rules. We were a lean, mean shooting machine – we were on location, shot, in the can and home before the virus even knew we had been there".

Is Olc an Ghaoth is on TG4 on Sunday, November 1, Lá Na Marbh, at 10.30pm



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Inspirational story of Beara's Johnnie Gill available to purchase online

'Who was Johnnie Wheels?' by Victor Sullivan has just been re-launched due to popular demand and the availability of online sales.

This inspirational book is based on the true story of Johnnie Gill who was born in Beara in 1862. He became a cripple at

the age of nine through a tragic accident. As a result of this he could not walk, stand or sit, therefore he spent his life in a prone position until his death at the age of 70.

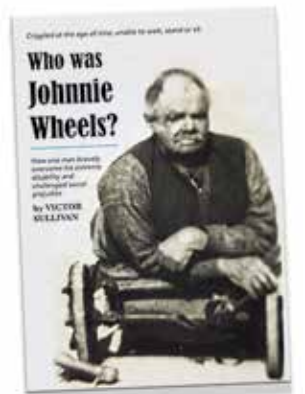
Despite hardship, prejudice and disability, this remarkable man succeeded in making a living for himself by intelligence,

skill, strength and willpower.

This book featured recently on c103fm with John Greene.

All profits are donated to the Irish Wheelchair Association. It is available online at ifund-raise.ie/johnnie.

Phone enquiries 087 2759279 or 087 2514811.



people Environment : Making a difference



NATURE TALKS

April Danann

April Danann is a food influencer, creating new trends in healthy sustainable living as part of her clinical practice as a Naturopath Herbalist Herbal Nutritionist Intuitive. She lives in West Cork where she is a natural bee keeper and can often be found in the hedgerows.

Listen and look towards each new day

If nature could talk what would she tell us? Especially now of all times to be here on this planet while our lives are turned around and certainly altered for the better and worse.

I wonder if nature would give us some sage advice for the coming long cold winter nights we are sure to face as the days close in.

Perhaps she would tell us to savour these times as part of our yearly quietening before the rush of Christmas.

Maybe there would be a gentle reminder to pay attention to the trees, plants and

flowers of winter. You know the ones that struggle to bloom in spite of the fresh breezes and the heavy rain.

Or perhaps they blossom because of it?

She might even mention that we are part of her, an extension or even a reflection of the wonderful ways that all things seem to be part of a much bigger pattern, a flow and those endless cycles of seasonal change.

Her advice might be to take our herbal tea to settle a tummy, include something wild and foraged with a meal, or enjoy a walk in the forest to

steady ourselves.

When we delve more deeply into listening to nature and all she has to say there is one thing standing out for us to ponder; no matter the wreckage and turbulence of a few hours storm or the flood of rain that frequent our shores....

We will always arrive at a new day, refreshed, cleansed and uplifted.

There is something flourishing in the hedgerows for everybody, every season and we have the gift of nature to guide us onwards.

April Danann has developed her own wild fermentation SCOBYs, mothers and starters... she produces some of the cleanest, barrel fermented Apple Cider Vinegar, Herbal

Kombucha, herbal teas and coffees available and manages to forage, grow and seek out the natural everywhere she goes. www.aprildanann.com.



people Environment : Making a difference

Green Party Cork South West – Your local green voice

By Brendan McCormack,
Local Chairperson

We live in interesting times. This is without doubt. 2020 has brought challenges that no one could have imagined 12 months ago. We have always known in the Green Party that the world is changing and Covid-19 has shown just how vulnerable we are to that. Again and again, we have seen how our communities rise to the challenge, how front line workers have performed courageously and at great risk, how our young have adapted to circumstances no students have ever encountered, and how local, national and European politics plays a part in preparing us and allocating the necessary resources for all of us to come through this. We also recognise that our recovery and our future will be centred on green policies.

Cork South West is a place that is vulnerable to climate change – droughts and floods are only going to get worse. Our coastal settlements are vulnerable to sea level rise and more erosion. Our economy is dependent on the quality of our environment – it's part of our brand and why people visit or choose to live here and why they buy our quality foods. We can get a grip and really help in the fight for a safer climate or be victims. Let's cop-on and make the most of how we can really rise to climate change as a threat.

Locally, we have been focused this year on submissions to the Cork County Development

Plan, which when complete, will determine how a lot of County will look through to 2028.

We want to see better planning for age-friendly and high quality accessible pedestrian access to streets and squares in our towns and villages. Our waste management policies must increase the availability of recycling and encourage the reusing of resources. Our streets and roads must benefit from increased spending on pedestrianisation and priority cycling routes. Our local link bus services can be expanded to provide better mobility for the elderly and the young.

Our towns and villages must benefit from initiatives centred on creating smart sustainable communities. The benefits of remote working have to be encouraged. This will make a big difference to rural Cork attracting jobs. We want bring people back into our town centres and to stop the waste of unused buildings. These are changes Cork County Council can make. We also want to see a Museum of West Cork established so that the full story of our region's history, where our environment and culture is brought to the fore. We've got a great story to tell.

We want to see biodiversity prioritised, for the Council to take this seriously before it is too late. How much better our towns and villages would look with flower-filled verges and green spaces. Why shouldn't we see SW Cork more nature-rich and leading the way in using our quality environment to create more jobs and resilience?

We have made submissions to Coillte on the use of glyphosphates near Lough Hyne, to Cork CoCo on the cutting down of mature woodlands near Inishannon, and on the flooding events in August and most recently in Bantry. We have asked our Ministers to look into the recent issue of inshore fishing that is causing damage to Special Areas of Conservation in Bantry Bay. Our local representative, Dr Marc O'Riain, led a community action in Kinsale against a 4G Vodafone mast being erected within the Area of Architectural conservation and on the historic town wall.

The new Development plan offers a chance to build in social justice into our plans. Our urban and rural ways of life must be protected. It should be easy to be more sustainable but the County must help this along.

If you want to be part of this, get in touch now. We will be building towards running candidates at the next local elections in the three areas – Kinsale/Bandon, Skibbereen/Clonakilty, and Bantry/Beara. We will be looking to win seats in all three. If we do not put biodiversity and climate change at the heart of our local Government thinking, we will be beset with challenges we are not ready for. And real opportunities will be missed. Nature really is our 'green gold'.

If you would like to get in touch, please email us at corkgreens@greenparty.ie or message us on our facebook page 'Cork South West Green Party' or on twitter at @Green-PartyCSW



West Cork's Ballinspittle one of a number of Cork schools honoured for water conservation efforts

Green-Schools moved its annual Water Awards ceremony online last week, with a virtual ceremony shown on screens in 24 schools around the country. Postponed in May due to COVID-19 restrictions, the ceremony celebrates the winners of the annual Water School of the Year Awards; Water poster competition and Water Ambassador Programme. The Green-Schools Water theme is supported by Irish Water.

Michaela Coholan from Ballinspittle NS won a prize in the Junior Primary category of last year's Water Poster Competition.

Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil in Glanmire, Cork and Dominican College, Galway City were named Ireland's Water Schools of the Year (primary and secondary). Gaelscoil Uí Drisceoil impressed the judges with their commitment to the Water theme and spreading water conservation messages in their school

and community. Along with rainwater collection, visiting a wastewater treatment plant and holding a water-themed action day, the school surveyed students on plastic bottle versus reusable bottle use. Their actions lead to an impressive decrease in water use from 11.871 per person per day to 9.981.

St. Mary's Special School, Rochestown, Co. Cork were also awarded as the winning Secondary School of the Year for the Southern Region of the country. Also awarded today was The Green-Schools programme has moved much of its interaction online for the current school year, having developed a suite of Green-Schools Stay Home resources since March, including 13 weeks of activities related to the Water theme. This is the seventh year of the awards and partnership with Irish Water, which has seen over 2,000 schools attend interactive Water

Workshops and Walk for Water Events since 2013.

Following the awards, Colm Ward of Irish Water, said: "A key part of Irish Water's role in safeguarding Ireland's water supplies is helping the next generation understand the importance of conserving water. I am delighted to say that in the past year alone, as a result of this programme, Green-Schools have saved almost 600 million litres of water.

"The success of the participating schools in reducing water usage and raising awareness about water issues really highlights how important it is to learn about the value of water and water conservation from a young age. That's why this is such an important programme and one that Irish Water is proud to sponsor."

MC-ing the event from a remote studio, Green-Schools Manager Cathy Baxter said: "It was definitely not the same to be

staring into a camera and set of screens for today's event, instead of at a group of friendly faces, but we have to carry on. Over 200 members of the schools' communities and each winners' extended family could watch the ceremony through a live link today and we received messages of support that students and families appreciated their work being rewarded and recognised in this way. Messages like that keep us going at times like this!"

Twelve students won prizes for their artwork designed for this year's Green-Schools Irish Water Poster Competition and four groups of students were honoured for their work as Water Ambassadors in their schools and communities. This year also saw the first group of students winning for their entry to the inaugural video category of the Poster Competition.



South Regional Junior Primary Category Winning Poster by Michaela Coholan, Ballinspittle NS, Ballinspittle

people Environment : Making a difference

The beauty of the bog

The Kilcoe Studios Calendar has over the years become more of a project than just a business to its creator. It is a project that gets **Sonia Caldwell** to explore new habitats and new plant types each year and then, near the end of the time spent painting the images for the Calendar, the research begins; a whole other discovery of literature happens – both

scientific and more artistic. Sonia then aims to just share snippets of this information on the plant or the habitat that can be read each month – so it is more than just a Calendar!

The images are painted directly from the plant in watercolour paint, which is a practice she began

many years ago when doing sketchbook studies for her sculptural work.

The Calendar for 2021 features images from our bogs, of which there are many in West Cork and she shares with us here just some of the interesting facts about bogs that also feature in the Calendar.



layers of history, and we have discovered ancient objects; bodies, butter, old bog roads and the whole Céide field system of wooden houses and fields from the Neolithic (approximately 10,000-4,000 BC) period, which was under four metres of peat in Co Mayo.

The study of pollen in layers of peat in the bogs has also been a rich source of information that has allowed people to study change in climate and conditions over thousands of years, with the fascinating observation of the gradual move of pollen from trees to grasses as our landscape moved from woodland to grassland.

Thankfully the Climate Change issue still seems to be being tackled at government level despite the troubles of these times. We often do not realise that peatlands are also a sink for carbon dioxide. In Ireland Peatlands store 53 per cent of all soil carbon on the island,

but only if it is left undisturbed.

Peatland originally covered approximately 17 per cent of Ireland. It now currently covers approximately five per cent. Currently 53 sites have been designated as special areas of conservation and 75 more as Natural Heritage areas. This has been hampered considerably by the 'turbary rights' system that allows individuals to cut turf for their own use, even on protected areas. Cutting turf is huge part of local culture and spending days on the bogs cutting turf was an integral part of life.

In the same way that Bogs are changing over time, so too will our views and practices. Many European countries, especially Holland, have almost destroyed all of their bogs and are now spending enormous amounts of money trying to save and reclaim what is left.

The setting up of the Irish Peatland Conservation council in 1982 was an important stage

in our Bog preservation. There seems to active steps being made to preserve our Bogs but, like all things, there is a constant balance to be met between the need to live, commercial interest and preserving our wildlife.

It seems that the best balance is a combination of preserving large areas of un-cut Peatland, allowing areas that have been cut to restore slowly over time and allowing some areas to be used commercially but sensitively.

Plants native to the area and habitat can be re-established – like willow for biomass, broad leaf trees and some of the smaller native plants, which feature in the calendar and which have medicinal uses and can be used commercially for this purpose.

The plants that feature in the Calendar are the small plants – Eyebright, Tormertil, Sundew, Bog Pimpernel, Marsh Lousewort and Bog Myrtle, Wild Billberries (Fraocháns),

Heath Milkwort, Bog Bean, Bog Cotton, Heath Spotted Orchid, Bog Asphodel, Marsh Cinquefoil, Purple Moor Grass {Fionnán} Heather, Devils Bit Scabious and Broad Buckler Fern. Names are given in Latin and Gaelige also.

Thankfully Kilcoe studios was selling online prior to 2020, so it is easy to order online, but it can also be bought in most shops in West Cork, many of which are offering some sort of service to customers either online or by phone during Level Five restrictions – so give them lots of support this Christmas.

Shops stocking the Calendar in Cork are Forest and Flock, Designs; Ballydehob Post office; Quinlans, Green Dot, Bookstór, Wild Designs; and Cork Craft and Design. The Calendar is also assisted on by a local graphic designer and is printed in City Print in Cork.

A bog is an area which is covered with peat, which is a deposit that is formed under waterlogged conditions when the moss and grasses and the other plants

cannot break down, due to lack of oxygen and the acidic habitat. Not all bogs are the same; they are a constantly changing environment throughout history.

As a result, they have created



GROUNDED

An occasional column by **Grace O'Sullivan** – mother, environment and peace activist, ecologist, MEP

Grace, a mother of three from Tramore, Co. Waterford, spent 20 years working with Greenpeace and was a crewmember of the Rainbow Warrior, when it was bombed by the French Foreign Intelligence Service in 1985. She served as a Senator for three years, before being elected to the European Parliament, where she is a proactive and outspoken member of important committees on Fisheries (PECH), and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). She is also a member of delegations on Mercosur and Palestine, and a member of a number of working groups. She is Green Party Spokesperson on Environmental Protection, Natural Resources, Marine and Tourism.

We need to make environment central to the new CAP: Grace O'Sullivan, Green Party MEP

At the recent Plenary week in the European Parliament, I spoke about the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) package. Plenary is the intensely busy session where the entire parliament comes together to debate and vote on a multitude of issues. This month, while Brexit and Covid were obviously on the agenda, high on the list were the multiple amendments we were voting on around the future CAP. When I say multiple, I refer to almost 2000 amendments, many of them highly technical.

I can't say, in all honesty, that it was the best week to be Green, where decisions around the future of agriculture are concerned. Some had described this as the CAP Reform. I suggested, when I addressed the Parliament, that whoever had come up with that description should check a dictionary.

Reform would mean improving what the European Commission presented, aligning the CAP package with and integrating the targets of the Biodiversity Strategy, The Farm to Fork

Strategy and, most importantly, the European Green Deal (the von der Leyen Commission's flagship programme).

Against the backdrop of an unravelling climate and biodiversity emergency, the future CAP should be transformative. It won't be. As it stands, the future CAP will be regressive.

Only a few days before the Plenary debates on CAP, I was addressing the ENVI (Environment, Food Safety and Public Health Committee) and other committees at the launch of a European Court of Auditors report. That report concluded that declining biodiversity on farmland is a major threat to both the environment and to farming itself. It was a conclusion that weighed heavy on my mind throughout the following week's votes.

There is absolutely no question but that farmers need to be supported. I don't argue with the CAP providing payments to farmers, indeed, over the years those payments have been a lifeline for the agriculture sector at home in Ireland. However, it's

now vital, and urgent, that those payments are carefully targeted.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity estimates that we have just 10 years to save our planet's biodiversity from mass extinction. Farmers I speak to know how important healthy soil, songbirds and pollinators are to their work and they want to encourage biodiversity on their land.

It's crystal clear that the current CAP, from 2014 - 2020, was not designed well enough to adequately support our farmers in protecting and restoring biodiversity on farmland. The new CAP proposal we debated was made by the last Commission, when Phil Hogan was the EU Commissioner for Agriculture. The Greens in the European Parliament did their best in arguing that the Commission should align the EU's biggest spending programme (CAP) with its most important overarching policy (the European Green Deal). In order to ensure this policy coherence, the Commission should have come out with a new CAP proposal. In an ironic twist, the

new EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, has publicly agreed that the CAP package is not fit for purpose.

MEPs who voted in favour of the CAP claimed the proposal is better for the environment and climate than the last one. They justify this with claims that the environmental aspects of the CAP are more mainstreamed across the programme than ever before. The difficulty with this argument, though, is that there are so many loopholes that this amounts to nice wording and greenwashing rather than anything of real substance.

An example of this is around direct payments to farmers. A good portion (30pc) has been allocated to so-called 'eco-schemes'. This is a higher percentage than ever before. However, the scope of these 'eco-schemes', which are voluntary for farmers, have been diluted because the rules that guide them have been weakened so much that their net effect will result in very little environmental change.

A possible saving grace in this situation is that there is wriggle room around how Member States implement CAP on the ground. If we shirk our responsibility to both the planet and the future sustainability of agriculture, by not ensuring that the implementation of the next CAP on the ground in Ireland is radically different in terms of nature protection, we will be in big trouble.

Rules and rewards shape behaviour and practice. In the context of a climate and biodiversity emergency, those rules and rewards need to be effective. We are on borrowed time and we cannot afford to find ourselves listening to these same arguments year after year as the clock ticks down.

CAP must continue to provide vital support to farmers. But that support needs to be targeted at a transition into improving farming methods that help to halt, not speed up, our hurtling and runaway progression towards mass extinction.

people Environment : Making a difference

What on earth is an 'Earth Protector Community'?

ENVIRONMENTAL
MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

The year was 1970, the place Washington DC. A Yale Professor, Arthur Galston, addressed the Conference on War and National Responsibility. He was devastated that his 1943 PhD work that focused on finding a chemical means to make soybeans flower and fruit earlier, had been used by biological warfare scientists at Fort Detrick to develop the toxic defoliant, Agent Orange, Galston proposed a new international agreement to ban massive damage and destruction of ecosystems that he called 'Ecocide'.

In 1972 at the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Olof Palme then Prime Minister of Sweden, spoke explicitly of the Vietnam War as an Ecocide; and it was discussed in the unofficial events running parallel to the official UN Stockholm Conference on Human Environment. Others also called for Ecocide to be an international crime, including Indira Gandhi from India and Tang Ke, the leader of the Chinese delegation. A Working Group on Crimes Against

the Environment was formed at the conference, and a draft Ecocide Convention was submitted into the United Nations.

In 1973 there was growing support from government, the United Nations and communities, to amend the Rome Statute to include Ecocide as the fifth International crime to stand alongside the crime of Genocide.

Now a local to global grassroots movement is calling for communities to ask the question, "How would we live our lives if the crime of Ecocide was already included in the Rome Statute? How would we work towards becoming regenerative communities facilitating the transition from harm to harmony?"

The vision, which was conceived by Barrister Polly Higgins, who in 2010 submitted the definition to the UN Law Commission, is a thriving network of resilient and regenerative communities, in harmony with the earth's ecosystems.

Cities, towns, villages, educational institutions, businesses and other organisations, can declare themselves Earth Protector Communities and work together to protect the land, wildlife, air, soil and water.

An exceptional example of this has a presence right here on the island of Ireland.

When Ray Anderson, founder of the carpet manufacturer Interface, read 'The Ecology of Commerce' by Paul Hawken, he was so moved as to set up a task force to create his company's environmental vision.

In his book, Hawken argues that the industrial system is destroying the planet and only

industry leaders are powerful enough to stop it.

In 1994 Interface, set their mission to eliminate any negative impact they may have on the environment by the year 2020. This meant redesigning of processes and products, pioneering of new technologies, reducing or eliminating waste and harmful emissions, while increasing the use of renewable materials and sources of energy.

Many thought it an outrageous ambition, however not only did they achieve this ahead of target, every flooring product they offer being 100 per cent carbon neutral, but they have set a new mission. They state on their website, "It's no longer enough to limit the damage we do, but to think about reversing it. We want to restore our planet and leave a positive impact."

What Ray Anderson had recognised, is that Nature is our life support system and that for years we have been mortgaging the wellbeing of future generations to create a 'fast buck'. This is not only about climate change; this is about social health, mental health, spiritual health and indeed, is about human rights and intergenerational justice.

There is indeed urgency!

The Houses of the Oireachtas/RTÉ Youth Assembly on Climate in November 2019 brought 157 students from across Ireland to the Dáil Chamber to discuss how Ireland needs to address the climate crisis, establish the next urgent steps for Ireland and present them to the nation.

They drew up a series of recommendations, includ-

ing a ban on the import of fracked energy goods and a commitment to invest solely in renewables, a tiered tax on emissions from large companies and legal moves to outlaw 'acts of Ecocide'.

Bringing together these students fits entirely within the vision of the Earth Community Trust, which believes that a key step in the transition towards regenerative community is bringing together all stakeholders in local areas (villages, towns, cities, businesses, universities) to openly and creatively participate in changing the way we live, learn and work together.

In a top down, bottom up approach they also endorse campaigns which support the ongoing legal and diplomatic work to make Ecocide an international crime.

What would it look like if we lived our lives AS IF the Law of Ecocide was already in existence?

The time is now for global co-operation on local system change initiatives for community resilience. What better way to show our politicians that we demand full political support for change, than to start to live that change in our communities?

The hardest part of this is to get started; and yet many organisations that have already set up, organisations like Tidy Towns, Zero Waste, Cork Climate Action, UCC Environmental Society, Irish Environmental Network, Cork Cycling Campaign, BirdWatch Ireland, Bantry Bay - Protect Our Native Kelp Forest, Streamscapes, Fridays for Future, Eco Congregation Ireland and many, many others, are already working towards

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intergenerational and ecological health.

Seeing all these communities as a meshwork of change, all part of creating an Earth Protector Community throughout Ireland starts to create critical mass; creates a compelling argument that cannot be ignored by policy makers and politicians.

What would it be like if we lived our lives AS IF the Law of Ecocide was already in existence?

If you are interested in helping Cork City become an Earth Protector Community mail-to: shepearthaware@gmail.com

If you are interested in helping create Earth Protector Communities in West Cork, mailto: irelandearthprotector@gmail.com

To learn more about Earth Protector Communities go to earthprotectorcommunities.net

To learn more about the Law of Ecocide go to www.endecocide.eu or www.stopecocide.earth/become

Pollinator Plans roll-out for three West Cork towns

The West Cork towns of Kinsale, Bantry and Macroom are set to become brighter and more bee friendly with the anticipated roll-out of Cork County Council's Pollinator Plans. These plans guide the Council's management of publicly owned spaces within the towns, to ensure bees, and other insects that helpfully pollinate our flowering plants, are encouraged and supported.

County Mayor, Cllr Mary Linehan Foley, welcomed the initiative, which is also happening in Carrigaline, Kanturk and Fermoy, saying, "We've seen the Middleton Pollinator Plan become a great success

with some surprising results like the appearance of rare orchids, and I'm delighted to see that six more Cork towns are to follow suit. Sadly, the populations of many of our pollinator species are declining, with about one-third of our native bee species threatened with extinction. We all know the importance of bees to food production. This is a timely mitigation from Cork County Council and will be a boost of beauty to each town. I look forward to seeing all the bright pollinator plants blooming in these towns come Spring."

Chief Executive of Cork County Council, Tim Lucey, commented, "Cork County



Council is identifying and implementing new strategies for the management of public spaces in our towns, to promote biodiversity and provide food and habitats for our wild pollinator species, which are an essential component of a healthy environment. The Pollinator Plans are being led by a consultant ecologist and are inspired by the success of the first Town Pollinator Plan in the county, prepared by Cork County Council for Middleton in 2019. We hope to extend the project to include additional towns in the coming years."

Pollinator Plans will see existing habitats of high value for pollinators identified and pro-

tected; the variety and extent of flowering plants available to pollinators increased, with less intensive approaches to management of grass cutting in our parks, roadside verges and other green spaces; new pollinator friendly planting proposals; and the creation of new nesting habitat for pollinators.

Funded by the National Biodiversity Action Plan fund and Cork County Council, and in collaboration with community groups in each of the six towns, pollinator friendly strategies will be developed in accordance with All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Guidelines.

people Environment : Making a difference



PERMANENT CULTURE

Allison Roberts

This month as we near the end of our yearlong exploration into what Permaculture can offer to our conversation around 'Cool Clon' and the future of our communities in West Cork, we are looking at the two principals, which go hand-in-hand. 'Use and Value Diversity' and 'Use Edges and Value the Marginal' are two principals that ask us to design in order to create more opportunity for inclusivity to the benefit of all.

During the past ten months of delving into these principals one theme that has run throughout is the need for proper high-level planning that includes observation of how our shared spaces are currently used. We are

Permaculture Principals 10 and 11: 'Use and Value Diversity' and 'Use Edges and Value the Marginal'

communities rich with a wide range of residents, from those with restricted mobility, to cyclists, to kids running amok, we all pass through the same spaces. "Just as ecosystems work best when filled with a greater variety of different plants and animals, so human society functions best when a variety of different people are represented." (ethical.net) This is crucial when it comes to planning for the future of a town. At the design stage, and during the consultation process it is imperative that local authorities and project leaders engage with all stakeholders, from pedestrians to bus drivers to schoolteachers to local business owners. To design with thoughts only to the fittest (young and able-bodied) or the fastest (motor vehicles) would be akin to discrimination.

By encouraging diversity on our streets we will achieve more 'livable' towns, where all feel welcome, small businesses thrive and motor traffic is calmed, creating quieter shared spaces that are safer and more

attractive. In Ireland, the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council is leading the way by embracing this international vision of the 'livable city'; they are reinventing mobility plans, access to amenities and shared spaces, more trees, public seating and an invitation to slow down and enjoy their communities.

This brings us to the eleventh Permaculture principal – 'use edges and value the marginal' – which tells us that sustainability is about making use of all the resources that we have at our disposal. We must again look at what we have and see how we can make use of it. In Skibbereen the river was made into a 'Blue Way', an attraction and resource for the town to celebrate. In Bandon, quieter roads are being used for family cycles every weekend, and in Clonakilty we have recently seen the main street transformed through widening the footpaths. These principals ask us to look again, to seek out what is there already, waiting in the margins

and on the edges. In West Cork, we have so many empty properties, it would be great to have these spaces – be it land, retail space or empty garages – used to allow for more diversity in what our town has to offer. If, say, community groups and business start-ups had opportunity to access empty spaces at affordable rents we would see a wide diversity of new amenities for the town, from pop-up shops to restaurants, to creative spaces and community gathering spaces. All new life that is brought to the town centre will benefit all existing shops. Take the Bike Circus (community bike workshop) in Clonakilty for example; through the generosity of a local landlord, a previously unoccupied yard has been brought life, a community group has found a home, the community bike fleet can be repaired at no cost to the town, and new opportunities are being offered to residents to learn new skills and make new friends. Any new life in our town centres, new amenities that can



A visualisation of the plans for Dundrum village.
Image: Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

draw diverse groups of people, are 'a rising tide lifts that will lift all boats' – this is not an old adage for no reason!

If there was ever a year to get creative it's this one, and going forward we know that we will need to be able to do more in our communities with less, budgets will be tight for years to come as a result of the pandemic but permaculture reminds us that so much of

what we want and need can be found in our midst already. We are blessed to live in a part of the world alive with community spirit, volunteerism and passion so, as we plan for the future of our communities, let's embrace diversity, use the edges, and be open to new opportunities that might be waiting in the margins.

people Home & Garden



A COTTAGE GARDEN PROJECT

Jean Perry

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...

With the recent news of a new lockdown, the dark nights, and the prospect of a very different Christmas, we really need to focus on the brighter days ahead. I am already thinking of Spring. I have sown some

annual flowers, including sweet peas, planted some garlic and sown broad beans. The best news, however, is that the bulbs I have ordered are on their way. Climate change, mass extinction of species and biodiversity are now everyday subjects and continually trying to do the right thing can be daunting and exhausting. Planting bulbs can be an easy and positive way to help the early pollinators get going in the spring. Lots of spring bulbs are really beneficial as well as beautiful and there is still time to both buy and plant them.

The first to pop through are Eranthis or winter aconites and snowdrops. Winter aconites are a welcome source of early nectar and, once established, will come back every year in increasingly large clumps. The common snowdrop Galanthus nivalis is the most attractive to the early bumble bees, and over the years snowdrops will form beautiful drifts of white to brighten up the short days of late winter. Crocus come next with their goblet shaped flowers full of nectar. I had quite a job



getting crocus to establish in our light sandy soil. I used to blame mice, thinking they were feasting on them through the winter, but now, for some reason, I have some lovely patches of mauve and cream crocus, which happily return each year.

Who would have thought that the common grape hyacinth, Muscari armeniacum would provide a nectar feast for bees, and the list goes on. Narcissus can be useful particularly the old-fashioned Narcissus pseudonarcissus (Wordsworth's 'host of golden daffodils') and Narcissus obvalaris, the Tenby daffodil. If more glamorous

daffs are more to your liking apparently the scent is a pointer for nectar rich varieties. With my particular favourite, Tulips, it is better to go for the small specie tulips. These also have the added bonus that they are more likely to return every year. There are lots of other beautiful bulbs that are important for early pollinators, Alliums, Camassia and Chinodoxa, with its common name Glory of the snow, who could resist it.

In a cottage garden there will also possibly be brassicas going to flower with beautiful plumes of scented flowers in various shades of yellow. These are



much appreciated by the bees. Early flowers of broad beans are also heavily scented and beautiful. These flowers are much in demand with chefs looking for early edible decoration, but if you take the flower you don't get the bean. Much better to leave them for the pollinators.

Fruit trees and flowering hedges will also help with biodiversity and were all elements of a traditional cottage garden. They really did know what they were doing, those old fashioned gardeners, with bits of this and that, no monoculture for them, but usually something to eat or put in a vase, sticks for kindling

and apples to store. This is all starting to sound a bit romantic, but you see where I'm going.

I still try to get out in the garden most days and I'm thankful for it in these weirdest of times. I hope you can still find a garden centre to buy some bulbs and seeds, so that you'll have plenty to look forward to next spring.

Pictured: Winter Aconites and snowdrops.



THE NATURAL GARDENER

Noah Chase

Noah studied horticulture at the Eden Project in Cornwall, England. He now co-manages a family run nursery, Deelish Garden Centre in Skibbereen, specialising in rare, unusual and edible plants. His passion is sustainable gardening, useful plants and care of the environment.

Here at Deelish Garden Centre, we get our first delivery of potted and pot grown living Christmas trees in early November. Last season we had a hard time keeping up to demand as many people are starting to make the switch from cut to living trees. There are many advantages to making this simple change;

Environmental: With over 650,000 Christmas trees cut last year in Ireland and over 10,000,000 more been grown for this industry, switching to a living tree will give many years of use from a single tree, saving a huge waste of valuable resources including land, fuel and time as well as reducing your family's carbon footprint, and as a bonus, it will even absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen!

Financial: A living tree will cost on average €25-€65 de-

Living Christmas trees



pending on height and variety. This is very similar (or cheaper) to a cut tree in price. For every season you re-use your tree, you are saving money. Some of our customers have reported using the same tree for over 10 years. If you spent on average €50 per year on a cut tree, this could save you €450 over the 10 years by switching to a living tree!

Education: Explaining to children and adults your reasons for using a living tree is a perfect opportunity to educate them on a tree's vital role in a healthy eco system, as well as their ability to absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. Once the decorations are taken down, replanting your tree can become part of the Christmas routine as well as watching your tree grow through the year.

Practical: Personally I prefer having a living tree in our home in the weeks leading up to Christmas compared to trying to keep a cut tree from dropping its needles (which will not be an issue with the living trees) and generally looking limp! There will not be the issue of how to dispose of your cut tree at the end of the holidays. Some varieties we supply such as Nordmann and Fraser firs give off a

lovely scent that I have come to associate with the holiday.

After selling living Christmas trees for over 30 years here at Deelish, we have found smaller trees usually have a better chance of transplanting after the holidays. You also get more years to reuse it after your first Christmas. Thankfully there has been a change over the last few years and many homes and commercial growers are now making the switch to living trees. However, be aware of some sellers supplying 'living Christmas trees', as many of these have simply been dug up from a tree farm with no understanding that the roots need to be undercut each year, and will have little or no chance of transplanting after Christmas. With over 35 years experience in trading with living Christmas trees we are proud to say that we know what to look out for when selecting a supplier and thus can offer our customers the best trees with the highest chance of survival.

Once you have decided on which type of tree to buy, or if you have dug up last year's tree, try to minimise the amount of time you keep your tree indoors as the heat indoors can stress it. Place a saucer under the pot or

line the inside of the pot with a plastic liner and water it every few days or as you see the needles start to droop. When moving it outdoors after Christmas, if possible keep it in a garage or shed for a few days to get used to the change in temperature.

Listed below are the four varieties we have this year and are all great choices for Christmas trees and for growing on in your garden;

Nordmann Fir This Christmas tree accounts for 75 per cent of trees sold in Ireland. It has superb needle-holding ability and is nick-named the 'needle-fast'.

It has a glossy, rich green foliage and large soft family-friendly needles; great for young children and pets.

Norway Spruce This is the oldest traditional Christmas tree and is the ideal tree for outdoors or for a more traditional indoor variety. The tree's needles are light green in colour and it has a good scent.

Fraser Fir Is a citrus scented tree of compact growth, slimmer than a Nordmann and it also has good needle-retaining qualities. The Fraser Fir has soft dense needles, green with a silver underside. The tree itself has a conical shape with great proportions, particularly good in small to medium sizes.

Blue Spruce The blue spruce, also known as the Colorado blue spruce, is loved for its waxy gray-blue needles that tend to curve upwards. Native to the Rocky Mountains of the United States, this spruce tree features dense foliage that grows in a conical shape anywhere up to 75 feet tall. The blue spruce is said to have 'the perfect Christmas tree shape'.

Feel free to come and have a look at the full selection of Christmas trees at Deelish Garden Centre, and we will be

happy to help you select the perfect tree for your situation. Remember, gardening doesn't have to cost the earth!

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people Home & Garden

Helping homes to become calm and organised retreats...forever

From small beginnings, where she was simply helping friends to organise their hotpresses, to becoming a professional declutterer of homes and offices nationwide, Anne-Marie Kingston has built White Sage Decluttering into an impressive business in just four years. Taking home the Business Innovation trophy at this year's Network Ireland West Cork Businesswoman of the Year awards was the icing on the cake, she says.

“White Sage Decluttering started so small,” says Anne-Marie. “It grew from a local service, to covering the county, then Munster and now I have clients in Kerry, Dublin, Galway; I travel the whole country really because the need is there. Overwhelming clutter is making so many people stressed, uncomfortable and unhappy in their homes but they don't know where to begin to solve the problem.”

Many people have the wrong idea about decluttering, as Anne-Marie explains: “Decluttering is not the same thing as ‘a bit of clear out’ or a spring clean. Clutter is anything

that no longer serves you but you are still unable to let go of. Sometimes ‘stuff’ has just built up so much that it's out of control and too big a job to do alone, but sometimes complex emotions at the root of the problem – sentimentality, grief, fear. My service is about giving someone a new life skill so that they can recognise what is needed, why they are hanging onto something that isn't, and how to let go so that they can maintain the organisation systems that we have put in place.”

Anne-Marie has her own thoughts on how our heritage has made hoarding a common trait of Irish homes. “Nothing has left some houses in years! I think it's because Ireland was a relatively poor country in the not-too-distant past. Our grandparents were told to mind everything and not to discard what might be used; your good clothes were worn to Mass and then taken off immediately after. That was fine when as a nation we didn't have much but now we have a surplus of money and a lot more coming into the house, not all of which is ‘good’ or used. There are some exceptions but a good rule of thumb is if you haven't used it in 18 months you don't need it.”

Fast, cheap fashion from the likes of Penneys has caused



Anne-Marie Kingston with her Business Innovation Award at the Network Ireland West Cork 2020 Businesswoman of the Year Awards. Pic: Dermot Sullivan

wardrobes to bulge as never before. Anne-Marie advocates buying less but buying better for value in terms of cost-per-wear: “My wardrobe has no more than 60 items that can be mixed and matched. You don't need any more – if items are good quality they will last for years.”

“Decide what fits and what flatters. If something is two sizes too small in the hopes that it will motivate you...aren't you just depressing yourself every single day when you open the wardrobe doors and nothing fits? It's much nicer to be able to throw on whatever you feel like wearing that day!”

People have called Anne-Marie the ‘West Cork Marie Kondo’ and while she's flattered she feels it's not quite accurate: “

I work differently with people to Marie. Yes, I have the same philosophy of ‘you have to love it to keep it’ but I talk people through their attachments and discover what lies behind the hanging on to things. It might be grieving the loss of a loved one, an unrealistic fear of future scarcity or of paperwork that has built up.”

“Another root cause is buying with emotion. Women, especially, can crave the rush of happy hormones you get from buying something new. Unfortunately that feeling is immediately replaced with the stress of adding to the clutter at home. We all have our reasons and I never judge; my work is entirely confidential and I take such pleasure in helping clients discover that you can get the

same happy feelings from a well organised home.”

Also, unlike Marie Kondo, Anne-Marie really rolls up her sleeves on a project. “It's 100 per cent a team effort. We do the heavy lifting of clearing together and then figure out an organisational system that works for that particular family and their lives.”

A good example is taking care of sentimental items: “If you have so many old letters or kid's artwork that you never get to look at it, think about what's the most valuable to you. Then we can put those items in an easily accessible keepsake box that you can look through regularly or select a few artworks to frame and admire.”

Women, especially, can crave the rush of happy hormones you get from buying something new. Unfortunately that feeling is immediately replaced with the stress of adding to the clutter at home.

Most jobs take a minimum of three days but some can take longer, depending on how many rooms need to be dealt with. Anne-Marie then takes all the cleared clutter away: “I have built up a huge list of contacts and very little ends up in landfill, instead its redistributed to charities such as the Vincent dePaul or WEEE centres. I recently took a huge bag of small hotel toiletries to the homeless in Cork City so lots of people are benefitting.”

Anne-Marie does an initial remote consultation to assess

what's needed (from photos and videos) and to assess if the client is actually ready to declutter. “I only work with people that really are ready to do this life changing process. Sometimes they aren't and the idea has to sit with them for a few months first. But the seed is planted and when the person is ready they'll call me in.”

Where has Anne-Marie's love of order come from? As an only child from a farming background, she helped with the housework from a young age and loved nothing more than sorting the hotpress and bookshelves. “I immediately felt more relaxed and grounded when there was order. I worked in Bank of Ireland for 11 years and colleagues would comment wistfully on my organisations skills and how I could put my hand so quickly on paperwork.”

Following marriage to dairy farmer John and the birth of two children, Ryan (now 7) and Caoimhe (now 5), Anne-Marie had thought about returning to finance but instead decided to seize the opportunity of running her own business and getting the work/life balance right for her busy farming family.

“It's funny, it started with my own kitchen island heaving with toys, paperwork, washing etc and that was causing stress and petty arguments in the house. I felt like taking a match to it but instead got stuck in and put in an organising system that was easy to maintain. That led to sorting rooms for family and friends and I just knew there was a real need for a professional decluttering service in West Cork.”

“I completed a 12-month decluttering course in Limerick and the business has grown from there. I really believe you have only one life and you must take every chance to follow your dreams. I didn't want to have any regrets.”

You can contact Anne-Marie Kingston on 087- 6529901. White Sage Decluttering follows all Covid guidelines and precautions. Now taking bookings for December and for 2021.

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Left: A home that has been transformed with the advice and help of White Sage Decluttering.

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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

Covid-19 means that Christmas time will likely be a lot different this festive season but it's important to stay positive and focus on the things we can all do to prepare our homes to make this season a really special one. As we have more time in our homes right now, it gives us time to think about what we need to do to get it Christmas ready.

Here are a few tips to help you on your merry way...

Declutter your home: There is something about getting rid of stuff that clears your head and gives you a fresh start; take time to clear out anything that you no longer need. Tackle one area at a time, be it a junk drawer in the kitchen, the room under the stairs or paperwork in the home office.

Look at what needs attention: Are there any jobs, for

example DIY or painting, that need to be done? Make a list and get started. Don't leave it to the last minute, just before putting up the décor.

Is your kitchen ready?

Christmas time usually involves a lot of cooking and baking – an organised kitchen helps this all run smoothly; ensure all the appliances and utensils are in working order.

Add the cosy factor: Maybe now is a good time to think about getting a new rug, cushions, throw or coffee table for the living room to cosy it up a little; add a few candles, warm lights, or maybe you have items in another room that you don't

what you have already and add a few items you may need to give your collection a fresh look. Or perhaps you like to add an extra item to the decoration box every year, be it a new centrepiece for a table, a new garland, a new set of flameless candles, making memories is so important. Please ensure you shop local this Christmas.

Decorating the tree: Whether your tree is artificial or real, set it up in an area in your home where it can be enjoyed by everyone – put the lights on first, weaving them in or out of the branches for a fully 'lit up' look. Place your ornaments, baubles evenly on the tree and finish off

Garlands/Wreaths: These can give a home a real sense of Christmas and warmth. You can use foliage from the garden and lighting and ribbons and so on can be added. These are added to mantles, stairs, console tables and front doors and many other places in the home.

Christmas table settings: I know we don't set the table till the night before/day of but be mindful of placemats, table setting, crockery, cutlery, add some greenery to the table, add sweet touches and candles.

Christmas Scent: We all love the fresh smell of pine, cinnamon, chestnuts, oranges – light a candle to create a warm,



use that you could bring in to cosy up that space.

Big thinking for small spaces: Most people crave an extra bit of floor space at Christmas, here are a few ideas to help to make it look and feel more spacious. A) Use light colours on the walls. B) Try to use the vertical space in your room for storage – floor to ceiling storage. C) Mirrors – these are a great trick for opening up a space, they also reflect light back into a room. D) Open up your blinds and curtains – this will allow the light into your room, we all need bright spaces at the moment.

Now plan your décor: It's time to plan your colour theme; you don't have to buy new decorations every year, just consider

with a tree topper. Keep your tree fresh and healthy by putting it in an area away from heating vents.

Fireplace: The fireplace and the mantel is an eye-catching feature in a home, so using this focus point is the perfect opportunity to personalise your decor. Sometimes decorating the mantelpiece reflects the way one decides to decorate the home for Christmas.

Christmas ornaments: Put your items on display; if you collect Christmas novelties like nutcrackers or snow globes, show them off, hang your stockings on the mantelpiece, sprinkle snowflakes on mantles or windowpanes.

comforting atmosphere and scent in your home.

Decorate the outside of your house: You don't have to light up your entire house; this can be done simply by adding a festive welcome mat or placing a few led lights around potted shrubs.

I may not be able to visit your home right now but I am available for virtual consults through Zoom, Skype and Facetime – whether you need help with interior design, colour or staging advice or getting your home Christmas décor right, please reach out, as I am here to help you.

Maura is currently taking bookings for Interior Design consults in the home for December.

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Top five tips from Tria to keep your house extra cosy this Winter



With the current global pandemic restrictions as they are, it looks as though we will all be spending a lot of this winter indoors. Obviously, you will need to ensure that you have a full tank of home heating oil to keep you going. But, realistically, you are not going to want your radiators running 24/7, so to help you out, we have put together our top tips

on how to keep your house extra cosy this winter, without running your heating on full steam.

1. Have you have been putting off upgrading your home insulation? Then now is the time to do it, you could retain up to 25 per cent heat that is presently being lost.
2. Eliminate draughts, check window seals, doors, key holes and unused fireplaces

etc. You can invest in self-adhesive rubber seals that are both cost effective and easy to install.

3. When the sun is up open curtains even in the winter, as it helps to heat the room, sun down close curtains. A handy tip would be to add a thermal layer of lining to the curtains to maximise heat insulation.

4. Check your temperature gauge is at the right level – normally 18 degrees Celcius degrees is sufficient. Radiators should be working at full capacity so check for air locks.

5. Make sure your heating timer is on at relevant times, not too early or too late to suit your lifestyle. Don't forget that after any electricity outages to reset your timer.

Use these practical tips and you'll enjoy a toasty house all Winter long without having to worry about spending any more than usual. Consider budgeting for your heating bill by setting

up a monthly payment plan with Tria and ensure that you are not left feeling the chill this Winter. Freephone: 1800 470 470 or call 028 31396. www.tria.ie

people Home & Garden

Waste not

Not the most promising word – waste. ‘Unusable or unwanted material’ says the dictionary. Our world is knee-deep in waste problems; that’s for sure! This includes edibles: ‘1.3 billion tons of food is lost or wasted every year,’ according to www.theworldcounts.com. This is all the more alarming, as to prepare one meal for one person, requires no fewer than 10 kilograms of topsoil.

There are solutions. Donal O’ Leary from Macroom is a self-confessed compost enthusiast who trained in psychology but has turned waste management into a business called Waste Down. His true ambitions go even further, as he tells **Moze Jacobs**.

“It has been a dream of mine for years to facilitate community composting. I think every community should collect their own leaf mould and use local materials. More people are taking up gardening these days. Mostly, this means visiting the German discount supermarkets or hardware shops and buying peat moss as a growth medium, which is deeply unsustainable. At the same time, we are putting

our food waste in bins for it to be taken away and composted elsewhere. Far better to use our own waste or organic materials to build local soils.”

Everyone with a garden (or even a courtyard) can create their own compost. The question is how? Donal casts a critical eye on various systems on his website. “In my 15 years working as a composting trainer, adviser, and researcher,” he writes, “I have met many people who face issues



with their composting system. It’s a smelly heavy mess, they don’t know what is happening inside the pile, and it just isn’t easy enough to use.” A ‘Dalek’ style compost bin or compost tumbler does not permit quick or easy composting, he states. Instead, Donal has devised a box and tray system called the ‘Magic Box composter’ while he also sells stackable wormeries containing two, three or four trays. “Now

we are all staying at home you become aware that there is a lot of food waste to deal with.” For a household that wants to just compost its kitchen waste, a wormery can be a good solution. “A very important aspect is getting the mix right. ‘Green waste’ (food and grass cuttings) tends to be soft, wet, and high in nitrogen, which means you’ll get a sloppy smelly sludge. This doesn’t happen if you mix in ‘brown materials’: Straw, cardboard, sawdust, autumn leaves, newspapers. The latter contain ink but that is plant-based, which is fine, while plain cardboard is, essentially, made out of wood. However, anything covered in plastic, including glossy magazines, can pose problems, as the chemicals will be released into the compost.”

Worms are a different ‘kettle of fish’. “These are not the long fat earthworms you’ll find in your garden. They are smaller, surface-dwelling worms. Their natural habitat consists of rotting leaves, animal manure or compost piles. I can help people

source them from online worm sellers. The worms need to live in a moist environment, as they breathe through their skin, which has to be slightly damp all the time. They live in brown material (bedding) into which you feed your kitchen waste. The worms will move around and eat it all. You cannot feed much meat, fish or dairy to the worms, only fruit and veg waste plus small amounts of leftover rice, pasta and bread.”

Once the worms have digested the food, they leave behind nutritious compost, which can then be applied in the garden. For instance, to grow vegetables.

Donal sets great store by autumn leaves. “I don’t have a big grassy garden but my preference is that leaves are left where they fall. It is much better for biodiversity; everything organic turns into soil, and the leaves will decompose naturally: They are consumed by fungi, then bacteria and worms and wood lice and other organisms. And they release nutrients wherever

they land. If you want fertile soil, plant as many trees as you can. The roots bring up minerals that the leaves will then return to the soil. I have collected a great many leaves in recent years. People see them as a nuisance or undesirable material but I put an ad in my local magazine every autumn: “If you are bagging your leaves I’ll take them.” I pile them up. Over time, under the weather, they turn into a very valuable compost called leaf mould, provided there is enough oxygen and moisture. Without organic matter, the soil will degrade and erode, as happened in the US Dust Bowl in the 1930s, when no organic matter was ploughed back into the soil, which is held together through the chemicals exuded by bacteria and fungi. Hence, everything turned to dust. These conditions could reoccur as temperatures rise. It is already happening with the Amazon rain forest.”

www.wastedown.com

Gardening in November



GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

Jobs for November

Rake up fallen leaves and clear them off lawns, ponds, paths and drives. Be sure to compost them where they will break down into a much-appreciated decomposed compost to add to the garden next spring and summer. The composted leaves will make a great resource of valuable humus, organic material and nutrition in the garden. Many leaves have fallen early this year due to high winds in August and quite cold nights during some nights in October. Don’t compost any diseased material.

This is best disposed of offsite, well away from healthy, growing plants.

Raise containers on to pot feet to keep off the ground and facilitate free drainage and a quick and rapid escape of any excess water. Saucers holding water under outdoor pots should be removed, as they will only create waterlogging and impede

any excess water draining away. Waterlogging will rot the roots and the stale water combined with it can cause root borne diseases such as phytophthora.



November is the prime tulip-planting month. If you haven’t already secured some go out and seek out some. There is a wide diversity of colours, shapes and heights from 5cm-60cm. Colours include vivid oranges, fiery reds, pure whites and almost black varieties such as ‘Queen of the Night’.

Plant in bold, dramatic groups of the same variety and colour to maximise impact. Use dwarf varieties 15cm/20 cm in height in window boxes, troughs and in conjunction with alpine and rockery plants and heathers. Add a slow-release organic fertiliser at planting time and plant 3/4 times the depth of the bulb to maximise longevity.

When planting in containers do some companion planting with pansies, viols, wallflowers and forget-me-nots. Add some early Crocus and dwarf Iris’, Hyacinths and early Narcissi such as Tete a Tete, January Gold and February Gold to extend the period of interest. Outdoor Hyacinths are robust performers in solid colours with a most addictive fragrance. Colours include red, blue, pink, yellow and

white. Make sure all containers have adequate drainage and that they have been replenished with fresh compost.

You are still in time to have Narcissi in flower for Christmas. Choose the deliciously fragrant, pure white ‘Paperwhite’. These will flower in seven to nine weeks from planting time. They will thrive in bowls, pots or galvanised buckets or old wooden wheelbarrows. If there is not adequate drainage, do make sure to use a good quality bulb fibre, which has additives such as charcoal to keep the compost from going sour. Keep the planted bulbs in a cool but frost-free situation until they have flowered.

Prune Roses now to prevent wind rock from winter gales. Remove any dead, damaged or diseased wood. Use a sharp, good quality secateurs or loppers to prune your Roses.

Bring tender plants indoors undercover to protect against damage by adversely cold weather.

Put out food and water at regular intervals for birds.

November marks the start of the bare root season for trees – both ornamental and functional. You can plant bare root screening and forestry trees this month, fruit trees, roses, hedging. Don’t let bare root trees hanging around too long. If you are not in a position to plant right away, heel the plants until ready. Don’t let the roots exposed to extremities of cold winds and frost.

New Roses should be planted in a generous planting hole so as not to cramp the root system. Incorporate organic matter into the planting hole such as Gee-up and

add a small handful of organic fertiliser.

Lawns

Rake fallen leaves off lawns before they block out light and moisture from the grass. Grass will continue to grow at temperatures above five degrees Celsius so if the weather remains mild it may be necessary to trim the lawn with a mower. Ensure the cut is 3-5mm higher than in summer to prevent turf stress. On average this means a cutting height of around 4cm (1.5”). Mowing will help to deal with any annual weeds that have sprung up in new lawns sown earlier in the autumn. In mild conditions you can still carry out autumn lawn care i.e. scarification, aeration and top dressing as long as the soil isn’t waterlogged. This will improve the lawns performance next year.

Don’t do this in frosty, very wet weather or snow.

Avoid walking on lawns on frosty mornings – this can damage the grass and often leads to brown footprint-shaped ugly marks.

It is now too late to sow grass seed but new lawns can still be laid from turf if the weather is not too cold.

Don’t feed the lawn with leftover summer feeds. These contain too much nitrogen, which stimulates lush growth at this time of the year. Lush growth will be vulnerable to diseases. Use an autumn feed instead, which contains more potassium and phosphorous to encourage hardiness and root growth instead.

If your lawn suffers dieback

from treading during the wet, muddy season, then you may wish to lay stepping-stones to allow easy access. Stones can be laid at a low enough level to avoid interference with mowing.

Watch your lawn for signs of water logging, as the weather gets wetter. You may be able to remedy this with some maintenance, either now, next spring, or the following autumn, depending on the weather.

Fruit Garden

Complete picking of all but the very latest of apples and pears. Ventilate the fruit store at night to bring down the temperature. Plant new fruit trees and bushes as soon as possible and prune after planting. Prune established fruit trees and bushes after leaf fall.

Complete pruning of blackberries and hybrid berries. Complete pruning of raspberries. Check supports and wires. Ensure canes are securely tied. Prune currants and gooseberries. Weed strawberries. Remove runners. Remove old and dead leaves.

Vegetable Garden

Broad beans and peas can still be sown outside this month. Cover with cloches.

Christmas Trees

As the days draw nearer to Christmas thoughts of Christmas trees become more prominent and topical. Specific requirements should be ordered as soon as possible to secure your specific requirement especially for the larger Christmas trees.

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people Home & Garden

Bringing nature indoors for Christmas

I always have mixed emotions when the clocks go back; the shorter daylight available outside usually has me scrambling to get jobs done. However all that has changed this year and it's thanks to your support that we are in a position to employ people. You have no idea how good it feels to be able to give back, support others in our community, and give a much-needed injection of employment here in West Cork. In addition to Aly, our photographer/social media/admin and Jake, our web developer, we have just added two on-farm helpers, Emma and Keith, with Catherine joining the team, as a seasonal helper on the floristry side. This is scary and thrilling at the same time. My body couldn't keep going doing 17-hour days seven days a week. This is the first time in 10 years that I've been able to finish work and have an evening off – I don't mind telling you I could get used to this! It's another good reason to support our little flower farm, by providing local employment, which in turn keeps money in our local community.

I was asked an interesting question on social media last week about supplying pinecones and dehydrated oranges and it got me thinking. I'm not in a position to do this, partly because I only have enough stock to meet my own needs,



but also my workload is already stretched. So I thought I'd share what I do and maybe someone out there might think about this as a business.

I planted a dozen Sitka spruce and about 20 pine trees 15 years ago and these give me my cones but there are plenty of these in the greater countryside where you can forage. We have an abundance of storms here in Ireland and each one brings an abundance of windfall, so to top up my supply I will take a trip and gather these. Equally, our beautiful larger cones, from trees like the Monterey pine, are all windfall too. I'm always on the look out on my travels and keeping mental notes of where to visit after a storm. These are all on our doorstep but if you're short on time we have a wreath



kit with full tutorial available to purchase, along with readymade options on our website. These are a wonderful way to do something creative and positive together and start a new family tradition.

Planting wise on the farm is very much focused on getting the last of the spring bulbs in for Mother's Day and Easter. You're always working about six months ahead. I'm also going to get in another winter heather bed, because if this year is anything to go by with the number of bumblebees emerging in March, I'm going to need them. Our native primrose, hellebores, and if you have room, mahonia, are my go-to winter foods. I know we all love the splash of colour from those large yellow trumpet daffodils but they provide nothing for our pollinators, they've simply been hybridised too much and are only good to look at now, but species crocus, snowdrops and muscari are all fantastic, so do try to incorporate some of these to keep everything happy!

We are doing a workshop for Network West Cork on Tuesday, November 3, on Christmas prep – making your own wreath – which is free for members, but is open to the public for a small fee, and this can be booked through eventbrite. Mary Lynch is also doing a keeping your confidence up workshop, so it's incredibly good value.

If you would like more information on our Christmas range or plant recommendations, it's all on our website www.bumblebeeflowerfarm.ie.



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people Motoring

A neat car that can turn on sixpence

CAR
REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

When the electric Renault Zoe was launched three years ago Paddy Magee, the MD of Renault in Ireland had a good idea to try and encourage mo-

torists to at least think about an electric car.

Paddy suggested that when people leave their regular petrol or diesel cars into their local garage to be serviced, they should be given an electric vehicle as a courtesy car for a few hours. That seemed a reasonable suggestion as 'range anxiety' wouldn't bother drivers of petrol or diesel cars for half a day. But I don't think the idea really took off.

Range Anxiety and slow charging points. They seem to be the two major bugbears for motorists who are thinking about buying an electric car. However, with the Green Party now in Government hopefully we will see a push for more charging points for electric vehicles around the country.

It's no secret that what happens in England, usually follows here. Next month



England's first electric vehicle forecourt is due to open. Located near Braintree in Essex, Gridserve's EV forecourt will be the first of over 100 sites to be built in the next five years, as part of a one billion pound programme. Thirty electric vehicles can be charged simultaneously with high power chargers, enabling drivers to add around

320km of range in 20 minutes.

Last week I got to drive the second version of the Zoe EV. There are minor changes to the exterior while the cabin has got a makeover and looks very smart now. The Zoe now has larger capacity 41kW/h battery pack and a new power saving heat exchanger. With a full charge you should be able to

travel 360km without stopping to take on more energy.

It was a beautiful sunny Monday morning when I picked up the Zoe from the Automotive Team in Sandford and I was heading right across the city on the M50 to Beaumont. The range showed 360 kilometres when I left Sandford and thanks to some 'cagey' driving I still had 360 kilometres available by the time I arrived in Beaumont. Once you take your foot off the accelerator the battery is recharged thanks to regenerative braking.

Over the following days I got to really enjoy the car. The battery managed to hold the charge very well, but when I did have to charge the battery the ESB public charge point was slow, around 100km after an hour charging. If you are thinking of buying an electric car you would need to get a home

charger.

The Zoe is a very neat and can, as the old only saying goes, turn on sixpence. There is room for four people, five at a squeeze, but space is a bit tight in the back. Naturally the boot is fairly small and no spare wheel.

I have driven white and black versions of the Zoe in the past; this time round my test car came in an attractive Celadon blue colour. I have seen taxi drivers use electric Nissan Leafs, but maybe the Zoe would be too small for taxi drivers.

Prices start at €29,990, but the price of my test car, which came with some extras, was €35,015. Road tax is only €120. Overall I had no complaints except waiting around for the battery to be charged.

people Sport & Fitness

Championship success for Clon junior hurlers



SPORT

John Bohane

The Clonakilty junior hurlers captured the SW Junior A hurling championship title for the 17th time last month after they emerged victorious against St Mary's. Captain Sean White tells **John Bohane** about the recent battle.

Sean White captained the Clon hurlers to divisional championship success. The dual star was unable to play in the recent final after he sustained a hamstring injury in their semi-final win against the Dohenys. Sean was proud with the resilience they displayed in their four point win against St Mary's. "It was a very good win. We felt we left ourselves down

this year in the football championship, so it was important to show spirit and try to make the most out of the situation with the hurling. Thankfully we got things going nicely and managed to pull through to win the West Cork championship title. There is plenty of tradition in the club with hurling; Clonakilty have won the most West Cork junior hurling titles, which just shows the tradition in the club and how long it's been there. We have a lot of very talented young players coming through which will only strengthen the panel in the coming years. There has been a great focus in recent years within the underage club to take hurling more seriously and thankfully those decisions seem to be reaping the rewards now."

Clonakilty edged out St Mary's on a final scoreline of 2-17 to 0-19 following a pulsating final. Both sides contributed immensely to a great game. Sean was full of praise for the challenge from The Saints. "It certainly was a battle. We knew Mary's were going to give everything on the day. It was a tough game the whole way through and thankfully we managed to get the goals that counted on the day. We have taken a few things from football over the years in terms of running off the shoulder etc which seem to result in goals for us, so the combination of the football

and hurling seem to benefit us. St Mary's I have no doubt will come back fighting again next year. They have a very young team and some brilliant players. A West Cork championship win for them will come sooner rather than later."

There were three White brothers on the victorious Clonakilty hurling panel this year. Sean was joined by Mark and Brian. Sean enjoyed linking up with his talented brothers in this year's championship campaign. "Mark was outstanding in the final. He must have made three or four brilliant saves on the day. To then save a penalty in the final minute capped off a great display from him. His puckouts are a massive plus for us also, as if we concede a score we are instantly on the attack again. It was great to win with my brothers. It was Brian's first West Cork championship win, so it was our first time the three of us had won the Flyer Nyhan Cup together. It certainly made it that little bit more special."

Clonakilty possess a nice mixture of youth and experience within their junior hurling team. Sean is pleased their strength in depth within the panel is getting stronger every year. "The mixture of youth and experience certainly helped us this year, as over the last few years we wouldn't have a huge panel to choose from due to football



Clonakilty junior hurling captain Sean White is pictured on the far right

commitments or injuries. Thankfully this year things seem to have gone our way. Everyone is driving the whole thing forward, be they experienced players or players on their first year in the panel which is great. Everyone just wants the team to succeed."

The divisional champions have now advanced to the county series. They defeated Kinsale in a quarter-final tie which has secured them their place in the last four of the county championship. Sean was thrilled with their nine point win against Kinsale. "It was a great win. It is always hard to know what other divisional teams are like as we would never have played Kinsale in hurling before. We really put a big emphasis on winning the breaking ball in the game and I think that certainly showed. The next round of the county section is unlikely to be

played in the coming weeks. We are all hoping that at some stage we will get a chance to play out the remainder of the championship as it would be a dream come true for the club to win a county hurling title."

The talented GAA star, who is also a member of the Cork senior football panel is hopeful of returning to competitive GAA action very soon. He is receiving intensive medical care at present as he hopes to return to both club and county action in the coming weeks. "Unfortunately I tore my hamstring three weeks before the semi-final win against the Dohenys, so I probably wasn't 100 per cent going into the game. However, it felt okay, so I played anyway. I just took a wrong step for a ball and the same hamstring tore again. I've been seeing the physios now a couple of times a week, so I am just looking to get

it all right for whenever the next outing will be."

The Cork senior footballers are scheduled to play Kerry in a Munster championship semi-final tie on November 8 in Paic Ui Chaoimh. Sean is looking forward to playing their old rivals once again. "It is great that the season will go ahead. We are back in the full swing of things now and preparing for the final league games before the Kerry game. Playing against Kerry will certainly be special especially after the year we have had. I am hoping to get the injuries cleared to be in contention for the footballers. It will certainly be a different feeling in the Pairc that day in comparison to the last number of years with 20,000-30,000 supporters there. It will still be equally as important."

Enniskeane Camogie Club emerges triumphant in county title decider

Enniskeane Camogie Club recently captured the Intermediate county title after they defeated Aghabullogue in the county final. **John Bohane** hears more about the win from Club PRO and player Siobhan O'Driscoll.

The West Cork side produced a great performance which ensured they emerged triumphant on a final scoreline of 1-16 to 2-8. After experiencing so much final heartache in recent years, their recent county final success was just reward. Club PRO and player Siobhan O'Driscoll was thrilled with their great win. "I was forced off early with an ankle injury, but I never doubted that my teammates would get the job done this year. To be playing with this group of girls that have experienced heartache in the last few years, we've stuck together and driven each other on. It is brilliant to be going up senior, knowing we are good enough to be playing

at the top. As soon as the final whistle went, it was a dream come through and a relief. We knew we had a job to do and we achieved our goal."

County final success this year was fitting given the club celebrated their 25th anniversary of being established this year. The successful team enjoyed great celebrations upon their return to the village revealed Siobhan. "I am so thrilled for everyone, as it has been a long time coming. It has been a great year for Enniskeane camogie. We are a small club, but we certainly have put Enniskeane on the map. The celebrations were class. Parading up and down the village alongside the people you have grown up with, on a trailer behind a New Holland tractor and singing our hearts out. It was a special feeling. Going senior this year is extra special as Enniskeane Camogie celebrates its 25th anniversary since being founded. It was great to have some members who founded our club present after we won the county title celebrating with us. This success means so much to the parish of Enniskeane."

The Enniskeane camogie



Enniskeane players (l-r) Laura Mannix, Siobhan O'Driscoll, Aisling O'Driscoll and Louise Duggan.

team produced a brilliant display on county final day. They reserved their best performance of the season for the county final revealed their proud wing forward Siobhan. "We were nervous starting off, but we then settled into the game and got control. As a unit we were outstanding. This year we were a lot more mature which was the difference. Every game we came together as a unit and we never gave up. This was evident from our quarter-final win against Blackrock, when we were 13 points down. We kept on hunting down our opponents, tipping the scoreboard over and

showing leadership all over the pitch. That is why we are county champions."

Cork senior star Orla Cronin produced another brilliant display in the county final. The talented forward struck 11 points, which was a huge factor in helping guide her side to glory. Siobhan is full of praise for her colleague. "We can talk about Orla all day. She is one of the best forwards in the country and we are so proud to call her our teammate. She is a class act. The only good thing about Covid was we got to train with Orla on a full-time basis, three nights a week. We got to know how she

plays. We learned a lot from her, but even off the pitch the team bonded really well together this year. Orla is a great role model especially for our younger girls in the club."

Enniskeane were coached to county glory by key quartet Anthony O'Sullivan, Elaine Aylward, Brian Daly and Dermot Curtin. Siobhan reserved special praise for their dedication throughout the season. "Our management team are fantastic. Camogie is like a second full time job to them because they put in so much work for us. Our coach Anthony O'Sullivan, Elaine Aylward, Brian Daly and Dermot Curtin have driven us at every training session to be competitive and to get out of our comfort zone which has given us the belief to power on this year. Between them they have a great mixture of hurling brains. Sandra Corcoran who records the stats and paramedic Ciara Whyte were also a huge help to us this year."

Enniskeane fielded two junior teams for the first time in their history this year, which indicates the strength of numbers within the club and augurs well for the

future. Siobhan is very confident the club is well poised to enjoy a very successful future. "The future is very bright for Enniskeane Camogie Club. There are 34 girls involved in our intermediate panel and there is a wave of young talent coming through. We also have a very strong underage set up. There is massive work being done at underage level and you can see it in the results they achieved this season. This year was also the first year we fielded a second adult team which is great to see. This shows that the club is expanding. The club has won silverware this season at all age groups."

Enniskeane will now operate in the senior grade next season. Siobhan is looking forward to her beloved club plying their trade in the top tier of Cork club camogie. "We will be playing senior camogie for the first time ever next year. I am confident we will make an impact at senior level. We will be playing all the great teams that we want to be playing against. Teams such as Courneys, Killeagh, Milford, Inniscara and St Finbarrs. We are already looking forward to the championship draws."