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Bandon's very own Sister Act 'The Ryan Sisters' have launched their debut CD 'A Christmas Collection'. (l-r) Ella, Mary-Jo and Angela Ryan recorded remotely the 10 Christmas songs over the past number of months. For further information, check out @angelaryanmusic and @ellaryanmusic on Facebook and Instagram. Pic: Ivo Yotov, livetimephotography.com

Remember Cork's homeless children

With Christmas fast approaching, and children around the country eagerly anticipating Santa's arrival on Christmas Eve, please spare a thought for families who will be homeless in Cork this Christmas.

Children currently living in accommodation provided by Good Shepherd Cork at Edel House on Liberty Street (an emergency shelter for women and children), the Redclyffe family hub on Western Road, and those supported in B&Bs, may worry that Santa won't know where to find them if they don't have a place to call home.

At the end of September there were over 150 children, from 62 families, in emergency accommodation in Cork and Kerry. Many of the Cork families were supported by services provided by Good Shepherd Cork, during a year, which has been extremely difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against this challenging backdrop, the team at Good Shepherd Cork is determined to make this a memorable and magical Christmas for all the children in their services.

Allison Aldred, CEO, Good Shepherd Cork, said: "This year we are all anxious about whether we will be able to visit family and friends over the Christmas season. Families in homeless services have the additional challenges of meeting family and friends, and making Christmas special, when home is a small room in a crowded emergency shelter or, worse still, a B&B. When you add the social distancing requirements in a shared facility, the requirement to wear masks at all times in communal areas and the vigorous cleaning regimes required in shared kitchens and bathrooms, making Christmas magical for children is very difficult indeed.

Every Christmas we are delighted

and amazed by the generosity of people who call into Edel House with presents for the women and children in our services, with Christmas treats, food items for our annual Christmas dinners, together with donations which are essential to us being able to provide the range of supports our service users need," concluded Ms. Aldred.

If you would like to help make Christmas 2020 magical for families who are homeless, you can make a donation at www.goodshepherd-cork.ie, or by post to Edel House, Grattan Street, Cork. Donations can be made in person, but please contact the team in advance at info@goodshepherd-cork.ie or make contact with Claire at 086 604 5241 so that the team can manage social distancing requirements.

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'Tis the season for traditions

Just in time for Christmas, 'Pretty Interesting History' has launched the latest in a series of whimsical visual anthologies of Irish women's social history – 'The Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage'. The writer, designer and illustrator behind these humorous historical guides is Jenny Dempsey, a self-proclaimed history obsessive and talented graphic designer, who through her beautiful illustrations and fetish for time travel, gives an interesting and accessible insight into the past.

The Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage' explains how to find a man, how to live with a man, and where to turn if you don't actually want a man! From 'How to wear the latest, flimsy, see-through dresses without contracting consumption' to 'Alternative life choices for spinsters' each of the 90 pages is a fascinating mixture of gentle humour, quirky drawings and historical fact.

A native of Co Wicklow, Jenny lives in Bantry with her daughter. Jenny talks to Mary O'Brien about her fascination with the past, how it influences her work and daily life and how some of the Christmas traditions we take for granted today actually came to pass.

Jenny Dempsey describes her work as "making children's books for adults. I use lots of illustrations and include little snippets and fake newspaper cuttings for people to discover." Her penchant for time travelling means that family outings usually end up at some museum and when someone makes a remark – about anything – she finds herself replying with phrases like 'funny you should mention that because in the past they did it this way...'

"When I visit an old house or heritage site," says Jenny "I find myself imagining how life was like for the women who lived there. What did they laugh about, cry about, rage and roar about.... I'm not a historian, but I decided to find the answers."



Jenny stepping into Bantry House ballroom from the servant's entrance

The "relatedness of everything" is what she finds fascinating in her research for the guides. She explains: "For example the French Revolution in 1789, which created the French republic, created an interest in the fashion styles of the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, which is why the Regency fashions some years later favoured, white, flowing muslin gowns. This rise of Napoleon

and Britain's subsequent war created great prosperity in Cork where the merchants stocked the ships and clothed the navy. The war also needed men to fight so the British government had to relax their ban on Catholics entering the forces. This was a step forward for Catholic Emancipation...and so on."

Even more intriguing is the tale Jenny shares of Lady Cathcart. "Aged 53, this rich English

lady married a 35-year-old Irish man. Perhaps she thought he loved her, but he loved her riches more and demanded she hand them over. She refused and hid her jewels in her wig and petticoats. He locked her in the attic where she spent 22 years trying to keep sane by recording her thoughts by pricking them on the wallpaper with a pin.

Eventually she broke down and told her wretched husband that

her papers were in a locked box. He forced the lock, injured his hand, got lockjaw and died. She was released aged 75 and enjoyed life to the full until she died at age 98."

Grateful that all of her family members, especially her mum who is in her 70s, have remained safe and well during this pandemic, Jenny is hoping that she'll get to see them this Christmas if the restrictions are lifted.

"I don't celebrate Christmas very well at the best of times," she laughs. "Usually I have three Christmases. One with my family in Wicklow, which is my mum, my brother, his wife and their four loud, exuberant boys. This usually takes place in early December so it's not very Christmassy and it is dominating by excited shouting."

"The second Christmas is with my daughter and her father. We come together for gift giving and a meal on Christmas day. None of us like turkey, no one believes in Santa and we don't go to mass, so that's not very Christmassy either."

"The third Christmas is the one in my imagination. The idealised Christmas where my house is bigger, I am thinner, Bing Crosby is making eggnog and all the decorations are exquisite twinkling 19th century

Continued on next page...

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..Cont'd from previous page

glass from Bavaria."

Jenny feels it's probably about time she instigates some Christmas traditions herself. "I heard Jeffrey Archer on the radio recently who gives a famous champagne and shepherd's pie party every year. That mix of posh and poor sounds good. I might borrow that for Christmas Eve," she says with a smile.

Jenny's research into how some Christmas traditions have come to pass has unearthed some interesting facts. "Holly and Ivy are often linked together at Christmas; this goes back to the idea of the holly (male) and ivy (female) being burnt together at the pagan festival of Bealtaine," explains Jenny. "I have heard that the idea was to bring some life, something 'growing' into the homes as a sign to remind us all in the dead of winter that spring is on the way."

"For some reason the idea of greenery caught on in a huge way in Germany. Not for them a mere sprig or two of holly – the Germans were cutting branches off trees and hefting them into their homes. So much so that in Strasbourg at the end of the 15th century a law was passed banning the seasonal cutting of pine branches. But the tradition conditioned and 1603 the first indoor decorated tree was recorded.

It took a few hundred years for the idea to catch on in Britain and Ireland. Queen Victoria and her German husband, Albert, had one for the first time in 1840, and in 1848 an illustration of their family around a tree popularised this German tradition. If the Queen did it, then everyone wanted to do it.

"Holly and ivy were popular decorations in Ireland too. But a tradition that I have only heard of here is one where at midnight on Christmas Eve too, farm animals were believed to have had the power of human speech, but a terrible fate also awaited those who spied on them."

"The third Christmas is the one in my imagination. The idealised Christmas where my house is bigger, I am thinner, Bing Crosby is making eggnog and all the decorations are exquisite twinkling 19th century glass from Bavaria."

The Bantry House Collection has two charming books, which mention Christmas in the big house. One is written by Rachel Shelswell White when she was about nine or ten. She writes the little book in the voice of her beloved pet dog, Kerry. "Kerry tells how her mistress (Rachel) hung up holly and she (Kerry) ate the berries. Kerry watches as Rachel and her sister pin stockings at the end of their beds and the next morning joins the girls while they open their presents but soon gets bored and hides under the bed eating their slippers. Kerry says she was frightened by the loud noise of the crackers but had fun sneaking out of bed, pulling a box of sweets off a table and chewing the lot all up."

The other book is written by the third housemaid – a local girl of 16 by the name of Nora O'Connor. "She was dazzled by the big house and the splendor," explains Jenny. "She writes of a Christmas ball where the orchestra came from Cork city. Ice cream was served to the guests – which also came all the way from the city. Nora got to taste ice cream for the first time. She tells us that the dresses of the ladies 'were something to behold. Jewels sparkling on everyone but none could hold a candle to our mistress'. Nora then tells us that the servants had a Christmas ball too. Also held in the grand ballroom.

They invited all their friends, a supper was served, and she got a new dress for the occasion. Both books were produced from actual diaries and you can get a copy through the current owner Brigitte Shelswell White (contact through Bantry House facebook page)."

The twelfth and final day of Christmas, January 6, was known in Ireland as Nollaig na mBan or Women's Christmas or Little Christmas. "As a reward for their hard work over the Christmas season, it was a day off from all house work for women and traditional roles were supposed to be reversed in the home: men did the women's work in the house while women rested and gathered together informally," explains Jenny.

Women's Christmas on January 6 was mainly observed in the Western and South Western parts of Ireland. By the mid 20th century, the tradition of Nollaig na mBan had largely died out. It seems now to be coming back with a bang with groups of women enjoying nights out in restaurants and pubs.

Dr Marion McGarry, an Irish art historian, writes of some customs around Little Christmas, one of which in particular Jenny found intriguing. "Weird and unpleasant is the habit of some mothers who rubbed the tail of a herring across the eyes of their children to give immunity against disease for the rest of the year," she shares.

"Rather more welcome was the belief that all the well water in Ireland was said to turn into wine at midnight on Little Christmas.

"If the lockdown continues we might all be gathering around the country's wells watching out for the moment when the water turns to wine....

Mine's a merlot go raibh maith agat."

For more information on Jenny's guides go to www.prettyinterestinghistory.com

Brookpark Community Enterprise Centre receives funding boost from Enterprise Ireland

Brookpark Community Enterprise Centre in Dunmanway has successfully applied for funding from the Enterprise Ireland 'Enterprise Centres fund'. The Centre will receive a grant of €38,560.

The grant will be used to increase office/co-working capacity and to cater for increased demand for services at Brookpark Business Centre resulting from the Covid Pandemic but also the societal switch to remote working.

Enterprise Centres are em-

bedded in communities in every county in the country. They provide space and training for entrepreneurs, allowing them to work remotely, access training and advice, and network with other business leaders.

This funding will be crucial as the Centre continues to offer services to local individuals and businesses during what is an exceptionally difficult time. It will help the Centre implement a recovery plan over the next six to twelve months for the centre but also Dunmanway and its environs.

Brookpark CEC is currently at 90 per cent occupancy. They offer hot desks, co-working office space, training and meeting rooms. There is also a modern boardroom with video and tele-conferencing. The centre has 1 GB fibre broadband, which has been a key part of the centre's success.

The Brookpark committee would like to thank Enterprise Ireland and Cork County Council/LEO for their continuing support.

Enquiries to Peter at 086 4410484 or info@brookpark.ie

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SCALLY'S
of Clonakilty

Holly Cairns TD reflects on her first year in the Dáil

Taking my seat in the Dáil to represent the people of West Cork was such an incredible honour. On the first sitting the chamber was full, with TDs and their families packed into Leinster House. Crowded rooms and big gatherings seem like a lifetime ago now for so many of us. While I will have happy memories of 2020 as the year I got elected to the Dáil, it is more significantly one of the hardest years for families, businesses, and society as a whole.

One of the main things I do as a public representative is listen. To be able to speak on behalf of West Cork, I need to understand the issues that impact people's lives. With communities across West Cork and organisations, such as the Bantry Project Group, Bike Friendly Bandon, Cork Hoteliers, Bród West Cork, IFA, disability services, the forestry sector, the list goes on. Each group has different needs and has been impacted differently by Covid. When asking ques-

tions from Ministers or meeting with Department officials, it is essential to have the on-the-ground information to make our case.

I have also prioritised being honest and transparent. I regularly post updates on social media to help constituents understand not only what matters are being decided on in the Dáil but how they are being decided. We had a great response from our podcast 'Inside the Chamber' when I was a Councillor. We let people know

how local government works (and sometimes doesn't) and we will have more episodes about national government, how legislation is made and passed etc. I am also committed to sticking with my principles, which mean I will sometimes disagree with constituents, but I guarantee you that you will always know where I stand.

The main lesson I have learned as a TD is the importance of standing up for ordinary people especially those who are disadvantaged.

So many different groups can feel voiceless in our society. I have spoken up for the victims of domestic abuse, new mothers and their partners, survivors of institutional abuse, the environment, communities experiencing flooding and I will continue to work for these groups and other causes to help achieve a more equal Cork South West. I will use every opportunity in the Dáil and the committees I serve on, including the Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters and the all-party Committee

on Reproductive Health, to raise these and other issues.

I would like to acknowledge the massive effort made by everyone in getting us through the pandemic. Neighbours and communities pulled together in the spring and summer to help each other, especially those cocooning, and frontline staff in health services and other sectors who have worked tirelessly to protect us all.

Wishing you all the best Christmas. Here's to 2021.



HOLLY CAIRNS TD
Cork South West
Progress | Equality | Democracy | Sustainability

My constituency offices in Bandon and Skibbereen are closed during the pandemic but please get in touch if there's anything I can do to help you.

☎ 086 3615830
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Social Democrats

A letter from Mayor of Cork County

“One thing that has sustained us throughout a difficult year has been our sense of community. We applauded our frontline workers, we kept apart when we only wanted a hug, and we hoped for something that would bring normality back to our lives. From deliveries to neighbours, to checks on friends, to Zoom quizzes with family, County Cork communities have managed to make the best of a very challenging year.

From early on in the crisis, Cork County Council has been helping communities across the county to respond to rapidly changing needs. Through Project Act, the Council provided supports for businesses and took action where needed to deal with a new reality.

Now, as we head towards Christmas, let us celebrate that which has drawn us together. We turned on the lights a little early this year to bring a little extra joy to our streets and towns. Our walkways have ribbons to power the Christmas spirit as we pound the footpaths with a newfound love



Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley

Cork County Council has been encouraging everyone living in the county to discover the sparkle on their doorstep, and the magic on their main street. Support the businesses run by your neighbours and friends by shopping locally. Despite the challenges, our traders have done amazing work to sell by phone, click and collect and on-line. There is an incredible range of Cork businesses who can provide you with inspiration for that extra special gift. The one that is really deserved this year, of all years.

Teams from Cork County Council will be working throughout Christmas, providing essential services but also supporting our citizens in different ways (and that includes ensuring that Santa Claus can deliver all his presents on time).

This Christmas will be different. However, it will also be special. Let's use the opportunity to really celebrate that which has gotten us through this year - each other.

That's A Real Cork Christmas.”

of the outdoors. Our school children have been designing postcards that will be sent across the world to those who cannot make it home this year. And our local businesses have shown resilience they never thought was possible by trading in new and innovative ways, when they cannot meet their customers.

Despite all the challenges, there is a great hope that this will be A Real Cork Christmas.

Walkways across county decorated with colours of Cork and Christmas

Cork County Council has announced plans to decorate hundreds of kilometres of Slí na Croí walkways with the familiar colours of Cork and Christmas. Teams from Cork County Council, Tidy Towns Committees and local community volunteers will decorate local walkways with red and white ribbons, along with festive and uplifting messages.

Outdoor exercise has become extremely popular throughout the year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with Cork County Council continuing to encourage persons of all ages and abilities to walk for leisure and good health under the current Keep Well campaign.

Thousands of metres of red and white ribbon have been distributed to communities across

Cork to add a little extra Christmas cheers to these walkways, as families exercise during the festive period. Council staff in Mallow have also been adding meaningful signs to their walking routes, with messages such ranging from a simple “Happy Christmas” to “Not all storms come to ruin your life, some come to clear your path”.



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Niamh Crowley awarded Bantry Credit Union Scholarship for 2020

Niamh Crowley from Snave, Bantry, has been awarded the Bantry Credit Union Third-Level Education Scholarship for 2020. Daughter of Tony and Carmel Crowley, Shauna is the 18th annual winner of the scholarship, which is worth up to €6,000 over four years.

In keeping with public health guidelines, this year a brief award ceremony took place outside Niamh's school for the past six years – Coláiste Pobail Bheannttraí.

Presenting the award, the Chairperson of Bantry Credit Union, Eddie Mullins, acknowledged and paid tribute to this year's Leaving Certificate students: "Like all her classmates and fellow students throughout Ireland, Niamh had to deal with the challenges and disruption that Covid-19 brought to the Leaving Cert class of 2020. They had to endure uncertainty, postponements, and a whole range of challenges and deprivations like no other year. But they rose to the challenges and overcame them."

Turning to the credit union's annual scholarship scheme, Mr Mullins explained that it is awarded following a rigorous process, involving a detailed application form, a written

submission and an interview. The assessment and decision-making process is conducted entirely by a panel of independent adjudicators, whose decision is binding on the credit union. Eddie added: "These highly experienced judges take a holistic view, recognising the applicants' personal traits, community and voluntary involvement, and career choices as well as their academic results."

Addressing this year's winner, the Chairperson said that Niamh was a worthy recipient of the scholarship for 2020. She had done remarkably well in the Calculated Grades system that was used this year instead of the Leaving Certificate. And she had been offered a place on her first-choice course – Primary School Teaching at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Mr Mullins also paid tribute to the enduring and remarkable commitment of the panel of independent adjudicators, each of whom has served on the panel almost continuously since the outset in 2003: Denis O'Sullivan (retired Deputy Principal of Maria Immaculata Community College, Dunmanway), James Kilduff (Cork Institute of Technology) and Olive McCarthy (University College Cork).

The Principal of CPB, Marian Carey, congratulated Niamh on

her achievement, saying she was a most deserving winner. "It is well known that the recipient of this award is an all-rounder excelling not only academically but also in the sport and music areas while also having a great personality." And the Principal used the occasion to make a surprise announcement: "It is testament to Niamh's character and abilities that she has also been nominated on behalf of CPB as 'Student of the Year' to the Cork ETB." Ms Carey commented that the fact that these two separate and rigorous selection processes came to the same conclusion was confirmation of Niamh's evident strengths and qualities.

The Principal also took the opportunity in her first year at the school to congratulate Bantry Credit Union for its contribution to education through its annual scholarship scheme: "Personally, I think it is great to have such a long-standing tradition in the community with an award that is well recognised here in West Cork."

Accepting the award, Niamh thanked the credit union, the school and her family. Expressing her surprise at also being announced as the CPB nominee for the Cork ETB 'Student of the Year' awards, Niamh said it would be a huge honour to



Niamh Crowley receiving her Bantry Credit Union Scholarship 2020 certificate from Eddie Mullins, Chairperson of Bantry Credit Union. Also included are Marian Carey (Principal, Coláiste Pobail Bheannttraí) and Finbarr O'Shea (Manager, Bantry Credit Union).

(Photo: Tony McElhinney)

represent both Coláiste Pobail Bheannttraí and the Bantry Credit Union Scholarship Scheme.

When asked about her ideal career, Niamh's passion for and commitment to education was obvious: "I would like to be part

of a busy, diverse primary school where children are given the chance to develop, not only their literacy and numerical skills, but to enhance their creative and artistic passions. My ultimate ambition would be to progress

to a managerial role such as principal."

With people like Niamh coming into the profession, we believe that the future of teaching is in safe hands!

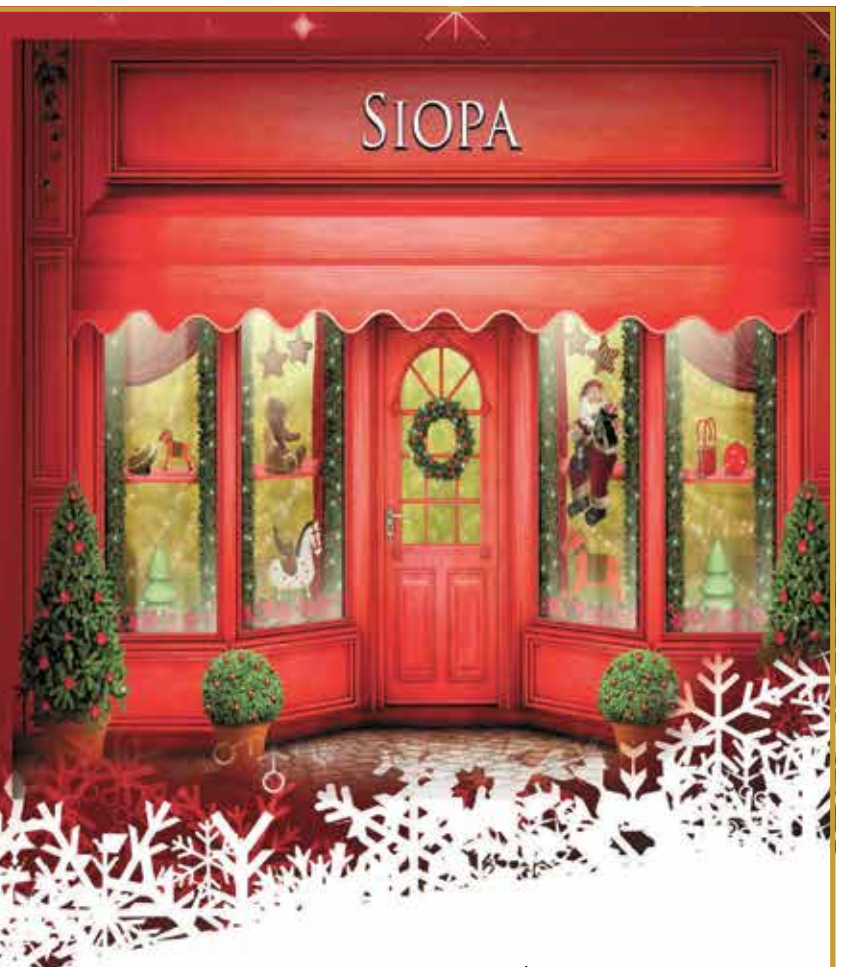
Let's Bring A Real Cork Christmas to Cork County

We are asking the people of Cork to:

- Support your local businesses
- Spread the word about what's available on your doorstep
- Enjoy Christmas in a safe and meaningful way

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley said, "Ongoing restrictions have come as a significant blow for our local retailers, who had been relying on the run up to Christmas to make up for lost time and business earlier in the pandemic. As a community, we will celebrate Christmas as best we can while protecting and supporting each other. I look forward to leading by example, and spending as much as I can with Cork businesses in the weeks ahead. Let's enjoy the festive season and celebrate safely as a community."

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year from Cork County Council



A Real Cork Christmas



Cornhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council



A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

I've been writing a column in one form or another for over two decades, and every year in late November I have to dust off my Santa hat and write about the upcoming holidays before we've even had Thanksgiving. I have always had a resistance to getting into the festive spirit too early, so writing a Christmas column is a bit of a trial. It's like briefly opening a present you don't really want to see, taking a quick peek, and then wrapping it up again to wait for a more appropriate time.

I also have to be careful not to repeat myself, which isn't easy after twenty years of writing about the same thing. At the core of celebrating Christmas are the traditions. Those things that you do over and over again every year. We look forward to doing the same things we did last year: decorate the tree, have Christmas Eve drinks in town, welcome far-flung family home, pop over to friends and neighbours on Stephen's day, have people over for eggnog. Tinsel and Fairy lights as you stroll around a market. Last minute shopping in crowded shops blaring carols. And – let's face it – excess. Excess food, drink,

Christmas is coming

presents and people.

There is little chance that my 2020 Christmas column will repeat anything I've written before. Excess and pandemics do not mix. As I write, we are just coming out of a six-week lockdown. I should feel elated, and ready to jump into the mad swirl of the season, but the uncertainty of what exactly the situation will be makes looking forward to the holidays a bit difficult. The government has warned us that it will not be like other years. It has tried to comfort us by saying that we can still have a 'meaningful' Christmas. Whatever that means...

Frankly if I had a choice, I'd take over-the-top festive excess over meaningful any day.

Celebrating Christmas is more than just presents and turkey. In a secular household like ours, it also marks a fitting blow out to the year. A time to reflect on the year that's past, and look forward to the year ahead together. The operative word is together. This year more than most, people need to get together. Every time I watch the SuperValu ad where the little boy hopes his Grandad will make it for Christmas, it brings a tear to my eye. Will we be able to visit friends? Will we be able to go to the pub for a sing-song? What will Christmas be without the craic in town?

Still I'm not going to be a Scrooge and complain. Too many families will have people missing at their table this year. Some will not be able to come home, others have passed away this dreadful year. In fact,

thanks largely to the pandemic, we'll have all four daughters at home this Christmas. Having the entire family around the table when you have grown-up children is a rare blessing indeed. One year we had one daughter in Australia and another in Edinburgh. We set up the laptop at the table, but it only made their absence more obvious. Two years ago, we had no one home and it was horrible. I could barely bring myself to decorate a tiny tree and could not imagine how to celebrate without them. Thankfully, friends invited us over for their family Christmas and I enjoyed the day despite it being the first time I had not been in my own home with my girls.

I'm hoping that in the next few days we'll get more certainty as to what level of restrictions will be imposed. By the time you read this, we'll know what the story is and can begin to plan a way to have the best Christmas in what has been a pretty bad year. Fingers crossed, we'll find a way to feel the spirit, to share the joy, to celebrate with hope for the year ahead. To see out the year and wish more fervently than ever that next year brings us peace and happiness. We certainly deserve it.

Here's wishing you "a merry little Christmas", no matter how small or remote it ends up being.

Stay safe. Shop local. And may the holidays bring many, many tidings of comfort and joy to you and yours.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the December issue of West Cork People.

As we near the end of a turbulent year, we look forward to celebrating a Christmas like no other. It will be a simpler affair this year, in a way harking back to the more traditional Christmas of past. So many were dealt a tough hand in 2020 but we remain grateful for everything and everyone we have. If anything positive has come out of this pandemic, it has been the change in perspective for so many. Our appreciation for the little things in life has increased, as we've found different ways of enhancing our physical and mental wellbeing during this difficult time.

While many of our restaurants and hotels will remain temporarily closed over the Christmas period and many family members will be missed this year, with the success of the vaccines for Covid-19, there is hope, and we look forward to better times in 2021.

With non-essential businesses allowed to open their doors this week after a five-week lockdown, it is heartening to see and hear the buzz around the streets of towns in West Cork. Our annual Christmas Gift Guide inside this issue highlights many of the wonderful shops and makers, creators and producers we are lucky enough to have on our doorstep here in West Cork. Please support local this year.

We are delighted to be able to bring you a great read in our Christmas issue. While clairvoyant Peter Tadd and astrologer Kate Arbon look to the future, historian Jenny Dempsey and storyteller Eddie Lenihan dip into the traditions of the past. Karen dresses up a cauliflower for Christmas and Jacques presents a meal fit for a vegan king! We hear from West Cork brother and sister duo Tara and Rory Copplestone who have recently launched their innovative cocktail mixer business and Fionnuala Harkin gives us her wine recommendations to go with selection boxes and charades! Heidi at Kerr's bookshop has once again come up trumps with her wonderful book recommendations for younger readers. Tania gets us off the couch this Christmas with her reminder that doing some exercise, no matter how little, is better than nothing at all and Susan's advice is to meet Christmas, not with speed or panic, but with a sense of ease.

The Clonakilty branch of the Society of St Vincent de Paul remind us they are there for anyone who needs a helping hand. Please support this charity if you can; any monies donated to the local branch are distributed in the immediate locality.

This is West Cork People's 17th year in print and we are very grateful to have weathered the storm that was 2020, due in no small part to all the wonderful contributors, readers and business supporters of this community paper.

Thank you and Happy Christmas,

Until next year,
Mary



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West Cork People

Bantry Credit Union news

AGM postponed

Readers won't be surprised to hear that Covid-19 has affected

the holding of credit union AGMs all around the country. No physical AGMs will be

held this side of Christmas, in keeping with public health guidelines. New legislation is currently before the Dáil to allow credit unions hold virtual AGMs and to use electronic voting. This new Act will also extend the timeframe for holding AGMs for the year ending 30 September 2020 until 30 April 2021. This is to give time for the legislation to be enacted and implemented.

As a result, the Board of Directors has decided to postpone this year's AGM until early 2021. The decision about whether it will be a physical or virtual AGM will be made at a later date.

Christmas Giveaway!

This is the first time in the credit union's 54 years that its AGM will not be held in December.

The Board are disappointed with this break from tradition. And they also know that many members who look forward to the AGM each year will also be disappointed.

So the Board has come up with a novel idea. Even though the AGM is being postponed, the prizes that are raffled at the AGM each year will still be given away. During the month of December, hampers and Christmas prizes worth €1,500 will be won by members through a range of fun competitions and raffles. Full details are available in the credit union offices in Bantry and Castletownbere and on the credit union's social media.

Bantry Credit Union supporting Local this Christmas
During the summer and again

when Bantry was flooded in late August, Bantry Credit Union ran 'Supporting Local Businesses' campaigns on social media. These competitions were hugely popular, with great engagement across social media platforms. In all, the credit union gave away 32 vouchers, each worth €50 and every one of them for a local business, from Bantry to Castletownbere and from Glengarriff to Kealkil.

So, to do its bit to support local businesses this Christmas, Bantry Credit Union is running a new social media campaign throughout December. Again, the prizes will be €50 vouchers for local businesses. And to keep it seasonal there will be 12 competitions! Full details are on the credit union's Facebook page.

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Skibbereen wins at all-Ireland community awards

Skibbereen was honoured at the all-Ireland Pride of Place community awards at the end of November. The awards, hosted by Marty Morrissey, took place online due to the Covid pandemic with 6,000 people logging in from across Ireland to see community groups pick up gongs.

Skibbereen took top spot in the 'Area With a Population Less between 2,000 and 5,000'. Judges said that Skibbereen was "a progressive town, revitalised and reimagined, with great plans for the future, with the Chamber of Commerce to the fore in much of the progress that has taken place."

"Implementation of a flood relief scheme, completion of a purpose built art centre and the managing of the local tourist

office convinced the judges of serious vision."

"We are thrilled to have won this National Award on behalf of Skibbereen and District," says Kate Callanan, business administrator for Skibbereen and District Chamber of Commerce. "Whilst the Chamber of Commerce was the anchor for this submission, we could not have done it without the inclusion of many of the various community groups that Skibbereen is so proud of. We would like to especially thank Cllr. Paul Hayes for his nomination and Cork County Council for all their support."

Meanwhile Rita O'Connell, on behalf of the Chamber board, thanked Kate for all her hard work in the preparation and submission of the Skibbereen application.

Pictured: l-r Helen Dempsey, owner of Abbey Furniture and Chamber Board Member, Sandra Gallagher, owner of Violette and Chamber Board Chairperson, Rita O'Connell, owner of Inspire and Chamber Board Member, Cathal O'Donovan, owner of O'Donovans Bookshop and Chamber member and Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme Committee Member and Kate Callanan, Administrator of Skibbereen & District Chamber of Commerce.

Pic: Emma Jervis



Skibbereen Chamber puts festive plans in action

Whilst festive plans might be a little different from other years, Skibbereen Chamber of Commerce wishes to assure everyone that it will still be celebrating Christmas throughout Skibbereen!

The public is invited to visit a wonderful Christmas display, on The Bridge in the centre of town; a Chamber initiative that wouldn't have been possible without the sponsorship and support of Project ACT, Access Credit Union Skibbereen, Drinagh Co-Op Skibbereen, Fields Supervalu, The Eldon Hotel, Cork County Council, Kieran Crowley, Bryan Harris and volunteers from Skibbereen Lions Club and the Chamber Christmas Committee. The display features in one of two videos produced by the Chamber – the virtual switch on of the town lights and a beautiful festive video of some local primary schools reading Christmas poems – both



videos are available to view from the Chamber's Facebook page Skibbereen – Home and the website www.skibbereen.ie.

Christmas hampers and the 'Find The Elves' competition are

both back by popular demand, so make sure you take part in both. Tickets to enter the hamper draw are available in local shops from early December, and entry forms for the Elf Competition will be

available from Abbey Furniture from December 8.

The Chamber's message is for everyone to Shop Local this Christmas and many of the businesses in town, who have had to close their doors for several months now, will be opening them wide this month including late night Fridays (December 11 and 18) and staying open on

Sundays (December 6, 13 and 20).

New for this year are Skibbereen Town Vouchers, available from mid-December, perfect to give as gifts whilst supporting local businesses.

A final video, in conjunction with the Ilen Vibe Choir and featuring some Chamber members, will also be streamed in

December. This special project aims to highlight the importance of everyone coming together as a community to support each other and businesses, particularly in the times we find ourselves in now. The message from this video is to stay safe, shop local and support your community.

Inchydoney Christmas swim – virtual in-swim-ity

The Annual Inchydoney Christmas Swim in aid of Fr John Kingston is going online this year. Thanks to Covid 19 the traditional Christmas morning swim is cancelled but instead people are being asked to do a Virtual Swim. It's the first time in the 42-year history of the swim that it's been cancelled, with only one other postponement due to weather. Hopefully the swim will be back on the beach again next year, as it's a great social occasion for a lot of people, a chance to get out of the house and meet up with friends.

SPLASH FOR CASH!

If you're inside 5km, then perhaps you'd like to take a dip at your nearest beach or if you're staying at home, maybe a cold bath or shower might help replace the sea. Remember to be safe at all times.

All donation are welcome and the effort people make each year to help out the swim and Fr John is really appreciated. To make a donation go to Go Fund Me page for the Inchydoney Christmas Swim.

Feel free to share your 'swim' photos/videos on the Facebook page – @inchydoneychristmas-

swim

As with every year, all the funds raised by the swim are going to help Fr John and the Spiritan mission in Mozambique. The funds are used to help the local community for education and medical purposes. The swim is one of John's main methods of getting funds so we're hoping the online event can help him just as much as the normal swim.

If you have any queries please contact Mary White at 087 2806063.

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Write for Rights – Change for the Better



By Clonakilty
 Amnesty Group

Amnesty International's 'Write for Rights' campaign takes place annually around December 10, which is Human Rights Day. Write for Rights 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 organising 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 in past years, be a part of West Cork's contribution to the international Write for Rights campaign even in this difficult Covid time. Please take action on the case below. Inform yourself of the issue from the case card and sign and send the sample letter directly, or compile your own letter.

Case Card

Nassima al-Sada (b.1969) is a human rights writer and activist from Saudi Arabia, who has campaigned for civil and political rights and women's rights for many years. She has been in solitary confinement in prison since February 2019.

Nassima al-Sada loves animals and cherishes her garden back home. Even in her prison cell, she has a carefully tended plant. It is her only link to the

outside world, which she must sorely miss. For much of her life, Nassima campaigned for women's freedom in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, she has lost her own.

She was one of several prominent activists demanding women's right to drive and the right to carry out their daily business without the permission of a male 'guardian'. Saudi Arabia's guardianship laws required women to seek a man's permission to go out, and other basic needs. While these laws have been eased in recent months, the women who have campaigned to end the guardianship system remain behind bars. "Why should an under-age boy be the guardian of a woman who is an adult?" Nassima wrote in 2016. "Why isn't there an age at which a woman becomes an adult, responsible for her decisions and her life? Why should there be a man responsible for her life?"

Nassima was arrested for her peaceful human rights work in July 2018. While in jail, she was ill-treated. She was placed in a cell alone, in complete isolation from other detainees, from February 2019 to February 2020. She is allowed one weekly phone call with her family, but no visits, not even from her lawyer. Still, Nassima and her family aren't giving up. Nor should we.



Sample Letter

Addressed to:
 His Majesty King Salman
 bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,
 Office of His Majesty the King,
 Royal Court, Riyadh,
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
 Your Majesty
 Nassima al-Sada is a woman whom Saudi Arabia should take great pride in. Her lifelong journey has been one dedicated to the improvement of women's freedoms and her vision of them being active members of an open, vibrant society.

But instead of embracing Ms. al-Sada's efforts, the authorities arrested her in July 2018 and placed her in solitary confinement. Today, she is still behind bars.

I respectfully call on you to release Ms. al-Sada and all other detained women human rights defenders, immediately and without conditions.

*Yours sincerely
 (sign the letter)*

Dear WCP Reader: Clonakilty Amnesty Group is grateful for your action on this case. You can find further information about the case at amnesty.org.

Clonakilty Amnesty Group can be reached as follows: 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).

Turning the tide



Daniel Boddington pictured with his daughters and fellow open water swimmers from Courtmacsherry

With movements constrained by Covid-19, many in West Cork have found unexpected pleasure in the freedom of the ocean. With this call of the wild, all around West Cork, young and old, have been seen donning thermal accessories and taking the plunge. Aside from offering a release from the restrictions that have us tied to within 5km of our home during this pandemic, the physical and mental benefits of open water swimming are said to be immense, from better circulation and boosted immune system to increased happiness. In fact, according to researchers from Cambridge University, cold water swimming may even protect the brain from degenerative diseases like dementia.

"When you're in there and the wave catches you and lifts you up, it really does lift your body and your soul," says Daniel Boddington from Courtmacsherry.

Daniel, 35, works as a hairdresser in Clonakilty and joined the ranks of the open water swimmers for the first time during the lockdown in

the Spring. In fact this was a real baptism of fire for Daniel, who had never even swum in the ocean before. "I've always had a pretty bad shark phobia," he explains. With some gentle persuasion from his neighbour Maureen, who has been enjoying the benefits of sea swimming all year round for a few years now, Daniel eventually pushed aside his fear and hasn't looked back since.

With his work life paused due to Covid, swimming has become the highlight of each day for Daniel. "I'd go so far as to say it's similar to that feeling of excitement in the build-up to Christmas...except you have that feeling every day before a swim!"

"The uncertainty has been very hard. It feels like we're on a rollercoaster with all the ups and downs and always waiting for the next thing to happen. Swimming is my outlet; it gives me headspace...I've been in the water every day since the start of the second lockdown."

Daniel has set up a WhatsApp group to co-ordinate swims with a few other locals so there is also a social aspect

to the activity. His three young daughters, age eight, 10 and 13, regularly accompany him on swims. For a brief part of every day, the great open space of the ocean, whatever the weather, allows the opportunity for a safe, friendly chat, albeit treading water. "There is a really nice community feel to the swims," says Daniel. "It's a chance to make friends with people you'd ever only meet in passing before in the locality."

Whatever about sharks, even a recent invasion of the venomous Portuguese man o' war hasn't deterred the swimmers of the Seven Heads Peninsula.

"Doing something out of your comfort zone changes the way you see things; you deal with fear differently and nothing is as bad you imagine it to be," explains Daniel simply.

"It takes you back to nature. When the sun comes out from behind the clouds and ripples and reflects off the water, it makes you stop and just be in that moment...and whatever your feelings and worries, you simply enjoy it."

A helping hand in a time of 'Impossible Choices'

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) Annual Appeal launched last month is one of the most difficult in the Society's 176 years history. Christmas will be different for everyone this year but the theme 'Impossible Choices' reflects the really hard situation families on low incomes face in the lead up to Christmas.

The Clonakilty branch has been working with people in need in the local community for 160 years and the work done by the organisation and its members has never been so important as now, when people are under such severe financial and psychological stress due to the economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

If you are struggling to keep a roof over your head, how do you choose between a decent dinner and a warm house? What do you sacrifice to buy your children those precious gifts after such a tough year?

St Vincent De Paul Clonakilty helped nearly 250 families last year to the tune of €130 K to keep their heads above water

Launching the Annual Appeal, Ryan Tubridy said "Poverty is never easy to confront and yet, every Christmas it is impossible to ignore. Never has it been so important as in 2020 in the middle of a pandemic, and when

people are on their knees wondering what to do next, wondering how to pay the next bill or fill the schoolbag with books, and how they will feed their family every night"

"It can be very difficult for people to make that initial contact with the Society, especially if they haven't been in a position where they have needed to ask for help before," said Agnes Cahill, President of the Clonakilty branch of St Vincent de Paul. "But based on the need of the individual or family, assistance is given in a non-judgmental spirit of compassion," she emphasises.

Our members are very accessible and our door is always open to anyone," adds Noel Lawlor, the organisation's education officer.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul provides practical financial support and advice, assistance with grants for fuel and a short-term safety net for those who fall outside the welfare state. It also provides social housing to the over-50s at affordable prices: There are 24 housing units in three locations around Clonakilty town.

There is also an Education Grant scheme provided by the Society to which people can apply for financial assistance to pursue third level education.

Anyone is welcome to apply. "We have a bursary up to a value of €2,000 for each student per annum," explains Noel. "Once you qualify for the grant, it's made available for the duration of the student's course."

Most of the students who qualify for the Education Grant would already have been accepted for the Susie scheme. However as Agnes points out, "the Susie grants would probably not stretch to cover accommodation costs if the students are attending third level colleges far from home.

"The €2,000 is there to cover whatever they need, whether that's travel costs or course materials," she says.

"It's fantastic to see the recipients of these grants progressing and achieving their goals in life," says Noel. "Many of them now in fact support the Society themselves."

Last year alone, the Clonakilty branch invested €45,000 in supporting 30 students attending college and university.

This type of investment is only possible as a result of the generous donations and fundraising efforts of the public throughout the year and in particular during the annual collection in December. The need for donations this year has been exacerbated by the fact that there can be no SVP church

gate collections this year due to the Pandemic. Instead anyone who wants to make a donation in person can do so in the locations listed (see advert on this page) on Saturday, December 12.

"Everyone deserves a helping hand when needed and all help is given with the utmost respect to the privacy of the individual or family," says Agnes.

"We'd like people to approach us as if they were approaching a family member who is in a position to help them financially through a difficult period," says Noel.

In what has been a difficult year for charities all over Ireland, Agnes and Noel would like to assure people that any monies donated to the local branch of St Vincent de Paul are distributed in the immediate locality.

If you wish to make a donation you can do so through the Clonakilty Saint Vincent de Paul GoFundMe page. All donations greatly appreciated

To contact the Clonakilty branch directly for assistance call 087 3769935.

The numbers for the other branches in West Cork are as follows: Bandon 086 8255092; Bantry 086 1710559; Dunmanway 086 3458037; Skibbereen 087 9182698.



Many families will face impossible choices this Christmas.



ANNUAL APPEAL

Clonakilty St Vincent de Paul

BUCKET COLLECTION: SAT DECEMBER 12

Courtmacsherry Church:
9.30am-11.00am

Barryroe Co-op:
9.30am-4.00pm

Rosscarbery Church:
10.00am - 1.00pm

Clogagh Church:
10.00am - 1.00pm

Timoleague Church:
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Clonakilty Church:
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An unexpected voyage: Coming home and thinking local

Mother and daughter, Jennifer Corcoran and Athena Corcoran-Tadd from Ballydehob joined the crew of a 100-year old, two-masted schooner transporting cargo-under-sail last January. As a result of the pandemic, what started out as a two-month journey turned into a challenging and eye-opening seven months at sea. They returned in July with a new appreciation for why supporting local is so very important to our future. This is their story.

We returned at the end of July, having sailed 16,782 nautical miles on the Avontuur, a refurbished 100-year old, two-masted schooner transporting cargo-under-sail.

We are mother and daughter, film writer/director Jennifer Corcoran and composer/performer Athena Corcoran-Tadd from Ballydehob. To support their 'mission zero' of reducing maritime shipping emissions, we joined the Avontuur as crew in January 2020.

Cargo-under-sail is a clean way to transport goods. But sailing takes time, which is inconvenient. How tied is convenience to consumerism? Would we all consume less if we had to wait longer? And, consuming less, produce less waste?

Shipping a total of 64 tons of cargo (organic coffee, cacao, rum, gin and olive oil) we sailed, fifteen people from six countries, from Germany to Tenerife, across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. We loaded cargo in Honduras, Belize, Mexico and the Azores, sailed up the west coast of Ireland and back to Germany.

We had planned to join the voyage for only two months, Germany to the Caribbean. But the unexpected happened. We were on the ship for seven months. For four of those months we did not step ashore.

There is no Internet at sea,

no phone connection, no news updates. We received a satellite message halfway across the Atlantic with news of Covid-19.

This meant no crew change, shore leave or even repatriation. Our scheduled ports of call were locked down, though fortunately still open to load cargo. But no one had permission to leave the ship. On land, lockdown meant isolation. At sea, we were stuck together, but locked out.

The voyage was challenging.

Ten of us shared an unheated, open space where privacy consisted of bunks with curtains. The bunk was so low that Jennifer couldn't sit up to read a book. If Athena talked in her sleep, everyone – especially Jennifer just above her – would hear. Our bunks became our own little worlds, complete with a flock of hanging wet socks. And we slept deeply in short shifts, exhausted from hauling lines to raise sails, endless maintenance and helming for hours.

Teamwork equates survival on a ship so we had to prioritise the group's safety and well-being. One person's mood – good or bad – would affect us all. Any tensions had to be addressed and resolved immediately: there was no closing the door or walking away. We both found that humour was key.

Fresh water was at a premium – hot water was not even an option. Showering, laundry and



dishwashing were done on deck with buckets of seawater (no matter the temperature). Show-ering became a well-planned, occasional and invigorating event.

We discovered that it is possible to live with (a lot) less. And how to improvise when you run out of toothpaste. Stitching a torn sail, splicing a frayed rope – we learned that

nothing is ever truly broken. So we patched our clothes, sewed shoes back together, re-glued broken glasses.

The voyage was eye-opening. We saw many things that are mostly unseen.

Considering the Avontuur's 'mission zero', we were particularly aware of container ships, struck by the visible pollution pouring from them as they ploughed forward at high speed regardless of wind and wave direction. There are up to 60,000 container ships at sea, daily.

We were shocked by the density of oil-rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, fully illuminated day and night, enormous flame-jets burning off waste gas. Just south of the Canary Islands, we rescued sixteen West African boat people. Along the Grand Banks of Newfoundland we encountered a long current of dead fish, eyes popping, mouths agape – the by-catch from fishing trawlers. In the middle of the North Atlantic, flotillas of Portuguese man o' wars floated by, interspersed with plastic waste.

We were overwhelmed by the speed at which our rubbish accumulated even though the Avontuur provisions sustainably. A mountain of packaging grew until we could recycle it on land. Since our return, we are more conscious than ever of what we buy and how it is packaged.

And the voyage was wondrous.

Athena had expected the sea to be black at night. Instead, we witnessed huge swathes illuminated by bioluminescence – flashes in a bucket of seawater, clouds of it in our wake. Whale blows and sleek backs hinting at so much unseen beneath the surface. And one night, while becalmed in fog, four Minke whales, illuminated only – but completely – by bioluminescence, dove back and forth

beneath the ship leaving trails of light behind them. The complete dome of stars curving to the horizon. And the breathtaking green of land seen after 50 days. We returned with the conviction that no choice that any of us makes is insignificant.

As we enter the holiday season and the shopping list lengthens, we are resisting the temptation of convenient purchases on websites like Amazon. More than 90 per cent of goods are transported across the globe in the very container ships we saw. 'Made in China' makes its way from China by sea – to West Cork. With high greenhouse gas emissions, whale strikes, marine and coastal pollution, the existing container shipping industry is destroying our oceans, and our local economy.

Jennifer noticed in last month's West Cork People that many local shops are now online. Can we reimagine our holiday gift buying to support local growers and food producers, shops and artists?

We are privileged to have quality options available to us in our corner of Ireland. We can do our part to conserve them. Where and how we choose to spend our money has a huge impact.

And when it comes to holiday feasting, look at the labels, see where items are coming from. Bananas shipped from Costa Rica? Considering the seasonality of foods and what is locally available is another way to support local growers and minimise the carbon footprint of your dinner plate.

Any traveller returns changed. But this time we also returned to a changed world – a strange, brave, new world. We didn't bring any tangible souvenirs back with us, but we did return to West Cork with a fuller appreciation of clean air, water, community – and beauty.

And it's all local.

Reaching for the bigger picture

For Kate Arbon, Christmas has become a very sacred time to spend in solitude. The West Cork astrologer loves the freedom of no pressure or expectation and finds a special peace in being alone and inwardly focused at such a busy time of year.

"I don't really 'do' Christmas in the traditional way any more," says Kate. Instead of the big tree, presents, Santa and 20 people for dinner, which she has done in the past, she likes to observe traditions such as bringing some evergreen branches into the house for the Solstice and lighting candles every sunset until Epiphany, Little Christmas. "I'll usually make a wreath for the door and have a little fir tree with some lights in a corner. I love that feeling of lighting up the darkest days. It's about 'holding the light'," she explains.

Life and work entwines for the astrologer, who explains that the insight and understanding provided by her work has really helped her during tough times. "And there's been plenty of those times," she admits.

"I've never really used astrology to set out any life plan, and I've never let it influence my intuitive decisions. But I do use Astrology to understand why things are happening the way they do and it makes sense of many events and aspects of my life," she explains.

In recent years, Kate has seen a huge increase in interest in astrology. "People are recognising that it can offer another perspective," she says. "I think this is a very critical time in our modern history and people want to make sense of their experiences and to understand the larger patterns that are affecting them personally."

However for this astrologer – who, when she's not studying or researching something related to astrology is happiest outdoors in all weathers at her home on the Sheep's Head Peninsula – overcoming the misunderstandings about astrology is still a challenge. "There's a lot of stuff online that gives people the wrong impression so it's easy to think of astrology as a fortune telling service," explains Kate. They will see it alongside tarot readings and psychic readings. It's very different, but reaching people with that information so they can appreciate its value is a challenge.

She'd encourage any sceptic to come for a reading. "To dismiss something that you have never actually taken time to try for yourself doesn't impress me," says Kate. "The best way to see the value of astrology is to experience it in a personal way with a well established and genuine astrologer."



Kate was born when the Sun was in Cancer so, as a water sign, she says that she is very aware of subtle undercurrents, emotions, feelings and atmosphere, with a sensitivity to people and what they need.

During each reading she sees the person from a perspective that they themselves may not have seen. "When I can give them something to go away with that will add to the quality of their life, a lasting positive insight, I feel like my work is meaningful and worthwhile," she says passionately.

So what is astrology and how does it work? Kate explains how essentially astrology is the study of the movement of the planets, and other astronomical bodies, and the interpretation of those movements as they reflect life on earth. "It's been said 'as above so below'," she says simply. "Astrologers look at events, situations, individual personality and life patterns and we can see there is a fairly predictable comparison to the 'heavenly' patterns and events. It's really just knowledge based on the results of statistical research, over millennia! How that actually works, well how does anything in our experience 'work'? That's like asking me to explain 'life, the universe and everything'. That could take more than one book!" she laughs.

The roots of modern Western Astrology can be traced back at least 4000 years to Sumaria, Babylonia and Egypt, but we know it's older than that.

"There have been mammoth tusks found that have the lunar phases carved into them so we can assume that studying the movement of the 'heavens' is as old as the human race!" explains Kate.

Astrology, medicine and astronomy were all studied together as inseparable subjects up until the late 1600s in Western Europe. "It was taught in the universities and widely used by monarchs, Popes and other leaders. Political and religious trends during the 17th century forced

it to go underground and it fell out of popular use. In the late 1800s there was a re-emergence and modern astrology evolved, incorporating a psychological approach and becoming popular in the mainstream once more during the mid 1900s."

In recent years, since the early 2000s, many ancient Arabic, Greek and Latin texts have been fully translated into English for the first time. A wealth of lost knowledge and techniques are finally being re-introduced to modern astrologers.

Kate's childhood involved spending a lot of time on her own so she learned to love reading, which eventually led to her interest in and passion for astrology.

Her training started when she found a book that showed her how to calculate a birth chart. "I was motivated to start studying further so I could interpret those charts," she explains. "It was all hand drawn and calculated using complex maths back then."

Kate relied on books and self-directed study, as there just wasn't the options for courses that there are now. The more she learned, the more she wanted to know. "So I just kept going," she says, "reading every book by every author that I could find."

Over time this passion evolved into a professional 'job'.

"With the Internet it was so much easier to find sources of quality information and I've had the chance to connect with so many more highly skilled astrologers in recent years. I didn't set out to be a professional astrologer but, as I got more knowledgeable, people wanted me to look at their chart for them."

We are living through one of the most challenging moments in world history, which Kate says is "also a critical time; it's a time of change and it's happening at high speed."

"Changes are to be expected with the current planet themes but there are choices to be made too."

Perhaps that is where Kate's work gives her an advantage in life. "It probably helps me stay balanced," she admits. "I see it all as part of a bigger pattern, a drama being played out. I get to see the bigger picture so I can keep some detachment."

So what does Kate see playing out on the world stage?

"There's a definite shift in energy dynamics as we turn the corner into 2021. The tough and frustrating transits that have been the theme of 2020 are reaching conclusion. Now we're looking at fast-paced changes and a serious overhaul of our society and economy over the next two years. The

panic and fear that forced all the recent drastic measures have revealed a high level of corruption and self-interest amongst the world's political leaders.

We're getting our eyes opened to who and what doesn't work well for the ordinary person. There's going to be a lot of new thinking. Innovations and creative solutions will emerge. It is going to be a bit of a rollercoaster ride. More controls will be enforced and everything about our daily life becomes subject to the governments dictate."

But the good news is that "2020 Winter Solstice brings the end to the age of materialism, and like in the story of King Cnut who recognised that, for all the regal and sovereign power he held, he couldn't control the tide. We'll be reassured that there exists a greater force than any earthly power can summon. This will become apparent as those who try to become our 'overlords' come unstuck!"

"The coming months will remind us that natural laws and the inherent force that creates life itself always has the final say. We can shake off the disbelief at where we find ourselves at the end of 2020. It's a bit like we fell asleep at the wheel! Once we get our bearings again, we'll remember that the 'life

force' is actually on our side and we can gradually find the right road to a new harmony with

nature and life itself." And so there is hope...

CHRISTOPHER O'SULLIVAN T.D.

Christmas 2020 will be a Christmas like no other. Despite this, by sticking together and looking out for each other, we can still make it a special time of year.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and here's to a better brighter 2021.



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WILD ATLANTIC WAY



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

It's all over the airwaves. There is outrage amongst the population. The incumbent president is claiming victory in the election. Hundreds of thousands pour into the streets. Civil unrest is in the air as protestors and counter protestors clash. The president, seeing he is in a vulnerable position gets the police to turn water cannons on the men and women, who only want their democratic vote to be counted. He still clings onto power, despite most of the world recognising the election in favour of his opponent.

No, this is not the USA – it's Belarus. Alexander Lukashenko, with the backing of Russia's president Putin, has been stubbornly holding only his presidency claiming a staggering 83 per cent of the vote from an avalanche of an 87 per cent turn out at the polls. His two decades in office have given him great power to control the media, manipulate the electoral system and silence political opponents. Zimbabwe's former autocratic ruler, Robert Mugabe, often used the same tactics to stay in power for thirty years, claiming unfeasible and inconceivable huge victory margins. International independent observers have deemed these elections unfair and illegal based on evidence and the free and fair universal rules of democratic



Shining a light on the undemocratic nature of American democracy

elections. Sadly, the world has come to accept the fragile and porous nature of democracy in places like these, which were once colonised by the Soviets and British, respectively. Perhaps unfairly, our expectations of these regions to hold whiter than white democratic elections, is quite low, compared to say, the United States of America. Well, that was until the 2020 American election, where the home of real democracy and transparent elections, has been embarrassed by calls of fraud, rigging, tampering and cheating on a scale associated with the bad guys in an old James Bond movie from the Cold War.

The frightening thing is that the aforementioned description of the chaos in the streets of Minsk, could easily be mistaken for what is happening in the USA, the world's oldest and according to Americans, 'Greatest Democracy'. It's even more staggering to think that American demagogic and autocratic rulers like Trump, do not need to achieve fantastical, overwhelming majorities to win their presidential race. Forty Seven per cent could do it thanks to the defective Electoral College system that they use. You have to wonder, next time the Americans step in to police some poor, war torn country, where claims of voting irregularities are presented – can they now honestly maintain their position as the sacred arbiters of world democracy, when their own is so flawed?

I wrote a few months ago in the West Cork People, about

we have had wall-to-wall media, television, radio and social media coverage of their election. It's through gritted teeth I add to another layer of paper to a rainforest of articles, dedicated to 'their' election. This however, is an attempt to wrestle us free from the perceptions of the USA, as the bastion of democracy. It is not, nor was it ever a place, where everyone is equal. Let's examine it to see why.

Most readers already understand that the presidency in not won by national popular vote, but by the Electoral College system. That's why Donald Trump (and George Bush junior who also won the presidency without winning the popular vote), only needed to appeal to a particular type of voter and not the majority. Clearly, 74 million Americans saw fit to re-elect a racist, misogynistic, un-stately and divisive man to lead their country. Don't get me wrong, there is more to the Republican Party than Trump, guns, and bibles that we probably don't appreciate on this side of the pond. Their fiscal tax and economic policies are game changers for many voters. But it begs the question: If you can still vote in your Republican senator and congress man or woman to do all these things for you, why oh why continue to support Trump, knowing what he is? Most likely, is that 74 million people do agree with his behaviour. That 74 million were within a few hundred thousand more votes of returning Donald Trump. Its unfathomable to

think that 74 million people, in a world of eight billion, can impose their values on the rest of the globe via American interventionism and geopolitical muscle, every four years.

The American system, for all its pretence, is a rigged game, where change is almost impossible. Each state can vote for two senators, so Republican Party-dominated States like Wyoming and North Dakota, with populations well under a million, have the same power as Democratic Party-dominated states like California and New York with populations of 40 and 20 million respectively. Sounds familiar? Remember Gerrymandering in Northern Ireland that rigged the unionist vote in favour of the nationalist one? Bearing this in mind, if the Americans wanted to change the Electoral College system, Congress would need a two-third majority and three quarters of the states would also have to agree. Only the regimes of Mugabe and Lukashenko and other tyrants, can guarantee these numbers. Why would the Republican Party change the rules of a game that favours them? It's simple – In America, you can hold power without the blessing of the majority.

So why the Electoral College system and not a majority vote? In essence, the founding fathers of America didn't have a blueprint. Democracy did not exist and humankind had only known the rule of kings, queens, despots and emperors. Yet they refused to trust their own people believing that the common man (problem number one – no women), could not be trusted to be informed or vote for the right candidate via majority voting.

Instead states were given electoral votes, based on the size of their population. States with massive slave populations like Virginia, who had a 60 per cent slave population, would wield little power if it were majority rule. The northern, non-slave states, had much larger white voting male populations. To 'unite' the disparate states, a system was devised to give each state Electoral College votes based on their populations. It was the only time that slave-owning states sought to legitimise the humanity of their slaves by trying to assert their state should count them. A compromise was agreed and slaves were counted as 3/5 of a person to inflate the southern states representation, and so the constitution was approved and has been run in this manner for 240 years. This is the foundation of the 'world's greatest democracy' that Joe Biden has called 'the envy of the world'. This 'democracy' has, five times in its history, failed to award the candidate with the most votes, the presidency – most recently Hilary Clinton in 2016. Before you assume that the independent chosen electors, who are meant to cast their votes on behalf of the states whose majority voted in favour of a particular candidate, there have been 157 'faithless electors' who have gone against the wishes of their state and voted differently. Unlike Ireland, only the two parties will rule the USA every electoral cycle (though some of you may have noticed a tiny percentage of votes going to third party candidates). For all our own flaws, in thirty years, we have been represented in government by Fianna Fail,

Fine Gael, the Green Party, Labour, the Democratic Left, the PDs and a myriad of Independents to give full voice to the disparate views of our nation in what is a better reflection of democracy.

Donald Trump has exposed the frailty of democracy in the United States of America. Let's not pretend that a Democratic Party, led by Joe Biden, magically means the system is okay. A Democratic, blue, Joe Biden, will still drop bombs on countries around the world. It will use its muscle to make unconscionable trade deals that include arms transactions and keep people in indentured slavery around the globe, whose livelihood depends on supplying the USA with cheap goods. Guantanamo Bay will stay open, though Obama, supported by the Democrats, said they would close it. At least he will continue a hundred-year long tradition of having a dog (a rescue dog in this case), in the White House, a sequence that Trump broke.

Winston Churchill, not exactly a poster boy of democracy himself, summed it up when he said that; 'Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time'. It's certainly the worst form of government in the US of A.

I hope you forgive me for a plug, but my own history book, 'Behind the Wall: The rise and fall of Protestant power and culture in Bandon', has been reprinted and is for sale in shops and bookstores for Christmas. I hope it will be a good Christmas for you all. We all deserve it.

Forgotten stories sought from the founding of the State

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A project carried out by writer and theatre-director Karen Minihan invites the telling of stories of ordinary women in West Cork who were involved in the War of Independence and Civil War.

In order to understand our history from that time and what was to follow, Karen believes these forgotten stories must be heard, some perhaps for the first time. Her aim is to give voice to these women, for the purposes of understanding and reconciliation. She would like all sorts of stories: how ordinary people coped with the circumstances of the time; the aftermath of dealing with the authorities—the police, Black and Tans or Auxiliaries; dealing with the involvement of members of the family in the activities.



Karen is seeking stories from the West Cork area. In gathering them, careful consideration will be taken to do this in a sensitive manner with care for the integrity of each story. She is flexible in gathering the stories; it can be done electronically or in person, or through the post.

Eventually, twenty stories will be chosen and written down, in collaboration between the storyteller and Karen, and they will be



collected in a pamphlet, which will be available to the public on completion of the project.

Inspired by the nature and dramatic potential of the stories, a Monologue will also be written by Karen for performance in Spring 2021 by a professional actor and produced by PlayActing Theatre. The Monologue will create a 2020 prism on the stories in order to better understand the legacy of the events of that time.

Although a piece of drama, the Monologue will stay true to the original story and history of the time. This theatre performance will be filmed.

The completion date of the project will be mid-2021, with the release of the film and the accompanying pamphlet.

The gathering of stories is happening now and the deadline for submission of stories is December 18. If you have a story you wish to share, please write to playactingtheatre@gmail.com.

This project is supported by Cork County Council's Commemoration Grants Scheme 2020, and Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre.



FACT & FOLKLORE

Eugene Daly

A retired primary teacher, West Cork native Eugene Daly has a lifelong interest in the Irish language and the islands (both his parents were islanders). He has published a number of local history books and is a regular contributor on folklore to Ireland's Own magazine. Eugene's fields of interest span local history, folklore, Irish mythology, traditions and placenames.

The Christmas Crib

Christmas joy has always been expressed in music and song, in poetry and art. Not only have the great masters of art depicted Nativity scenes that capture the atmosphere of the most holy of nights, but simple artists and unknown wood carvers have portrayed in the Christmas Crib the great mystery of the Incarnation in a way that captivates young and old everywhere.

We must thank St. Francis of Assisi for the lovely custom of the Christmas crib. When Nativity plays became so sacrilegious

that they were banned by Pope Innocent III, in 1207, Francis found another way to show his followers what he felt about the birth of Jesus. 'I desire', he wrote to his disciple Giovanni Vellita, 'to represent the birth of the Christ in Bethlehem in such a way that with our eyes we may see all that he suffered from the lack of necessities for a newborn babe, and how he lay in a manger between the cow and the donkey'.

On Christmas Eve 1224, after his return to Assisi from the Holy Land, he made a crib in

a forest grotto in the mountain village of Greccio. Here Francis sang the Gospel and preached about 'the Little Babe of Bethlehem'. The simplicity of Francis' crib became the model of all future ones.

Cribs at Christmas soon became popular throughout the country, and from Italy the custom spread all over Europe. Missionaries later brought it to the rest of the world. And so today the Peruvians have Llamas watching over the manger; the Japanese cribs have a procession of Samurai bearing gifts, and the Eskimos make igloo-cribs from blocks of ice, with the infant lying on a sled pulled by huskies.

For centuries certain places in Europe have specialised in making beautiful cribs – Provence in France, Olot in Spain, and Oberammergau in Germany. In Amalfi in southern Italy, fishermen make a crib beneath the clear waters of the Emerald Grotto, its life-size ceramic figures shimmering on the seabed. In many Basque towns, boys and girls build portable cribs and carry them on stretchers while they beg for alms for charity. In Milan's Cathedral Square every Christmas, they make an extraordinary mechanical crib, whose figures perform two thousand movements.

The crib reached its greatest

artistic expression in the 18th century Naples, thanks to the enthusiasm of its king, Charles III, who loved to model the figures himself. Splendid examples of the crib-makers' art can still be seen today in museums in Naples, in Trapani in Sicily, and in Munich, whose Bavarian National Museum has the greatest collection of the most beautiful cribs in the world.

Today the Christmas tree is probably more in evidence than the Christmas Crib, but has less significance. The crib is the true symbol of Christmas. It is the best reminder of the real meaning of the feast of the birth of the baby Jesus.

The Flower of the Holy Night

The Mexican call the poinsettia the 'Flower of the Holy Night', after a legend that tells of a little peasant girl, who, on Christmas Eve, wanted to go to Midnight Mass with a gift for Jesus. She had nothing to give, but the angels appeared to her and told her to pick some weeds and take them into the church.

As she went in, everyone laughed at her. Suddenly the top leaves on every stem burst into a flame of scarlet. The congregation fell to their knees and the little girl proudly marched forward to make her offering at the crib.

There is no more beautiful name for a flowering plant than the 'Flor de la Nochebuena' (Flower of the Holy Night), the flame-coloured jungle plant, the poinsettia.

Today, the poinsettia is one of the most popular Christmas plants and has become the centre of Christmas decorations in homes, halls and churches. Its wealth of crimson flowers gives an exclusive and exotic glow to the trimmings of the festive season.

The poinsettia, as we know it today, was introduced to the world of plants by Joel Robert Poinsett, a keen gardener and

botanist, who became the United States' first ambassador to Mexico in 1825. One Christmas time he was strolling in a market place in Mexico City when he noticed the exotic flaming flowers that the people were buying for Christmas decorations. Poinsett was fascinated with the strange plants that grew well in the hot lands of Mexico and Central America. They are 'painted leaves', he told his friends, and on inquiring about their name, he was told they were the 'Flor de la Nochebuena'.

On returning to the United States, Poinsett propagated the 'painted leaves' in his South Carolina greenhouse and sent

cuttings to his botanist friends around the world. One grateful botanist named the flower after his friend, and so today, the name Poinsettia is a household word.

The poinsettia, as know it today, is what one would call a 'tame variety'. The wild plant grows as high as a house, but, with chemical regulations, it has been tailored to a twelve-inch variety. The chief supplier of the poinsettia today is the Swiss American grower, Paul Ecke. More than thirty five million plants are sent around the world from his five hundred acre strip of 'Christmas in living colour' in California.

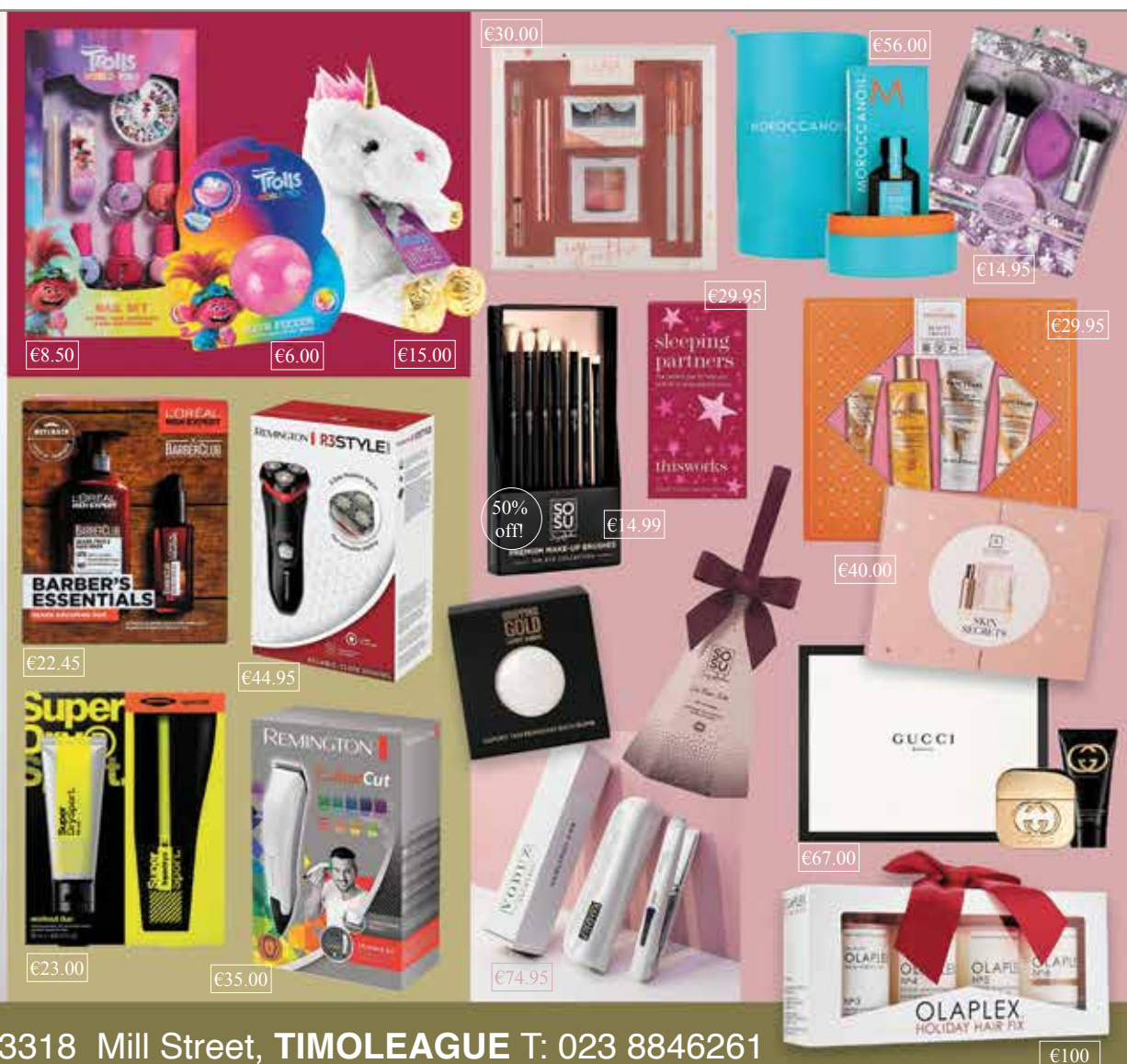
In Ireland the poinsettia is



now very popular since the advent of central heating, which it needs to flourish. It is now accepted as a special Christmas plant, and so thousands are bought for use in homes and churches at this time. This flame-coloured flower of the jungle, as red as the robes of Santa Claus, has rooted itself as part of our Christmas decoration.

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In pursuit of a Doctoral Degree



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

With a demanding job, taking on a doctoral degree is not for the fainthearted. In this article, I share my experiences of balancing both. I completed a master's degree in 2012 and I am around halfway through a Doctor of Management (D. Man.) programme at Glasgow Caledonian University. I'm studying this on a part-time basis and via distance learning.

My reasons for pursuing postgraduate education are many and varied. Some of the extrinsic motivators include career progression, underpinned by the development of my research skills, analytical skills and my critical thinking. However, the reasons run much deeper than this, particularly on top of a demanding full-time job and family commitments.

What follows is some key advice for those who may be considering pursuing a doctoral

degree, particularly while working simultaneously.

Consider the type of Doctoral degree

Until a colleague mentioned a Professional Doctorate (Prof. D.) a few years ago, I didn't know they existed. I thought that the only type of doctoral degree was a Ph. D. (Doctor of Philosophy). Both have equal status – level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (QQI). There are a few keenly disputed differences between the two. Prof. D. research tends to place more emphasis on contributing to professional practice. Ph. D. research tends to focus more on contributing to new or existing theory. These are generalisations, however.

Most doctoral degrees take around three years to complete on a full-time basis, and four-to-six years part time. There are different types on Ph. D's: Structured Ph.D., Ph. D. by Publication etc. There are also different types of Prof D's, e.g., Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A) etc. Some programmes run entirely online and more to follow as a result Covid-19.

Choose a programme that fits your life

If you can afford to do a full-time doctoral degree, more power to you. Those that continue to work simultaneously will do it on a part-time basis. Many Ed. D. and D.B.A. programmes are designed to facilitate this. My D. Man. programme, for example, involved five one-week teaching blocks every four-to-six months on campus for the first two years. This made up Phase 1, the taught element of the programme, which focused on professional development, research methods and thesis preparation. It involved a number of written assignments, ranging from 1,000 to 8,000 words each. This structure would be typical of many Irish

and UK-based Prof. D's.

Phase 1 allowed sufficient time to sharpen your skills in order to conduct doctoral-level research and to build up the concept for your thesis. Often, this is not the case with PhDs, where you are expected to have a clear concept of your research question from the off.

Another advantage of many Prof. D's is that you can exit with a master's degree after Phase 1. Phase 2 involves two-to-three years of conducting research and writing the thesis, which ranges from 40,000 to 80,000 words. A Ph. D. thesis is usually around 100,000 words. After submitting your thesis, you do a final examination called your viva voce, which is an oral defence of your thesis.

Shop around as tuition fees vary

Many programmes in Ireland and the UK will charge between €5,000 and €7,000 per annum, which can rise slightly each year. Some of the more 'prestigious' programmes can charge multiples of this. One programme I looked at in the UK was almost €50,000 over four years; that was the end of that conversation!

Establish the quality of the programme

I spent two years trying to find the right programme through online searches, email correspondence and the occasional phone call. The international dimension excited me. I'd say I have researched every business and management professional doctorate programme in the world run through English. It is important to check the accreditation of the programme and that it aligns to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (QQI), or its international equivalent. Many well-established universities

and colleges may take slight offence if you asked them for their accreditation credentials. However, there are some private companies who offer doctoral degrees with questionable accreditation. Warning signs include things like the ability to complete the doctorate in two years and a thesis requirement of around 10,000 words.

Suss out the culture of the programme

A major factor that influenced my decision to apply to GCU was the vibe I got from the staff over email and telephone. I had prompt and thorough responses to my enquiries. I can't say the same about similar attempts to correspond with other institutions. GCU's commitment to its mission as the 'University for the Common Good' is something that attracted me. I have to say that, so far, it has lived up to my expectations. While the School for Business and Society strives for excellence, the culture is not stuffy and elitist. The staff are highly professional and the atmosphere on campus is friendly and relaxed. It's an inspirational learning environment.

Another dimension to the programme at GCU is the social support from the class. There is a mix of students from different strands, including health, engineering and education. I first thought that amalgamating these strands was a money-saving mechanism. Maybe it is. In any case, I wouldn't change it. The range of nationalities, cultures and professional expertise is a catalyst for stimulating critical discussion. We have a WhatsApp group and it's good for sharing information, ideas and concerns. It comes to life around the time an assignment is due. At doctoral level, you have little choice but to

immerse yourself in your research. Despite wanting to talk about it, it can be difficult to find somebody who is willing to listen. Understandably, most of your family and friends have no interest in the difference between positivist and interpretivist paradigms, for example. The class meet for dinner when we're on campus in Glasgow. I have made some good friends there. Many doctoral students don't have this peer group support.

Although it will be your name on the parchment on completion, you will not reach that point on your own. Completing a doctoral degree is one of the most rewarding experiences one can have, however, getting there can be an isolating pursuit, especially when you're doing it on top of a full-time job. Support from those closest to you is vital. Before and during this journey, it is imperative that you talk through what is takes to be a doctoral student with them. Their understanding in this regard is necessary. Ultimately, you'll have less time to spend with them; although, it does make me appreciate how precious my time is with loved ones even more! It is also important to have the support of your employer. My job will always take precedence over my studies.

Think deeply about why

The most crucial question when considering embarking upon a doctoral degree is 'Why?'. When I thought about it, the first thing I realised was that I could. I have the health, the will and the energy. I'm lucky to have grown up in a country that has facilitated my education and now provides me with access to the appropriate infrastructure.



This may sound obvious, but accessing such supports is far more challenging for some of my classmates from socio-economically-disadvantaged countries. Another reason is that I have been a management practitioner for over a decade and a doctoral degree should help to progress my career.

The most significant motivation for me in pursuing this degree is that it feels right, at my most deep, intrinsic level. This feeling is very difficult to describe. I continually desire to be a better person and to live a fulfilling life. I thrive on facilitating the development of others and believe that you can't do this unless you consistently develop yourself. The D. Man. complements my ongoing learning through my job. A small part of me will enjoy having the letters after my name and knowing that this degree should, in some way, bolster my professional credibility. However, if your reasons for doing a doctoral degree are mostly based on superficial and extrinsic motivations, I would say that it may not be for you. It is a profound commitment, which has strong potential to be life changing. It forces you to be honest with yourself and, as a doctoral student, you must have the courage to live this honesty to both endure and enjoy the journey.

EmployAbility Service West Cork secures 90 jobs for its clients in 2020

EmployAbility Service West Cork is one of 23 Supported Employment Services in Ireland funded by the Department of Social Protection. The organisation prides itself on its innovative and unique approach to creating employment opportunities for individuals who avail of its service. EmployAbility Service West Cork job coaches are known for their commitment in supporting their clients to secure and retain employment in the West Cork region.

"The key to our success is that we get to know our clients well, we take the time to understand

their strengths, experiences, and of course their employment preferences and personal goals," explains co-ordinator Micheal Hurley. "This DSP funded service is an 18-month free and confidential programme. EmployAbility job coaches meet regularly with clients to identify the best role and source suitable employers so that the ideal job is secured for our clients. Each client who avails of this service is treated as a unique individual; a unique job search is begun with each client with the goal of finding the best job for each client."

The good news story for 2020

is that EmployAbility Service West Cork remained open. Micheal explained that 90 clients availing of this service have already secured employment during this year. He outlined his thanks on behalf of EmployAbility Service West Cork to all the businesses who have supported and continue to support EmployAbility Service West Cork.

The service at present offers, virtual meetings, phone meetings and email support, as well as one-on-one meetings to clients depending on the level of Covid-19 restrictions in place. Micheal concluded by explaining that the EmployAbility team

are very aware of the difficult times experienced by the West Cork community currently and highlighted that if you are looking for employment to get in contact with a member of EmployAbility.

EmployAbility Service West Cork have offices in Kinsale, Bandon, Clonakilty; also covering Dunmanway, Skibbereen and Bantry covering Castletown-bere. You can find your local job coach details on www.empwc.org or contact Micheal Hurley, coordinator on 086-8546559.

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Skibbereen 086 8158786

Bandon 086 8101795

Kinsale 086 6007964

Clonakilty 086 8395058 and 086 6031335

Remembering RIC Constable John Hodnett on the centenary of his death

RIC officer John Hodnett, a native of Ardfield Rathbarry, lost his life at the Rineen Ambush in Co Clare 100 years ago. **Conor Nyhan** recounts the life and death of Constable Hodnett, a story that is symbolic of so many others in the Irish War of Independence but one that has been largely forgotten.

John Hodnett was born on June 13, 1889 in the townland of Camus, Ardfield to James Hodnett and his wife Mary Corcoran. The couple had married in 1884 in Ardfield Catholic Church and the 1911 census verifies that they went on to have nine children, five of whom survived to adulthood, including John, their only surviving boy.

We know that the family suffered great loss, which was not untypical for the times. One son, James, died in infancy and we know that the first-born son, Richard, a sprightly boy full of the joys of life, also died young. According to family lore, every afternoon, when returning from school in nearby Rathbarry, Richard would sing a song on the bridge across the road for his neighbour, known affectionately as Jamesy Jack, who lived in the bordering townland of Ballylibert. On one of those afternoons in 1893, Richard was suffering from a terrible headache and, on meeting his neighbour on the bridge, stopped briefly to say that he 'couldn't sing for him today as the pain in his head was so bad'. Richard had contracted meningitis and passed away at the end of a 12-day fight against this deadly illness. Just eight-years-old, he was buried in the family plot inside the old ruin at Old Rathbarry Cemetery, along with his aforementioned brother James and two other siblings who have yet to be identified.

John: Joining the RIC and the Rineen Ambush

On his RIC record John Hodnett is noted as a farmer by trade and first registered with the RIC on December 14, 1911. On June 19, 1912 he was stationed in Glasson, Co Westmeath and remained there until he was transferred to Ennistymon, Co Clare on September 11, 1917. Constable Hodnett was known to have been kept busy at the Petty Session Courts



Photo from John Hodnett's homeplace in Camus, Ardfield. John is believed to be either centre standing or front sitting.

and was generally well liked in the area.

Three years after his posting, on Wednesday September 22, 1920 John was one of a party of RIC officers who travelled from their base in Ennistymon to Milltown Malbay. The RIC lorry passed safely through the IRA ambush position on the road between the two towns due to some confusion in the IRA over the numbers they faced. However, when it became clear that there was only one RIC lorry, it was attacked on its return journey from Milltown Malbay at a place known as Drummin Hill near Rineen. The lorry was hit by a grenade and blasted at close range by rifle and shotgun fire. The shooting was over in seconds, with four out of the six RIC men killed outright, including John Hodnett. Sergeant Michael Hynes (29) from Roscommon, survived for two days but died of his injuries. The sixth man managed to run about 300 yards before being shot dead. Five of the dead

were Irish RIC officers: John Hodnett, Michael Hynes, Con Michael Harte (28) from Sligo, Con Michael Kelly (32) from Roscommon and Con John Maguire (21) from Mayo. The driver was an English Black and Tan, Reginald Hardman (21) from London. The IRA took their weapons and burned the lorry.

Not long after the lorry had been set ablaze, 10 more lorries of British Army troops arrived on the scene. They had been sent out to search for Alan Lendrum, the local magistrate who had gone missing earlier that day. A running fight developed, as four IRA riflemen kept the troops at bay while the other volunteers made their escape. Two IRA volunteers and several British soldiers were wounded in the firing but none were killed.

News reached the Hodnett family in Camus that John had been tragically killed in the initial ambush and Michael Hurley of Ballyva (who would later marry John's sister Kate)

made the journey to Ennistymon to formally identify and accompany the body back to West Cork.

News reached the Hodnett family in Camus that John had been tragically killed in the initial ambush and Michael Hurley of Ballyva (who would later marry John's sister Kate) made the journey to Ennistymon to formally identify and accompany the body back to West Cork.

It is important to understand the context of these events, in a time when this part of West Cork was a hotbed of IRA activity. At the height of the struggle to gain independence, the Hodnett family would have

been well aware of the local atmosphere; the Kilkerranmore company were an active unit in the vicinity and drew volunteers from the very area where John Hodnett was born and reared.

For these and other reasons, John's requiem mass did not take place in his native parish of Ardfield. Instead, on the following Sunday, a mass was held in Clonakilty. Nine motor lorries of RIC officers and other military accompanied Constable Hodnett's remains to the church, which were then taken to the family grave in Rathbarry Old Cemetery, where John's father James had been buried only 18 months previous.

John's mother Mary died in 1939 aged 77, having spent her final years with her daughter Ellen. John's four surviving sisters all married: Ellen inherited the farm and married Jeremiah Moloney in 1932 – Jeremiah was an active IRA volunteer during the troubles in his home place of Timoleague; Bessie married David White from Grange in 1924; Kate married Michael Hurley of Ballyva in 1929; Mary married Patrick O'Donovan of Ballyluck in 1936.

Rineen

Commemoration 2010

In 2010 members of the family, including John's direct niece Mary Ellen Eady, attended a 90th commemoration event of the ambush, which involved a full military presence from the State. While it was a commemoration to honour those IRA volunteers who took part in the ambush, the descendant families of both John Hodnett and Michael Hynes were treated with exceptional sensitivity at every stage of the proceedings.

Unfortunately, Mary Ellen, along with John Hynes, who was a nephew of Sergeant Michael Hynes, did not live to see the centenary event this year, which has been marked but deferred for the moment. However, John Hodnett has a niece and nephew still alive and well, along with many grandnephews and grandnieces. A memorial plaque to the Hodnett family, including John, was recently laid at Rathbarry Old cemetery on the previously unmarked grave.

A memorial to the RIC members who died between 1836 and 1922 can be seen in St Paul's Cathedral in London and another memorial can be viewed at Dublin Castle, which also includes those who perished in the Great War of 1914-1918.

Reflections

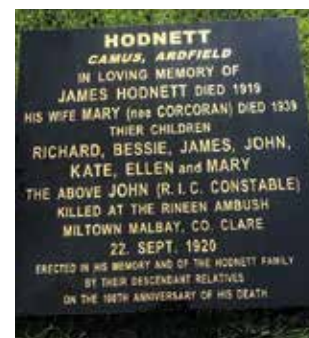
John Hodnett was just 31-years-of-age when he was tragically shot. He was unmarried but family lore suggests that he may have been in a relationship with a local girl in Ennistymon. He joined the RIC long before the advent of the troubles at a time when the force was generally well respected.

1916 and the subsequent war of independence changed everything and attitudes hardened against the RIC. They found themselves in a difficult position as the struggle for independence evolved around them. In the words of Tony Killeen, the then Minister for Defence, at the 90th commemoration: "these were Irishmen who were victims of circumstance and bad timing", finding themselves in a predicament that they could hardly have envisaged when joining the force. This is one view that can be taken but, of course, not the only one and people are free to interpret the events of the past in their own way.

It would appear that John Hodnett was not keen to continue the family tradition of farming at Camus. When his father passed away on New Year's Day 1919, John remained with the force, despite being the only surviving son of the family. This would indicate that he was quite happy to remain in the RIC, relinquishing his entitlement to continue the family tradition of the generations that went before him and leaving the duty of continuity to his sister Ellen.

When the troubles ended it was common for people to not discuss the happenings of the past, as some events weighed heavily on people's minds. However, in these years of important centenaries of our history, it is important to remember all those who lost their lives, and the heartbroken families that were left behind. All parts of our past should be acknowledged, however difficult that may be.

After 100 years John Hodnett's grave has now been marked.





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.

“I do think it’s worth pointing out that epidemics of dancing had always been very rare – a big gap, for example, between the 1370s and 1518; so perhaps it is not all that surprising that the events in Strasbourg were not repeated soon after.” – John Waller

With the news last month that Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna have created effective Covid-19 vaccines, it should not be long before the Coronavirus is eradicated. The pandemic, ongoing since March, has changed all our lives irrevocably. It has given us habits that will long live with us, if not stay with us permanently. Soon, with some luck, there will be a safe worldwide vaccination program implemented. It will add Covid-19 to the long list of viruses that have been eliminated by vaccinations in our lifetime. Viruses such as polio, tetanus, bacterial influenza, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rubella, measles, to name a few. All these viruses have been eliminated thanks to vaccines. Eliminated, not eradicated. The difference being, when a disease stops circulating in a region, it’s considered eliminated in that region. Polio, for example, was eliminated in the United States by 1979 after widespread vaccination efforts. If a particular disease is eliminated worldwide, it’s considered eradicated. To date, only one infectious disease that affects humans has been eradicated. In 1980, after decades of efforts by the World Health Organisation, the World Health Assembly endorsed a statement declaring smallpox eradicated. Proof beyond doubt that vaccines work. However, there is one case in history of an epidemic that is unexplained. In 1518 one of the strangest epidemics in recorded history struck the city of Strasbourg.

On July 14, 1518, in the French town of Strasbourg, a woman named Frau Troffea

The dancing epidemic of 1518

stepped out of her home and began dancing involuntarily. Soon, she had a large crowd around her. Some clapped, some laughed while some just gazed in awe. The event was intriguing since Troffea had no control over her dancing. Neither did she start out of choice, nor did she know how to stop. Rather, she was suffering from what came to be known as the ‘dancing mania’ or ‘dancing plague’. To everyone’s horror, Troffea kept dancing for six days. She would collapse out of exhaustion each night; her shoes soaked in blood, but would wake up the next morning only to start dancing again.

in agony for days or weeks, screaming of terrible visions and imploring priests and monks to save their souls. A few decades later, the abbot of a monastery near the city of Trier recalled “an amazing epidemic” in which a collection of hallucinating dancers hopped and leapt for as long as six months, some of them dying after breaking “ribs or loins” but it was in France that the most famous and well-documented case occurred.

On a far larger scale was the outbreak that struck the city of Strasbourg in 1518, consuming as many as 400 people. One record states that it claimed, for

of the disease. The epidemic is also sometimes referred to as St. Vitus’s dance.

With no known reason or cure, but with deaths mounting day after day, it seemed praying was the only resolution to this mysterious illness. But what could cause people to literally dance themselves to death from exhaustion? The most widely accepted theory is that of American medical historian John Waller, who laid out in several papers his reasons for believing that the dancing plague was a form of mass psychogenic disorder. Such outbreaks take place under circumstances of extreme stress and generally take form based on local fears. In the case of the dancing plague of 1518, Waller cited a series of famines and the presence of such diseases as smallpox and syphilis as the overwhelming stressors affecting residents of Strasbourg. He further maintained that there was a local belief that those who failed to propitiate St. Vitus, patron saint of epileptics and of dancers, would be cursed by being forced to dance.

When combined with the horrors of disease and famine, both of which were tearing through Strasbourg in 1518, the St. Vitus superstition may have triggered a stress-induced hysteria that took hold of much of the city. Other theories have suggested the dancers were members of a religious cult, or even that they accidentally ingested ergot, a toxic mould that grows on damp rye and produces spasms and hallucinations. Epidemics of ergotism certainly occurred in medieval Europe when people ate contaminated flour.

Ergotamine is the main psychoactive product of ergot fungi; it is structurally related to the drug lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) and is the substance from which LSD-25 was originally synthesised. The same fungus has also been implicated in other major historical anomalies, including the Salem witch trials, although ergot alone would not cause unusual behaviour or hallucinations, except when combined with opiates. But this theory doesn’t seem tenable, since it is unlikely that those poisoned by ergot could have danced for days at a time. Nor would so many people have reacted to its psychotropic chemicals in the same way. The ergotism theory also fails to explain why virtually every outbreak occurred somewhere along the Rhine and Moselle Rivers, areas linked by water but with quite different climates and crops. We do know, however, that the victims of dancing epidemics were experiencing altered states of consciousness – this is indicated by their extraordinary levels of endurance. In a trance state, they would have been far

less conscious of their physical exhaustion and pain throughout their bodies.

Moreover, these outbreaks nearly always struck in, or close to, cities affected by earlier dancing epidemics. In short, the epidemiological picture is strikingly consistent with a form of cultural contagion. Only where there was a pre-existing belief in a dancing curse could psychological distress be converted into the form of a frantic dance. Every so often, when physical and mental distress rendered people more than usually suggestible, the spectre of the dancing plague could quickly return. All it then took was for one or a few poor souls – believing themselves to have been subject to the curse – to slip into a spontaneous trance.

Then they would unconsciously act out the part of the accursed: dancing, leaping, and hopping for days on end.

On why the dancing plague did not occur after the 16th century, Waller explained: “This is an area for speculation alone. I do think it’s worth pointing out that epidemics of dancing had always been very rare – a big gap, for example, between the 1370s and 1518; so perhaps it is not all that surprising that the events in Strasbourg were not repeated soon after.

“And, by the late 1600s, the educated were less likely to lend credence to cursing saints,” he said.



Drawing by Pieter Bruegel from 1564 portrays three women affected by the plague.

In Europe of the 16th century, dancing mania was not a new disease. It had been in existence since the seventh century, occurring in phases with long gaps in between. It is said to have reached its peak in the 15th and 16th centuries though, infecting thousands of people, and killing hundreds; historical documents from the time suggest as many as 15 people a day died from the illness. There are several cases where a dancing epidemic is recorded, places such as the German town of Kolbigk on Christmas Eve 1021 or another in the German town of Erfurt in 1247. Shortly after, 200 people are said to have danced impiously on a bridge over the Moselle River in Maastricht until it collapsed, drowning them all. Likewise, dozens of medieval authors recount the terrible compulsion to dance and note that in 1374, the dancing epidemic swept across western Germany, the Low Countries, and north eastern France. Chronicles agree that thousands of people danced

a brief period at least, about 15 lives a day, as men, women, and children danced in the punishing summer heat. Having begun in July, by August the dancing epidemic had claimed as many as 400 victims. With no other explanation for the phenomenon, local physicians blamed it on “hot blood” and suggested the afflicted simply gyrate the fever away. A stage was constructed and professional dancers were brought in. The town even hired a band to provide backing music, but it wasn’t long before the marathon started to take its toll. Many dancers collapsed from sheer exhaustion. Some even died from strokes and heart attacks. The strange episode didn’t end until September, when the dancers were whisked away to a mountaintop shrine to pray for absolution. They prayed to St. Vitus, who was a Catholic saint who pious 16th century Europeans believed had the power to curse people with a dancing plague. They also believed he could absolve them

Innishannon’s Candlelight

This is the 37th edition of the Candlelight magazine and the biggest issue to date.

“Probably the jewel in the crown of this year’s great articles is a historical piece by Murt O’Sullivan on the Gaelic origins and the meaning of the names of every townland in the parish,” says editor Alice Taylor.

“For historical reasons a copy of the Candlelight should be treasured in every house in the parish of Innishannon and beyond. There are some lovely old photos and memory pieces dating back to 1920 which considering the year that is in it makes for fascinating reading.

“A great article documenting the wildlife in the woods and rivers around us by John Quinn who lives locally and lectures on the subject in UCC makes us realise the beauty that surrounds.”

This is a super edition of Candlelight and an issue that documents much to be preserved for posterity.



Chloe Rose O’Sullivan and Tim Angland are the children of previous Candlelight Children.

The action-packed life of Dunmanway's Fightin' Tom

Fightin' Tom Sweeny, a US Army General and Fenian, was born in Dunmanway town on Christmas Day two centuries ago. He now lies in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. **Pauline Murphy** shares her research on the extraordinary life of this born survivor.

Thomas William Sweeny was born in The Green Dunmanway on Christmas Day in 1820 to Honora and William Sweeny. The cherubic baby would grow up to become known as 'Fightin' Tom', a name he certainly lived up to by evading death multiple times during his eventful life.

When he was seven-years-old, Thomas' father died and five years later the family emigrated for the United States. During the treacherous crossing, young Sweeny was thrown overboard by a violent wave. The 12-year-old fought for 30 minutes to get back on board – an early indication of his fighting spirit!

On arriving in New York City Sweeny found work as an apprentice in the book printers Gould & Banks before joining a local militia, The Baxter Blues, as soon as he was old enough.

During the Mexico War The Baxter Blues was mustered in with the New York Volunteers.

Sweeny took part in the Siege of Vera Cruz and in 1847 was shot in his right arm during the Battle of Churubusco; the musket ball did so much damage that the arm needed amputation.

Sweeny was honoured by the Governor of New York, who bestowed him with the brevet of Captain and a commission in the 2nd US Infantry, which sent Sweeny to California where he was based at Fort Yuma from 1851 to 1856. While fighting Native Americans there he took an arrow in the neck, an injury from which he also recovered.

At the outbreak of the American Civil War, Sweeny became Brigade General of the Missouri Volunteers, who he led at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, where he was again hit with a musket ball – this time



Sweeny was at the forefront of the Fenian plans for invading Canada in 1866. The plan was to hold Canada, a British dominion, hostage in exchange for the freedom of Ireland.

in the leg.

Sweeny was back in action in 1862 as Colonel of the 52nd Illinois. At the Battle of Shiloh his brigade suffered many casualties and Sweeney himself was wounded when a bullet pierced his remaining arm and another bullet lodged in his leg.

During this convalescence, Sweeny's courage was acknowledged when officers of the 52nd Illinois presented him with a sword as a token of their respect.

However, Sweeny was not done yet; he next led a division in the Atlanta campaign but found himself at odds with General Grenville Dodge following the Battle of Atlanta. The two men ended up brawling, for which Sweeny was arrested and courtmartialled but acquitted on account of his service and bravery on the battlefield.

In April 1865 Thomas Sweeny was a member of the

guard of honour in charge of President Lincoln's body as he lay-in-state in New York. In August of the same year he mustered out of service and joined the Fenian Brotherhood, where he was selected as its Secretary of War.

Sweeny was at the forefront of the Fenian plans for invading Canada in 1866. The plan was to hold Canada, a British dominion, hostage in exchange for the freedom of Ireland.

Sweeny procured a large cache of US Army surplus weapons and the force he was to lead was called The Irish Republican Army. The invasion began in June 1866 but soon fell apart. Sweeny was arrested but later released and reinstated to the US army as a Brigadier General.

During his action-packed life Thomas Sweeny also found time to marry, twice. He married his first wife Eleanor Clark of Brooklyn in 1848 but illness claimed her life in 1860. Seven years later he married Eugenia Regan of Georgia, with whom he had three daughters and three sons.

Fightin' Tom retired in 1870 to Long Island where he died on April 10, 1892 at the age of 72. He was buried with military honours at Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.

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people Farming

Putting a strange year behind us

FARMING
IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

In his farming diary, West Cork suckler farmer and columnist with the Irish Farmers Journal, Tommy Moyles covers the lay of the land across all agri and farming enterprises – news, views and people in farming across West Cork and further afield.

In association
with



Soil, Silage and Dung – or ‘the three S’s’ as they might be colloquially referred to on farms! Diagnostics has become routine on the farm

over the last few years. Of the three, soil sampling is going to become a more routine operation on a lot of farms, as it plays a significant role in the efficient use and reduction of artificial fertilisers used on farms. That will stem from changes to CAP and also an increased focus on water quality.

The soil results are what I view as the most important ones as it gives you a good indication of where the soil fertility and pH of the farm is. Increasing the use of dung samples in place of routine dosing for fluke and worms was an idea my vet had and, while sceptical at first, I now value its importance.

I don’t delve into the silage results as deeply as the other two. All I want from those is a bit of an overview on the quality and feed value of a selection of bales cut at different times. Priority is given to keeping the best bales for later in the spring in the event it gets too wet and calved cows need to stay in a bit longer.

On the topic of housed cows by the last days of November, there are only nine cows out. They are in the process of tidying up the paddocks.

We moved from having all grazing finished by now about

three years ago. If you had a mild finish to the year, there would be strong covers of grass on fields by New Year’s Day, but we noticed two issues. One was having too much grass, reducing the area to spread slurry on to get the best out of the nutrients available. The second issue was if we got strong winds or storms from the sea, which resulted in salt burn and the volume of grass reducing because of it.

The cows that are out and will be moving to the paddocks are across the road from the main block in early December with the aim of housing them in a month’s time or so.

Shed extension

There was great relief on the home front as a shed extension that got delayed for a myriad of reasons finally was completed. It ended up 14 months behind the target finish date but there’s a noticeable drop in the workload since I’ve been able to get cattle into it.

Covid-19

I don’t think I need to tell any one how strange a year it has been in many ways. While farmers were less affected than other sections of the economy,



November rain made late grazing challenging on Tommy Moyles’ farm at Ardfield.

nonetheless Covid-19 played a part in the marketplace throughout the year, for a variety of reasons too.

With the exception of the last two weeks, where there has been a slight rise, beef price has been stagnant. Lamb has received a steady high price throughout the year and while there was concern on milk price in the early days of Covid, thankfully they have held well for most of the year.

Market place ups and downs are nothing new to farmers. The generation of farmers who farmed from the late 60s onwards have perhaps experienced the most fluctuations: Entry into the European Economic

Community as it was then, two currency changes, and so many social changes in the intervening 50 or so years. Some coming near retirement and with no successor may be looking for ways to continue in some form and developments in recent years may facilitate this.

Collaborative farming

Collaborative farming offers a potential solution for younger people willing to get involved in agriculture and also facilitates a land owner who wishes to step back from the business yet still have an involvement and financial return from the land.

Farm partnerships and share-farming arrangements

will have more of a role in future. There is still a desire to get involved in farming and societal changes will see opportunities arise for those who want to get involved. There are a number of examples of collaborative farming in West Cork with partnerships being the most common and Share-milking getting going in a small way in recent years.

One of the higher profile ones is a project undertaken by Shinagh estates, which is owned by the four West Cork co-ops at their Gurteen farm near Bandon. This month, I met the current share milker at the farm, Padraig Cunnane, to get an insight into what is involved.

Farm Life: Padraig Cunnane, Ballyhaunis to Bandon

Interview by
Tommy Moyles

First things first, how did a Mayo man end up in West Cork?

I grew up on a suckler farm in Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo and first came to West Cork in 2005. That was as part of my work placement for the advanced course in farm management. I was on the farm of John O’Brien, Barryroe and decided to stay on his farm for a bit after my placement. His wife, Phil, convinced me to join Macra and that was a great move. After a bit of time I met Grainne, and there’s no getting away from a Cork woman, as many a good man can testify to. Finding a wife and a part of the country I like, it was win, win for me.

You’re now Share-milking in Gurteen farm near Bandon. Tell us about the farm and what Share-milking involves?

The farm consists of 34 hectares, which is owned by Shinagh estates, a company owned by the four West Cork co-ops. It’s a Share-milking collaboration. Share-milking is different to a lease, as the landowner still has a say and a financial input into the land and facilities. Those deci-

sions can affect their income. In Gurteen, Shinagh estates provide the land and the facilities while I provide the herd and labour. The milk cheque then is split 60:40, so is the cost of maintenance of soil fertility and purchased feed. If the soil pH or Potassium or Phosphorus levels need to be built up, Shinagh estate covers that 100 per cent while I get 100 per cent of livestock sales.

I initially applied for the role in 2015 but banks were a bit more hesitant to lend money towards the venture. There is great credit due to John Sexton, who was the initial share milker there, for making the project work. To take on this opportunity, I had to buy the cows, farm machinery and have enough working capital to pay the bills until the milk cheque started coming in. I purchased 78 cows off John and there’s a Ford 4100 tractor for scraping the yard and pushing in silage. Contractors do all the other work including feeding.

You’re currently the chairman of the Irish Farm managers association. Tell us about the association and it’s role in getting share milking up and running in Ireland?

The IFMA was set up nearly 50 years ago after the first



group qualified from the Farm apprenticeship board to represent farm managers. Over the years they lobbied for better work conditions and wages. In the last 10 years, the focus has turned to helping those who may not come from farms or weren’t inheriting farms or wished to farm for themselves. We lobbied for more tax relief for long-term leases and tax breaks on stock relief.

On share farming we did a lot of research with past and present members who were involved in Share-milking in New Zealand. In consultations with Tom Curran who was the Collaborative farming specialist in Teagasc at the time and is now head of Teagasc West Cork advisory, we drew up

a template for a share-farming arrangement. That’s the one used in Gurteen today. Farm management is a great profession; in the IFMA we get calls every month looking for people.

What advice would you give those wanting to get into farming but may not have a large enough holding or other members of their family also want to farm?

It starts with getting a good education. There is a great farm management course, the Professional Diploma in Dairy farm management. That would set anybody up whether they go home to farm or work for others. Find good people to work for and network. Because it was a 10 hour round trip home, I used to stay in Barryroe at the weekends when I came here first and I did a lot of relief milking for neighbouring farmers so I got to know a lot of people. I got involved with Clonakilty Macra too and was introduced to lots of people, which was a great help.

Wherever I went, I always treated cows as though they were my own. Now I’m in a position to say they are actually mine. My aim from here is to be able to lease a farm capable of running 120 to 150 cows.

Matters of Great Indifference – reflections on modern rural living

Jim O’Brien’s new book, ‘Matters of Great Indifference’ is a collection of short pieces that make for ideal reading while waiting for the kettle to boil, or when sitting in the car waiting for the children to come out of school.

The property correspondent and columnist with the Farming Independent has just published a compilation of his popular weekly columns. Thanks to his job, Jim is uniquely placed to keep a finger on the pulse of rural Ireland. He travels the country, week in and week out, walking land, meeting farmers, chatting to rural auctioneers and tasting the delights to be found in local coffee shops.

“Inspiration for the columns comes from what I see around me and what I encounter on my travels,” he says, “anything from a badly hung gate, to a word from a neighbour, a line from a book, the smell of a tractor engine, the bark of a dog or the

hum of a milking machine can spark a train of thought that eventually hammers itself into about 800 words.”

The collection covers a huge range of issues from broadband to Brexit, from politics to place-names, from climate change to the Covid. Jim is also not afraid to delve into the personal and comes into his own when writing about the joys, delights and sorrows experienced at the various milestones that mark a life.

The pieces in ‘Matters of Great Indifference’ are presented in chronological order, changing topic every two pages. The book can be something of a roller-coaster, going from the closure of the local shop to a hair-raising trip to Moscow, followed by an eye-opening account of the highs and lows of door-to-door canvassing. All-in-all, a great read.

Matters of Great Indifference is available from www.jimbrien.ie, and on Amazon, in paperback or as an eBook.

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Wines for Christmas

OFF THE VINE

Fionnuala Harkin
Wines Direct wine producers

When I'm asked for recommendations for Christmas day wines, it's usually expected that I'll suggest bringing out the best wine in the house. I don't! Of course, I'll want to drink something really lovely, but funny enough, I don't think it's the moment for the special bottle you've been saving under the bed. That's for an evening with just two of you, and nothing else going on, where the wine takes centre stage.

At Christmas time, many other things are going on, and it's really about sharing, chatting, laughing, eating and relaxing, rather than focusing on the complexities and nuances of some rare vintage. A wine to go with selection boxes and charades, that's what we're looking for!

Now, for me, nothing says fun like bubbles, be it Prosecco, the excellent Cremant de Loire, or of course, Champagne.

My favourite fizz this year is Pet Nat from Di Filippo in Umbria. 'Pet Nat' is the trendy new style of sparkling wine, but like many new trends, it's been around for a long time. Otherwise known as 'methode ancestrale', it's a different style of sparkling from Champagne and Prosecco, as it's a single fermentation in the bottle. This gives beautiful brioche aromas, with lots of fresh apple fruit, so a perfect wine for Christmas

day breakfast!

Starters in our house are usually a grazing affair, happening for a couple of hours between the Inchydoney swim and the main event. Coming in cold and energised, a nice hot shower is followed by a market platter of salami, olive paste, feta and basil dip, Ummera smoked salmon, and this year, I'm going to add some heat from Caitlin Ruth's 'Hot Box' from NeighbourFood. It takes quite a wine to stand up to all those flavours, so an unoaked Chardonnay, or Gavi or Soave from Italy would be my choice. Balestri Valda Soave is definitely well able. Laura Rizzotto, the winemaker, is also a beekeeper; and I don't know if it's my imagination, but I definitely detect a hint of honey in this wine, along with ripe pear and citrus fruit. Lively, fruity and delicious, it stands shoulder to shoulder with all these robust smoky, creamy, herby and spicy flavours.

By this time, I believe our palates have been well and truly stimulated, if not assaulted. There will also have been chocolate, crisps, cake and all manner of sweets, so by dinnertime, a wine with a bit of a kick is required. We are a traditional roast turkey with all the trimmings house, even though we have a vegan diner, so a nut roast is also on the table. A region I am always drawn to is the Languedoc in France. This is the source of some of my favourite wines and offers great value. My choice this year is L'Hortus Grand Cuvee. While not cheap and the 'Grand Cuvee' in the title refers to the special status of this wine, it is

Fionnuala Harkin
Pic: Thady Tra Photography



a stunner for the money. I love it because it is not too heavy, while definitely having the punch necessary for the richness of the Christmas feast. It pleases the wine lover (even the wine snob!) but is equally enjoyed by those family members who just want a nice glass of red – no drama! A blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre, the holy trinity of this region, aged in oak for 12 months, its got oodles of flavour, great structure and balance, and is the perfect sauce to bring all those seasonal dishes together.

After a snooze in front of Home Alone 17, we try to wake ourselves up for a game of charades. Reluctant at first, it usually gathers momentum and turns into bedlam. This is when the port and cheese is needed for a last bit of sustenance. LBV Port is a great choice for its balance – lovely rich, ripe, fruit

and a touch of spice.

Crasto LBV Port with some mature Cashel Blue is my dream pairing, followed by a

sweet and salty Hungry Crow chocolate. This port is sweet but savoury, rich, fruity and complex and is a comforting drop at the end of this hectic and exciting day.

Recommendations:

Di Filippo Malafemmana
frizzante Pet Nat,
Umbria, Italy €20.95

Balestri Valda Soave,
Italy €15.95

L'Hortus Grand Cuvee,
Pic St Loup, France €30.75

Crasto LBV Port €25.75

Why not add a couple of
Christmas Eve wines:

Château des Eyssers
Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon,
Bergerac, France €13.55

Nicodemi La Murate
Montepulciano d'Abruzzo,
Italy €16.40
Case including delivery,
€123.35

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Thank you to all for your support
over the last 8 months. I wish you
all a happy and safe Christmas.

Mella x



people A flavour of West Cork

Award winning cheesemaker Bó Rua Farm launches new cheeseboard gift in a year that prompted innovation

The festive season wouldn't be complete without a cheeseboard and this Christmas, Bó Rua Farm has put together a beautifully hand crafted wooden cheeseboard gift, with Bó Rua Farm cheddar, chutney and crackers, available from www.boruafarm.ie.

Former electrical engineer and Castlelack native Norma Dinneen handcrafts her farmhouse cheddar on the family

farm in Ballynoe, County Cork using the milk from the family's herd of Montbeliarde and Friesian cows, which are tended by husband Tom. Named in honour of the rust-coloured Montbeliardes (Bó Rua is Irish for 'Red Cow'), the cheese is made on the Dinneen's family farm from March to October when the cows are out on pasture.

Biodiversity is the fore at Bó Rua Farm. It is one of 44 farms in their locality partici-

pating in the innovative BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairy Environment) Project. The project aims to conserve, enhance and restore habitats. With the guidance of an ecologist they have chosen tailored biodiversity measures that suit Bó Rua Farm. All three generations of the family are looking forward to reaping the benefits of increased biodiversity on the farm for years to come.

Using their rich and delicious



Norma and Tom Dinneen with their children on the family farm in Ballynoe



BÓ RUA FARM

Elevate your Christmas cheeseboard with Cork's finest cheddar

Enquire in your local SuperValu

Wishing all the best to you and yours.

Tom + Norma Dinneen

cows' milk (winner of the Gold medal for Best Dairy Milk at the 2020 Blas na hEireann, Irish Food Awards) the Dinneen's use traditional methods to handcraft and mature their farmhouse cheddar. It is gently aged until it has a firm yet delicately creamy texture, and a mellow and rather nutty flavour with a balanced finish of sweet and savoury caramel notes.

Norma and Tom have made it their mission to oversee every step of their pasture-to-plate

produce to ensure they craft the finest of cheese and their attention detail has certainly paid off with Two Stars at the Great Taste Awards 2020 and the Gold Medal for Best Irish Hard Cheese at the Blas na hEireann, Irish Food Awards in 2019.

Like so many other businesses, Bó Rua Farm has faced challenges this year due to Covid, particularly due to the closures of so many of their loyal food service customers. Norma's tech background came

in very useful in March when the first lockdown hit. Over that first weekend she set up an online cheese webshop and the Dinneen's started selling their produce online. Visit their website www.boruafarm.ie to see the range and also purchase the aforementioned cheeseboard.

Bó Rua Farm Original Irish Farm Cheddar is now available nationally, enquire in your local SuperValu store.

CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Monkfish Curry

submitted by An Bord Bia

You could make the sauce for the curry in advance and store it in the fridge. When you are ready to finish it off, just heat the sauce and add in the fish. It will probably taste even better!

Ingredients:

- 700g monkfish fillets, skinned, boned and cut into cubes
- 2 tablesp. rapeseed or olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 3 cm piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- half a tablesp. mustard seeds
- 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
- 400ml of low fat coconut milk
- 2 curry leaves
- 1 handful of coriander leaves, chopped

Spice Mix:

- 1 tablesp. chilli powder
- 1 tablesp. ground cumin
- half a tablesp. ground turmeric
- 1 tablesp. fennel seeds
- 2 tablesp. ground coriander

Serve with rice or noodles and a salad.
Serves 4
Time: 45 minutes

To make the sauce: Add a tablespoon of oil to a thick bottomed pan over a medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and ginger and cook gently for about 15 minutes until the onion softens. Then add the mustard seeds and cook for another minute or two until they begin to crackle.

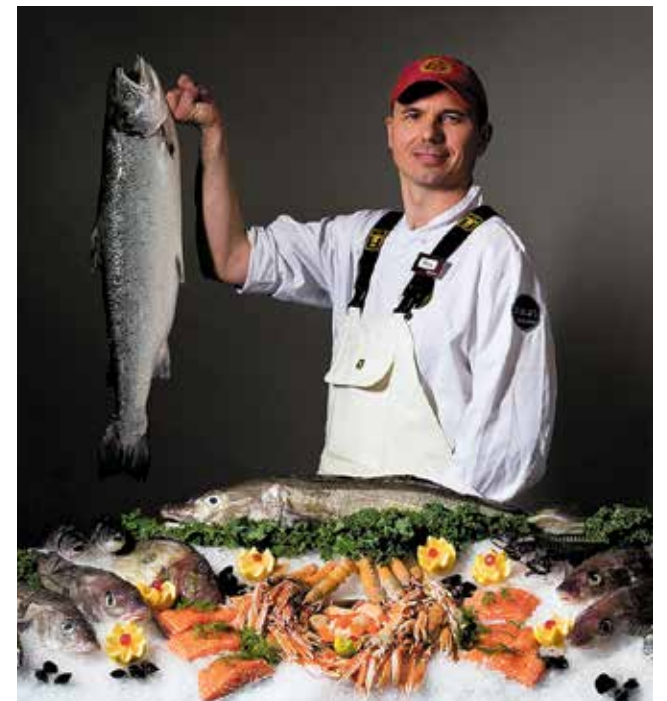
Add the spice mix ingredients to the pan and stir them into the mixture. Cook for a couple of minutes then add the chopped tomatoes, coconut milk and curry leaves.

Bring to a simmer and cook for about 10 minutes until the



sauce thickens. Then add the cubes of fish and simmer very gently for another 3-5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Taste and season.

To serve: Remove the curry leaves and sprinkle with chopped coriander. Serve immediately with rice or noodles and a salad.



Milos Korinek (above), a fishmonger at Scally's SuperValu in Clonakilty is always on hand to offer friendly, expert advice at the fish counter. Don't hesitate to approach him if you're not used to cooking fish...he is happy to help.

people A flavour of West Cork

READER COMPETITION

Celtic Ross Hotel – The gift of West Cork Memories

The festive season is almost upon us. The most wonderful time of the year when we think of gifting for family and friends. Why not treat your loved ones to the gift of West Cork memories this Christmas?

Be it a gift for the festive season, a little something to mark that special occasion or a gesture of staff appreciation, a Celtic Ross Gift Card makes a thoughtful gesture.

A Celtic Ross Gift Card gives the gift of choice. Redeemable against accommodation, a dining experience in the hotel restaurants and bar or food to go from CRAFT West Cork. So be it a Wild Atlantic Getaway to West Cork, dinner for two with wine or a fireside Afternoon Tea the Celtic Ross has thought of lots of lovely gifting solutions this Christmas. You will find a dedicated page of gifting inspiration on www.celticross.com – why not have a browse?

Celtic Ross Gift Cards come beautifully packaged and are available in denominations from €25 to €250. Gift Cards can be purchased online at www.celticrosshotel.com, by phone 023-8848722, or by emailing info@celticross.com.

A Celtic Ross Gift Card makes the perfect gifting idea while supporting local – an Irish family-owned hotel with the West Cork community central to its operation.

To celebrate the seasonal launch of Celtic Ross Gift Cards, the Celtic Ross Hotel are giving one West Cork People reader the chance to win ‘A Taste of West Cork’ – a two night stay, for two people in a Bay View Room with breakfast each morning and a three course tasting menu with wine on one evening.

To be in with a chance to win simply tell us one of the services that a Celtic Ross Gift Card can be redeemed against. Email your answer with your name and phone number and ‘Celtic Ross Gift Card competition’ in the subject line to info@westcorkpeople.ie before December 16.

T&Cs: Booking is subject to availability.

The prize for a two night stay with dinner for two people.



New mozzarella plant now operational at Carbery

The completion of the expansion at Carbery's headquarters in Ballineen marks the beginning production of new cheese varieties (mozzarella and grilling cheese) for the food service market in Europe and Asia.

Supported by a €78m investment in a new facility at their headquarters in Ballineen, the new ranges of cheese will go to market under the brand name 'Carbery Dairy', to be sold in existing and new markets with a particular focus on growing markets in Asia.

CEO of Carbery Group Jason Hawkins said of the expansion: "Our cheese diversification strategy has been in the works now for a number of years, so it's great to see all our planning and efforts come to fruition. It's a significant investment for us, in financial terms, but also in terms of our strategy, our people and market research. Our teams across the business have been working extremely hard on this project and we are really looking forward to bringing our products to new markets and returning value on this investment to our farmer shareholders. This diversification will create new markets and value for our West Cork milk suppliers."

The expansion in Ballineen is supported by a new state-of-the-art facility, with specialist equipment from New Zealand, Italy, UK, Denmark and Minnesota in



(Forefront) Jason Hawkins, CEO at Carbery Group photographed with Chairman TJ Sullivan, CFO Colm Leen, COO John Holland and Cheddar Cheese Manager Conor O'Donovan with the new Carbery Dairy mozzarella in Carbery's new cheese facility in Ballineen. Photo: Don MacMonagle

the US. The Group will initially be focusing exports on customers in Asia, including China and Japan, and mainland Europe.

John Holland, Chief Operating Officer of the group, who has overseen the expansion project at Ballineen, spoke of his excitement about the opportunities ahead. "We are extremely proud of the cheese we produce in Ballineen and the quality and flexibility we offer to our customers. This step forward will only enhance our capabilities into the future. We have been implementing a growth strategy for a number of years now to diversify our outputs, and therefore expand our customer base. Our extensive market re-

search has shown us that demand in Asia for dairy products and particularly cheese continues to grow. We believe that our heritage and expertise in dairy, combined with our dedicated people, talented team of researchers, food scientists and cheese technologists enables us to develop products that will excite our existing and new customers."

Commenting on this latest development, Chairman of Carbery Group, TJ Sullivan said: "This is a significant investment for the Board of Carbery and our farmer suppliers, and it has required vision for the future and confidence in ourselves and the quality of our milk supply. It's great to see the

facility operational, and especially to see some good news for West Cork at the end of a difficult year for everyone."

Best known for producing Dubliner Cheese and Carbery Cracker for the Irish domestic market, as well as cheese for export under the Ornua brands, Carbery Group currently produces 55,000 tonnes of cheese annually, or 25 per cent of all cheese made in Ireland. This is set to increase to 64,000 tonnes with the new expansion now in place. The 'Carbery Dairy' brand is a new development for the Group, which is producing new varieties of cheese for new markets, and also going to market in a new way. John Holland explains "Our new production facilities allow us to offer pasta filata, including mozzarella and grilling cheese, to the market. We are continuing to supply our wide range of cheddar types and all of our cheese products will now be marketed to the ingredient and food service industry for use in commercial kitchens."

Commenting on the circumstances of this year and how Carbery embraced the challenges, CEO Jason Hawkins said: "2020 has been a challenging year for us all, and Carbery has been no exception. I want to sincerely thank our employees and in particular everyone involved with the cheese expansion project, for continuing to push to deliver this project even

through the extremely difficult circumstances that Covid created during the year. I know that our success will be down to the com-

mitment and dedication shown by all our employees."



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people A flavour of West Cork



A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

When I heard at the farmer's market that there were only five more markets before Christmas, I went into a spin. How is this possible? We haven't been anywhere or done an awful lot. The year's just slipped by; it's quite disorientating but the indisputable fact is that Christmas is coming and it's good to have another Christmas dinner to look forward to.

We have about twenty-five cauliflowers in our garden, getting ready to do their thing.

Cauliflowers are big plants, like giant cabbages on long stems, which have florets that suddenly open up in the centre like knobbly white aliens. We set the seed late last lockdown with the hope they would be ready for Christmas and fingers crossed it looks like we might

be lucky.

Thinking of Christmas with all of these anticipated caulis has piqued my interest, as there are so many ways to cook – or not to cook – a cauliflower. It's another one of those vegetables with gazillions of possibilities.

Roasting seems like a good solution for a celebration feast, as the sauces can be made beforehand and the cauliflower needs very little attention once in the oven apart from occasional basting.

This fancy-sounding dish is not difficult to prepare and it looks beautiful. Its golden roasted crown strangely gives it an odd turkey-like appearance and it looks quite spectacular on a serving dish crowned with freshly toasted pistachio, parsley and lemon. Serve sliced into wedges with tahini sauce and whatever vegetables you're having on the side.

If you can find some fresh pomegranate seeds it'll look spectacular.

Roasted Cauliflower with Pistachio and Lemon Picada and Tahini Sauce

Serves 3-4 as a main dish.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium cauliflower, trimmed

- 1-2 lemons
- 100mls olive oil
- 75g pistachios, unroasted but shelled
- Small bunch parsley
- 1 tsp white balsamic vinegar – or the best you have
- Salt
- 2-3 tbs light tahini
- 1 clove garlic
- Pomegranate – optional

Method:

Put the oven on, 200c then put a large pot of water to boil. It needs to be deep enough to just about submerge the cauliflower. When the water boils, add 2 tsp salt and the cauliflower. Cook for two minutes and then drain the cauliflower into a colander. Leave to drain for five minutes, turning it half way to get rid of any excess water.

Grate half of the lemon into a bowl, add a good pinch of salt and 50mls olive oil.

Line a small baking tray with parchment or greaseproof paper. Holding the cauliflower over the tray, rub all over with the lemony olive oil making sure to catch any drops. Sit the cauliflower into the tray then cover loosely with tin foil. Bake for 30 minutes.

Remove the tin foil and baste

the cauliflower with the oils in the bottom of the tray. Repeat this every ten minutes twice more. Test the cauliflower with a sharp knife: It should be just tender – you don't want mushy.

Whilst the cauliflower is roasting, make the sauces, or if they're already made, have an aperitif.

For the picada, toast the pistachio gently in a fairly hot dry pan for two minutes, stirring all the time. You want to toast the pistachios, not char them so keep an eye on the heat. Tip the nuts onto a clean counter then chop them roughly. Put half the nuts into a small bowl then chop the remaining nuts a little finer. Mix the nuts, the zest of the other half of the lemon, salt, 50mls olive oil and a teaspoon of your best vinegar.

Finely chop the parsley and stir in. Taste and put aside.

For the tahini sauce put the juice of one juicy lemon and two big tbs light tahini into a bowl together with one clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped and a pinch of salt. Whisk until amalgamated. Thin with water to achieve a thick pouring consistency – like cream. Taste and add more lemon juice or salt if needed, the acidity opens the



flavours.

To serve, pour the remaining lemony oil from the tray that the cauliflower is sitting in into the picada and mix well.

Put the cauliflower onto a heated serving plate, pile the picada on top so that it slips down like a volcano, pour a little tahini sauce around the base and sprinkle over the pomegranate seeds.

Serve sliced into wedges with the remaining picada and tahini sauce on the side.

We will be open until 3pm on Christmas Eve and are taking orders for Christmas puddings, cakes, nut roasts etc, as well as all our usual fare. Check out our Christmas menu in our ad.

We hope to see you in the days leading up to Christmas and would like to wish you all happy feasting with whomever you are able to share it with.

Thank you all for supporting us, and our very best wishes for the coming year. Who knows what good things it will bring!

The alternative Christmas meal

Jacques Brennan is the author of Hungry Soul Cookbook and writes a blog, Le Journal; find it at www.hungry-soulplantpower.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.

I look forward to Christmas day in its entirety: Morning, afternoon and evening.

Even the days leading up to the dinner – with all of the preparing, shopping, planning and salivating – are to be savoured. To some it may seem like work, but for me it is all pleasure and, if it all works out and people are pleased with their meal, it is the best Christmas present I could give myself!

While I have never eaten or made what is considered a traditional Christmas meal – no meat, fowl or fish has been at our table – we have always put on great feasts and look forward to the meal every year.

Due to limited publishing space, I will share the main nut roast recipe with you here; the rest you can get by going to my website www.hungrysoulplantpower.com.

Starter: Vol-au-Vent filled with cream sauce, fried tofu or mushrooms and spinach

Main Dish: Nut Roast with onion gravy, slow roasted tomatoes, roasted potatoes, stir-fried Brussels sprouts with chestnuts and a big mixed salad

Dessert: Tarte Tatin with a little

vegan ice cream or custard on the side

Nut Roast

What I like about this dish is that it has many of the ingredients are readily available at this time of the year – a type of harvest feast. I make this the day before. It will make less work on the day, it gives it time to set and of course most dishes taste better the next day.

Depending on whom you are having for dinner, i.e. young adults who do not like chunky things in their food, just make sure to reduce the size of the nuts – put them into a food processor a blitz once or twice to crumb texture.

Enough for 10 slices (servings)

Ingredients

- 2 cups unsalted Nuts (can be cashews, almonds or walnuts, or a mixture, I like the mixture)
- 1 Onion – finely chopped
- 1 Large Leek – well washed and finely chopped
- 4 Garlic cloves – minced
- 1 Celery stalk – finely chopped
- 2 Carrots – grated
- 2 tbsp tomato paste

- 1 Red Pepper – finely chopped
- 2 tbsp – Apple Cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp Olive Oil – extra virgin
- 1 cup Breadcrumbs
- 1/2 tsp Thyme - dried
- 1/4 cup Oats – ground into a meal
- 1/4 cup Parsley – finely chipped

Method

I like to roast the nuts just a little – so put them in the oven at 180 degrees Celcius for 10 minutes, allow to cool, then chop small by hand or reduce in a food processor. The food processor can make them like breadcrumbs...better for people who do not like 'bits' in their food.

Soften the onion, leek, celery and garlic in a drop of oil.

Add the chopped pepper and grated carrot to the pan and stir for another minute.

If you like it chunky, mix together the softened veggies, the nuts and the rest of the ingredients. It should be a little stiff; if too runny add a little more breadcrumbs *or* if you like it smooth – add the softened veggies to the food processor and give it a quick pulse or two, then mix with the crumbly nuts and the rest of the ingredients.

Pre-heat the oven to 180C / 360 F and oil and line a bread pan – 20cm / 9in long with grease proof paper or you may not get the nut roast out after cooking.



Place on the middle shelf and bake for approx. 40-50 minutes until browning.

You can serve immediately into 2cm/1in slices or what I prefer is to allow it to cool completely then slice it.

Place slices on a tray in the hot oven 200C / 400F for 10 minutes then turnover and bake another 10 and browning nicely – now serve on a plate with gravy!

Onion Gravy

Ingredients:

- 1 onion – finely sliced
 - 3 tbsp flour
 - 2 cups of water
 - 1 tbsp soya sauce / tamari
- Cook the onion in a drop of olive oil on low heat until very soft.

Method:

Sprinkle the flour over the onion and stir until well coated then add the water a little at a time so the flour does not go lumpy. You want a smooth sauce.

Add the soya sauce, taste it and add a little salt and pepper, as you like.

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Puy Lentils and Roots braised in red wine. €7.50 portion

Sausage Rolls – all butter puff pastry and Caherbeg free range pork. €2 each

Vegetarian Sausage Rolls
– all butter puff pastry
€2 each

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sm 12, med €20

Orange Polenta Cake g/f
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Pear & Chocolate Cake
sm €9, med €18, lrg €24

Pink Grapefruit & Pistachio Cake g/f, d/f
sm €13, med €25

Chocolate, Chestnut & Prune Cake g/f, d/f
sm €12, med €22, large €32

Vegan Carrot Cake g/f, d/f
sm €10, med €18, large €25

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Thanks to everyone for your continued support.
Have a lovely Christmas!

West Cork brother and sister team shake up West Cork with cocktail mixer business

What do you get when you mix some New York bartender know-how with the best of West Cork ingredients? Answer: The makings of some pretty amazing cocktails!

Foxglove Cocktails is the creation of sister and brother duo Tara and Rory Copplestone, who both moved back to the family home in Baltimore at the beginning of the pandemic last March and ended up starting a business together.

Foxglove was born organically: Suddenly presented with the time to get to know one another and have fun together during the first lockdown, the siblings, who have a ten year age difference between them, started experimenting with new flavours and trying out their recipes on family members. The aim was to create a craft cocktail brand that was non-alcoholic, so people still held the power and imagination to create their own cocktails, in the comfort and safety of their home.

Tara brings over six years of

experience working in the bar/liquor industry in New York to the table and Rory is a final year student of Shannon College of Hotel Management, who has worked in bars and restaurants in Europe and the US. Together the siblings, who share a passion for the hospitality industry, make an impressive team.

Foxglove's made-to-order artisan craft cocktails, using only fresh local ingredients are creative and delicious – so much so that they will have your tastebuds tingling in anticipation. Topped with handmade garnishes, combinations like blackberry and ginger; rose and elderflower; passionfruit and mint; pineapple and jalapeno; grapefruit and rosemary sour or, for coffee lovers, vanilla espresso martini, promise to bring elegance and sophistication to happy hour in the home. It's 'Sex in the City' West Cork-style! Cocktails in your pyjamas or go the extra mile and dust off the sparkly dress – whatever takes your fancy!

"We want to focus on the experience the consumer gets, when they are making a cocktail," explains Tara. Foxglove mixers are 370mls each, and serve approx three cocktails. Each mixer costs €7 and comes

with an accompanied garnish (dehydrated fruit/flavoured salt) to create a fun, engaging experience.

Foxglove only uses real, fresh ingredients, and the mixers are created by a complex blend of teas, fruits and botanicals, so no added preservatives or additives are included.

"We offer a different variety of flavours and mixers to help ignite the imagination within our consumers. Blackberry and Ginger mixer can be added to vodka to make a 'Moscow Mule'-esque cocktail, or gin and tonic to make a fruity and tangy 'G+T' or even added to sparkling water for a delicious alcohol-free cocktail."

Starting a business is new to Tara and Rory so the first six months have been a steep learning curve. Like so many other West Cork food businesses, Foxglove started in the kitchen at home with sales mainly made through various Farmer's Markets and NeighbourFood markets, as well as selling directly online. In an exciting development, Tara and Rory have now sourced a commercial kitchen and been accepted onto the SuperValu Food Academy. "This is a huge step for us in terms of learning and mentor-

ship," says Tara. "We have also set up a 'Click and Collect' service – where people can order their cocktail mixers through text, email or Instagram message, and pick-up their order every Friday at our Collection Point on Lancaster Quay, Cork City." The hope is that by late

"We offer a different variety of flavours and mixers to help ignite the imagination within our consumers. Blackberry and Ginger mixer can be added to vodka to make a 'Moscow Mule'-esque cocktail, or gin and tonic to make a fruity and tangy 'G+T' or even added to sparkling water for a delicious alcohol-free cocktail."

Spring, Foxglove mixers will be stocked in various SuperValus around West Cork. "We would also love to do more Farmer's Markets and maybe get

involved in boutique events and weddings – as well as doing cocktail classes/online workshops for different occasions," explains Tara.

Although starting a business together couldn't have been further from the siblings' thoughts when they moved back in with their parents in March, West Cork has a way of fostering the entrepreneurial spirit in people.

"I think in the times we are in, and living through a global pandemic, there is nowhere better than West Cork," says Tara. "We are both really outdoors people; we love to swim in Lough Hyne a few times a week, to run, walk our three beautiful dogs, and we have never been more appreciative of the space and comfort at home. There are definitely days where I miss New York so much, but those days will come again."

A lover of coffee, the Espresso Martini is Tara's personal favourite. She advises that the key to a good Espresso Martini is the shaker you use. "The bigger the better; so when you shake your Espresso Martini with ice, the air inside creates a rich, foamy top. Also the chocolate salt rim is my favourite, I don't have a huge sweet tooth so this is the perfect balance of

coffee and dessert at the end of any meal"

For Rory, who admits to a huge 'grá' for Irish Whiskey, Jameson in particular, the Grapefruit and Rosemary Whiskey Sour can't be beaten. "Growing up, I will always remember the scent of rosemary in our parent's garden, and I love the fact you can use it in both sweet and savoury recipes," he says.

Currently, you can purchase Foxglove mixers at Mahon Point Farmer's Market every Thursday.

You can also order direct, through email, text or social media (Facebook/Instagram) for collection. You can pickup seven days a week, with 24 hours notice, from Baltimore and there is also a Collection Point on Lancaster Quay on Friday afternoons, from 3-7pm. Orders put in before Thursday 3pm can be collected next day.

Foxglove is also listed on various Neighbourhoods across Cork; including Skibbereen, Lisavaird, Timoleague, Ballydehob and Kinsale.

www.foxglovecocktails.ie

people A flavour of West Cork



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Poachers has launched a world first; a premium Ginger Beer made with Irish chilli. Poachers Ginger Beer is low in sugar but packs a punch. It can be enjoyed as an Irish mule with a premium vodka, with poitín, or on its own as a refreshing no alcohol alternative over ice. Priced at €1.50 per 200ml bottle and €26 per case, Poachers Ginger Beer is available through select distributors, premium retail, and direct from www.poachersdrinks.com



Delicious and beautifully presented **Fernhill House Hotel** hampers (full of homemade goodies and priced from €55 to €98) are available to pre-purchase on www.fernhillhousehotel.com & will be available for collection from December 14. Or call reception to order.



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people A flavour of West Cork

Chocolate that will make you melt

Jude's Chocolates in Ballydehob began to evolve five years ago when Judy Ratliff took matters into her own hands after finding it difficult to source a dark chocolate fruit and nut bar.

What started out as a hobby soon developed into a passion and with a little encouragement and gentle pushing from family and friends, Judy turned her love for all things chocolate into a business and started selling her artisan chocolates at Skibbereen Farmer's Market.

"For me, this was a big move because I was a very quiet person, so I had to learn to engage with people," explains Judy. "Fortunately, people enjoyed the chocolates and kept coming back for more. This made it easier for me and boosted my belief that there was a market for my product."

The business was named

Jude's Chocolates for sentimental reasons: Judy's grandfather called her Jude.

There are five generations of traders and entrepreneurs on the maternal side of Judy's family, so she didn't lick her gift for business off the stones. "My mother, who has been in business as far back as I can remember, has been my main influence in driving my business forward," explains the chocolatier.

It was once Judy began making her renowned caramel chocolates that sales really began to take off. She has kept her range of chocolates small so she can concentrate on quality, creating primarily dark chocolates. Currently, there are three varieties of chocolates available – caramels (Salted, Ginger and Salted Peanut), barks (Raspberry, White Chocolate Raspberry and Mocha) and boxes of chocolates



(Boozy Box, Gin and Tonic and Chocolate Collection).

"When I began developing my range of chocolates, it was important that the chocolates have strong authentic flavours. This meant using natural flavours," explains Judy.

Jude's Chocolates are available in the following outlets:

Field's Supervalu of Skibbereen (in Field's hampers and on the shelves), Ballydehob Post Office, Skibbereen Farmers' Market, online (judeschocolates.com) and NeighbourFood markets (Ballydehob, Skibbereen, Drimoleague, Timoleague and Lisavaird).

A range of chocolates are available from NeighbourFood, Fields Supervalu, at Skibbereen Farmer's Market and online.

judeschocolates.com
info@judeschocolates.com • 0851461721

New book 'Milk' explores Ireland's culinary treasure

"Irish milk is a Grand Cru ingredient and Ireland produces the best milk in the world", says John and Sally McKenna, authors of the new book, 'Milk'. The book explores the complete food chain that brings milk from the pasture to our kitchens.

"In France, the highest rating for wines would be a grand cru or a premier cru," John explains. "You're looking at places where people say, 'This is the ideal location for growing this [type of] grape.' It struck me: in Ireland, we have the perfect circumstances for making the best milk. Clean rain, green fresh grass, small farms, and hands-on farmers with small herds. It's an echo of the French system where you have the perfect circumstance to produce optimum quality."

Research presented by Teagasc has shown that grass-fed dairy is higher in beneficial fats, protein and nutrients than other milk, but currently only a small percentage of global milk production uses a grass-fed system. John believes the milk produced in Ireland is like a magic elixir; chock-full of health benefits for people of all ages.

The Irish obsession with milk proves a simple truth: milk is a magic liquid. "The Irish are the greatest lovers of milk I ever met", wrote the traveller and writer John Stevens at the end of the 17th century. 'Ireland

has an extensive history and folklore tradition in seeking to create meaning and understanding of milk's magical properties,' says Food Historian Regina Sexton.

Milk is a culinary shapeshifter like no other, able to transform into multiple guises, to change density, to disassemble and then reassemble, to become sour, and yet be especially delectable when made sweet. The book explores its amazing



versatility looking at the history of butter and cheesemaking in Ireland. Butter was of such vital importance to the Irish economy that Butter Roads were fashioned to speed the shipping of casks of butter to the city – the first Butter Road, built from 1747 onwards, ran between Castleisland in County Kerry and Cork city, shortening the journey from 102 miles to



66 miles, meaning a farmer could make the round trip with his horse and cart in just two or three days.

"We've known how to transform milk into butter for thousands of years," says Professor Alan Kelly of UCC. "That it's so deeply ingrained in our DNA, going back that far, is remarkable." "What I love about the stories of milk's cultural significance is the fact that it was an art, long before it was a science, and it would appear to magically transform" says Professor Kelly.

MILK also introduces the best dairy farmers in Ireland, the family-farm winners of the annual NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards, who outline the importance of pasture-fed milk and butter. The book explores the culture, history and culinary potential of the magic liquid, which is Ireland's culinary treasure, and features brand new

recipes from the new generation of chefs working in Ireland.

While the Milk cookbook features recipes from 60 Irish chefs, and each recipe uses Irish dairy as a main ingredient, the recipes themselves are culturally diverse and impressively styled and shot by Kildare-based photographer Mike O'Toole and chef Anne Marie Tobin. John feels it's important to showcase other cultural uses for milk; methods which are not only interesting, but sometimes superior to our own. By combining these recipes and techniques with Irish dairy, something special is achieved.

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people A flavour of West Cork

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPE

Mini Frittatas with Bacon and Spinach

Recipe provided by Bord Bia

You will find lots of occasions to serve these frittatas – lunchbox, picnic, breakfast-on-the-go, brunch. Enjoy warm from the oven or store in the fridge and allow to get to room temperature before eating. Make sure you buy your eggs from a local food producer such as West Cork Eggs or Upton Eggs.

Makes 12 mini frittatas
Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

- 8 large eggs
- A little butter
- 1 tablesp. olive oil
- Half medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 6 streaky rashers, diced
- 100gms baby spinach leaves, roughly chopped
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 50g cheddar cheese, grated

Method:

Heat the oven to Gas Mark 4, 180°C (350°F).

Using a little butter lightly grease the cups of a muffin tray.

Heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the bacon and onion and cook for 6-8 minutes. Add the spinach and continue to cook until the spinach wilts.

Meanwhile break the eggs into a bowl



and whisk to mix. Season with salt and pepper then add the mixture from the frying pan and stir through. Finally add the cheese.

Divide the mixture between the 12 muffin cups and bake for 10 minutes.

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPE

A sweet and simple Swiss roll

A traditional favourite, this Swiss roll is easy to make. Use Maggie's Homemade Jam from Timoleague for extra yumminess!

Ingredients:

- Butter, for greasing
- 4 large eggs
- 125g (4oz) caster sugar plus extra for sprinkling
- 125g (4oz) self-raising flour
- About 4 tbsp. Maggie's Homemade Raspberry Jam
- Icing sugar, for sprinkling
- 23 x 33 cm (9 x 13 in) Swiss Roll tin

Method:

Lightly butter the Swiss roll tin, line with baking parchment, and then lightly butter the parchment.

Put the eggs and caster sugar in to a large bowl. Whisk together with an electric mixer at high speed until the mixture is pale and thick enough to leave a trail when the whisk is lifted out.

Sift the flour in to the egg mixture and fold in gently but thoroughly.

Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and tilt to spread the mixture evenly, particularly into the corners.

Bake in a preheated oven at 220°C (200°C fan, Gas7) for 10 minutes or until the sponge is golden and starting to shrink away from the side of the tin.

Invert the sponge on to a large piece of baking parchment that has been liberally sprinkled with caster sugar. Peel off the lining paper and trim the edges of the sponge with a sharp knife.



Roll up the sponge and the baking parchment together, from one of the short ends. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes.

Unroll the sponge, and remove the baking parchment. Spread the sponge with warmed jam and roll up again. Wrap tightly in baking parchment and leave to cool. Unwrap, dust with icing sugar, and serve in slices.

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPE

A simple healthy fruit cake

Because of the use of Emerald Oils rapeseed oil, this cake is a healthier Christmas bake for lowering cholesterol. The best things come to those who wait, so this cake is best eaten a few days after baking.

Ingredients

- 225g of plain flour.
- 2 level teaspoons of baking powder.
- 150g of light brown sugar.
- 125 ml. of Emerald Oils rapeseed oil.
- 2 tablespoons of milk.
- 2 Eggs
- 1 teaspoon of mixed spice.
- 450g of dried fruit, soaked in 400ml of tea overnight and drained before adding to dry ingredients.

Method

Sift the flour, baking powder and mixed spice into a bowl and add the sugar.

Measure the rapeseed oil in a jug, add eggs and milk and beat together.

Add the oil mixture to dry ingredients and mix well.

Add fruit and mix.

Pour mixture into an 18cm round, lined tin and bake for 1 hour at 170°C and then 1¼ hours at 150°C.

Use a skewer to check if cake is cooked, the skewer should come out clean - if required the cake may need to bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Allow the fruit cake to cool in the tin.

Tip: If you think that the top of the cake is browning too much, cover the top with some parchment paper.



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Bantry Bay Lions Club Diary

By John Dervan, PRO

The Bantry Bay Lions will hold their annual Christmas Food Appeal in SuperValu from December 7-13 and Lidl from December 11-13. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, collection boxes will be placed in SuperValu for much needed monetary donations. Food donations can be made as usual in the store at checkout. Lions will be stationed outside Lidl from Friday to Sunday to accept monetary donations. There are more needy families to help this year so the Lions are relying on the usual generosity of the local community to support this food appeal. Food vouchers will be given to Saint Vincent De Paul for distribution this year instead of food hampers. Food donated at SuperValu will be converted to money through the co-operation of Jim O'Keeffe and staff.

In response to the growing incidence of Diabetes worldwide, the 1.4 million members of Lions Clubs International have adopted Diabetes as a signature project. While several types of Diabetes exist, the Lions Signature Project aims

to specifically address the risk of Type 2 Diabetes. Eating healthily, increasing the level of physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight, all play a role in preventing or delaying the onset of Type 2 Diabetes. Bantry Bay Lions Club President Marion Rouse highlighted the importance of this initiative 'Diabetes is the 8th leading cause of death in the world and it is estimated that worldwide more than 460 million people have Diabetes, and this number is growing', she said. Diabetes Ireland and Diabetes UK (NI) estimates that there are 340,000 individuals with Diabetes in Ireland of which approximately 80 per cent have Type 2 Diabetes.

Lions Clubs International has set itself a target of one million completed risk assessments. Lions Clubs Ireland has risen to the challenge and is encouraging local communities to take the on-line Risk Assessment Test at

Diabetes Ireland (diabetes.ie). The Bantry Bay Lions club is confident that the project can create awareness of Type 2 Diabetes and greatly reduce the impact of the condition on



Pictured is Sister Sandra with two of the sewing machines.

individual health and that of our children and grandchildren. It encourages everyone to complete the questionnaire at the url noted above.

Earlier this year the Bantry Bay Lions received a request for help from Sister Sandra Simandi via John and Marian Minehane of Bantry. Sister Sandra is in charge of a skills training centre in Zambia, which focuses on underprivileged women who need to learn

skills in order to earn a living. This centre has been in existence since 1986 and is located in Mongu, a very rural area in one of the poorest parts of Zambia. Sewing and knitting skills are the main focus of training. The Bantry Bay Lions donated €300 to help Sister Sandra in her work. The Bantry Bay Lions are pleased to announce that three sewing machines were purchased as a result.

Club President Marion Rouse and all at the Bantry Bay Lions would like to thank people in the local community for their generous support throughout this challenging year and extend their warmest wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

The Bantry Bay Lions Club is a non-profit organisation and is affiliated to the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF), which has 100 years of service. To learn more about the Bantry Bay Lions you are cordially invited to visit their website at www.bantrybaylions.com.

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Wrap up in 100% brushed merino wool by John Hanly weavers, starting from €75 at **Wild Atlantic Design**, Clonakilty.



Gold plated star necklace €50 from **Susu**, Clonakilty



Thalgo Skin Solutions Cracker €19.90 is a great stocking filler. There are lots of sets from as little as €10 for women, men and kids at www.thalgo.ie



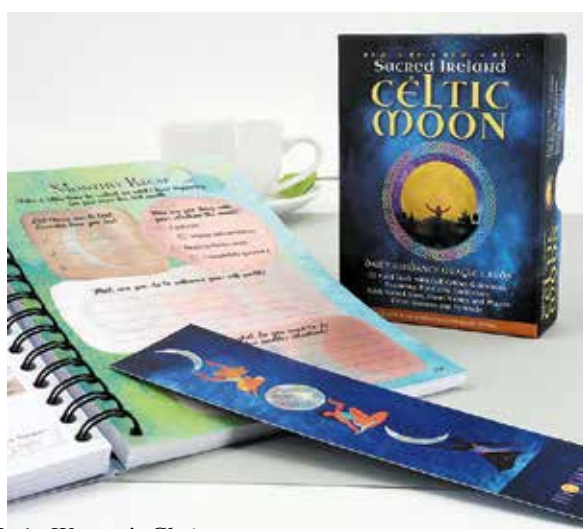
Name chains available in sterling silver, yellow gold and rose gold from **Twomey Jewellers**, Dunmanway from €70, place your order now to avoid disappointment for Christmas.



There is a wide variety of jewellery by Irish designers at **Wild Atlantic Design** in Clonakilty such as these gold and seed pearl earrings by Dublin jewellers MoMuse (prices from €50).



With short leather handles and a long adjustable and detachable paper strap, this Otti bag is smart and casual. €89 from **Chalk & Easel**, Ballinspittle



Moon Mná - Women's Christmas Diary and Sacred Ireland Celtic Moon Daily Guidance Oracle Cards. **Organico**, Bantry



LED Mirror with touch dimmer €39.95 at **Harringtons Pharmacy**, Clonakilty & Timoleague



Selection of Perfumed Oils by Stag & Seer - €19 each
Woodmans Realm, Skibbereen



Findhorn Flower Essences start from €15 at **Solace Holistic Centre** in Clonakilty where you can also get Gift Vouchers from €40 to use towards Massage and Reflexology treatments.

Tisserand Aromatherapy Roller Ball Set to enhance your mood or comfort your skin throughout the day or night at **An Tobairín** in Bandon.



Inchydoney Candle Soap €5,95 at **Green Dot Design Shop**, Clonakilty



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Selection of hat & scarf sets €49 and a pop of colour with this Scarf €29 at **Options Boutique**, Clonakilty



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Jose Saenz boots €125 and TOMS slippers €55 at Fuchsia Footwear, Clonakilty

Luxury Print Scarves in gorgeous designs €43 Bonnie Pom Pom Hat with super soft fleece lining €32 at Barnett's of Schull.



Sustainably made leather bags and wallets from Spanish brand Soruka at Batemans, Clonakilty

Sally Caulwell - Primrose Print from €28 at Courtyard Crafts, Schull



A large selection of Clarins gift sets at all price points are available from Bluetts Pharmacy in Clonakilty. Clarins uses over 250 natural plant extracts in its formulas, which are carefully selected for their effectiveness for all skin types.



Designer inspired giftset of 100% silk scarf and headband €39 at CiCi Boutique, Clonakilty.



Ceramics by Mairi Stone, starting from €6 at West Cork Crafts, Skibbereen

Beautiful lined, warm hats €24 from Pebbles, Schull



Full range of Clarins & Vichy Giftsets are available in Drinagh Pharmacy, Skibbereen.



Soft scarves from just €29 at Susu, Clonakilty



Jumper €55 and Rains waterproof backpack €80 (available in many colours) from Gooseberry, Clonakilty



McWilliam's Tote bag. Available in different colours €60 from Jellyfish Surf Shop, Clonakilty



Globe Necklace by Sawframed Jewellery. Handmade in Béal na Bláth using 925 Silver, these are original pieces of art. Available at Forest & Flock, Bantry



The Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage is set in Regency Ireland and is all about the stuff that Jane Austen doesn't tell you! €28 with free shipping in Ireland from prettyinterestinghistory.com

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Genius Square game
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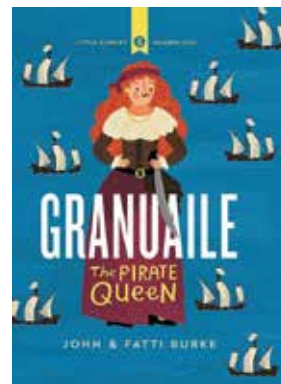
Maileg Mice Collection from
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Design Gallery in Clonakilty**



Hairy Henry Care Farm supports children and adults with additional needs and has beautiful 2021 calendars (€20) and cards (€3) available featuring their therapy animals with all proceeds going into building a much needed barn for visitors as protection against wet and windy weather. There are also individualised vouchers available for Christmas, get in touch to let them know your requirements. www.hairyhenry.com



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Lelli Kelly €75 at **Fuchsia Footwear,
Clonakilty**



3 BabyBoo Bibs for €12
(made in West Cork) at
Rosscarbery Pharmacy

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Selection of Clarins gift sets at all price points are available from **Bluetts Pharmacy** in Clonakilty.



West Cork Tshirts €16 at **Barnetts of Schull**



Tommy Bowe €79.99 at **Fuchsia Footwear, Clonakilty**



Upcycled Steampunk Lamp €120 at **The Loft Gallery, Clonakilty**



Small Viking Axe Throwing Game - €80 at **Woodmans Realm, Skibbereen**



Beautiful notebooks by **Petal to Petal** . €22.50 at **West Cork Crafts, Skibbereen**



Ceramic Curlew by **Joanne Robey** from **The Craft Shop, Bantry**



Mucros Weavers - Flat Cap €35 at **Courtyard Crafts, Schull**



Lighthouse ornament €99.95 from **Clonakilty Garden Centre**



There's a large range of Buff multi-functional headwear available online and in store at **Jellyfish Surf Shop, Clonakilty**



Skincare set €10.95 from a large selection at **Harringtons Pharmacy, Clonakilty & Timoleague**



Bugatti Socks Giftsets at **Batemans, Clonakilty**



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at **The Loft Gallery, Clonakilty**

Tipperary Crystal gift set with two candles & Christmas decoration €25 at Rosscarbery Pharmacy.



Leda May Hand Painted Wall Plate at The Craft Shop, Bantry



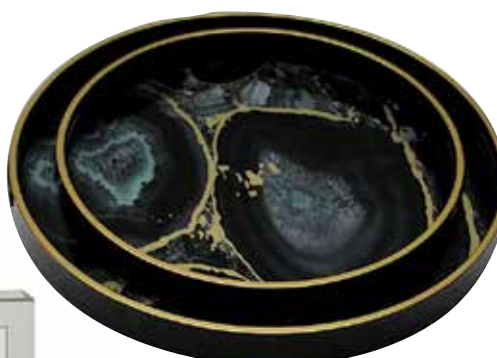
Framed Limited Edition Prints by Aidan O'Regan Small €70 Large €140 www.aidanoregan.com



There is a great range of Christmas gifts and decorations in stock at **Tom Sheehy's in Clonakilty** such as this Belek Living Church Lamp €65 and Biederlack Throw in a selection of colours/designs €49.95.



From the **Scríobh Range** of framed Irish words and phrases, this beautiful gift reminds us of the importance of home. www.wildgoosestudio.com



Serving tray sets – Beautiful filled with glassware and bar essentials on a drinks trolley or bar cabinet. €79. Luxury scented candles €18.50 at Perrotts Home Living, Clonakilty



See the world with this **Pink & Gold Globe €20 at Chalk & Easel, Ballinspittle**

This festive 78cm Lit Santa in Chimney is part of the wide variety of Christmas lights at **Hegarty Lighting, Clonakilty**



FeelGood Health and Fitness opens in Clonakilty

FeelGood Health and Fitness will open in Clonakilty in January, bringing a variety of fitness classes to suit different fitness levels and abilities. The woman behind this new health and fitness business is Lorna O'Regan. Lorna tells West Cork People about her new enterprise, which will offer fun as well as healthy classes for people of all ages.

Tell us about yourself and why you decided to set up FeelGood Health and fitness?

I live in Clonakilty and have three girls aged eight, nine and 10 years. I am passionate about food and fitness and love to cook nutritious food. Growing up in a household with three vegetarians ensured nutrition was given due priority and I learned this at an early age from my mother. After studying Nutritional Science in UCC, I worked for several years in the health industry and have always enjoyed sport and generally keeping fit. When my job was made redundant last April as a result of Covid-19, I decided to use my free time to train as a Personal Trainer (Level 4 and 5). I enjoyed the course so much that I continued my studies to become a Strength and Conditioning coach (NFQ Level 6).

The birth of FeelGood Health and Fitness seemed an obvious next step.

What will you be offering at FeelGood Health and Fitness?

I will be offering a range of services. A variety of fitness classes, personal training, nutrition coaching, school programmes, corporate wellness programmes, functional movement screening with relevant corrective exercises and boot camps.

Describe the fitness classes you will be offering?

I will be offering several fitness classes to suit all abilities from beginners right up to advanced with classes also available for teens, antenatal, postnatal and seniors. I have consciously put together a variety of classes to help you find a class that suits you. The beginners' classes will teach correct posture and technique and will be low intensity type exercises. This will be a comfortable place to come and exercise and develop your strength while also progressing your ability in order to move on to more intense classes.

There will be intermediate and advanced classes, which will be mainly high intensity in-

terval sessions with an 'express' class offered at lunchtime for those short on time. My fitness classes will be delivered in a fun way, but I will help you unlock your inner beast and have you leaving the class with that 'feel good' feeling!

This year has been a tough year and I really want my classes to be accessible to all fitness levels. Looking after your mental and physical health is so important, but I think everyone needs an escape and routine now more than ever.

Wellbeing and exercise for children is very important especially in the current climate. Will you be offering any classes/programmes for kids?

I'm really excited to share with you that I will be bringing Kangoo jumps to Clonakilty, which is a fitness class using Kangoo rebound shoes. These are so much fun! As they absorb 80 per cent shock, they are so much kinder to your joints while still allowing you to do a great fun cardio workout. I'll be offering this class to teens only initially but, depending upon demand, I may extend classes to other groups. I will also be doing kid's boot camps, which will involve a variety of fun activities centred around FUNdamental skills. I will also be offering six-week programmes

for schools

Six week School Programme: I will be offering a six-week nutrition and fitness programme to schools. These will involve FUNdamental skills for kids, which are an extremely important and foundational aspect to sport. This will be delivered in a very FUN way so it's fully inclusive to all kids. I will also be broadening kids' understanding of the importance of good food and teaching them the power of nutrition.

Tell us about your Rock n Box class, it sounds like great fun?

Rock n Box will be a class built around modern and classic rock tunes where you can punch out any pent up energy from the day. The classes will run on Tuesdays, Thursday and Saturdays, ranging from classes for beginners right up to seniors. Get in touch for details of times.

Have you any class that incorporates both Nutrition and Fitness?

The six-week FeelGood Programme This is a great programme is a great one if you want to address your nutrition and fitness as part of a group. It includes things like body composition analysis, tailored food diary, fitness classes of your choice and a weekly cooking demonstration.

This programme is suitable for all, which is why I have given the option to pick your

own classes. Regardless of your goal, be it losing weight, building strength, creating more energy or addressing menopause, I will create a nutrition plan ideal for you and your needs.

I also offer Corporate Wellness Programmes, where I can work with your company to help create a package for your employees. Classes are offered locally or online. Vouchers are also available, which would make a great gift for your employees this Christmas or as part of an employee recognition award scheme.

Where are you operating your business?

I will be at Ahamilla every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from January. **Classes can be booked online via the website www.feelgood-healthandfitness.ie or find me on Instagram and Facebook to book also. Email lorna@feelgoodhealthandfitness.ie.**

Follow me on Facebook and Instagram for the latest updates. I do hope to offer a few free classes on the beach over the Christmas period too.

Is it possible to buy gift vouchers?

I am happy to announce that I will be offering gift vouchers for any set amount, which would make a great Christmas Present this year. Who doesn't want to FeelGood?



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December	Wednesday 23 rd	7.30am - 2.30pm
December	Thursday 24 th - 28 th	Closed
December	Tuesday 29 th	10.00am - 4.00pm
December	Wednesday 30 th	10.00am - 4.00pm
December	31 st - 3 rd January	Closed
January	Monday 4 th	7.30am - 6.30pm

Escape to the Eccles Hotel and Spa with a gift voucher



Give the gift of escapism this Christmas with a night in West Cork's very own Eccles Hotel and Spa. Enjoy an incredible artisan three-course dinner with locally foraged produce by Head Chef Eddie Attwell, followed by a peaceful night's sleep and a scrumptious award-winning breakfast in the morning – a wonderful treat for all the senses. With a glass of festive mulled wine on arrival, sipped next to a roaring fire, Eccles Hotel and Spa is the perfect escape this Christmas. Gift vouchers for one night's accommodation, a three-course dinner and breakfast for two people start from €280 on www.eccleshotel.com



people Health & Lifestyle

A message from Hairy Henry

A big thank you from us at Hairy Henry Care Farm to all in the community for their support with our successful launch of our fundraiser campaign at the end of summer! All funds raised are going to go into building a barn for our riders with additional needs. As part of our launch, we had a fantastic week in September, touring West Cork with Henry the horse, where we met so many wonderful and generous people. Between direct dona-

tions and our online GoFundMe campaign we made a great start and raised a fantastic €12,000 towards building this barn. There is still some way to go, but we are so grateful for everyone's support in getting this fundraiser started. With the wet and cold and windy weather settling in, we are more motivated than ever to continue to move this project forward – for the benefit of so many riders and their families who use our service!

Despite the sometimes tricky weather, we are really delighted that we can continue to offer our services to our community within on-going Covid-19 guidelines throughout autumn and winter. My thoughts are with the many people in hospitals, residential care and nursing homes whom we used to visit with our team of therapy animals – unfortunately, it seems that it will be a while before we can offer our outreach visits again – in the meantime, we are wishing them all well in these difficult times.

But here on our Care Farm at least we can carry on – with individual, sibling and family sessions and small children's groups, using the natural outdoor setting and our therapy animals in our therapeutic, recreational and educational activities.

The pandemic and the enforced social distancing that came with it only emphasised our intuitive desire to connect with nature and other living beings. On a daily basis, I can see how our horses and other therapy animals work their wonders with the people who come here. Our animals offer unconditional affection and closeness, and endless warm fluffy hugs in a world, which has changed so significantly due to Covid-19 guidelines. And that's not all our animals do – they also offer

children and adults a range of safe outdoor activities where they can socialise, learn, grow, relax and heal.

Horses especially are such strong graceful creatures that inspire children to feel free and invincible. When children partner up with our horses on our farm, they gradually build a meaningful relationship which makes them feel bigger, stronger, more loved and needed, more confident, more sure of themselves, and the horses usually put such purpose and meaning and direction into the children's lives.

Horses in general do not judge whoever approaches them – our horses are especially trusting and innocent, always assuming the best. Children who can feel left out in other parts of their lives or are judged or bullied because of a disability for example, are met by our horses with unconditional acceptance of who they are and how they behave – this can be a life-changing experience!

And the great thing is, all of this is on offer when children just hang out with horses – they don't have to learn to ride for competitions or shows. Caring for and spending quality time with horses is the much more significant part in terms of learning life-skills like time keeping, reliability, honesty and empathy for another living



creature. Because of the caring bond children build with the horses, which leads to a strong desire not to let their four-legged friends down, children feel motivated to tackle what seemed impossible before – like controlling emotions, dealing with frustration and disappointment, building stamina and patience.

Over all these years of working with horses and children on our little farm here, I have learned that the key is to make plenty of time and space for the horses to work their wonders. We encourage a meaningful

relationship between child and horse because that's where we think the real benefits are. Because when the child and horse get the chance to build their own bond, so much good stuff happens between them, and everything seems possible!

To find out more about what we offer, please go to www.hairyhenry.com or give Sandra a call on 087 9389867

If you would like to support our fundraiser campaign for a new barn, please find us on www.gofundme.com: 'Help Hairy Henry Care Farm to build a barn'.

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Best Wishes to all our customers in what has been a difficult year for all. Have a very Happy Christmas.

Dogs Trust urges public not to be 'Sold A Pup'

Dogs Trust, Ireland's largest dog welfare charity, has launched their emotive 'Sold A Pup' campaign, to highlight the cruelty and deception currently surrounding the illegal selling and advertising of dogs and puppies. The charity is urging the public to support their petition to stop the illegal sale of dogs and help stamp out puppy farming in Ireland.

Part of the campaign saw Dogs Trust launching a new TV advert produced by Irish production company Cardel, directed by Katarina Lundquist and voiced by Irish singer, songwriter and composer, Lisa Hannigan. The animation demonstrates the horrendous reality of where purchased puppies may come from and how easy it is for puppy farmers to hide behind the façade of online adverts.

Laws were introduced in February of this year around the Sale, Supply and Advertising of Pets but many sellers continue to deliberately flout them. The new rules make it a legal requirement for puppies to be eight weeks of age or older before being sold. A microchip number for each dog

must be displayed on the ad, as well as the Dog Breeding Establishment registration number, if applicable and a seller/supplier number for anybody selling more than five pets in a calendar year but sadly many online ads are not compliant.

Speaking about the campaign, Executive Director, Dogs Trust Ireland, Becky Bristow said: "Most people wouldn't dream of buying their dog from a puppy farm; however, the sad reality is many unwittingly do so! Puppy Farmers often go to extreme lengths to hide the true environment their pups originate from as they prioritise profits over the welfare of the dogs in their care. The stringent enforcement of the Sale, Supply and Advertising of Pets law is paramount because it gives puppy farmers nowhere to hide! Displaying a microchip number means that every dog sold is traceable back to the seller, while displaying a Dog Breeding Establishment number gives the purchaser the power to decide if they want to buy from a large scale commercial dog breeder or not."

PR & Communications

Manager, Dogs Trust Ireland, Corina Fitzsimons continued: "Shockingly, it is currently legal in Ireland to keep hundreds of breeding dogs in registered Dog Breeding Establishments, with guidelines recommending only one staff member required per 25 breeding female dogs, not to mention their puppies. Often, members of the public are duped into thinking they are purchasing pups who have been raised in a family home when nothing could be further from the truth. So, we are appealing to people to not only consider the puppies but the poor mums who are left

behind and have to go through it all again and again, churning out puppies from their little pens."

Dogs Trust is urging the public to sign their petition to help end the misery behind the illegal sale of dogs using the hashtag #SoldAPup. They are calling on the government to enforce the already existing laws as a matter of urgency and to penalise those who do not comply.

Find Dogs Trust on Facebook, and Instagram or follow the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SoldAPup.



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people Health & Lifestyle

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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

As mentioned last month, there are four steps involved in becoming pregnant. These are ovulation, fertilisation, transportation of the fertilised egg and finally, its implantation in the womb.

Approximately, one in four women who seek help for infertility have ovulation disorders. This means that they are not ovulating or are ovulating infrequently. These two issues are closely associated with imbalance in the hormonal system and the reproductive hormones produced by the hypothalamus and pituitary are the most likely culprits in this situation.

One relatively well-known hormone imbalance is polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and this is the most common cause of infertility in women. Insulin resistance, obesity, excess facial hair growth and acne may all be present in cases of this hormone imbalance. If there is a history of diabetes in the family, this is one hormonal issue that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. In this situation, severe acne as a teenager should be investigated and addressed through diet, exercise and natural medicine so that it does not develop into a more serious issue, such as infertility or diabetes, later.

Some women who have PCOS also struggle with excess weight due to insulin resistance

generated by the hormonal imbalance, which in turn may lead to a failure to ovulate. Women who lose between five and 10 per cent of excess weight have a better chance of sustaining regular monthly ovulation and thus have a better chance of becoming pregnant.

The best way of reducing weight for women with PCOS is to lower carb intake, eat plenty greens and incorporate fibre into the diet. Protein amounts should be approximately 15 per cent of overall food intake, with fat being an important component of the diet also. A low glycemic index (GI), low carb diet is therefore the most advantageous diet for women with PCOS. I have also mentioned fibre and the recommended daily intake is 14grms per 1000 calories...quite a lot. Healthy fats should also be included in the diet and avocado, olive oil, coconut oil, and nut butters fulfil this requirement. It goes without saying that processed food and all sugar should be reduced DRASTICALLY. Chronic inflammation is associated with obesity and this in turn is increased by sugar and processed foods. Calendula tea or green teas are both suitable for helping to reduce the constant low-grade discomfort that accompanies this type of chronic inflammation.

Taking time to eat, rather than

gulping down food as if one was late for a bus, is also important. Putting down the knife and fork between bites helps to slow rushed meals as does chewing each bite 5-10 times. Each bite will be so thoroughly masticated, that satiety occurs.

Regular exercise will help women with PCOS lose weight and this needs to increase over time to about an hour, three times a week and be moderate in intensity. It goes without saying that a good sleep routine is essential to maintaining and restoring health, as is the practice of meditation, qi gong, or yoga. Any one of these three will work at a deep level, at the very core of your being, thus reducing stress and creating an interior balance.

Moving Goalposts for the wellbeing of communities

The Wellbeing Network, West Cork in partnership with Cork GAA bring you Moving Goalposts on Wednesday December 9; an online event discussing the impact of COVID-19 on sporting communities and how people can be proactive about looking after the wellbeing of their communities.

According to Ita Murphy, coordinator of the Wellbeing Network, West Cork: "The event will highlight some of the community-minded and creative ways GAA clubs and the organisation have responded to this crisis and ways that players, supporters and the many others involved in sport at grassroots level, can stay connected and positive in the midst of this pandemic where the goalposts are constantly moving."

The event, which takes place

online on Wednesday, December 9, from 7-8pm, will include panellists Keith Ricken, Cork Under 20 all Ireland winning team manager; Ruairí Deane from the Cork Senior Football team; Martina O'Brien, Goalkeeper with Cork Senior Ladies Football Team; and Kevin O'Donovan, CEO of Cork GAA. MC for the event is Kieran McCarthy, Sports Editor at The Southern Star.

"We are delighted to be partnering with The Wellbeing Network in West Cork for this event," said Cork GAA CEO Kevin O'Donovan. "The GAA have always placed a big emphasis on health and wellbeing and our members and communities are at the heart of what we do. It has never been more important than during this very challenging time, that sport has the power to provide a con-

nection and support to people within their local community."

"The Wellbeing Network, West Cork is all about supporting individuals, families and communities to be proactive in looking after their health and wellbeing," said co-ordinator, Ita Murphy. "There were some brilliant fundraising and online initiatives to keep sporting communities connected earlier in the year and we hope this event will inspire people to continue to find creative ways to engage and connect, at a time where supporters cannot attend matches and meet in person in the usual way."

The event is free and places must be booked in advance on Eventbrite.

Further information is available by email at: wellbeing-network@nln.ie or by phoning 087-7453933.

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MOVING GOALPOSTS

ONLINE EVENT

Panel will discuss the impact of Covid-19 on sporting communities and how people can be proactive about looking after the wellbeing of their communities.

This free webinar will highlight some of the community-minded and creative ways GAA clubs and the organisation have responded to this crisis and ways that players, supporters and the many others involved in sport at grassroots level, can stay connected and positive in the midst of this pandemic where the goalposts are constantly moving.

7 - 8 pm Wednesday 9th December

PANELLISTS

RUAIRÍ DEANE - Cork Senior Team
MARTINA O' BRIEN - Cork Senior Ladies Football Goalkeeper
KEVIN O' DONOVAN - CEO Cork GAA
KEITH RICKEN - Cork U20 All Ireland Winning Team Manager & CIT GAA Officer

MC: KIERAN MCCARTHY - Sports Editor, The Southern Star

Register on Eventbrite at:
<https://movinggoalposts.eventbrite.ie>

FURTHER INFO
www.thewellbeingnetwork.ie/movinggoalposts
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people Health & Lifestyle

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Skincare Christmas gifts for her

Looking for the perfect Christmas gift for her? Hello skincare sets! From stocking filler ideas to splurge-worthy items, I've rounded up the coolest beauty must-haves that any skincare loving mum, daughter, sister or friend would appreciate receiving this festive season. And as it's more important than ever to support Irish businesses this year, all products featured are available in pharmacies and salons nationwide as well as online from Irish websites.

AlumierMD Home Hydration Kit €160

For the first time, you can hydrate like a pro at home. With hi-tech hydration and exfoliation ingredients, superfoods and vitamins, The AlumierMD Home Hydration Kit offers in-clinic results at home with two products previously reserved for professional use only. Each kit contains Aqua Infusion Mask, an oil-free, lightweight mask that provides intense hydration. Bright & Clear Solution, a refreshing skin conditioning solution that exfoliates cellular debris and refines skin complexion. Eye Rescue Pad Sachet, refreshing gel pads help reduce puffiness and fine lines around the delicate eye area. Also included is an application brush and cosmetic bag. To purchase email hello@shernamalone.ie or call 0861451551.

Skingredients Skin Veg & Skin Protein Giftset €75

This hard-working serum duo is the perfect recipe for dewier, more hydrated, and oil-controlled skin. Skin Veg and Protein are your hard-working, lightening, brightening skincare serums which work together to provide anti-ageing and hydrating benefits. Skin Veg and Skin Protein are the 02 and 03 steps



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.

in the Skingredients routine, and they can also be used as part of any pre-existing skincare routine. Skingredients is available online from skingredients.com, and pharmacies, department stores and selected salons nationwide.

Yon-ka Paris Anti-Ageing Vanity Firming €71

This Christmas make the woman you care about glow from the outside in with a stunning Yon-Ka Paris Christmas gift set. Containing Phyto 52, this refined, fast absorbing cream has a powerful rosemary base that visibly restores firmness and oxygenates to tone skin and invigorate the complexion. Phyto Contour, a refined, aromatic cream with extracts of rosemary visibly reduces puffiness and dark circles. It restores firmness to the eye and lip contour and

imparts a feeling of freshness and relaxation to tired eyelids. All housed in a beautiful Yon-ka vanity case. To find your nearest Yon-ka stockist head to www.renaissance-skincare.com/yonka/where-to-buy

NeoStrata Limited Edition Restore Kit €112

A specialised collection of products featuring gentle, yet effective polyhydroxy acids (PHAs) to help protect the skin's moisture barrier while providing gentle exfoliation. The set includes a full size Restore Facial Cleanser that gently cleanses and lightly exfoliates without drying skin's protective moisture barrier. Ultra-Moisturising Face Cream, a high strength face cream that visibly improves texture, lines and overall skin clarity for healthier looking skin and Bionic Face Cream a rich, soothing emollient helps provides intense hydration and revitalises the look of stressed skin. Available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online from neostrata.ie

Codex Festive Bytes €19.95

Treat everyone on your list with this little stocking filler duo. Skin Superfood, a hydrating and nourishing treatment cream for face, hands, and body and made with Codex unique BiaComplex herbal formula, helps treat dry, flaky or irritated skin, leaving it silky smooth and the limited edition holiday soap, with French green and pink clays and nettle and wheatgrass help refresh and balance skin. Scented with orange, mint and spruce. Available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

NUXE Huile Prodigieuse Florale Gift Set €39.90

A delight to the senses, the brand-new fragrance has a delicate floral scent and subtle pink hue. It combines fresh notes of zesty, reviving citrus grapefruit with sweet, floral magnolia and a lingering, sensual musk base note. The set contains a full size Huile Prodigieuse Florale multi-purpose dry oil and the beautiful Creme Prodigieuse Boost Multi-Correction Gel Cream to combat the first signs of ageing and the visible signs of stress, fatigue and environmental damage on the skin. Also in the set is a deluxe travel size Prodigieux Floral Shower Gel and a scented Prodigieux Floral votive candle provides the perfect excuse for a moment of me-time. Available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

Dermalogica Cleanse & Glow to Go €35

Dermalogica's Holiday Collection for 2020, in collaboration with artist Julie Wilkinson, features some of their most loved products, with the added benefit of a unique limited edition bespoke packaging, as well as savings, making it the perfect gift for your loved one! Containing travel-size versions of Dermalogica's Double Cleanse technique and their #1 powder exfoliant. PreCleanse, a makeup busting oil, Special Cleansing Gel, the perfect way to achieve your cleanest skin ever without stripping your skin's natural moisture and Daily Microfoliant. Available from Dermalogica Salons nationwide and online from Dermalogica.ie

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and every happiness for 2021. I look forward to bringing you many more beauty and skincare updates next year! [@shernamalone.ie](https://www.shernamalone.ie)


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Finding the light

We've all experienced moments where we've wished we had listened to our 'inner voice' or trusted in our 'gut feeling'. Afterwards we are usually left wondering about the direction life could have taken?

From Einstein to Gandhi to Steve Jobs, the power of the 'inner voice' has been endorsed by some of the world's most influential people. "Don't let the noise of the others' opinions drown out your own inner voice," – Steve Jobs.

American-born, Ballydehob-based clairvoyant Peter Tadd has never looked back since he trusted his own inner voice and, as a result, abandoned a career in construction to follow a more spiritual path that would allow him to use his talents to help others.

The French word 'clair' plus 'voyant' translates literally as 'clear' plus 'seeing'. It is said that a clairvoyant is someone who can see and experience other dimensions and other times.

Peter explains how he has since helped people all over the world to find understanding and balance in life.

"My work helps people answer questions about any of the life challenges that we all have," he explains.

Some of these answers ostensibly are found within the energy field known as the aura – a field, which Peter explains, is created by the seven major energy centres or chakras. It is believed that we have major and minor chakras in our energetic body systems and when a chakra is not functioning properly or if it is blocked, illness is more prone to occur.

"I'm able to see and engage with these chakras directly," says Peter, "where images of the past, from childhood, or even from a former incarnation can appear. Working with that knowledge we find ways to deepen our understanding of life and to create balance in this one."

Peter recalls how he had a number of experiences as a child but his clairvoyant ability was turbocharged by the practice of transcendental meditation. He began meditating every day twice a day in his early 20s.

"The single most important part of my growth – along with taking courses in Tibetan Buddhist meditation and Chinese qi gong – is daily practice. Meditation opens me up to the inner landscape and qi gong connects me to the outer one."

Peter's belief is that our reality is more dreamlike than rock solid. "Dreams are everything," he says. "What looks like life on the outside is much more fluid and interactive than our left

brains and reductionist thinking can imagine."

As the single breadwinner with a family and a mortgage, letting go of a steady job to pursue a profession as a clairvoyant was a risky move.

"My inner voice asked 'what do you believe in? You either believe in these spiritual realities or you don't.' So I took the plunge," says Peter.

While it was touch and go financially for the first year, he has never regretted trusting his inner self. "I have the joy and privilege to do what I love," he says.

Although he's working remotely as a result of the pandemic, prior to Covid Peter was travelling all over the world, working with clients and teaching throughout the USA, Canada, England, Scotland, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal and Ireland.

Peter and his wife Jennifer first landed in Ballydehob with their three young children in 1994. "It was really my wife's doing, as Jennifer's family came from West Cork," he says. "I thought we were only coming for a year or two." Peter shares how the house that the family rented on the Goat's Path was so haunted that they broke the one year lease, which led them in to the village, where they bought a house. "Only later that year did we discover that we were just six miles from Jennifer's family's home place in Schull."

Although they spent a number of years in other parts of the world before settling properly in West Cork, Peter and his family have always been drawn to what he describes as "the vibrant creative hub of open-minded helpful people in West Cork".

"Initially I found it very challenging because I was not allowed to work in Ireland for seven years forcing me to go back to the USA and to the UK to make a crust. Having lived in different parts of the world I feel



this is one of the most beautiful and definitely the most peaceful place I've ever lived."

He also admits to not feeling comfortable in sharing his profession with his neighbours in those early days. "I thought I would be seen as some kind of a weirdo or American know-it-all. My children told all their friends that I was a psychologist, not a clairvoyant. I'm happy to say all of that has changed in the last ten years."

Some of his greatest 'successes' have been releasing the energetic basis of psychosomatic illness. "People's lives change, their symptoms vanish and that is so fulfilling for me. For a number of years this was the thrust of my work."

Christmas will be different this year for so many including the Tadd family. "Christmas is a family affair but this year all of the children are away," shares Peter.

Usually Peter puts up a tree or a branch full of lights or candles and decorations and, in order to cut down on consumerism, they draw lots and simply buy or make presents for one member of the family.

"Each year we have a theme about an international cuisine and we do a lot of cooking and spend time together preparing lavish meals. And we do a series of evenings where we share personal photos and stories of the past year. Not this year!" he says sadly.

But there is light ahead. Peter says that "this is a marvellous time to embrace life more fully than ever by standing up for our individual freedoms and rights and for the earth and her inhabitants."

"Hope for the future lies in the truth and our common love of life. The truth is enshrined in the charters of many institutions but unfortunately is not followed. The more transparency and the more honesty that we can demand of ourselves and

of, not just government but also international corporations, the better our future will be.

"Fear is corrosive and contagious."

"Love lives in the heart of each of us. Go there more often."

If you would like learn how to become more resilient and at the same time discover your innate potentials, go to Peter's website PeterTadd.com and listen to his podcast series 'ConsciousnessMatters'.

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HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

What a year we have all had! I'm finding it a relief to have something celebratory to plan for, so Christmas couldn't have come at a better time for me. I'm loving the Christmas lights in Bantry, planning our Christmas Day feast and I'm even looking forward to the Christmas Day swim this year – I've been going in a few times every week since the end of the summer, so it's not nearly so daunting!

For this last column of the year I asked the Organico Team for their tips and tricks to get you through the next three weeks, so you arrive at the Big Day feeling as good as possible – happy, healthy and up for a lovely family day with your nearest and dearest.

First things first – let's talk about breakfast. If you follow our social media or receive our newsletters, you might have seen that we have launched a new range of Irish made functional foods this Autumn, called Vita Plantae. Vita Plantae is a company run by Eamon Cullen in Newry, Co Down, and they make two products including a jar of deliciousness that has started me eating porridge again

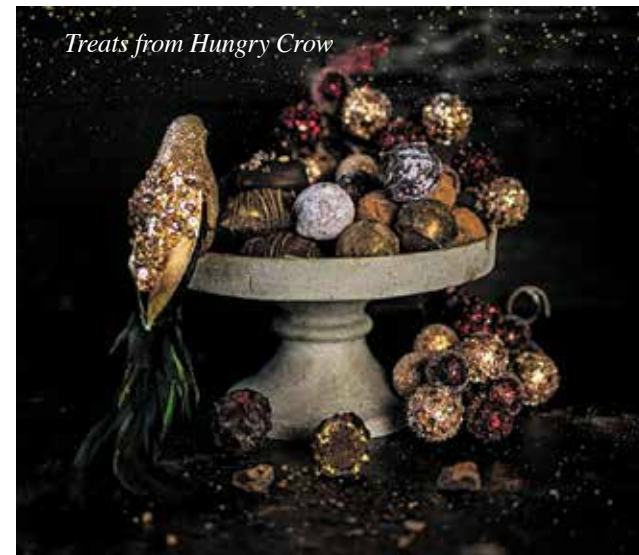
after about five years off! They call it The Botanical Blend, and it is a mix of 45 different organic ingredients – including raisins, lots of spices, their own organic kombucha, carrots, orange peel, blueberries, parsley, ginger and lemon peel and juice, along with a botanical herb and spice blend that adds many micronutrients. All this goodness is then fermented for a few months, which creates a blend that is easily absorbed by the body and can be added to various foods for depth of flavour. I think it tastes like jam crossed with mincemeat – and if you add a spoonful to your morning porridge along with a spoon of tahini and a handful of blueberries, you have a breakfast fit for the most challenging month of the year!

The same team also makes a Cider Vinegar, again containing the mother along with the same 45 botanical ingredients which makes it incredibly tasty and healthy. Christine Meadows, Assistant Manager in our Shop, says "I'm really enjoying the raw botanical vinegar, I take a shot of it in a little warm water in the mornings – it's a great way of kickstarting your system and helping to regulate digestion." And it's a lot easier to take than regular ACV (it's a little sweeter) so no need to add honey.

If you wake up feeling tired and daunted by the day ahead of you, then another Irish company, Revive Active, have something they have designed to give you a day-long energy boost. Revive Active is a supplement containing high doses of CoQ10, which is a natural way of boosting your energy, and a sachet first thing in the morning makes a noticeable difference. Santhe, who swims in the sea every morning at 6am (gasp!) says "Revive Active, is my go to for busy periods, a good dose of Co-Q10, and B vitamins amongst other vital nutrients. Take one every day in a large glass of water or add it to your water bottle if you are heading out – it will keep you hydrated and nourished all day".

Laura, of our Baking team, also loves Revive Active. Laura also has to get up early, and says "I love the Revive Active Zest Active especially during the winter months for energy and immune support". Zest Active has a good range of nutrients, as well as Beta-glucans for added immune boosting.

Stress can cause us to find these next few weeks hard to handle, so if this is something you find affects you, there could be a natural remedy to help you.



For example, Stressveda is a new product from the company that makes Udo's Oil; it contains KSM-66 Ashwagandha extract, made from organic roots grown in India. The Ashwagandha is extracted without alcohol or solvents, using a traditional Ayurvedic method, ensuring a full-spectrum extract. Stressveda also contains B Vitamins sourced from organic guava, holy basil and lemons. Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb of Ayurvedic traditional 'medicine'. Adjuvants are herbs that help increase the body's ability to resist physical, chemical or biological factors, have a normalising effect on stress management and are generally safe and free of side effects at regular doses. Fleur, our Shop Manager, says "Stressveda really helps me to stay calm during difficult times; I can really notice a difference in my day when I take it. I feel calmer, for focused and less worried. I would recommend it for minor stresses coming up to the holiday season".

Good Digestion is also very important on Christmas day – it could be good to call into your local Healthfood shop at some point in the next few weeks for a digestive aid if yours is prone to act up at all. For example, you might find your Christmas dinner goes down better if you take a good digestive enzyme first – digestive enzymes are needed if you find that rich or heavy meals can make you feel full hours later, or give you gas and pain during the night. Personally, I like the one that Viridian makes, but depending on the meal there are different types so a consultation is a good idea.

Finally, gifts and sweet treats! We have lots of lush Christmas gifts in Organico this year – Dr Hauschka, Weleda and Kinvara Skincare giftpacks all look lovely, and we have a great range of Irish made foods, as well as the

hugely popular Moon Mna Diary Journals and Oracle Cards. We love that all our gifts are practical as well as luxurious – given that we are all becoming so aware of the problem of having too much 'stuff' in our lives, giving food and drink, or luxurious organic bath soaks, is very satisfying.

One of the companies we absolutely love working with is called Hungry Crow, based in Clonakilty. Niamh and Mark make the most beautiful (still healthy) treats imaginable – think organic Medjool dates, wrapped in 70 per cent dark chocolate, stuffed with creamed cashews flavoured with rose water. Ailbhe, of our shop team, says: "I've got a big sweet tooth and Hungry Crow Chocolates are what I like to gravitate towards as a little pick-me-up during these busy, festive months and they're a local company, very creative with their gorgeous range of treats and their winter selection is wonderful (especially the gingerbread caramels)".

Lastly, we have 10 per cent off absolutely everything online and instore on December 7 and 8, and online on Sunday, December 6 as well, just for good measure. We hope this makes Christmas a little easier for you financially.

If you would like to ask about anything I have mentioned here, get in touch (info@organico.ie) or go online to organico.ie – we will be shipping all around the country until December 23 (though we are advising you place your order around December 13 to be sure of deliver before Christmas – this is something to be very aware of, as all the couriers, and An Post, are completely snowed under with all the online hopping we are all doing this Christmas).

Have a lovely December folks, and a wonderful Christmas. And here's to 2021!



Pauline Cassells-Walsh
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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.

This year has been an incredible journey so far, and no doubt we will all be processing the events of 2020 for many more years to come. Yet, despite this, there is always something to be grateful for, and always something to be hopeful for. As we approach this season, a traditional time of giving and receiving, we have an opportunity to take stock of the year, as well as a chance to meet Christmas, not with speed or panic, but with a sense of ease.

It has been a year like no other, so can we make it a Christmas like no other? There is time to prepare for Christmas with intention and awareness. Can we decide to take the pressure off this year by keeping things simple? Can we choose ease over excess? After all the uncertainty and the turmoil of the year, we might be forgiven for planning on even 'overdoing' things to make up for the challenges of the year, or indeed, even as a reward for surviving it. But instead, maybe we can make our mindfulness practice this season, one of resting, spending time in the company of those dear to us, doing activities we love, caring for others whilst being mindful too of caring for ourselves.

Christmas can, even at the best of times, bring up a range of emotions and behaviour patterns, when we are in the company of those close to us. Relationships are not always easy. There will always be tricky people or issues that can unsettle us, and, while mindfulness does not take these away, it can help us turn towards these difficulties with softness and care, acknowledging the very real hardships and challenges that exist in our lives at the moment. By acknowledging our difficulties instead of pushing

Presence of mind at Christmas

them away, we allow them their place too. Feeling our full range of emotions is so important, for example, being mindful of any loved ones who will be absent this year for Christmas and how that makes us feel. Perhaps we can soothe and balance any tricky emotions by inclining our minds towards what has been good in the year, things we may have, up to now, taken for granted. There are two practices that can be simply integrated into our day that may help us through this holiday season.

1. Regularly taking the time for a simple check-in can help us to notice how we are feeling: Taking a little time out to yourself every now and then can help diffuse any difficult moments or interactions. A simple pause for just a minute to check in with yourself and notice how you are doing can make a big difference. Taking a few nice long, deep breaths can help us to notice when we are travelling down our habitual tracks, in terms of mood or communication style. If you have a few minutes to spare you can do a longer check-in, bringing attention to your breath and, if it feels comfortable, maybe slowing it down a little. Gently asking yourself some questions, like, how am I doing just now, in this moment? How is my body feeling? How are my thoughts? How is my breath moving in my body?

2. Making gratitude a daily practice: Gratitude represents the opposite of taking something or someone for granted, it humbles us. We can be grateful that with technology, we can arrange to see and hear those loved ones that are far away. We can also be grateful for those loved ones that 'are' able to be here and aim to be fully with them over the Christmas holidays. See if we can deliberately put away our phones and our cameras now and then, and be present with each other, listening to people's stories and conversations without distractions, being mindful of any patterns of communication with family members.

Gratitude is viewed as a key to our wellbeing and happiness. Research shows that reflecting on the things we are grateful for can help with sleep and with a multitude of other areas, including increased happiness, resilience to stress and reduced materialism. Evidence suggests that it is impossible to feel grateful and, for example, jealous, at the same time and

so practising gratitude can help reduce those unhelpful emotions that can take hold in us sometimes.

There is a wonderful gratitude practice that we can do right now, which enhances feelings of happiness and abundance, rather than lack. Maybe you can make it a daily practice for this lead up to Christmas. You can try this as a ten-finger gratitude practice at any time, but you could try it first thing in the morning or maybe last thing at night to make it a ritual on waking or to assist with getting to sleep. Very basically then, you count on your fingers what you feel thankful for, but taking your time with it, and reflecting on each one as you count. So, make a little time for yourself to reflect on what has been good in your day so far today. Take a pause as you reflect on each of these things, for example, people, places, scents, sights, textures, tastes, sounds that have brought even a tiny moment of peace or joy to your day. Linger on each of them a little while, really savouring them, soaking them in, breathing them in. Notice how this makes you feel.

This Christmas will be different, there is no doubt, but we can bring a curiosity to the season, savouring the tiny moments, and being thankful for them. A heartfelt thanks from me to all the wonderful people that I have spent time with this last year, people who have attended my classes in person or online, indoors or outdoors, and to all those who drop in to our little online meditation community on zoom. I will borrow the words of John O'Donohue from 'For Friendship' in wishing a warm and wonderful Christmas to everyone, 'May you be blessed with good friends, and learn to be a good friend to yourself'.

Online meditation sessions via Zoom will run through the Christmas season 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. Gift vouchers are also available www.mindhaven.ie.

For more information on upcoming workshops and courses please like my Facebook page (Mindhaven) or feel free to get in touch by phone: 087 2700572 or email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com

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people Health & Lifestyle**A collective vision of beauty and wellness @42**

On Ashe Street, in the very centre of Clonakilty, is a beauty emporium for the women of West Cork, a place where clients can go to have their nails, hair, makeup, brows and skin taken care of by experts, all under one roof. In a bustling town centre of cafes, shops and boutiques, and with two-hour free street parking and large free carparks nearby, the location is ideal for both locals and those travelling from further afield.

Having purchased the beautiful building at 42 Ashe Street a number of years ago, Claire O'Neill decided to open her nail and beauty business, Nail Boutique, five years ago and has since seen it go from strength to strength.

However, Claire also saw a gap in the market for high-end experts to collectively deliver high-end treatments to people in West Cork and beyond and invited four other businesswomen to join her in what is collectively known as @42; they are Sherna Malone, Olive O'Sullivan, Triona Lynch and Niamh Butler.

"We are all women in business together and we support each other," Claire explains. "Although our services vary within the

industry we have an interest and understanding of each person's profession. Depending on what our client is looking for, we are able to inform and direct them to the appropriate person."

Olive O'Sullivan explains why it was ideal for her to join the other experts under one umbrella in Clonakilty town centre: "Indeed it is a privilege for me to work alongside other women in business who share the same vision as I do. Prior to this I had eight clinics in East and West Cork, three in Cork City centre and one in Kerry. It was time to settle in one place. Having spoken to my cancer chemotherapy clients, they preferred the soft decor of @42; it is a pleasant and much needed break away from clinical and hospital settings but still a place where sterility and high infection control standards are not compromised."

Sherna Malone says that to work alongside other industry professionals and experts in their field is hugely advantageous, not only for her own clients but for herself too. "There's the interaction and the support element, by raising each other up and channelling the power of collaboration, collectively we have impact."



plan to continue to expand my skills and services."

Niamh now offers acrylic nails and gel polish with nail art, makeup for occasions like photo shoots, weddings and parties, eyebrow shaping/tinting and facial waxing.

She feels her creativity sets her service apart, "I can give my client a unique set of nails of their choice every set! In makeup artistry I have been trained to do from natural (but photoready) makeup to very extreme makeup, such as drag and theatre, so I have the skills to cater for every occasion and every individual."

Niamh appreciates the ability of @42 practitioners to refer clients to each other: "For special occasions such as debts, weddings or graduation it's so convenient and time-saving for the clients to have their makeup artist and hairdresser under the same roof with their facials, nails, eyebrows and tan having been done by the other businesses here beforehand."

Book: 087 1735028
Instagram and Facebook:
Niamhbuttermakeup&beauty

Claire O'Neill Nail Boutique

Claire welcomes a broad range of customers in to her plush and elegant salon every day – busy mothers, professional women or anyone looking to treat themselves to a personal care and wellbeing session.

With over 20 years experience in the beauty industry, Claire guarantees that her client's wishes and requirements are her top priority. "We provide one-to-one, undivided attention to each client. We aim to make everyone feel relaxed and comfortable from the moment they enter the salon and offer flexible opening hours to suit our clients needs."

Most of her clients regularly avail of nail treatments such as manicures, gel polish and nail extensions, as well as the variety of other beauty treat-

ments on offer such as eyelash and eyebrow tinting, face/body waxing and spray tans, but she also caters for wedding parties preparing for their big day: "Every bride that comes to 42 need look no further!"

Claire has recently trained in Machine Brows, a semi-permanent makeup for brows that lasts approximately 12-18 months and compliments the services that Olive O'Sullivan offers. "This is a good option for clients who like a more solid, filled-in brow and also suits people with very oily complexions who do not retain microblading hair strokes well. I also plan to train in permanent eyeliner and lipliner in 2021."



Claire offers this advice for readers: "Start early with maintenance and prevention, it will pay off. Disastrous home beauty and nail treatments are sometimes hard to rectify so always seek advice from a professional beforehand. We are there to help and are very happy to advise you."

Book: 086 8336580

Sherna Malone Facialist, Beauty & Skincare Expert, Beauty Columnist



Before moving to West Cork six years ago, Sherna managed and taught in her family business, the Bronwyn Conroy Beauty school in Dublin. Now based in Clonakilty, she offers a variety

Continued on next page...

Triona Lynch Hair by Triona



Since opening her salon in 2017, Triona has put a lot of hard work into building her business but says it has been an exiting time for her. "I love doing hair and meeting people, my clients are amazing. Running a business can drag me away from the creative side of the job sometimes but if asked 'Would I do it all over again' the answer is definitely 'Yes'! I love that my salon is in the centre of town. Ashe Street is a fabulous street with lovely shops, cafes and friendly people."

Hair by Triona is known for its colour services and great range of aftercare products. "We use Matrix and Milkshake hair colour," Triona explains. "We feel it's better to have two ranges to keep everyone happy. If one doesn't suit a client we can choose the other. Both Matrix and Milkshake have shampoo and conditioners to suit everyone with the colour care shampoo and conditioners being best sellers. Milkshakes purple shampoo for blonde hair also flies off the shelf."

As well as running her busy salon, Triona is a firm believer in the importance of education and started teaching in Clonakilty Hairdressing College 15 years ago. She now teaches one day a week in McEgan Hairdressing College in Macroom.

Everyone wants healthy looking hair but a healthy scalp is just as important as good products Triona maintains: "A good diet, plenty of water, not too much alcohol and plenty of exercise will make everything look great from the inside to outside."

Unfortunately due to the Covid pandemic hair salons have to adhere to the two meter rule so salons are working at half capacity at Level 3. "I have seven sections in my salon but can only use four of them so we can't do the volume of clients we normally would do. So my advice is book your next appointment before you leave the salon otherwise you could be disappointed. We would love to fit everyone in but it's difficult. I wish there were 10 days in the week for December!"

"We all look forward to this pandemic to be over, until then we will keep our clients safe by wearing our masks, clean sterile gowns and towels for each and every client. Our clients safety is our top priority."

Book: 023 885 8870

Niamh Butler Niamh Butler Makeup & Beauty

Highly qualified Niamh first trained as a professional makeup artist with Vanity X Make up Academy in Cork, where she studied theatrical, media and bridal make up, before training as a beautician with Foxy Training.

"I fell in love with doing nails and felt like it went hand-in-hand with makeup. I was then lucky enough to get work experience in Nail Boutique with Claire, who allowed me to continue doing both and to build my experience and personal clientele. I used the opportunity of lockdown to up-skill with online courses in nail art and I

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@42 ...Cont'd from previous page

of services including skincare consultations, facial treatments, and masterclasses for adults, teens, and tweens. Sherna is also the Beauty Columnist for the West Cork People.

Sherna knows that skincare can be a confounding space for most people: "The advice out there is often conflicting and overwhelming. To exfoliate or not to exfoliate? Micellar water or a cleansing lotion? A drop of serum? What about face masks? What sets me apart is my years of experience in the beauty industry and my understanding and knowledge of skin, what works and what doesn't, what ingredients will have a positive impact on someone's skin health. For me, it's all about delivering exceptional results and I do that with my skincare consultations and proven, efficacious treatments like AlumierMd Skin Peels, Murad Facials, Micro Needling and LED Phototherapy."

When a client goes to Sherna with their skincare concerns, they have often been bombarded by the vast array of products on the market and don't know where to start, or they feel they are not getting the results they're looking for from their current skincare. "Ultimately, they are looking to see a change in their skin health, and I can help them with that. So, whether it's a skincare consultation or a skin treatment with me, they will be well on their way to achieving their skin goals."

Sherna's clients are all ages, with many different skin concerns such as skin ageing, acne, rosacea, and pigmentation. "While it's mostly women, more and more male clients are coming in for treatments and investing in their skin health, which is great to see. I've also had clients travel from Cork City and even further afield. Word of mouth counts for a big percentage of my business

which is fantastic."

Sherna explains that a common mistake she identifies during consultations is the overuse of products, and not necessarily the right products for the client's skin. "It's also very important to manage client expectations, consistency is key – people sometimes start with great intentions, but you need to stick with it, using homecare products consistently and as directed, will achieve optimal results. Likewise, with treatments, while one treatment can provide the immediate effect of bright and radiant skin; repeated treatments will give progressive and more significant results in treating textural issues, fine lines and inflamed acne."

And her number one tip? "Wear a broad-spectrum SPF daily – your skin will thank you."

Sherna is busy planning for next year. Following the success of her sold out 'Style & Skincare' online events with 'The Style Bob' in November, she will be looking at other dates for 2021 along with holding more masterclasses for tweens, teens and adults.

Book: 086 1451551
shernamalone.ie

Olive O'Sullivan Browtique Cork

Olive has been a qualified nurse/midwife for four decades and qualified in eyebrow services such as threading and tinting 15 years ago. She then trained in microblading and discovered a niche market for women who had lost their eyebrows due to illness, chemotherapy, hormonal issues (postnatal, thyroid, menopause), Alopecia, Trichotillomania or who had simply over-plucked eyebrows. Olive now works on eyebrow restoration six days a week is the only nurse in Ireland that is also a microblader!

Olive says that eyebrows frame our face and we don't realise how important they are until they are gone, "A problem I can help with. When a client looks good, they feel good. The transformation in confidence is clearly visible."



Microblading is eyebrow restoration by a safe, painless, semi-permanent and natural method of tattoo. A very natural looking hair stroke technique is used to implant tiny, realistic hair strokes just under the epidermis of the skin, creating new eyebrows.

The bulk of Browtique Cork's clients are or have been cancer patients. Olive explains that chemotherapy causes a patient to lose their eyebrow hair: "It may not happen right away, but it does happen. Drawing on brows daily is a chore, eye pencils can be accidentally wiped off and brow wigs unfortunately slip. Without eyebrows you may look sicker than you feel. Mothers of children note that whilst they can be reassured that treatment is going well, their antennae are up because 'mom doesn't like quite right'."

"We have won the confidence of Cork City oncologists and they now send their clients to us as pre-chemo prep so that we can capture the existing brow shape before it's lost. As I am a qualified nurse, we are also

covered to treat client during chemotherapy, something other microbladers are unable to do. We are the only Microblader to be Laya Healthcare Approved for cancer chemotherapy clients and clients without medical insurance can claim 20 per cent back from Revenue."

Olive also sees people who are just looking for a bit more definition in the brow area. "Good eyebrows knock 10 years off your age, and mi-

croblading is cheaper and less invasive than a facelift!"

Microblading entails three appointments, 30-50 days apart, with an annual colour boost to keep the look fresh. "We take the process gently and can add to each step to get you your preferred eyebrow."

"The one piece of advice I would give clients who are curious about microblading, is to book in for a consultation. It's an ideal way for cautious

clients to meet me, have a facial measurement done, a prospective eyebrow shape drawn on, a patch test and leave without feeling compelled to book in for any treatment. Gift vouchers are from our website, Instagram link or by calling us. This gives the nudge to the special someone to just go ahead and book in."

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people Health & Lifestyle

Suite of online services for GBT+ men launched in Cork County

The Gay Project has announced a suite of online services that will be available to those folks in Cork County for the duration of COVID-19 restrictions. These include a range of online social groups for men, a book club, a writers club, coffee social groups, seminars and online classes and a facebook group called Munster Gayze. These services offer a much needed social outlet for GBT+ men in Cork to socialise with their peers during ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

"We know that these services can help combat isolation for folks who might be finding the added isolation of COVID-19 challenging," said Michael O'Donnell, Community Development Worker with the Gay Project. "Our services offer a digital space where GBT+ men in Cork can be out and proud of who they are. We've found that this is especially relevant for older men."

It's very easy to get involved. These services are completely free to attend. Confidentiality is assured from all staff deliver-

ing the service. The groups are facilitated online so people from any part of Cork can attend. These services are available immediately. To get more information e-mail community@gayproject.ie or you can phone 0873647901.

The Gay Project is a National NGO that Supports, Celebrates and Advocates for Gay, Bi+, Trans and Queer Men. Ailsa Spindler, the Co-ordinator of the Gay Project, says: "Like everyone, we've recently been adapting our services to COVID-19 restrictions and this

has enabled us to reach more people than ever

"There are four main pillars to our work: Running Events and Social Groups;; Campaigning for LGBT+ Human Rights and Policy Protections; Providing Information and Resources to GBT+ men and their families; Delivering Workshops and Talks.

To get more information go to gayproject.ie or follow on social media @GayProjectIRL on facebook, instagram and twitter.

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DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Dr Jeff Featherstone

Dr Featherstone is a highly experienced medic and award-winning doctor who works in a busy GP practice in West Cork, as well as at Mercy University Hospital and Cork University Hospital, as an A&E doctor.

A different Christmas

Well, December already! It has been a tough year for us all. I have to ask myself who would be a politician or a member of Nphet at the moment, having to make the call on whether Scrooge is ruling this Christmas or popularity politics will prevail and let the World go mad and to hell with the consequences. It is a tough one.

I have drawn St Stephen's Day and New Year to work in A&E this year, so I will be at the sharp end of things.

In mid November some houses were fully decked out with all the lights and decorations; I do not think Covid will affect their plans too much.

Leo Varadkar has advised and been lambasted for his advice that relatives intending to fly back to Ireland this Christmas,

should not. Most have already pre-empted his advice, as the airlines are extraordinarily quiet with regard to Christmas bookings. He is quite right of course. How did the virus get from Wuhan to Ireland so quickly any way? By infected people in planes.

I will be honest, I detest flying, what with the waits, security checks, cancellations, cramped conditions and now the good chance I could catch Covid from a misguided relative spewing Covid virus, sitting next to me. In the absence of proper screening, policing testing and 100 per cent compliance, infected people will get through the net. Driven by gushing sentiment, some will throw caution to the wind; I see it all the time.

Christmas is a time to show

kindness. Kindness is natural; we see it all around us. We all have a great capacity for kindness, but also for destructiveness, violence and unimaginable cruelty. Life would be so much easier if we felt nothing but kindness and consideration for others. However we can all be tired, selfish and impatient on occasion. Kindness and consideration for others is difficult, we have to overcome self-interest, anxiety and conflict. Intelligent kindness is a concept that goes beyond merely showing warmth and goodwill towards another. It emerges from a sense of common humanity, promoting sharing, effort and sacrifice for the good of others.

Let's not drop our guard over Christmas. Covid could deliver a knock out blow in January.

County Cork's Older People to get Winter Care Packs

Cork County Older People's Council (OPC), through Cork County Council's Age Friendly Programme, is distributing Winter Care Packs along with the OPC Winter Newsletter to older people across the County.

The newsletter includes useful information and news from around the County including updates on the Council's library services, fire safety advice, 'winter ready' advice, road safety advice, and details of the Council's COVID-19 Community Support

Helpline.

The newsletter has been prepared by Cork County Council's Age Friendly Office in association with the Council's Fire Services, Road Safety Office and Library Services in consultation with the Cork County Older

People's Council. Also included in the pack is a high-vis vest, a keyring torch and a Winter Ready Fridge Magnet which has been developed by Cork County Council, the HSE and An Garda Síochána.

ADVERTORIAL : CNM

"I launched my dream business"

Lauren Windas
CNM Naturopathic Nutrition graduate
(College of Naturopathic Medicine)

What I especially loved about CNM's course was that it really helped me understand just how important diet and lifestyle is to maintaining health and wellbeing. The course gave me the tools I needed to make decisions for my own health and provided me with plenty of clinical training experience of



working with clients in a clinic setting.

I became very unwell with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

during my second year at university. After seeing a variety of GPs and specialists who all told me that my case was incurable, I discovered that changes to diet and lifestyle could truly have the power to help relieve my symptoms and improve overall wellbeing.

It made me really interested in discovering more about nutrition and how the human body works. So I left university with a new career in mind, and enrolled at CNM where I could study Naturopathy, as well as Nutrition. What attracted me to CNM was their combination of academic learning and clinical

training, as well as the flexibility to work alongside and study part-time.

CNM changed my life because it gave me the ability to have the lifestyle I always desired. I launched my dream business in something I am truly passionate about; nutrition and coaching people to become the healthiest versions of themselves. I have co-founded my own wellness brand, ARDERE, with my sister. We provide expert nutritional advice, offer healthy recipes and sell 100% organic natural wax aromatherapy candles. I am particularly interested in helping people

who have a poor relationship with food or weight issues.

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Coming in for Christmas



LGBTI+ MATTERS

BROD 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.

By Mark Holland

Pronouns are getting interesting, for the previous fifty years of my life they've always been there but they never really caught my attention, now they have. Sure, we were taught about them in school, and it's no one else's fault that I didn't pay attention, or that I found them a little bit 'meh'! But just because they didn't matter much to me, as I took them for granted, does not mean that they are not vitally important to someone else, when we make assumptions about theirs. I am privileged; I work at the Gay Project in Cork and I get to attend seminars and training sessions about such fascinating topics. As a result I came out in support of people who do not have their identity properly recognised by others, by wearing a badge on my chest that declared mine (He/Him) so that people would know that I care, recognise the dilemma, am not making assumptions, and would like to start the conversation.

I am a Cisgender* male, of same-sex orientation*, easy really, nothing too complicated about that, He/Him, job done, until it hit me, right out of the blue. Why is it so important to me, such a fundamental part of my identity, that I am a man, a male, 100 per cent fully formed, and I can prove it. Look at how I walk, listen to the man-like things I say, I dress like an Irish

version of a modern day cowboy for God's sake! I don't think I'm in denial and I'm definitely not trying to complicate my life, but I had never before stopped to consider why it is so imperative to my 'self'-image that I project this and that no one else is in any doubt? Why do I protest so loudly?

I was brought up in an Ireland where Julie Andrews was still singing in the Hills and the word Gay(e) referred to a TV chat show host, still highly regarded, fondly remembered and coincidentally credited with introducing the whole concept of sex to the nation, which given our then extraordinary rates of procreation, is hard to swallow! The media reinforced our role models of gender identity; women were served up Maureen O'Hara, Dana and the like, men had a spectrum from John Wayne to Sean Connery to choose from. Did any of you see Goldfinger on RTE a few weeks ago, in which it seemed alright to slap other people's bottoms, and the titular character was such a maxi-me of the Trumpmeister that it could hardly be a coincidence? And it wasn't 'just' your manliness, but how you expressed it; you had to always be a little bit cross, permanently on the brink of boiling over. Wayne himself was pretty much hungover all of the time, they used to shoot in the mornings because by the afternoons he was beginning to slur and get nasty, all an acceptable part of the image. Some identity that was!

Anthropologists tell us that coming off the second wave of gender equality (1985), humanity learned about male identity, metro-sexuality et al., and we are now five years into a thirty-year cycle of gender identity. Parents, do yourselves a favour, get with the programme, it's not going away. The terminology is not so complicated, it just takes getting used to, don't be afraid to make mistakes, you can't get done

for trying and you will get there eventually.

And younger people; don't underestimate old fogies like me, we have faced challenges all our lives, met with the unexpected, loved and lost, we all lose at some stage. Others around you may also be struggling with their identity, I don't think that this gets set in stone during adolescence and remains fixed for the rest of our lives, we all grow and learn and develop as we mature. The most approachable, least judgemental person I know just turned 85 last week, some of the most conservative people that I have ever met are still in their 20s.

So we are asking you to Come In this Christmas. Try not to make automatic assumptions about 'what' other people are, and embrace the possibilities by informing yourself and shining a light on an integral part of human nature, of who we are. Let's make this Christmas special, not just for people who like to listen to music on a loop and squander the planet's resources on single-use plastics, but for Everyone.

For this Christmas season BROD will be featuring an Advent Glossary Calendar of LGBT+ terms, such as:

*Cisgender; identifies positively with the gender assigned to them at birth.

*Same-sex orientation; romantically attracted to people of the same sex.

A different one for each day, we are inviting you to follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, to send out the message of love and acceptance, that your home is safe and caring environment for all who live there, no matter what they are.

And before we go we must take this opportunity to thank Clonakilty Credit Union for their gift to us, sponsorship of our 'BROD' logo. Thank you and a very Happy Christmas to One and All.

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During Covid19, the Gay Project is providing online services to Gay, Bi+, Trans, MSM and Queer Men in Kerry and Cork

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To get more information

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Occasionally Meet
in Kerry (returning
after Covid19)



Mark and Fern from BROD on last Saturday's World AIDS Day run/walk

people Health & Lifestyle



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

Did I just blink and the merry season is almost upon us? What happened? I do believe that this year 'time' is making a complete fool of all of us. One-minute Christmas seemed so far away and the next it is right in front of us. For the first time ever, I'm using the word 'precious' for the holiday season. It is a precious time, to be spent with those who are precious to us, and remembering those precious ones who have passed on. The 'stuff' that needs to be bought will always take second place to the time we spend together. The sci-fi year that we

have survived has left its mark on us, and the lessons we have learned are to the forefront of our minds. Never, ever, take anything for granted again.

West Cork is the Riviera of Ireland. The picturesque towns and villages scattered along the coast are not just pretty to look at but also boast some of the most incredible shops and cute cottage industries. We don't need reminding that they need our support – we all know that. We want and need our towns to not just survive; we need them to thrive. It doesn't matter if you think that €10 or €20 is too little to make a difference; if we all do it, then it adds up to quite a significant amount. Give your kids some extra pocket money and send them off to shop locally, train them young and you would be amazed at what thrifty little shoppers you will create in doing that. Give them hints, remind them what you like and send them off. Your older kids can be encouraged to 'pool together' and there is nothing like a voucher for your favourite boutique. When it comes to your significant other, don't bother with the hints. You will often hear 'Oh right', or

'ok' and they will have no idea what you said. Be blunt, say it straight out so that there is no room for confusion or error. At this stage you do not need reminding that 'Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus'. Tell them exactly what you want, where the shop is, and how much it costs. Then all that you have to do is to act really surprised when you open your present on Christmas morning! Having gone through two lockdowns and spent many the hour and day filling refuse bags, the last thing any of us want is to fill up every empty space again so start asking for exactly what you want.

I have picked out a few businesses that I want to mention. Of course, in an ideal world I would list off every single boutique, shoe shop and jewellery store, but I inevitably had to just pick a few. These select few come with rave reviews and include something for every pocket, every age, and even for that person who has absolutely everything.

We all deserve to have the most incredible underwear but we rarely invest in pieces that look sensational, feel amazing, and hold you firmly together in all of the right places. I've written about HOT KNICKERS before but to be honest, I could never write enough about this little company. I have brought women from far and wide to Ali Wheeler (owner) and they just keep going back, time and time again. This couture line of underwear will give you

confidence and maybe even make you blush a little. The bralettes retail from €55, briefs from €40, cami tops from €50 and full slips from €110 (I am addicted to my slip). Each piece is lovingly hand made and the quality is impeccable. A Hot Knickers voucher might be exactly what you want and need. Have a look at hotknickerslingerie.com. The magnificent shop is tucked away on Spiller's Lane in Clonakilty. Check it out.



Next to Bandon and Bateman's Shoe shop, and NO, you can never have too many shoes or boots or pumps or heels. What we all insist on is QUALITY and RELIABILITY and that perfectly sums up what Bateman's Shoes is all about. It doesn't matter where you live because they have a fantastic website for you to peruse when it is convenient for you. While there is most definitely a resurgence of boots to the knee, ankle boots are still out-selling

everything else. The choice available is wonderful and you will find that there is a price that will suit every pocket. Military is big so check out their Fly London range, the price will leave you pleasantly surprised. Carmella boots are the ultimate in 'cool', so luxurious. I think that I'm a little too smitten with a 'to die for' tan Carmella ankle boot! Bateman's also carry XTI's and Tamaris. If you have any of the Gabor line, you know that they are all about comfort and you won't be disappointed with the selection online. Giving a gift of a shoe shop voucher may seem overtly practical but in a world overflowing with waste, I think that it is a well-thought-out option. Perhaps some of us have drawers full of vouchers, one thing for sure is that we all need or want new shoes, so this voucher will definitely be used immediately. www.batemansfootwear.ie

Have you ever come across SHARON ROSE and her stunning knitwear collection? She uses 100 per cent wool from Cushendale Woollen Mills and is based in Baltimore. I have been a fan for a few years now. Her hat and scarf sets are incredibly unique, her cowls are ever so eye-catching and you can wear them over anything. The collection mirrors those toasty warm colours of Autumn. This year Sharon has created a collection for Men and Kids, as well as her usual line for Women. You will fall head over heels in love with them when you see them and see them you must.



The men's hat and scarf sets are €65. The children's hat and cowl sets are €50. Ladies cowls are €55 and all are available from www.sharonrosedesigns.com or www.westcorkcrafts.ie (a beautiful shop in Skibberreen). These are exactly the type of Irish gift for someone who simply cannot make it home for the holidays.

Kathleen Holland Designs boasts an award-winning range of exquisite jewellery. Her collection incorporates the boldness of sculpture and elegance of metalwork. I just love her TWIG and ACORN collections, delicate but at the same time they make a 'fierce' statement. You will find that her price



Continued on next page...

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A Christmas reflection

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 'Clonability' 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!

This month, as we look forward to Christmas, to celebrating life, hope and love, I ask you to reflect on one thought and one thought only;

How to relate to people with disabilities?

Relate to them as people, as though they are your brother, your sister, your mother, your father, your son, your daughter, your friend...that's how you relate to, approach, include, talk to, laugh with and value people with disabilities.

Treat PWD as living, breathing, sentient people, with hopes and dreams, aspirations and ide-

als, lives and loves; treat PWD as people, equal in all ways to every other person; then you are walking in their shoes.

Have a happy, blessed and safe Christmas.



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...Cont'd from previous page

range is for everyone, starting at €50, all the way up to €200 or €300. What originally drew me to this incredibly talented lady is the fact that she recycles jewellery. Isn't that wonderful? Just imagine how many of us have outdated pieces that we never wear, maybe they are of sentimental value, or came with a big price tag. Wouldn't it be such a lovely thing to have them recycled into something that you would actually wear, or as gifts for your grown-up daughters? Based in Woodfield, outside Clonakilty, this business is as 'West Cork' as you can get. Check out www.kathleen-hollanddesigns.com, also on Facebook and Instagram. Now this is a gift voucher that many of you would adore!

Sitting in the pouring rain in my car, one morning recently, the sight of glitter and sparkles made me smile. Belladonna's window in Clonakilty was exactly what I needed to see. It was festive and feminine. This stunning boutique caters for the fashion-conscious woman from daywear to eveningwear to event-wear. Owner Oonagh makes the shopping experience intimate and relaxed with no pressure to buy and always a lovely chat. She goes to the moon and beyond for her customers and each and every one of them goes back time and again. After many months in leggings and PJs and anything



or everything comfortable, we are now more than ready for the sculpted look. Her collection of my absolute favourite Mos Mosh jeans will leave you sculpted, moulded, sleek and smiling. They do exactly what you need them to and suck in the tummy and at the same time they lift up your bum! Get yourself a pair before the holidays and you will wear and wear and wear them, all the while feeling fantastic. Be specific if you are sending your significant 'other' in for your gift or perhaps tip off the owner, then you will get exactly what you want. Belladonna also has the most beautiful on-trend machine washable big scarves, retailing at an amazing €35. Statement sparkly earrings are a must-have, even if we don't leave the house over the holidays, there will still be the photos, and they last forever. These earrings will

have you sparkling the night away and are available at the incredible price of €30. Vouchers available, run!

And finally, it isn't often that I get to recommend something right on my own doorstep and I'm absolutely delighted to do so. Have you heard of Rebecca's Apothecary? If you haven't, then you are missing out! Rebecca, of Rebecca's Beauty Salon in Rosscarbery, has been a



long-time champion of Organic, Ethical and Clean wellness and self-care. Always researching, Rebecca came across herbs and oils containing both antiviral and antibacterial properties. We all love a story, don't we? Well

Rebecca stumbled across the story of Four Thieves Oil from the 15th Century. You need to check out the rest of this story on the Rebecca's apothecary Instagram page. It is intriguing. As a result, she has lovingly and knowingly developed a line of Four Thieves Oil products including a Hand Sanitiser, Hand and Body wash, Hand Poured Thieves Oil soap and Four Thieves Oil Beeswax Candles. Oh my, but they are gorgeous. Each product is beneficial, hypnotic and drips luxury. The packaging is clean, ethical and simple. This is a gift for someone special, most especially if they are from Rosscarbery and living somewhere else. Delivery is worldwide. I know that a certain daughter of mine will be over the moon when she receives her 'Box of Love' and shedding tears when she opens it in Amsterdam. There is nothing quite like a piece of home when you are far away. All products are 100mls so ideal travel companions. Keep a close eye on these products ladies, they will soothe your soul and keep your worries at bay.

From my house to yours, have a heart-warming holiday season. Hug whoever you can, my pets are benefitting enormously in the 'hug' department at the moment. Be kind, be careful and keep an eye out for each other.

Merry Christmas

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Changing the story

Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

As 2020 draws to a close I have been thinking a lot about the idea of stories and how they shape and form our experience of life.

A few years ago I attended the Royal College of Chiropractors event in the UK and the keynote speaker was a lady called Dr Sarah Goldingay, a dramatist (not a medical doctor) who was working with a medical team looking at the role of stories in health, wellbeing and outcomes for patients.

The crux of her thesis was

that, if I, as a practitioner, am unable to tell you a story of how to overcome the issue and pain you are suffering with, whether that is shoulder pain, headaches or lower back pain, it is going to be very hard for you to find a way to get better.

The truth is that stories have the ability to impact us in a positive way or in a negative way. I often have people in the clinic who will say something like 'I've accepted I'll never be able to lift my arm above my head', I fell off a horse when I was 18 and my shoulder has never been right since'. This is a very negative story and the problem with it, is that it reinforces the belief that because of the fall, you will never be able to restore your mobility and your shoulder is never going to get better.

Another common thing I hear is 'it's my age; it's just wear and tear and I will have to put up with it' – I am not so sure that this is true either. If age was the only factor, everybody would be suffering with wear and tear injuries and they are not.

The fact is that when the environment is right the human

body has a remarkable ability to heal itself. But in order for that to happen, we also need to play our part, not only mentally by believing it is possible, but also by looking at other areas of our health and wellbeing, which influence recovery. All types of stress have an effect on the body's ability to recover, which is why reducing stress, making necessary dietary changes and exercise and nutrition is so important.

So what is required to change the story? I think that this can probably be summed up with one word – understanding. I don't mean my understanding as a practitioner but rather explaining clearly so that you have a new understanding of what the problem is, why it has not healed in the past and how, after appropriate treatment, you have the ability and resources to rehabilitate.

Some may think that this is just a load of mumbo, but over the years I have found that when I am able to articulate a clearer understanding (story) in a way that makes sense to the client, of how rehabilitation is possible,

these clients do better. However it is important to point out that this always has to be realistic, for example it is not possible to turn back time and none of us can be 18 again.

As Christmas approaches in this strangest of years, where there has been great turmoil and hardship for many due to lockdowns, we are all likely to

have a Christmas that is different from usual. I hope we can all find ways to maintain the social connections with family, friends and loved ones. I for one will certainly be holding on to the idea that 2021 will be a new year with new challenges; it may be different but I will do the best to make it as good as it can be.

I hope you all have a happy and joyful Christmas and New Year.

Eoin Roe is a chiropractor and functional medicine specialist working in Market St Clinic, Skibbereen. Please call 087 9582362 if you would like an appointment.

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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?

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- **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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Understanding our three-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.

Anyone who spends time with three-year-olds can see how quickly their minds, bodies and personalities are developing. Each day they seem to become more articulate, competent, imaginative and challenging. It is the time children establish their identity: 'This is me!'

The child's social world expands hugely during this year as children generally become more able to play together at nursery and at home, enjoying imaginary games and roleplay. One of

the major tasks of children and their parents is to manage the separation from each other, as children expand their horizons and move into social settings outside the home.

Preparing for and managing the settling-in period at nursery is a huge experience for parent and child, providing a model for future separations. Those children who have had a satisfying one-to-one experience with mother (or father) in their early babyhood would in most cases find it easy to enter group care because they have inside them a secure picture of a caring parent figure with whom they have had an exclusive relationship. Children's attitude and expectations of the outside world will depend to a large extent on their experience of home life with the adults closest to them.

Play and fantasy worlds

Play is a child's work, their way of developing imagination, creativity and emotional life. Over the course of the third year the child's imaginary life becomes increasingly complex and children can spend long stretches of time wrapped up in make-believe games on their own or with playmates. How delightful to have magical powers, strength and potency. With a wand food can magically appear, there is no need to rely on Mummy to provide it, injuries can be instantly healed and 'baddies' can be killed off. Imagine how difficult it must feel for a small child to be constantly aware of all the things they cannot do by themselves, all the skills they have yet to master, all the good things they are still totally dependent on their parents to deliver. A child needs to have some escape into a make-believe world where they can take on the role of being in charge and triumphing over all danger.

Imaginary friends

Sometimes children develop an imaginary friend to help them manage feelings of exclusion or loneliness. Imaginary figures or stuffed animals can be useful for a child to transfer some of their feelings onto, particularly those feelings they might like to keep a distance from.

Children fluctuate in their ability to grasp reality and permanence, at times believing that anything and everything is possible. This may become more noticeable when a child is faced with a possibly worrying situation, or a change in routine.

If one only takes a look around a nursery at the beginning of the new term to see how many children come dressed as fairies, gauze wings fluttering, wand waving, or wearing policemen's helmets or carrying an old briefcase of Daddy's and a toy mobile phone. A phone helps them feel emotional contact with absent parents. These accessories and the way they allow children to imagine themselves as having special powers, can help children get through stressful times, when they might otherwise collapse into tears.

Family life

By three, the child's feelings for mother and father will have undergone many changes and fluctuations, with sometimes father, sometimes mother in favour. At times, the couple together will be lovingly regarded, at other times jealousy could take over. If mother and father are living together, and even when they are not, the child will have an inkling of it at some level – that their parents have a separate and private relationship between them, of which the child is not a part. The child could feel intensely jealous of this relationship and become aware that they are excluded from this area. If parents sit together for a cuddle

on the sofa, the child is likely to squeeze in between them.

The child may become angrily frustrated with their own small child's limitations, longing to have the strength and power of Daddy or Mummy's rich supplies of food, love and beauty. Most parents have heard their child declare their love to one parent saying 'When I am older, I am going to marry you/ live with you' excluding the other parent, who might feel rejected. It can be helpful to consider that a small child often gets others to understand how the child is feeling by behaving in ways that stir up these same feelings in 'them'. So, in this case, the child's hurt feelings about being the one left out of the parent couple are passed on the 'left-out' parent, who gets first-hand experience of what this feels like. The child's actions seem to be saying: 'Let him/her see what it feels like to be excluded'.

It is reassuring for a child to see that parents can understand and bear these intense feelings while remaining tender, comforting figures for the child, as well as firm and boundary setting. Although each parent will bring her or his own style to parenting, it can feel safer for a child if both parents are able to take on both roles.

Conclusion

Life with a three-year old is exhilarating and exhausting, full of delights and dramas. By the end of this year children will be launched into nursery school and socialising with friends. They will be self-sufficient in many ways, but will still need the loving care of their parents and close family as they move on to the next adventure, aged four.

'Santa's Magic Mask' book aims to ease children's Christmas Covid-19 concerns

A babysitter's reassurance is hoping to become a best-seller, as a timely book on Santa Claus' Covid precaution has proven a hit with children and parents alike.

Santa's Magic Mask is a picture book about a group of children who worry what social distancing and restricted house visits mean for the most magical time of year.

The book, available to buy online at santasmagicmask.com and on Kindle, is written by Anna O'Connor and illustrated by Danny Foley.

Anna - a Quercus Talented Scholar studying English at UCC - reveals the book was the result of concerned kids in her care.

"I wrote the story after the kids I babysit expressed their worries about Santa calling. I've always loved writing, so this seemed like a natural way to ease their minds. The book is written in a similar tone to The Night Before Christmas and so is a new twist to a very traditional tale," Anna, who is from Blarney, said.

"This book really is something that is needed right now.

This year has been so hard for everybody, but children have been particularly hard hit. They are really smart, so they know what's going on - they know Santa travels and visits houses which are two things that we're not allowed to do. These questions are ones that they genuinely have, and we owe it to them to answer them. I think it's a great memento, too, and one they can look back at when they are older to remember the strange Christmas of 2020," she said.



people Health & Lifestyle

Giving to yourself



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

If like me you are a carer or a parent, you have already had a busy year looking out for the needs of your loved ones; and I know you are now preparing as best you can to make sure that this Christmas is as special and happy as possible.

We have often heard that it is better to give than to receive; people who are naturally caring give all the time. They will notice what others need before

they are even asked. They love to care and help others and find it very rewarding, however they often find it difficult to ask for or accept support and help for themselves.

So I wonder what happens to you when you are always caring, helping and giving? Do you feel energised? Do you feel tired? Do you feel frustrated that no one has noticed your needs? Do you feel uncomfortable asking for help? Or do you pride yourself on your independence?

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are a battery full of energy and every time you give or help others you are using the energy in the battery. After a while (which might be years) you start to notice that your energy is low, you are tired, you might be feeling stressed or moody, you may be having difficulty sleeping or notice your health has declined. These are all signs that your battery is running on low and is an indication that it is time for you to recharge it.

So how do we recharge our battery? Well this is going to

be different for each person but ultimately it means prioritising time for yourself. This may be difficult if you are a natural carer, but remember, if you become rundown, then who is going to care for your loved ones?

Christmas is a time for kindness, love and compassion and I ask you this year to start with yourself. I know for the time being, yoga or massage may not be an option but you can start by:

Making sure you are eating regularly. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and it is important to have a good balance of fat, protein and carbohydrates. Most people need to rebalance by increasing fat and protein and reducing carbohydrates. Eating adequate protein and fat will help you balance your blood sugar and have the energy to enjoy life.

If you are feeling tired, allow yourself a lie in or better still go to bed early.

If you are stressed go for a walk or call a friend and have a chat. Everyone is busy at this time of the year but your friends

would love to hear from you and will assume you are OK unless they hear otherwise.

If you are still feeling low, then ask for help or support. I know this may not come easy to you but unless you tell someone you need support they may not notice. If support is not available at home then give a professional a call.

Giving and receiving are equally important. So give yourself permission to recharge your battery so you can feel at your best and have the energy to be there for your loved ones.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Wonderful New Year.

Amanda Roe is an Anxiety and Trauma Therapist offering a range of holistic therapies that include Life and Health coaching, Hypnotherapy and Acupuncture. If you would like to make an appointment or have any questions phone her at 087 6331898 or email amanda@marketstclinic.com.

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The history of wrapping paper

History lover and illustrator **Jenny Dempsey** shares how the custom of exchanging gifts at Christmas, and wrapping them, has its roots in a number of traditions.

The original gift givers were the ancient Romans who, at December Saturnalia celebrations, exchanged presents among friends and family, believing the generosity would bring good fortune in the year to come. Later, when December 25 became established as the day of Christ's birth, the tradition of gift giving was tied to the story of the Magi giving gifts to baby Jesus. And then of course, there's Saint Nicholas – the inspiration behind Santa Claus – a fourth century Christian bishop who was known for his kindness and generosity, often handing out gifts to poor children.

Early gifts were usually handmade: a wooden toy, a hand-sewn handkerchief. There were generally unwrapped. As Industrialisation grew, manufactured toys became available. An engraving of Victoria, Albert and their children at Christmas time, pictures a group of dolls and toy soldiers displayed under the tree. None of the presents are wrapped. Instead, their



shiny newness and promise of pleasure to come, is an inherent part of the Christmas display. As the middle classes grew in prosperity, and they too could afford manufactured toys for their children, they also proudly displayed their purchasing ability. Wrapping and therefore hiding this evidence of their rising status, would be counter-productive.

The development of Gas lighting plays an interesting part in the story. While gas was brighter and easier to use than candles or lamps, it had its drawbacks. It left behind a sticky residue that settled on every surface. Consumerism became container-ism. The Victorians embraced a covering for



An early example of Hallmark wrapping paper.

everything to offer protection – spectacle cases, watch covers, slipper bags, glass domes for ornaments, crochet doilies for milk jugs...anything that could be covered was covered. As covering things became routine, so too did the idea of covering presents.

The Industrial Revolution and the arrival of cheaply-produced mass goods decreased the popularity of the making of gifts by hand. Yet merely buying a present felt cold when compared to the love expressed by the time and commitment that went into a handmade gift. Wrapping the present returned a bit of the personal touch. One's choice of paper was a method of displaying care and attention.

The first commercially produced wrapping paper was in 1917 by a pair of brothers called

Joyce and Rollie Hall. During the peak Christmas season, the Hall Brothers ran out of solid-colored gift dressing, and improvised by selling fancy decorated French envelope linings. These sold out so quickly that the brothers decided to begin printing their own giftwrap – and Hallmark was born.

More recently, there is a move against wrapping paper and the wastage it creates. On top of this, many of the commercially produced giftwrap contains glitter and metallic ink, which is not recyclable. Those concerned with sustainability could consider wrapping with plain newspaper, or trying the Japanese art of Furoshiki, which



Furoshiki is Japanese art of fabric wrapping.

uses fabric. Or why not hand-make a gift for those you love – and you won't have to wrap it at all.

Jenny Dempsey is the creator the Curious Lady's Guides, available from www.prettyinterestinghistory.com

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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.

Incorporating herbs into your diet and routine can be as simple as each day making a pot of herbal tea, adding in a handful of mixed herbs to your soup or cutting fresh herbs from the garden for a salad or stir fry.

The last thing I do each evening is boil the kettle to make a pot of herbal tea for next morning.

You can drink herbal teas throughout the day at any time with food or on it's own. Personally, I usually drink my herbal tea cold, as it's cool by the time I get to it. However, I've found that many bitter herbs are simply better this way, besides the fact that I love to let the herbs steep for a long time in the teapot to get the best use of them.

Top tip! Drink any bitter herbs cold and they are easier to take, so good for your digestion and liver function too.

Your herbs will change throughout the year as well. In the spring, adding nettle to your soups is an easy thing to do, because it is young and full of needed minerals and more palatable then. Dandelion can be used all year and all parts of the plant are edible, but this also tastes nicest in the early spring.

Some other herbs are only available during the autumn season such as meadowsweet or elderberries. And it's always nice to preserve herbs in syrups or in the freezer for use when you need them. I make rosehip syrup and elderberry or elderflower cordials that can be used all year long.

There are many herbs more suitable and palatable for young children – if you start when they are young, they will be used to the earthy tastes and smells. My young children would request chamomile tea, anything with elderflower or nibble on green baby spinach leaves from the growing tunnels.

I also love to give them rose petal or rosehip teas, dandelion, nettle and rooibos or hibiscus – each of them offer additional minerals and vitamins, antioxidants, and are uplifting to the spirit.

Throughout your life your

needs and body requirements will change – herbs can and should be a part of all of that. For instance, sage is a women's herb for all seasons and cycles, it supports hormone balance and creates harmony in the endocrine system.

My favourite herbs to use when I am feeling out of sorts depend on what I am battling. If it is a cold or tummy bug, I might be using antiviral herbs such as goldenseal, lemon balm, elderflower and garlic.

For a kidney or bladder complaint I would choose to use uva ursi, dandelion, clivers, goldenrod, juniper berries, hydrangea for kidney stones or marshmallow to soothe the area.

Another area of herbs I have found to be quite significant in their healing power are the trees. Personally, I have an affinity to trees of all kinds and try to incorporate at least some aspect of tree medicine into my healing protocol.

We can find and use elder, both the flower and berries especially for children and the winter months. It's a gentle yet powerful immune booster and can be easily dried to use all year. In fact all parts of the elder tree are medicinal.

See you in the hedgerows!



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people Arts & Entertainment

Clonakilty Community Arts Centre Christmas exhibition

Clonakilty Community Arts Centre is delighted to present a Christmas Exhibition of '13 Painters and 3 Potters'. The opening will take place at 7pm on December 4, 2020.

Following last year's great success with the exhibition '4 Painters and a Potter'

This year's exhibition will be more inclusive, with a greater number of artists invited to promote their work through the Arts Centre.

Included in the line up of Artists exhibiting are: Les Clague, Felicity Grace, Roisin

Hanrahan, John Headlam, Finn Heasman, Sheila Kelleher, Lorraine King-Marshall, Michael McSwiney, Cathal O'Regan, Cathy Twomey, Jim Turner, Pauline Walsh, Sheila Mullins, James Waller and Laura Wade.

It promises to be a wealth of talent and a fun; a festive exhibition with prices to suit all.

There will be some music in Astna Square at the opening and people will be invited, six at a time, into the gallery, in line with the HSE guidelines on safe distancing.



Clon Film Club offers some comedic relief with 'The County' from Iceland

Like everything else, the autumn season of Clonakilty Film Club was put on ice last October. However, the club's committee are now delighted to announce that they will be showing Icelandic film 'The County' on December 15 in Clonakilty Park Cinema. Plans are afoot to resume the club's programme of films in the New Year so follow them on Facebook for updates.

Eminent Iceland filmmaker Grímur Hákonarson follows up his acclaimed, award-winning crowd-pleaser 'Rams' with 'The County', another deadpan comedy of agricultural strife and community uprising.

Set in a small Icelandic com-

munity, the film tells the story of Inga (Arndís Hrönn Egilsdóttir), a middle-aged dairy farmer who, after a tragic loss, takes it upon herself to rebel against the corrupt, all powerful local Cooperative exploiting her and the local community. Though deeply in debt and facing great resistance, Inga must use her resourcefulness and cunning to break free of the Co-op's grasp and finally live life on her own terms.

A deliciously playful comedy filled with feisty female energy, 'The County' is a rousing yarn about the power of the underdog, and the importance of fighting against large-scale injustice.

Film starts at 8.30pm. Doors open from 8.20pm. €10, all

welcome.

"The County is full of feisty female energy and imagery, and sprinkled with rousing "you go girl!" comic moments.

– Variety



people Arts & Entertainment

Uillinn reflects on 2020

by West Cork Arts Centre staff and artists

A busy programme of events was in full swing at Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre last March. The thought-provoking multi-media installation, 'Land Walks Land Talks Land Marks', developed over three years by William Bock in collaboration with residents of Clonakilty Lodge Direct Provision Centre occupied Gallery 2. Hovering the James O'Driscoll Gallery walls, were nearly one hundred oil-painted migratory birds by Gabhann Dunne in his delightful installation, 'Committed to Falling'.

Studios bustled with young thespians busily planning their next great performance, children bounding in and out of dance class with Miss Ciara, and a string of budding painters and makers of all ages attending visual art classes and workshops.

Project Assistant Grainne O'Brien recalls the St Patrick's Day Festival project co-sponsored by Field's of Skibbereen. "Lots of the participants had never had the opportunity to be part of a creative process, and it was wonderful to see how much joy and pride they got taking part and producing a costume, prop or mask."

We know now, of course, that there would be no St Patrick's Day parade and that the centre would close to the public due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff and artists rallied under unprecedented circumstances, finding new ways to engage with each other and the public.

Aspects of William Bock's 'Land Walks' project migrated online. Musical director Liz Clark brought young people to-

gether in the virtual Quarantini Choir. Public Engagement Assistant Kate McElroy launched 'Uillinn Connect' – a challenge to social media followers to complete daily artistic activities and also 'Uillinn Coffee Meet Ups' bringing together various artists with a connection to Uillinn from around the world. Uillinn Galleries was created, offering the public opportunities to view exhibitions online, purchase original artwork and support local artists.

"The postal art project with the Art Club kids was the loveliest project!" says Front of House Coordinator Louise Forsythe. For this, poet Pól Ó Colmáin and visual artist Marie Cullen posted a unique poem to every club member. The children created an image in response and posted it back to Pól and Marie who bundled them into bespoke keepsake books for each family.

"The energy has to be released... regardless of the social circumstances," says one of our artists in Residence Tomasz Madajczak, whose project 'No Space' was initiated under restrictions. "The situation made me work remotely in my studio, while contacting artists around the world to open an art dialogue."

Artist Sarah Ruttle is proud of being part of the Arts for Health Partnership Programme and felt the strength of the partnership at work as she and her colleagues persevered in engaging with the residents. Programme partners at Cork Education and Training Board provided tablets to community hospitals so residents could stay connected, which wouldn't be possible without, "the support of amazing healthcare staff at such a challenging time."

The centre re-opened to the public in July. One-way systems, hand sanitisers and other recommended routines and facilities were dutifully implemented and became mostly second nature to staff and visitors. People were happy, excited even, to see each other again; but it was complicated.

Gavin Buckley, Front of House Assistant, explained. "Coming back to work after the first lockdown was tougher than I was expecting. I was excited to be back because I had missed the people and the routine... It was a bit of a shock to be outside and interacting with people again even though that's exactly what I wanted to be doing... I eventually had to take a week off just to adjust... it seems like it was a very 2020 problem."

Just as we were getting back into the swing of things in October news came of the second lockdown. Certainly, the year's ups-and-downs has taken a toll. When asked recently if light could be seen at the end of the tunnel, our team were hopeful yet cautious.

"It's hard to imagine getting to the end stage of the crisis; but I hope that it will help us recognise what is important and draw communities together as we work through it," says Sarah.

Kate McElroy hopes the skills developed this year will allow for new ways to engage audiences, "without replacing any desire for real art events and meet-ups."

Louise sums up best. "I hope I see light! As the mural outside our building says, 'There is a Light' but who really knows!"

As of this writing it's uncertain if Uillinn will re-open to the public again this year. But rest assured that creativity will abound, and West Cork Arts

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Merry
Christmas!

Centre will find ways to share it.

Arts for Health artists continue to work remotely, engaging older Community Hospital and Day Care residents from throughout West Cork in artistic and musical projects.

Uillinn Prize Draw tickets are available online. The draw offers a chance to win 'Sherkin Seas', a magnificent painting by acclaimed local artist Majella O'Neill Collins; a terrific stocking filler.

'Isolation20', a polyphonic voice and photographic installation by composer Justin Grounds involving 20 singers from across the county of Cork in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, launches January 9, 2021.

Siobhán McDonald, a multimedia artist who weaves art and science in meditative installations is due to exhibit in the James O'Driscoll Gallery in January.

Season's Greetings

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Cork Artists' Winter Showcase exhibition is now online

Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre launched the Cork Artists' Winter Showcase online in November. Uillinn Galleries, the new and exciting online gallery is a platform for an extraordinary collection of art by over 60 artists from the city and county of Cork for viewing and for purchase over the Christmas season.

Throughout the year, artists have been forced to operate in solitude with few opportunities to engage with their commu-

nities or to exhibit their work. Uillinn is delighted to have developed this online space to promote and support artists in the region.

As Christmas approaches, this impressive exhibition provides a unique gifting opportunity for the community to shop local and support local artists in a very concrete way.

The work on show ranges from oil, acrylic, and watercolour painting, to textile and glass work, to print, photography and sculpture. With the

subject matter encompassing landscape, seascape and townscape to still-life, plants and animals, as well as more abstract work that explores light, heritage, history and our current context, there is a large selection of styles and price points to peruse.

"The online gallery was launched this summer and went really well during the Members and Friends Exhibition bringing new audiences from around the world to local artists. We will truly miss seeing everyone at

our annual Uillinn Christmas Fair, but this exhibition will provide that space for a wide public to see and support the talented artists who are living and working in this region," says Uillinn Director Ann Davoren. "It has allowed us to showcase an even larger group of artists in one place at one time."

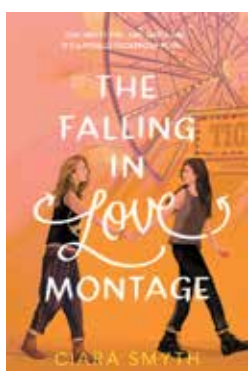
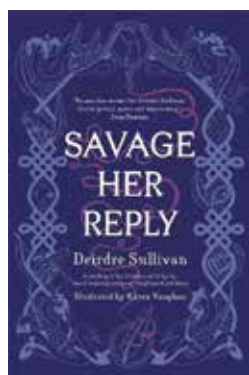
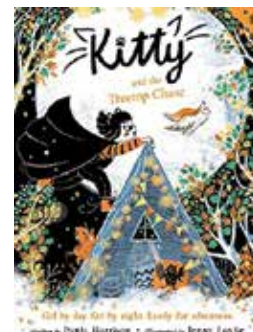
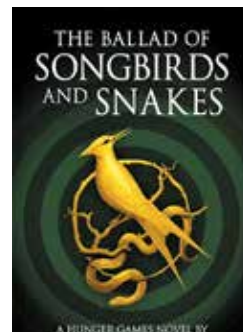
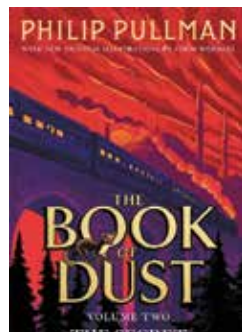
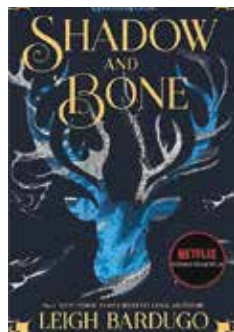
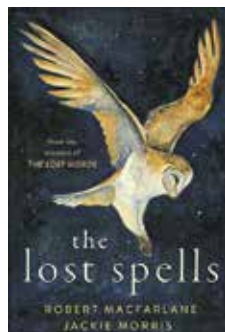
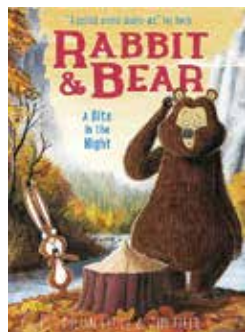
Cork Artists' Winter Showcase will run until mid-January at uillinn galleries.com. Queries can be made to info@westcork-artscentre.com.



Nigel Connell Bass, *Keep Your Distance*, Stainless Steel

A gift guide for readers

Christmas books for children



So many readers will know Heidi at Kerr's Bookshop in Clonakilty. She has advised, helped and even cajoled many a young reader into a delight and passion for books and reading. Below are her thoughts and wise advice for some very important customers visiting the bookshop over Christmas or requesting books on their Santa lists!

The run-up to Christmas has been quite different this year for Kerr's Bookshop. We are delighted with the local support and our 'call, pay and collect' system has kept us very busy. As we stock up on so many new exciting interesting books being delivered every day, we are as assured as ever that Christmas is just around the corner.

Beloved and prolific authors such as David Walliams (Code Name Bananas), Jeff Kinney (Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Deep End), and Dav Pilkey (Dogman: Grime and Punishment) are all flooding the shop with their annual contributions to many a child's Santa List.

However, let us shine some light on some of the other great books gracing our shelves at the moment.

For young readers between seven and nine-years-old we have a lovely series called **Rabbit and Bear** by Julian Gough. Gorgeously illustrated and with a classic feel, this is a brilliantly funny story of a rabbit and a bear who discover that

things are always better when they're shared with a friend. It is ideal for readers moving on from picture books, and perfect for both boys and girls.

Flamingo Hotel by Alex Milway, is another enchanting new series for this age group, full of characterful animal illustrations. Young Anna inherits a dilapidated once-grand hotel from her Great Aunt Mathilde, and she is determined to restore it to its former glory. But this is no ordinary hotel – all of her staff and guests are animals!

Kitty and the Treetop chase by Paula Harrison is a charming tale, starring little superhero-in-training Kitty and her feline crew. Up on the rooftops, at night time, Kitty soon discovers that being a superhero is about more than using her special abilities as she must learn to be courageous too. This is particularly suitable to all the fans of Harriet Muncaster's Isadora Moon.

Same Harriet Muncaster has, however, a new series called **Victoria Stitch: Bad and Glittering** which is perfect for those fans who are ready to move on to something a little bit more challenging. Victoria and Celestine are royal twins, robbed of their birth right and it is a gripping tale of betrayal, sibling rivalry and a fight for the throne.

For the more confident readers between nine and 12 there is also a good selection. **Gordon's Game: Blue Thunder** by Paul Howard and Gordon D'Arcy is a laugh out loud book of mayhem and mischief for all budding Rugby Union players, following Gordon training with Leinster under a coach called Joe Schmidt!

Future Friend by David Baddiel is another terrifically entertaining book for this age group, a time-slip adventure that combines action, laugh-out-loud humour and the importance of friendship. It is a story that asks the question – what would happen if your best friend came from the future?

From award winning author Qnjali Q. Rauf comes **The Night Bus Hero**, an incredible story, told with humour and heart. Told from the perspective of a bully, this book explores themes of bullying

and homelessness, while celebrating kindness, friendship and the potential everyone has to change for the good.

A more seasonal offering is **The Miracle on Ebenezer Street** by bestselling writer Catherine Doyle. A reimagining of Charles Dickens's beloved classic, A Christmas Carol, it is an enchanting and exciting tale of Christmas magic.

Some lovely books suitable for all primary school children, to be read out loud and shared, are the beautiful **The Puffin Keeper** by Michael Morpurgo, **Ickabog** by JK Rowling, and also **Lost Spells** by Robert MacFarlane – a pocket sized treasure of poems and artwork, the little sister of the bestselling and critically acclaimed literary phenomenon, *Lost Words*.

For the teens in our life, it is difficult to pull them away from the screens these days, but maybe some of the following books will do the trick?

Here in the bookshop we find that teenagers love a good series, and at the moment Leigh Bardugo's **Shadow and Bone** series, as well as Sarah J. Mass' **A Court of Thorns and Roses** appeal to those who like the Fantasy genre. With the screening on BBC2 of His Dark Materials #2, requests for Pullman's award-winning series **His Dark Materials** and **Book of Dust** are also coming in thick and fast. For teens who enjoyed the Hunger Games series, there is a prequel this autumn by Suzanne Collins called **The Ballads of Songbirds and Snakes**, delving into the early years of the Hunger Games contest.

For the readers who don't enjoy the Fantasy or the Dystopia series, we suggest **Dr Who: Twelve Angels Weeping** by popular children's author Dave Rudden. Here are twelve stories – one for each of

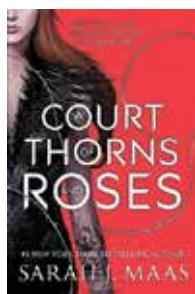
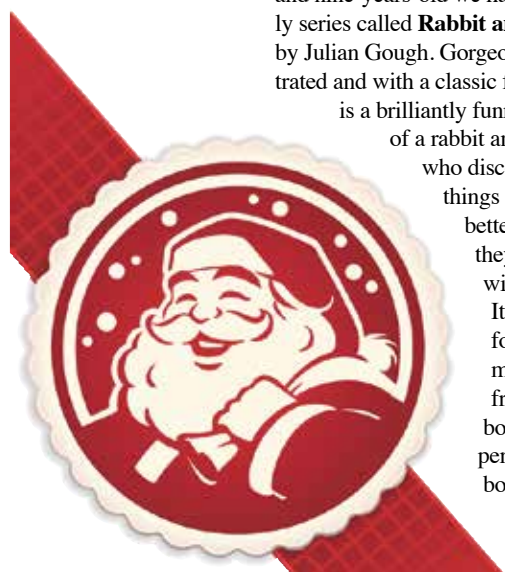
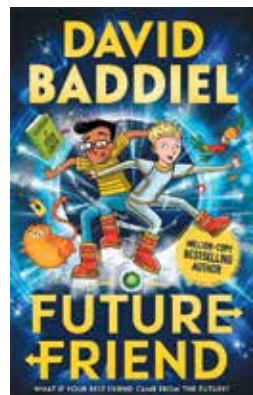
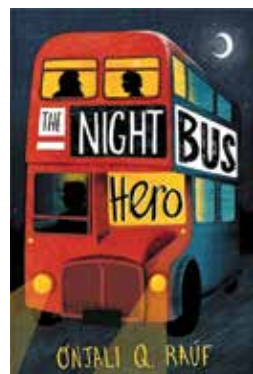
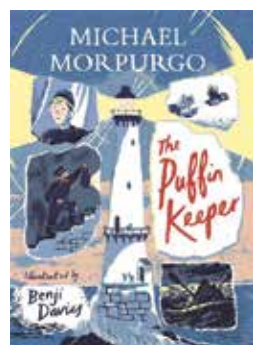
the Twelve Days of Christmas – to remind you that to come out of the darkness we need to go into it in the first place. We are not alone. We are not safe. And, whatever you do: don't blink.

Savage her Reply by Deirdre Sullivan is a dark and witchy retelling of The Children of Lir told in Sullivan's hypnotic prose. Retold through the voice of Aife, this book is unsettling and dark, feminist and fierce, yet nuanced in its exploration of the guilt of a complex character.

For fans of The Hate U Give, we recommend **The Black Kids** by Christina Hammonds Reed. This is an unforgettable coming-of-age debut novel, an unflinching exploration of race, class, and violence as well as the importance of being true to yourself set in Los Angeles in 1992.

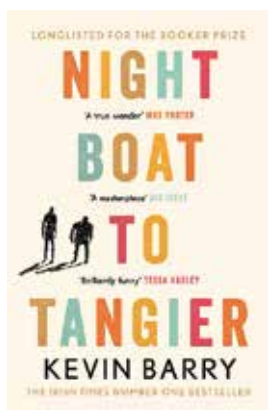
And lastly, a little lighter reading for the teens are **The Falling in Love Montage** by Ciara Smyth. This is a funny and smart story about two girls embarking on a summer of montage-worthy dates (with a few strings attached), a heartfelt LGBTQ rom-com that's perfect for fans of Jenny Han. **Super Fake Love Song** by David Yoon is another contemporary Young Adult rom-com where a case of mistaken identity kicks off a string of (fake) events that just may lead to (real) love. It is an inventive novel about identity, perception, and how hard it can sometimes feel to simply be yourself.

All of us in Kerr's Bookshop can't wait to throw our doors open again, and have the buzz of real customers in the shop. Remember to wear your mask, and use the hand-sanitiser on entrance, and be mindful of other people waiting to browse as well. We look forward to seeing you all!



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Christmas books for adults



Dark delighted in Night Boat To Tangier

With crackling dialogue and razor sharp prose Kevin Barry enlists the reader as a proverbial fly-on-the-dock-wall in his darkly comic novel 'Night Boat To Tangier'. Set at night in the Spanish port of Algeciras two aging Irish gangsters spawn reminiscences in that rough-diamond vernacular reserved for the Cork-born boy.

One could imagine 'Night Boat To Tangier' set on the theatre stage, two spotlights on Moss and Charlie, slightly broadened to take in the unfortunate young drifters unwittingly caught in their orbit. The scene is set in sharply hewn images, leaving nothing spare, whilst the dialogue punches, on beat, with almost poetic rhythm.

Barry's turn of phrase is delicious, his control of mood, voice and tempo enviable. The reader is drawn along, inexorably, into the under-belly past of Barry's edgy duo, only to be sidled back into the dark present of the port and the whispers of Beckett-esque nonentity that await them.

For anyone who loves poetic, punchy language and tales of transgression, 'Night Boat To Tangier', an Irish Times number one bestseller, is a must-read.

Night Boat To Tangier, by Kevin Barry, was published in 2019 by Canongate Books. Reviewed for WCP by James Waller.

Words like water lap in O'Farrell's Hamnet

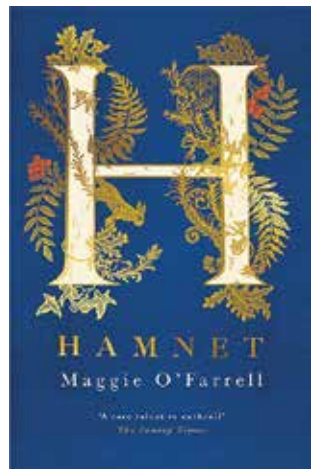
Maggie O'Farrell's novel 'Hamnet' is a brave and tender undertaking; it reaches for the hidden history of wife and child, imagined with care and pathos. In doing so it paints a well-crafted picture of rural Elizabethan England, of its gender structures and mores, and of its silent infiltration by a deadly plague.

O'Farrell's subject revolves around an imagined life of William Shakespeare's family, focusing principally on his mysterious wife Agnes, with

her knowledge of herbal lore and healing arts, and their twins, one of whom is Hamnet (a variation of the name Hamlet). O'Farrell carefully skirts the obvious temptation to delve into Shakespeare's creative rise (this is a minefield as next to nothing is known).

The playwright, himself, is largely absent, his 'work' alluded to, but not really understood. He is referred to initially as "the Latin tutor", then as "the husband" or simply "he". It is Agnes who is named, and Agnes whom the reader comes to know and empathize with. Her affinity with the wild, with healing and with growing things conjures a world far removed from the playhouses of London.

How O'Farrell manages to span the deep gulf between Agnes and her husband is where the perilous magic of this novel lies. It is at once highly improbable and deeply poetic.



Told in the present continuous tense 'Hamnet' leaves an indelible watermark on the memory. Indeed it is prose with the softness and clarity of water. Lovers of historical fiction will find it pure pleasure, as Elizabethan England is brought into deft and clear focus via characters rendered both distant and achingly close.

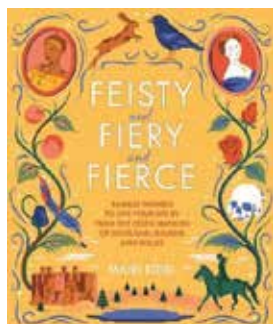
Hamnet, by Maggie O'Farrell was published by Tinder Press in 2020. Reviewed for WCP by James Waller.

Skibbereen's Agnes Clarke included in new collection

Provocative and engaging, 'Feisty and Fiery and Fierce' by Mairi Kidd is a collection that explores the stories of some well-known women in history from Ireland, Scotland and Wales — often misremembered, as we know by now the history books were overwhelmingly written by men — as well as uncovering those who have until now existed in the shadows.

The book celebrates 10

feisty and fiery and fierce Irish women, among them the 'witch' Florence Newton of Youghal, pirate and buccaneer Anne Bonny, and Agnes Clarke of Skibbereen — one of Ireland's first female astronomers.



Mairi says that she wanted to write this book to show that "women have always fought against the structures that bound us, refused to accept limitations imposed on us from outside and achieved extraordinary things within the contexts of extraordinary challenge."

Meticulously researched and presented in an accessible, modern style, the book is also gorgeously illustrated and will make a seriously beautiful addition to any coffee table.

A literary time capsule of poetry, fiction and drama created to honour our frontline heroes

Endorsed by actor Jeremy Irons and author Louise O'Neill, the newly-published 'Lights on the Horizon' hardback showcases the creative talents of an eclectic mix of fresh voices, seasoned writers and visionary photographers from across the island of Ireland.

Written during the lockdown in March 2020, the book reflects a people's thoughts, fears, actions and inactions, as they emerged from the darkest depths of COVID-19. More than anything, it celebrates heroes and hope.



'Lights on the Horizon' features a poignant collection of short stories, poetry, monologues and fictional diary entries, accompanied by stunning photography, including many beautiful shots of West Cork.

'Lights on the Horizon' was chosen as the book's title to symbolise hope in the

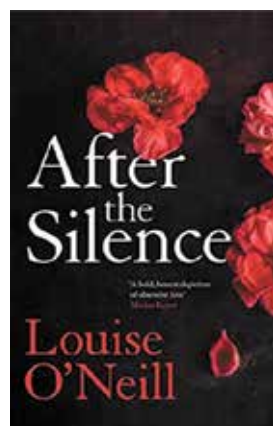
face of this crisis. It serves as a reminder of the collective trauma endured by a people. But more than that, it reminds us of the enduring flame of the human spirit that can never be extinguished.

The premium 'coffee table' edition of 'Lights on the Horizon' is available in all good bookshops now. €24.95.

All proceeds go to HSE (Mater Foundation) and NHS Northern Ireland frontline staff.

After The Silence wins at An Post Irish Book Awards

After the Silence by West Cork author Louise O'Neill was named the Irish Independent Crime Fiction Book Of The Year 2020 at last month's Irish Book Awards.



All of Louise's previous novels have been bestsellers and After The Silence is no different, being described by Marian Keyes as "Elegant, assured, gripping and moving, it's her best book to date and that's really saying something."

Nessa Crowley's murderer has been protected by silence for 10 years.

On the day of Henry and Keelin Kinsella's wild party at their big house a violent storm engulfed the island of Inisrún, cutting it off from the mainland. When morning broke Nessa Crowley's lifeless body lay in the garden, her last breath silenced by the music and the thunder.

It was impossible to get off the island that night. The killer couldn't have escaped Inisrún, but no-one was charged with the murder. The mystery that surrounded the death of Nessa remained hidden. But the islanders knew who to blame for the crime that changed them forever.

Ten years later a documentary crew arrives, determined to find evidence that will prove Henry's guilt and Keelin's complicity in the murder of beautiful Nessa.

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Together Apart – Haiku from a locked down Sherkin

During the first lockdown in the spring of 2020, a group of Haiku poetry writers from, or with a connection to, Sherkin Island couldn't meet in person, so they kept in touch by sending their Haiku poems via a WhatsApp Haiku group instead.

Since March, the group has created over 200 Haiku as a way of keeping the Sherkin Island community connected.

With the support of Cork County Library and Arts Service and the Creative Ireland Programme, this collection has now been gathered into a limited

edition book and is available for €10, with all profits going to fund other creative initiatives on Sherkin Island.

The Haiku poems featured in 'Together Apart – Haiku from a locked down Sherkin Island' are mainly nature-based, mirroring the beauty of the changing seasons, but they also reflect the impact of Covid19 on this small community and beyond.

Haiku originated in Japan and are three-line poems, often with seventeen syllables.

As well as the poems, the book captures the lively threads of conversations, quips and feedback, which in itself, tells a story of life in lockdown. It also features drawings of birds by many of the group members.

Tess Leak, a Baltimore-based artist and member of the group, said: "Very often a Haiku from one person sparked off a number of others in response. It was a lovely, collaborative creative process that kept us all connected."

"We are so grateful to Cork County Library and Arts Service and the Creative Ireland Programme for their support in helping us to produce this book and to the Sherkin Island Development Society for their support of our Haiku Group over the past seven years."



Peggy Townend from Turkhead, artist and member of the Sherkin Island Haiku Group, is seen here receiving her copy of the book

The ping of WhatsApp messages continues as the sixteen members of the group carry on sharing their Haiku poems.

The book was produced and

printed on Sherkin Island by Tess Leak and Sherkin Island residents, Susan Murphy Wickens and Bernadette Burns.

A limited number of the

books are available for €10 including P&P with Ireland. Please email sidssecretary@gmail.com with Haiku as the subject.

*Lunch outside today
A fly landed in my tea
Quick death by Earl Grey*

*The ping of WhatsApp
Punctuating the silence
A welcome respite*

*Draped in a misty shroud
As day gives way to evening
Sherkin's breath exhales*



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Thank you all for your amazing support during the year.
Stay safe and have a nice Christmas.

Sherkin Island artist launches book for charity

Jo Ashby, an artist who lives on Sherkin Island, has chronicled her life during lockdown and beyond in a series of hilarious cartoon drawings, which have now been made into a book to support two charities.

All profits for 'Corona Chronicles – the book' will be divided between Cork Penny Dinners in Cork and Lewisham Food Bank in London to raise much-needed funds for these two charities before Christmas.

'Corona Chronicles – the book' is a reproduction of Jo's notebook which records the daily ups and downs of life in lockdown.

Jo started the project during the first lockdown in March 2020 when she and her partner, Mick, had travelled to London from Sherkin Island to complete the sale of their house, but had to stay there because of travel restrictions.

"We had made the decision that 2020 was going to be the year that we finally sold our London house and moved full-time to live on Sherkin Island as we had been dividing our time between the two places for the

last 27 years. Our intention had been to arrive back quietly on the island in March, as usual, without any fuss or bother... and never leave. Then Covid-19 swept across the globe and changed all of our lives and plans.

"We decided to sit it out in the UK, whilst the house sale creaked on and so that we could be near my elderly parents as none of us knew what the future held at that point.

"With my London art studio half-packed, ready for the move, I decided to start this little visual diary to record our daily life. I posted some images on social media and was over-whelmed by the positive response."

Some of the pictures echo many shared experiences, such as baking, online fitness videos, the walks, gardening and Zoom chats, but mostly they tell the very individual and sometimes hilarious story of Jo and Mick's efforts to move to West Cork in the middle of a global pandemic.

"It has been a difficult year for all of us but for some families and individuals, it has been

particularly harsh. Although I was excited to have the Corona Chronicles published, I couldn't contemplate making any money from the book. All profits will help to raise much-needed funds to support Cork Penny Dinners and Lewisham Food Bank, which is a London-based charity supporting families in the

London Borough of Lewisham, where Mick and I taught for many years," said Jo.

Corona Chronicles costs €16.50 plus p&p. Please contact Jo Ashby directly on 086 0808225 or email jo@jo-ashby.com or visit her online shop www.jo-ashby.com/corona-chronicles



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READER COMPETITION

Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce has some lovely prizes up its sleeve for budding artists and keen-eyed elf spotters!



Clonakilty's business community wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. THANK YOU for your continued support.

#1 Christmas Colouring Competition

Name: _____

Age: _____

Contact Email: _____

Don't worry if you need extra copies for the family...you can download the image from the homepage of www.westcorkpeople.ie (top left, under features!)

Please drop your entry into the special **Christmas post box** on Astna Square.

Lots of PRIZES to be WON!



Hello we're the Clonakilty Christmas Elves and from now till Christmas we'll be visiting different shops around the town!

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#ILoveClonakilty

#ClonakiltyChristmasExpress

and be in with a chance to WIN a PRIZE!



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#2 Can you find the Clonakilty Elves?



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.com
www.katearbon.com

December Sun Signs

This month holds one of the most significant planet combinations, not just of our lifetime but, of the millennia, the Jupiter Saturn conjunction. We see a climax to the most extraordinary year that 2020 has been as we turn the page on the year and also an era.

There's no doubt this month brings a whole cluster of astrological events that indicate we are really about to re-determine our future focus and set out on a new trajectory as a collective. This 'reset' is the signature for the times we are living through. It is ultimately beneficial, but there are dubious undercurrents and alternative versions, with their potential outcomes, that need to be recognised and rectified before we'll see the full value of current events.

Mercury is now in Sagittarius joining the Sun, and so Jupiter holds the reigns this month. But currently, this bringer of joy,

opportunities and positivity is sandwiched between two very heavy duty and difficult planets, Saturn and Pluto. It may feel like there's not much to be cheerful about during the first days of this month. This planet combination indicates a lot is going on behind the scenes. So many distractions and deliberate illusions are being thrown around to create confusion.

Jupiter represents our best self and higher nature, our ability to know right from wrong and moral conscience and optimism. Saturn is limitation, regulation and boundaries. Pluto is control, power and hidden forces. Whilst Jupiter is being so tightly squeezed it's hard to see the truth or make informed choices. There is reason to be cheerful though as we are about to turn a corner. This is a critical time and holding true to your inner guidance and trusting in ultimate goodness is

the only way forwards now.

From mid-month things really begin to shift and the week beginning on December 14 holds a series of major events with far-reaching consequences. The New Moon and Solar Eclipse starts the sequence and acts like a switch being turned off and back on again. Something from the past may come to light and act as a game-changer as Mercury crosses over the South Node of the Moon. Within hours, Venus the planet of love, social connection and personal values touches both Jupiter and Saturn, adding some much-needed positivity. Then the real shifts begin as Venus moves into Sagittarius where she is much happier under the rulership of Jupiter. These two are our most positive planets, bringing some optimism and enjoyment to the next few weeks.

On December 17, Saturn finally moves into Aquarius

where it will travel for the next two to three years after being in Capricorn since late 2017. On December 19, Jupiter also slips into Aquarius. People with planets in the Cardinal signs (Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn) will feel the relief after having an especially difficult time in recent years. This momentous shift in energy is magnified by the 'Great Conjunction' of Jupiter with Saturn on December 21 just after the Sun makes its annual move into Capricorn, which marks the hugely significant Solstice point. On December 22, Jupiter is finally free from its restricting clench between Saturn and Pluto as it moves ahead into Aquarius.

There are so many culminating patterns all coinciding in these few days and we are witness to an incredibly rare astronomical sequence. Jupiter and Saturn make their conjunction only every 20 years and this

always signifies a new social direction. They have not made this connection in an Air sign for 800 years! Air signs are the realm of the mind. This is the beginning of a new age where ideology and intellect are infused with inspiration and innovation. Over these coming weeks before the New Year, we need to pause and consider the power of the human mind and the extent that our beliefs and thoughts create reality. The shifts and changes that are taking place now will shape and form the next several generations. Where we place our attention and what we focus our mind on is going to be what the new era becomes. What are your New Year intentions going to be?

December has a New Moon and total Solar Eclipse at 24° Sagittarius on December 14 at 4.16pm and the Full Moon is at 9° Cancer on December 30 at 3.20am.



Aries: This is a time to lift yourself out of your usual everyday concerns. You'll benefit from getting a larger perspective on your life. Although it may all seem overwhelming for a while remember that as long as you keep plugging away you will make gains. You really can get things up and running if you try. A chance to do things a little differently will make all the difference in the world. Don't slow down because someone can't keep up with you. You have to maintain the momentum. A teacher or mentor who appears this New Moon may be particularly important to you later.



Taurus: Don't push your luck now. Joint financial affairs and investments could become an issue. It's a good time to clarify each person's expectations and to take care of any legal business, insurance, contracts and so on. On a personal level, there is a desire to intensify the level of intimacy and honesty in your closest relationships and to clear away anything in yourself, which is impeding that deeper union you seek. Any temptation to make abrupt decisions and changes could lead to additional problems that you can do without. Stick to what's clear and avoid taking on other people's responsibilities.



Gemini: Partnerships, marriage, and one-to-one relationships demand your attention now. You are called upon to cooperate and perhaps to relinquish some of your own personal interests for the sake of harmony and mutual benefit. You may end up questioning yourself as well as the motives of the people around you. Get to the bottom of things before it's too late. Once you have all the facts you will be in a much better position to make a decision. Don't let anyone pull you in a direction you don't want to go. Do what's best for you but put the emphasis is on 'we' rather than 'me'.



Cancer: Doing your best work and taking pride in it are a focus for you now. You should be able to make some worthwhile career moves or at least secure your current position so that you don't have to worry about your financial future. This is a good time to examine how you use your time and energy, to improve your efficiency and productivity. Watch out for health matters as you are concerned with your body now, and you may be inspired to begin a self-improvement program, create better habits, or begin a new diet or fitness plan.



Leo: You are energised and inspired creatively and emotionally coming up to this New Moon time, and you want to bring forth all that's deep within you. You express yourself more freely, playfully, and spontaneously and are more willing to take chances. You will have Lady Luck in your corner so be sure to look for good deals. Social activities, travel and attending different cultural events will all lead to meeting people who can help further your goals. The dramatic and performing arts, sports and games, or other forms of self-expression and entertainment appeal strongly to you now. You can accomplish much if you set your mind to it.



Virgo: From the beginning of this month, you will have been enjoying the success that you worked hard to achieve. Don't be too quick to put your energy into new projects as you approach the New Moon, wait until the end of the month. All kinds of creative work are favoured and you might find yourself more closely involved with children at this time. Don't be surprised if there is some conflict between your personal enjoyment and what others think you should be doing for kicks. Those things that need to be discussed and settled with the family can be dealt with in the next few weeks.



Libra: Take a trip back into your past and you will find the answers you are looking for. Now it's time to make changes instead of doing a repeat performance. Take time to talk with neighbours and those you cross paths with daily. It may result in more positive and smoother-running relationships generally. You'll want to fritter away your time on fun and social events over the New Moon, but this may not be at all bad, things have been serious enough for you to want to take a break now. This is a good time to participate in or contribute to any community events in your area.



Scorpio: Money, possessions, financial security, and practical matters are a focus for you now. You can make some very interesting professional or financial moves this month. Be ready to put your money on the table to get ahead. If you have been overly extravagant with your resources, you may begin to see how you can get back on track. It should become clear to you what your next steps are regarding your resources. Your astute vision will enable you to correctly assess the right investment, job or any other money matter that arise after the New Moon phase.



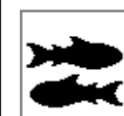
Sagittarius: During this time you can make an impression on others by making a strong statement to the world about who you are. People acknowledge you and are likely to follow your lead, or at the least, they stay out of your way. You are likely to feel more confident and vital now. However, you may be so preoccupied with yourself and your own desires that you unintentionally ignore other people and their needs. Include the ones you love in your plans and things will get progressively better. You should be able to strengthen the bond with someone who has been an influence in your life.



Capricorn: You'll be torn between what you want to do and what you have to do. Retreating from the world for a while and spending some quiet time alone to relax and rejuvenate appeals strongly to you over the New Moon phase. You may feel like you are at low ebb and as if nothing is happening or you may simply not want to be 'where the action is'. Don't overreact, overdo or overindulge to compensate for things not going according to your plans. Sometimes it's best to do what you must to just get it out of the way. You'll get your turn to please yourself. Competitive ambitions and ego drives are on hold now.



Aquarius: Get involved in charity events or social action groups that interest you and you will make headway in many different areas of your life through the people you meet and the information you discover. You may be asked to take responsibility or even a leadership role or to contribute and participate more fully than you have in the past. You will enjoy being part of a team or group effort this month. Being involved in a community or circle of friends and building your social network is important to you at this time.



Pisces: Over the New Moon don't mix business with pleasure if you want to avoid trouble. Not everyone will be on your side over the next few weeks so you may want to choose your friends carefully and keep your personal thoughts and opinions to yourself. With your career and reputation very important to you at this time, you can make significant gains regarding your ambitions. Recognition for your efforts and receiving credit for your accomplishments are likely now, but only if you've 'done your homework'. This is an excellent time to ask for a promotion or to engage the support of those in positions of higher authority.

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The Christmas image



Harry Clarke Nativity, Castletownsend, 1918.
Pictures courtesy of Finola Finlay/Roaringwater Journal.

Clonakilty-based painter **James Waller** reflects on his experiences of Christmas imagery – from his childhood in Western Australia, through the art galleries and churches of Europe, to a treasure in a small church in West Cork.

As a child my Christmases were spent in the baking hot environs of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, a gold mining town on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain. Images of snow encrusted sleighs and heavily-coated Santas collided with both the image of the Three Wise Men crossing the desert to greet the baby Jesus, and the 35 degree air outside. Even to a child these collisions were bizarre.

Still, Christmas meant images of snow, reindeer and stars (in the outback we had the latter in abundance) as well as chimneys (what were they?), Christmas trees and presents, as well as films and cartoons relaying stories from snow-bound England and America. The hypnotic power of film, especially, far outweighed the peculiar dress-ups of school nativity plays or the religious

spectacle of kitschily painted sculptures.

Clearly the power of film, popular fiction and fantasy has long eclipsed the silent world of history and painting and the image of Christmas has been shaped accordingly. Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol', is etched into our Christmas DNA, courtesy of its many filmed, animated and staged adaptations. The image of Ebenezer Scrooge, hunched over his accounts, proclaims Christmas far more loudly than, say, Rembrandt's 'The Holy Family' of 1646.

Images are powerful and engrave themselves into our emotional landscape. As we tie them to our own Christmas experiences they become emblems of nostalgia as much as wonder. It is strange to say, but I am nostalgic for the snow I never knew, nostalgic for the innocence, which found wonder in the stars and the glint of – 'was that 'his' sleigh?'

It is ironic, therefore, to have discovered the many masterpieces of painting that dealt with the infant Jesus – not through my experience of Christmas, but through many journeys as an adult, both through art books, and the great art museums of the world.

A great example is Da Vinci's 'Virgin and Child with

St Anne and John the Baptist' (known as the Da Vinci Cartoon). Mary appears to sit on the lap of St Anne as she holds Jesus aloft. St Anne gazes at Mary with an infinite tenderness which seems to swell and clang like an ocean bell. It is extraordinary to see it in its alcove in the National Gallery of London, all shadowy silence and eternal togetherness. But I have never linked it to Christmas.

As one delves deeper into the history of pre-film and fiction Christmas imagery the riches grow, as do the ethnic and geographic variations of the Christmas story. Hence the dark Judean infant becomes, under Leonardo da Vinci's hand, a light Italian cherub, Mary and St Anne, searing Italian beauties ('The Da Vinci Cartoon, London'). Bethlehem is also transformed, under the brush of Pieter Breughel the Elder, into a snow-encrusted landscape, in his painting titled 'The Census at Bethlehem' (1566).

Mary and Jesus morph yet again into a Dutch mother and infant in Rembrandt's 'The Holy Family' of 1646. The dark Rembrandtian interior comes complete with a tromp l'oeil frame and red velvet curtain (tromp l'oeil means something painted to look like a three dimensional fixture or architectural element). A fantasy of course, but for Rembrandt it was a beautiful device to reveal the painterly stage and the 'actors' upon it.

Our readiness and ability to assimilate differing image-variants of the same story is the same ability we employ when watching theatre or film. In theatre it is aptly called 'the suspension of disbelief'.

We suspend our disbelief when we gaze at Breughel's winter landscape, depicting a wintry Dutch Bethlehem. Even though we know the 'real' Bethlehem as a desert town, the fusion of its story with a Dutch winter is somehow spellbinding. And for those for whom snow is the reality of Christmastime it literally brings the story home.

Equally, with Rembrandt our knowledge of the narrative of his 'Holy Family' is given eternal and familiar resonance through his signature golden light, deep chiaroscuro (intense dark and light), and use of Dutch models. We accept immediately the ruse of a Dutch Jesus, just as we do an Italian, German or Spanish one. The adaptations bring the story closer to home, make it

relatable, less historical and more universal.

In St Barrahane's church, Castletownsend, locals can find their own very Irish image-variation of the Christmas story: Harry Clarke's stained glass Nativity window from 1918. In this wonderful image the devilishly good-looking Holy Family is flanked by dark, pale and red-bearded shepherds and Magi; the regal Joseph holds forth a lantern and looks for all the world like a Russian Czar; the sharp-eyed Magi and shepherds are interchangeable but for a lamb here and a treasure there; and Mary and her child are pale-faced innocence personified. All are bejeweled and

encrusted in Clarke's hallmark ornamentation, his colours glinting darkly in the cool church of St Barrahane.

The Christmas image has been made and re-made a thousand times, crossing all ethnic and geographic boundaries. Its success has been in its adaptability, and in our ability to, in theatrical terms, 'suspend our disbelief'. It is in this realm of suspension that we experience the magic of art. Peeling back some of the popular layers of imagery we can find treasures we might not have seen before and thus renew our love of the season.

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Finding the colour in nature

Annie Hogg has always loved being outdoors, finding comfort in nature. Her business 'The Wild Hedge Ink Co.' reflects this passion.

Based in Dunmanway, Annie creates her inks from natural materials foraged from the hedgerows on her doorstep. She first coaxes the colour from raw materials such as oak galls, cherry tree bark, nettle leaves, lichens, alder cones, montbretia flowers, cleaver roots, hawthorn berries. It's an ever-growing list.

"Initially I began with the sole intention of creating my own supplies for illustration," explains the artist. However, it soon became apparent that there was an enthusiasm and interest in the process, particularly amongst artists, makers and crafters. "I also get people who are looking to explore their environment in a new way," she says. "And harvesting colour from our environment is certainly a captivating way of doing this. It also attracts people who like the poetry behind where the colours come from and the novelty of capturing a time and place through the small lens of the inks."



Annie's workshops, which provided a valuable income alongside the precarious business of earning from commissions and prints, unfortunately stalled when the pandemic hit this year.

As a result, her plan to open an online shop by Christmas went into fast forward and she

has had it stocked with inks, pigment sets and some prints since the start of June (thewildhedgeinkco.bigcartel.com). She also developed a one-hour online workshop in the basics of ink making. This proved so successful that Annie now offers two further workshops; one in charcoal making and turning the



results into ink, and the second on modifiers to expand the colour potential of the inks. "I am thoroughly enjoying the zoom encounters I must say," says Annie "...you get to have a good peek at other people's kitchens, and I always fancied myself to be on the telly! It actually works out better in some ways for people taking the workshop, as I send out two downloadable videos and preparation pdfs with recipes also."

Annie has a degree in sculp-

ture but she followed a path in organic horticulture for a few years, which brought her to the Scottish Highlands, before returning to Ireland. "When I first happened across the rocks of the Beara Peninsula, it felt like the land reached into my marrow, and I stayed," she says. After working in healthfood shops for a while, her creativity and love of the outdoors drew her towards a career as an illustrator.

"I was looking for a specific

watercolour and came across someone in Berlin who was making small batches herself. What I wanted was sold out however, so I thought 'I bet I could do that myself'," explains Annie. Almost overnight The Wild Hedge Ink Co. was born.

Ever since, Annie can be found in the hedgerows.

"The history is fascinating...I find it a mind boggling thought, that the earliest proof of colour production into a paint is dated to 100,000 years ago, in a cave overlooking the sea in South Africa. And this is before you even mention the differences between Eastern and Western techniques!"

Annie hopes to exhibit a collection of her original mark making next year and expand her print sales into some local and national shops. "I would really hope that the work gets people looking at what wildness we have left here, gets us chatting and interacting with it," she says passionately.

Keep an eye out for The Wild Hedge Ink Co. 2021 Irish/English calendar...it would make a beautiful Christmas present.

Instagram: anniehogg_ thewildhedgeinkco thewildhedgeinkco.bigcartel.com www.anniehoggillustration.com

Tina Pisco is the first ever Writer-in-Residence at Cork City Libraries

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Wishing you all a safe and prosperous 2021

AS SEEN ON THE LATE LATE SHOW

Tina Pisco has been announced as the first ever Writer-in-Residence at Cork City Libraries. This appointment is funded by Creative Ireland and will run until May 2021.

Tina Pisco's writing career spans a wide range of genres and mediums. Her published work includes best-selling novels, a poetry collection, a collection of newspaper columns, and a short story collection; along with articles, comics, scripts and even a cookbook.

Along with writing, Tina Pisco is actively involved in Community Arts. Over the years she has worked with a large number of different groups including schools, Community Arts Centres, the Travelling Community, asylum seekers in direct provision, and many other groups. She has worked closely with Cork City and County library services over the last fifteen years, delivering classes, workshops, and organising literary events.

This year's Writer-in-Residence programme aims to engage communities on climate

change and sustainability through writing and contribute to literary festivals in the city, including Cork World Book Festival in April 2021, as well as to promote Cork City Libraries services and resources.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, it is expected that most of the engagement with the public will be on-line. However, this is a great opportunity to promote the excellent, and perhaps lesser known, on-line resources that the libraries offer.

Tina Pisco will write a monthly blog, and is expected to set up workshops and other on-line events in the new year.

The Writer-in-Residence programme also aims to give the writer the time and space to work on her own writing.

"I am delighted and grateful to Cork City Libraries for this appointment, notably because the brief fit so well with my current writing project. To be given the space and time to develop one's writing is a rare gift indeed," says Tina.

"I am currently writing my second collection of short stories. The working title is

'The Dithering: Tales from the Peri-Apocalypse'. My own personal journey from armchair activist to running the Repeal campaign in West Cork, and volunteering in Nea Kavala refugee camp in Greece, compounded with the death of both my parents in the last four years and a close brush with terrorism, is also very much the motivator for choosing this theme.

"So far, I have been writing stand-alone stories in different settings. The idea was to leave things loose enough, so that the stories might cross-pollinate. The goal was to create a gestalt (whether the stories are stand-

alone or interlinked) that gives the overall collection a solid sense of place and time: the peri-apocalypse on our planet. The stories might link up like a novella-in-flash, or grow into a full-blown meta-novel."

Tina Pisco's Publication List: Only a Paper Moon (Poolbeg); Catch the Magpie (Poolbeg); A West Cork Life (Random Animals Press); She be (Bradshaw Books); Adolescence 2: Hormonized Poems (Bradshaw Books) Translation of Manuel Arranas; Sunrise Sunset and other fictions (Fish Publishing 2016) long listed for the Edge Hill Prize.

Writer Tina Pisco
Pic: Louise Barker



Getting creative this winter

by James Waller

The depths of winter is a great time to get your creative hands moving! At Clonakilty School of Painting, we explore a whole range of techniques that can be readily tried at home, from lino and mono printing to wet-mold casting.

Lino-cut printing is fun and easy, made more so by the blue 'breeze block' lino, which is locally available (for example, at Coughlan's in Clonakilty) and easy to cut. Lino cutting tools and lino block ink are also easy to come by. A fun project is to draw the outline of an animal, object or figure onto the lino, then carefully cut the shape out with a blade or lino cutter. On a smooth surface (a mirror is good), roll up some lino ink, then ink up your shape. To print your shape, place a sheet of baking paper on to the inked lino, then burnish it on with a spoon. You should see the ink getting darker. Peel off the baking paper and there you have your print! The baking paper is a readily available alternative to Japanese rice paper. It will yellow over time but is fine for some fun experiments. Rice paper can be ordered from Cork Art Supplies.

An important thing to remember when lino cutting is to mind your supporting hand. Never have your supporting hand in the way of the cutter, always behind. When children are



shown how to do this they are generally very good – we have certainly never had an accident at the school!

Another easy thing you can do with your lino (or alternatively a small sheet of acetate or a smooth ceramic tile) is a nature mono print. Roll up your ink, then ink a piece of lino (or acetate/tile). Then press a textured object onto the inked surface (could be some lace material, a feather etc). Lifting the object off it should take some ink with it. Next print the lino, as before, with spoon and baking paper. You should see the ghost of the object from where the object removed the ink. I'm sure you'll love the results!

A final fun holiday project is to make a wet mold casting, using clay and plaster. This is quite effective to do with a sea-shell, but you can use any small interesting object. First, knead out a small slab of clay. Then press your object (say, a shell) into the clay so that it's deeply submerged, then take it out. You should have a nice deep impression in the clay. Next, sift plaster dust into a small container of water, until islands of plaster begin to form on the surface. Slowly stir the mixture. When it's smooth, pour the plaster into the clay mold. Wait an hour or so for it to harden. The clay will still be wet and the plaster cast should come easily out. And,

presto, you'll have a replica of your shell!

If you are interested in classes we run both Junior and Adult programs. The Junior program covers drawing, printmaking, painting and sculpture. The Adult program covers drawing, printmaking and painting, as desired (with options in oil, acrylic and tempera). Classes are capped at six participants and are ongoing. Please enquire for availability. Contact James: admin@paintingschool.jameswaller.org

Happy holidays, from Clonakilty School of Painting!

www.paintingschool.jameswaller.org

Why the robin and the wren are associated with Yuletide in Ireland

These beautiful renderings of a wren and robin appear on Kilcoe Studio's Christmas cards this year. Artist Sonia Cauldwell tells us why she chose these little birds.

"The Wren (Dreoilín) is associated with St Stephen's day celebrations in Ireland and there are several traditional folk tales that display it as being a trickster. This rhyme is one of several versions sung by wren boys on St. Stephen's day. *The Wren, the Wren, the king of all birds. On St Stephen's Day I was caught in the furze. Although I am little my family is great, Rise up landlady and give us a trate. Up with the kettle and down with the pan, Give a few pence to bury the Wren. Then I'll dip my wings in a barrel of beer, And I'll wish you all a happy New Year.*

"The Robin (Spideog) is a much loved bird and several

folktales associate the Robin with looking out for people and comforting the sick and the dying. Many tales also link the Robin with the Christmas story; these have made it a strong symbol of Christmas today as well as having strong pre-Christian associations as in the following tale...

If the soul and symbol of the old sun and the Oak King was the wren, the robin represented the new sun. The wren was said to hide in the ivy, the robin in the holly. The pagan neolithic festival of the birth of the new sun, symbolised by the robin, was at the Winter Solstice (December 21). The robin (the new sun) killed his father the wren (the old sun) and that is how he got his red breast, from the blood of his father."

These lovely cards are available from kilcoestudios.com and in local gift shops.

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Fascinating insight into Ireland's past captured in Kinmonth's new book

Claudia Kinmonth's new book 'Irish Country Furniture and Furnishings 1700-2000' illuminates a way of life in Ireland that has almost vanished. From investigating farmhouse and cabin furniture from all over Ireland to discussing the origins and evolution of useful objects, this book contributes as much to our knowledge of Ireland's cultural history as to its history of furniture.

Claudia has a fierce passion for Irish country furniture, which stems from her enjoyment of researching subjects other people have often neglected. A conservation consultant, as well as an art and design historian, her work involves a lot of time working in Irish museums, as well as knocking on doors for her research on farmhouse interiors. When Claudia began her fieldwork, photographing dressers, settles and so on, in situ, in the late 1980s, there were still considerable numbers of un-modernised homes in Ireland. "I could still occasionally seek out people living without electricity, or living in houses with no fitted kitchens, so the dresser and settle was sometimes still in place, and the arrangements were beautifully traditional," she explains.

"Colour schemes were especially interesting, compared to interiors in other parts of Europe, the twentieth century two-tone colour of the Irish interior was striking, having evolved as a way to brighten up and unify things made of a

mixture of timbers."

It is the photographs that Claudia took back in the late 1980s, some of which haven't been published before, that make her new book particularly interesting to people who like a traditional authentic appearance, or who are perhaps restoring an old house.

Nearly every illustration in this remarkable book has some kind of fascinating story behind it.

"The people who welcomed me into their homes were mainly elderly, and many of them have since passed away. But they were welcoming and friendly, and usually couldn't wait for me to finish my photography, so they could lay the table and offer tea," explains Claudia. "One of these meals was laid out on a 'falling table' in County Kilkenny.

"A falling table is a type that was hinged up flat against the wall when no longer needed.

So it saves space, and uses comparatively little timber, as it only needed to have one hinged leg to support it. This particular table had deep score marks all over it, when it was lowered down, which the owner told me resulted from her parents having cut up the pig on it, when it was butchered, each year. Such memories live on and that story, of the killing of the pig, was often related to me in other farmhouses."

Hen coops were often incorporated into the base of dressers. "This was how women on the smaller farms could ensure a good supply of eggs from their hens throughout the winter, as hens benefitted from light, warmth and extra food indoors," says Claudia. "The hens were carefully let out each morning to forage outside, and ate every scrap that was left over, as did the pig, if the family owned one."

In houses with open thatched



Falling table alongside a 'falling form' photo by Claudia in 1987, then in situ in a farm kitchen at Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

roofs, the beds frequently had an arched or canted wooden covering. "This helped keep dust or drips from above, away from sleepers. Curtains across the front of the bed added privacy, and were especially useful in small houses lacking spare bedrooms." At the beginning of her research, Claudia came across a couple of beds still surviving like this. "Now they're only found in museums," she says.

"People who used to bake bread over the open hearth, saved up their closely woven flour bags; and after scrubbing off the print, used them for lining the ceilings, for making clothes or bed-sheets, and for everything else that required textiles, such as curtains, tablecloths and tea towels.

"The thread that held the flour bags together was carefully unpicked and reused too. Butter boxes, each used to pack and transport 56lbs of butter were also lovingly saved and recycled. One could be turned upside down, immediately becoming a plain fireside stool, but with a little ingenuity, a hinged lid was often added, and paint and upholstery helped people create beautiful sewing boxes, with padded seats. These are now becoming rare, and an example recently purchased for a museum, has flowers embroidered in needlepoint on its

hinged top, and blue painted sides to match."

Claudia's research reveals how ingenious and frugal our rural Irish ancestors Irish were in the not-too-distant past. "I do think we can learn from this attitude. Nothing was wasted. People had fewer, but better things, that were made to last a long time," remarks Claudia. "The legs of chairs and the feet under dressers were deliberately made so they could be replaced easily by future generations. The woven seats of sùgán chairs, made simply of twisted hay or straw rope, were replaced by householders themselves when they became worn. It was the opposite to today's common (and annoying) built-in obsolescence."

Everything was given a second chance and reused if it became worn out, sometimes really cleverly. "So a worn out wooden cart-wheel, was usually dismantled, and the spokes were instantly useful to make a new ladder. Its central hub could become a stool, and the curved outer sections of the wooden rim (called 'felloes') made perfect rockers for wooden cradles. In the nineteenth century, people made hanging cradles, which as the name suggests, were suspended from the cabin roof (saving space and timber simultaneously). In coastal areas, driftwood was

carefully collected and made into furniture that could then be unified by paint. If I find holes bored in timber, about the size of a pencil, I know the wood must have been salvaged this way, as only the marine shipworm or Tereido, bores such distinctive holes. Usually the insides of drawers or backs of panels, can be seen to reveal this."

This sense of discovery and the reward of finding something intriguing with a story that begs to be unfolded is what Claudia loves so much about her work.

The award winning author lives near Leap with her husband Michael Duerden, a jeweller.

'Irish Country Furniture and Furnishings 1700-2000' Cork University Press, €39. 550 pages, 448 illus.

Claudia Kinmonth MRIA PhD MA(RCA) is Research Curator (Domestic Life), Ulster Folk Museum, a Visiting Research Fellow, Moore Institute, NUI Galway and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. She is the author of Irish Country Furniture, 1700-1950 (published by Yale UP in 1993) and Irish Rural Interiors in Art (Yale UP, 2006). www.claudiakinmonth.ie



Claudia Kinmonth will be signing books at the bookshop at Nano Nagle Place in Cork this Friday, December 4, between 2 and 4pm. Pic: Clare Keogh

Unlock a reading a day with WCLF's advent calendar

The West Cork Literary Festival is counting down to Christmas with a special 2020 Advent Calendar.

"So many incredible books by Irish authors and authors living in Ireland were released this year, without the usual fanfare of festivals and launches. We're delighted to celebrate a small selection of these authors here and we've invited 24 writers

to submit a short video reading from their new books" says Eimear O'Herlihy, West Cork Literary Festival Director.

Among the writers who will be waiting behind each door in the online Advent Calendar are: Alan McMonagle, Stephen Sexton, Sarah Crossan, Kevin Barry, Enda Wyley, Marianne Lee, Paddy Bushe, Bebe Ashley, Caoilinn Hughes, Helena

Close, Michelle Gallen, Oein DeBharduin, Sean Hewitt, Cauvery Madhaven, Frances Macken, John Connell, Grainne Murphy and Colin Barrett.

Following the cancellation of this summer's Festival, WCLF launched a busy programme of online events which continues throughout December and 2021. Details of future events will be announced in the new year.

In the meantime, enjoy a taste of the twenty-four books selected for WCLF's first ever Advent Calendar. Each day, from December 1-24, a new reading will be unlocked. The Advent Calendar can be found at www.westcorkmusic.ie/adventcalendar.

people Arts & Entertainment

A Trip to Bere Island

Local production company Wombat Media presents another VR tour from their series 'Island Ferry Tales'. This time they take us on 'A Trip to Bere Island'.

Wombat Media is a video production studio specialising in VR documentary content. Made up of Ciara Buckley, a native

of Castletownshend, and Dave Slowo from Australia, their story began when working on an outback television project in Central Australia. They started Wombat Media in 2018 and produce compelling content far and wide.

After the success of their first of its kind VR documentary 'A

Trip to Cape Clear' in 2019, Ciara was successful again in securing funds from a Creative Ireland County Cork Grant Scheme and Wombat Media has produced a VR documentary filmed on Bere Island with help from John Walsh from the Bere Island Project Group.

There's no doubt that Bere Island is rich in history with ample heritage sites; from Bronze Age to Napoleonic wars, Bere Island's position at the mouth of Europe's deepest harbour has often placed the island at the centre of profound historical events.

'A Trip to Bere Island' starts off with the short trip from Castletownbere with Colm Harrington to learn about the history of the ferry service and a little about the island itself.

Once landed the viewer is greeted by Gemma Hunt, a local woman who runs guided bus tours. Gemma will talk you through some of the highlights that the Island has to offer.

Next is Ted O'Sullivan, a local historian who shares some of the Island's early history at Lonehort harbour. From there you will meet another local historian, Barry Hanley, at the

Lonehort Battery to learn of its significance as the largest of the seven gun batteries that were constructed on Bere Island in 1898 to protect the British fleet at anchor in the bay while routine maintenance was carried out. The battery was manned by up to 1,000 British soldiers during WWI.

Listen to island native Teresa Hall talking about Island life (and recounting the first time she took a cow to a fair in Castletownbere) before meeting John Walsh who is the project coordinator of the Bere Island Project Group at the Heritage Centre, which was officially opened by President Mary McAleese in 2010.

The VR tour ends in the village, where Murphy's Ferry departs and takes you back to the mainland.

Wombat Media are looking forward to exhibiting this immersive documentary throughout the county once it's safe to do so but in the meantime you can watch from the comfort of your own home on YouTube, search for 'A trip for Bere Island'.

For more information and press enquiries please contact

Ciara Buckley of Wombat Media on the ferry back from Bere Island



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A Christmas tale

Although more at ease taking about fairies and folklore than Christmas, Ireland's favourite storyteller **Eddie Linehan**, who has a particular grá for West Cork where his stories are always given a warm welcome, shares a few almost vanished seasonal Irish traditions and digs a very special Christmas tale out of his story bag for West Cork People readers.

If you received an orange at Christmas, that would have been exceptional," recalls Ireland's favourite storyteller Eddie Linehan. "One woman told me that when she was a child, little chocolate men in

the shape of hurlers was a great favourite. There was no Santa back then...the first time she came across him was in New York! She also remembers people using a hard turnip to hold the candle that was traditionally lit to guide and welcome the holy family on Christmas Eve." Eddie explains how if there was a child called Mary in the house, she had the honour of lighting that candle every Christmas. Goose used to be the bird of choice at Christmas in Ireland. "There were always three geese kept; one for Christmas day, one for New Year's Eve and one for January 6. If it snowed on Christmas Eve, it was said the people in heaven were plucking their own geese." In keeping with one tradition, Eddie won't be putting up the Christmas tree at home until after December 8.

"The following is the kind of Irish story that came out of respect for the animals and the night that was in it," says Eddie.

"On Christmas Eve, at midnight, the cows and the donkeys were supposed to kneel down in adoration of the baby Jesus and at that very moment they were supposed to have the power of speech. But nobody was to spy



on them at that time...it was their private moment. If you spied on the animals, it would bring great misfortune on you. This story was told in many parts of Ireland.

Now there was this fellow, he was a bit of a drinker and a joker, one of the boys that you'd get around the bar in the pub, who believed in nothing except Guinness. When he heard this story about cows talking, he decided to prove it wrong. There were plenty of places he could go to hear them, so on that night, which was Christmas Eve, he went to have a listen.

And holy God, what do you think he heard at midnight: The cow and the donkey started to talk. It was the only time of the year it happened, so of course they had plenty of business to catch up on. The most important thing they had to talk about was

that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were coming.

Well, this fellow nearly fell out of his standing. He ran for it, this man who believed in nothing, only drinking Guinness. He ran, stumbling, stumbling, and when he arrived home, it was thought he was home from the pub and drunk. He staggered in the door and fell around the kitchen. They asked 'What's wrong with you?' He answered 'hee awrw ger awww hee graawr!' They thought 'where did he get the money for that much drink?' and put him to bed to sober him up.

But in the morning he was as bad as ever! 'Hee awrw ger awww hee graawr'. They sent for the doctor then and these were people who could ill afford the doctor, but this was Christmas Day, and God

almighty there was no way he would destroy Christmas day for them. The doctor could find nothing wrong with the fellow, nothing at all except that he couldn't talk.

So they sent for the priest and the priest asked 'do you have any notion at all where he was last night?'. 'No Father, he went out for a couple of drinks and a game of cards, but that's all we know.' 'Well I don't know either,' said the priest and so the priest blessed the fellow. 'That's all I can do for him,' he said.

Enquiries were made in the days that followed and of course it was found out where the fellow had been, and the big joke, the big laugh in the bar about the cows and the donkeys and how they could talk and how he went out to prove that they couldn't. The priest was sent for again. The priest enquired again and all he could answer was 'hee awrw ger awww hee graawr'.

The priest realised what he had done...listened to the cows and the donkeys talking at midnight on Christmas Eve – at a privileged time when nobody should ever listen to the animals.

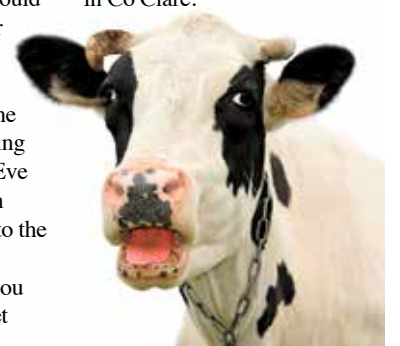
The priest said to him 'you have done an evil deed. Get

down on your knees.' He blessed the man again three times. 'I'm afraid' said the priest, 'it won't be enough'.

Eventually the fellow's speech did come back to him... in a kind of a way. He could talk, but from that day till the day he died; after what he did, he sounded like a 'bonamh'.

I tell you, it's a lesson to the people around, if they need such a lesson...never to do what that fellow did on that sacred night! They know what might happen to them."

Born in Kerry, Eddie Linehan lives in Co Clare and is a well-known seanachai who came to national prominence in the 1980s with his 12-part RTÉ series Storyteller and Ten Minute Tales. In 1999 he led a successful campaign to prevent a 'sceach', or fairy bush, from being destroyed by roadworks in Co Clare.



people Environment : Making a difference



PERMANENT CULTURE

Allison Roberts

What a year to delve into Permaculture. I have really enjoyed revisiting each of the twelve principals with you this year and thinking how each might offer new perspectives to how I run my life, garden, business, family, home and how we could, collectively, apply the principals

Permaculture Principal 12: 'Creatively Use and Respond to Change'

to our communal life together. 'Creatively Use and Respond to Change' is so apt for 2020. This year we have all been forced into situations we never dreamed of and have had to adapt so quickly.

At other times, change may come upon us slowly, creeping in, but we can sense it, then we hear about it in the news. This principal invites us to choose to adapt early, with positivity and creativity, instead of being forced to change later, perhaps when we find ourselves in a situation where our business or system become outdated or obsolete.

In a crisis like the one we have faced this year everything feels like it's tilted, so much has changed, we have all had to get creative on some level, from businesses holding meetings online to creatively changing your eating habits to suit the fre-

quency you can visit the shops. We have thought creatively about how we can support each other, how we can reach out to each other without touching, and how we can entertain our kids without them having their pals over. Though we all look forward to the day we can pop into each other's homes again and for that lovely casual pint with friends down at the pub, perhaps some of these creative adaptations will stick – the non-essential travel for business, the long-distance video chats with old friends, the stay-cation, bike rides to the beach, rediscovering old hobbies, not to mention the generally slower, smaller-scaled pace of life.

This principal is not saying that change is easy, or without anxiety, sadness or even anger. Knowing that climate change will cause crops to fail, or that

losing a job might mean not being able to cover your rent, or that a pandemic can affect every part of your life, these are terrible things, but this principal and all of Permaculture design centres on the vision that we, as human beings, are very resilient and that we can change, we can bend and create new possibilities in the face of change and that once we accept inevitable change, we can be a positive force working towards a new, exciting future.

To look at this from a 'Cool Clon' perspective I will visit one of my passions – transport systems – as an example. We all know, collectively, that the way we move around, the speed and frequency of our travel, is something that can't last, that the planet can't sustain it, so this principal would ask us (and our government representatives) to

think creatively and positively now to embrace future inevitable change. Investing in better public transport, with more frequent and reliable service could be one solution, as would be better access to our beaches by foot or by bike or reducing travel by incentivising working from home. We could also look at how we are using our resources, our land, public space, waste, food systems, energy, in what ways can we better acknowledge and prepare creatively for upcoming change; climate change, population growth, changes in technology, impacts of globalisation? Another local example is the 10,000 tree project, an initiative that is responding creatively to change, we know that Ireland currently has the lowest tree coverage in all of Europe (now around 11 per cent cover down from its native 80 per cent),

and instead of accepting this continuous decrease volunteers are responding with positivity, envisioning a new future and taking it into their own hands.

So that is the invitation this month, and going forward, let's use and respond to change creatively. May we not turn away when faced with inevitable change but accept and embrace and create anew. I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas season and happy 2021, thank you for your feedback and comments, as I've revisited these principals again this year, they are endlessly applicable to all of life and I really encourage anyone interested to keep discovering and delving into them deeper, there are so many books and online resources available. Stay well!

Three West Cork Climate Ambassadors awarded Outstanding Achievement in 2020

This year has been like no other, and one educational programme that successfully transitioned online is the Climate Ambassador programme. Twelve awards for an Outstanding Achievement were presented to individuals and teams from across Ireland at the virtual Climate Ambassador Awards on November 26 for their work in communicating and taking action on climate change.

Three Climate Ambassadors from West Cork were awarded the Outstanding Achievement

for 2020 and deserve a special mention: Aiyana Helder, Treasa Cadogan and Alice Glendinning.

Bandon Grammar School Student Aiyana Helder spoke at assemblies on fast fashion and climate action, and spoke to school management regarding biodiversity improvements, climate education and energy reduction. She also spoke at the UCC Climate Conference and their Green Flag Day, and published articles on women's rights and climate change. While not yet allowed vote, Aiyana is very

politically active in striking and campaigning for Polluter's Out, the Green New Deal, Keep it in the Ground, and many more.

UCC Student Treasa Cadogan started an incredible Farmers' Market on Cape Clear Island to encourage her community to consume more sustainable food. She shared her story at two virtual United Nations events and is currently exploring the world of permaculture in her final year of study.

Project Manager Alice Glendinning joined the sustainability

team in work and carried out several presentations on sustainability in the workplace to both TY's and the local Active Retirement Group. She co-founded the Doughnut Economy West Cork Group and started a weekly Doughnut Economics book club and completed a course on driving business towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

164 citizens from a wide range of backgrounds including secondary school students and teachers, university students, academics, farmers and busi-

nesspeople were all selected to be Climate Ambassadors in 2020. The programme, now in its third year, has gone from strength-to-strength with Climate Ambassadors gaining key skills and confidence to take action, and inspiring others to join them on their journey.

Climate Ambassadors are provided with training on climate science and communications and become part of a powerful network of committed individuals sharing their knowledge, learning from each other and building

relationships. Throughout the year they are asked to undertake four key actions – two climate communications and two climate actions, though many individuals go over and above what is required.

The Awards are a celebration of the hard work that has taken place over the last year and the enormous effort and dedication that the Climate Ambassadors have shown throughout the process. To mark this, each Climate Ambassador received a certificate of recognition.

Feeding garden birds and the Irish Garden Bird Survey



The number and variety of birds in the garden is now on the increase, as our Irish resident breeding birds are joined by those from places farther afield, like Russia, Scandinavia, the Baltics, Germany and the Netherlands. For example, you may have noticed a lot more Blackbirds recently. That's in part due to the hundreds of thousands of 'blow-ins' that come here every year from all over northern Europe, often at night. There are no travel restrictions for this lot!

However, during the colder days and nights of the winter months, natural food sources such as fruit, nuts, seeds and invertebrates are scarcer. Also the days are shorter, so there is less time for small birds to feed and

build up enough energy to stay warm. Putting out food in your garden for the birds is a great way to help them survive from now through to about March.

But what food is best? There is a wide choice of food available, but peanuts, sunflower seeds and hearts are recommended as they have a high protein and energy content and are eaten by a range of different birds. During cold snaps this can be supplemented with higher energy foods such as fat or suet balls. You can also cut up apples and pears to put on the lawn, a shed roof, or in a tree. Most importantly, don't forget to put out fresh water and make sure that it doesn't freeze over.

Birds try to avoid the open spaces where there is the threat of predators like Sparrowhawks. In the countryside, hedgerows act as an avian highway that small birds can travel along, as they provide both protection and food. The garden is no different, so feeders are best placed within a few paces of a tree, hedge or bush. That way, the birds have both shelter and a place

to escape to. If you can find a spot that can be viewed from the house, then so much the better.

As more birds find your feeders you may find that some of them are more dominant than others and also that size doesn't always matter. For instance, if you are lucky enough to attract Siskins into your garden (peanuts are best), you'll find that they punch well above their weight! A solution to reduce avian bullying is to dot your feeders around the garden.

Good feeder hygiene is very important. With more birds using your feeders there will be an increased risk of the transfer of infection, bacteria and parasites. Trichomoniasis is a parasite that infects finches and has had a devastating impact on our Greenfinch population in particular in recent years. This can be avoided by scrubbing your feeders every couple of weeks using a mild five per cent bleach solution and letting them dry completely before use. Don't forget to wash your own hands afterwards!

Now that you have done your

bit to help the birds, sit back, relax and enjoy watching them; they will reward you with their behaviour and antics. Observe how different species feed. Watch how Greenfinches and House Sparrows tend to dominate and stay on the feeders, while smaller birds, like Coal Tits, dart in, grab a morsel, and immediately fly off to feed away from the feeder.

While you are watching them, why not get involved in some citizen science? The Irish Garden Bird Survey is BirdWatch Ireland's most popular citizen science survey, with over a thousand gardens taking part

each year. Over more than thirty years it has given a unique insight into changes in garden bird populations; during a time when the countryside has changed and gardens have become an increasingly important habitat for many bird species. The survey runs from Monday, November 30 to Sunday, February 28. Taking part is fun, easy and an ideal way to get to know your garden birds better. The whole family can get involved and it also makes an ideal school project. You just need to record the highest number of each bird species that visits your garden every week and submit your findings

to BirdWatch Ireland. All the information for taking part in the Irish Garden Bird Survey can be found at birdwatchireland.ie. Download a survey form and get started.

The West Cork Branch would love to hear about the birds in your garden, or difficulties with bird identification. You can post pictures, stories and questions on our Facebook Page (search for @BirdWatchIrelandWestCork on Facebook or Messenger) or on Twitter @BWWestCork.

Covid has had a severe impact on all our lives, as well as on charities like BirdWatch Ireland. You can help by giving a BirdWatch Ireland Membership as a Christmas gift or buying your feeders and high quality bird food from the BirdWatch Ireland shop birdwatchireland.ie/shop.

For more information about the Branch contact Nicholas Mitchell at secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie or join our mailing list by sending an email to mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie.



people Environment



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.

In the lead up to Christmas, as we approach the end of what can only be described as a monumentally challenging year, it's a time to reflect on where we are and to look forward to 2021, with the tentative hopes that it will be an improvement on what has come in the year before.

Over the course of 2020, Covid-19 has brought countless individuals and families throughout the world, to the brink. They have faced illness, tragedy and loss, economic and social collapse.

For far too many people it has been a year they did not see out, be it through the direct impacts of the cruel illness, or the emotional and psychological toil that has been equally devastating for some. 2020 is a year in which we have seen global death tolls reach disturbing and heart-breaking heights.

If we're to move on from this year and its truly annus horribilis theme, there is some positivity around hopes for a vaccination in the near enough future.

Another positive aspect of our 'lockdown', which strikes me as I reflect on the past 10 months, is how, as a nation and possibly globally, we seemed to take stock and come to some sort of resolution around what's important in life.

When the Green Party launched their recent position

Working towards the 'wellbeing' of us and the planet

paper on Wellbeing Indicators, it felt fitting and well timed. Wellbeing Indicators are a way of looking at the progress of a country in a way that steps away from the traditional measure of using GDP, or the economic position of a country as a way of seeing where we stand.

Wellness Indicators measure progress in a more holistic whole-picture way, by putting tangible and measurable values on areas such as a country's healthcare, the quality of the environment, child poverty, mental health, education, and equality for minority groups or indigenous peoples. The follow-on from that then, is to use that information to invest in areas that will make the biggest improvements to people's lives.

In another instance of what seems like good timing to me, I was honoured, in recent days, to be appointed as Rapporteur on the 8th Environment Action Programme to 2030. It's a project, which is also relevant in terms of Wellbeing Indicators, as I will explain after I first outline what's involved in being a Rapporteur on what's known in the parliament as a 'file'.

The 8th Environment Action Programme is a report from the ENVI Committee (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) of which I am a member. It is a report on a far-reaching legislative proposal from the European Commission and it's one, which I am very excited to take on.

As Rapporteur, it's my job to lead the European Parliament's response to the Commission's legislative proposal, to analyse the project, consult with specialists, lead discussions on it with other members of the ENVI Committee and recommend the political 'line' to be followed.

After debates in the Committee, the report adopted by the Committee is then put before all the 705 MEPs in the Parliament's Plenary Session. A plenary session is the regular (usually once a month) block of days where all MEPs come together to vote and debate on key issues and pieces of legislation (which the Commission propose). At this stage, amendments can be tabled in a final opportunity to shape the overall report.

This particular legislative proposal comes at a time when the European Commission

President Ursula von der Leyen, who took up her position late last year, has started her term by launching the ambitious, overarching European Green Deal. It also comes in the wake of the Commission adopting a number of new strategic initiatives, notably a new Circular Economy Action Plan for a clean and competitive Europe, a Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and a Farm to Fork Strategy.

The 8th Environment Action Programme to 2030 follows on from and builds on seven previous action programmes. Against the backdrop and scaffolding of the collective strategies and commitments mentioned above, along with the urgency inherent in the precarious state of a planet in the depths of a climate and biodiversity emergency, the Environment Action Programme to 2030 must, I believe, have a meaningful and binding impact on the European Union's environmental strategies over the next 10 years.

Strategies around the environment are, after all, strategies around the survival of humankind, biodiversity and the planet into the future.

Included in the Programme are aspirations around the measurement of progress towards environment and climate objectives in the wider context of sustainability, wellbeing and resilience. Measuring the EU and Member State's progress towards achieving the crucial UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals requires measuring economic performance and societal progress 'beyond GDP' and shifting towards using 'wellbeing' as a compass for policy, a move also supported by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In our moves towards a more sustainable way of living in a healing planet, it is crucial that we embrace new ways of thinking and new ways of planning around a future in which we live with and within the parameters of a healthy planet.

It's a future which can, with careful, considered, life-focused planning lead to a better quality of life for all of us, where terms like Wellbeing and Sustainability, become more than just words.

Happy Christmas. Stay safe. Live well in 2021.



As we reflect on a challenging year that has brought loss and sadness to many, please:

- Stay safe
- Stay on board
- Continue the work to keep people healthy
- Try to spend time in the simple beauty of nature.
- Find safe ways to connect with your loved ones.
- Look out for each other.
- Stay peaceful and loving.



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Tóg sos.

Grace O'Sullivan MEP

people Environment : Making a difference

With the New Year comes a new decade and a great opportunity



ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

Given that this year, 2020, has been dominated by the news of a global pandemic, out-of-control forest fires, worsening news on melting ice caps and permafrost, worse news on changing sea temperatures and pH and the ever present destruction of our earth – through such things as deforestation for monocultures, spraying of toxic chemicals as pesticides and weed control and species extinction through habitat destruction or reduction – it is interesting, as the year draws to a close to look for good news and great opportunities that we can find regarding the environment.

The USA will inaugurate a new President in January 2021 and many in the Environmental and Scientific World are expressing high hopes that this new administration will reverse the rollback of environmental protection carried out in USA during the last four years.

The 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) provides a data-driven summary of the state of sustainability around the world. Thirty-two performance indicators across 11 issue categories are used to rank 180 countries on environmental health and ecosystem vitality.

The EPI provides a scorecard identifying environmental

performance in countries and providing practical guidance for them to move toward a sustainable future. However it is apparent, from digging in to the data, that creating and carrying out good environmental policy cannot be removed from creating economic prosperity. The report shows that for nations to invest in policies and programs that lead to desirable environmental health, they need to build the necessary infrastructure to provide clean drinking water and sanitation, reduce ambient air pollution, control hazardous waste, and respond to public health crises; and these in turn yield large returns for human well-being.

However, in the past, in the pursuit of economic prosperity, humans have industrialised and urbanised their environment, and in doing so have created pollution and have put massive strains on ecosystem vitality and climate stability. The October issue of Scientific American published a running list of environmental disasters in the USA in 2020, reporting 16 natural disasters, including wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes and drought that 'each' caused at least \$1 billion in damage.

How then to balance environmental and economic policy in symbiotic state remains the challenge for governments and businesses.

Encouragingly the data suggests countries need not sacrifice sustainability for economic security or vice versa, however we must carefully manage economic and environmental issues, with our attention on all areas of sustainability including climate change mitigation and species diversity.

The reported data shows that countries making concerted efforts to decarbonise their electricity sectors have made the greatest gains in combating climate change with associated

benefits for ecosystems and human health.

Policy in those countries with a high performance index, shows that it is possible to protect natural resources and human wellbeing despite the strains associated with economic growth. Factors such as a commitment to the rule of law, a vibrant press, and even-handed enforcement of regulations have strong relationships with top-tier EPI scores.

Those countries that score highly in the EPI have long-standing policies and programs to protect public health, preserve natural resources, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Ireland ranks 16 in the 180 countries ranked.

On November 25, Ireland's Environment Protection Agency (EPA) published a report called 'Ireland's Environment 2020' providing an assessment of the overall quality of Ireland's environment, the pressures being placed on it and the societal responses to current and emerging environmental issues. The report states "The evidence from this assessment reveals that the overall quality of Ireland's environment is not what it should be, and the outlook is not optimistic unless we accelerate the implementation of solutions across all sectors and society. The environmental challenges that Ireland faces are giving rise to complex and systemic issues. They cut across different environmental topics, such as climate, air, soil, water, biodiversity and waste, and across organisations and sectors, business and all levels of society."

The report which can be found at epa.ie and goes on to conclude "Overall, Ireland needs a national policy position for its environment that connects the various environmental challenges and guides the pro-

tection of the environment.

The overarching message from this report is that change is needed in how we look after our environment. However, economy or society cannot make the right sustainable choices if the systems or policies around them make it difficult to implement measures to protect the environment. Collaboration, integration and better connectivity across the different systems and policies are needed, as many are interlinked. Ireland has many sectoral plans in place with environmental commitments, but the environment continues to be affected and at risk – what we need is implementation, monitoring of plans and projects, and accountability to ensure that plans or projects are being carried out in the right way, in the right place and at the right time. A national policy position for Ireland's environment could help to achieve all of this."

On November 22, 2020 the French government announced the creation of an 'ecocide offence' to prevent and punish serious environmental damage, as one part of a participative decision making model that views climate action and environmental protection as an enabler of local development. This model aims to transfer ownership of the transition to zero carbon societies to the people and communities and to tackle inequality, raising standards of living by delivering climate and biodiversity solutions.

Currently in Ireland local communities have to fight hard, often having to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds to protect their local environment and the transition to zero carbon via the courts, as local decisions in planning and licensing run contrary to environmental protection and human wellbeing.

It is good then, to see the EPA calling for evidence-based

policy decisions and the regular use of integrated environmental assessment and system-based approaches to monitor these. We also need to close loopholes; and as in France, to make serious and large scale damage to the environment a criminal offence to be answered by an individual and punishable by a prison sentence, rather than the responsibility of a corporation or whole government.

Such a deterrent would change the mindset of the individuals making the decisions and would create a strong incentive for forward looking and innovative development and solutions, rather than remaining stuck in the rut of the climate and environmental degradation that leads to our eventual

demise and is so graphically reported by the EPA.

The move in France to create an 'Ecocide Offence' was initiated by a Citizens' Climate Change Convention. As we enter a new decade we have no time to lose. We need to lobby our government to support the creation of such a law and in our communities we need to start living as if this law was already in existence.

For further news on this follow @IEcocide on twitter or join the group 'Ireland Against Ecocide' on Facebook or write to <mailto:irelandearthprotector@gmail.com> to be added to the mailing list.



Skibbereen's Cycle Sense included in Paint Re-Use Scheme

Are you guilty of hoarding half empty tins of paint at home, those 'just in case' tubs that you finally get around to dumping when they've dried up? Householders have traditionally brought their leftover paint to their local Civic Amenity Site for disposal, however this may be set to change, as a new pilot Community Paint Re-Use Scheme will soon get underway in Cork City and County.

Cork City Council and Cork County Council have received

funding from the EPA's Local Authority Prevention Network (LAPN) programme for the joint scheme, which will see unused water-based paints in Civic Amenity Sites diverted towards one of two social enterprises. The social enterprises, Northside Community Enterprise (NCE) in Farranferis, Cork City and Cycle Sense based in Skibbereen, will then filter, remix, recolour and repackage the paint before selling it at reduced rates in the local community.

The pilot project will involve the City Council's Civic Amenity Site at Kinsale Road and three of Cork County's eleven Civic Amenity sites; two in West Cork at Derryconnell and Clonakilty and one in South Cork at Raffeen.

This unique collaboration between Cork City and County Council will divert paint from disposal and incineration to provide affordable, good quality paint for reuse in the local community. Not only will the project benefit our environment,

it will also deliver economically in terms of job creation and reduced costs for the community groups and individuals who use the paint.

A similar scheme run by the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin has been hugely successful and will provide mentoring for the new Cork scheme, which is due to begin later this month.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Mary Linehan Foley said, "This collaborative project between our two local authorities here in Cork is based on

the Circular Economy model. We're all increasingly conscious of the finite nature of resources available to us. Circular economies keep products in use for as long as possible and avoid waste. I find it very encouraging to see this pilot Paint Re-use Scheme starting up. It's positive news for the environment and for our communities and I hope it inspires more projects in the same vein."

people Home & Garden

Connecting

by Mags Riordan of Bumblebee Farm

I had the pleasure of chatting with Diarmuid Gavin last Wednesday evening on his garden conversations hour on Instagram, another wonderful thing to come out of this Covid situation. Not being able to meet in person hasn't dampened our quest for connection and that sense of belonging. I know for me if this hadn't happened, I'd have stayed in my little bubble a little disconnected from the rest of the world. I thought participating on the Ignite entrepreneurial business incubation programme last year was tough; it pushed me so far outside my comfort zone that 2020 was surely going to be easier! How wrong was I?

I remember writing my article this time last year so full of hope and gratitude but especially excited for the impending birth of my first grandchild Ollie who came into this world on January 2 this year. I don't think I can ever put into words

that incredible feeling of love, wanting to protect and share the beauty of our natural world with him. I couldn't stop thinking of all the amazing things we would do together; then Covid hit and the world stopped. We're a resilient species and we have all found new ways to connect. It will never replace touch but to be able to see people virtually, laugh and cry together, is something I am incredibly grateful for.

Our Sustainability School took a bit of a back seat this year because I was doing everything myself but now the workload is shared, I've had time to drive on and we have some very exciting things coming in the New Year.

We have started recording videos with Eddie Attwell around growing your own food and flowers, with a focus on our pollinators as always. Eddie is in the kitchen showing you how to prepare them and sharing different uses etc. These will be available to view very soon. We'll be filming here on the farm and in Eddie's kitchen

We have started recording videos with Eddie Attwell around growing your own food and flowers, with a focus on our pollinators as always.



garden at the Eccles.

Aly, my incredibly talented daughter, who's responsible for those beautiful images has upped her game too and has been working on the recording end of things with a Podcast, which will be available in the spring!

We don't know when we will all be able to meet in person

again but we're not letting that stop us. Being able to meet virtually, go through the seasons sharing what we do here and why, is all extremely exciting. I know so many of you would like to know more about dividing dahlias and when to take cuttings, along with supporting plants throughout the year for our pollinators, as well as our-

selves. These are some of the topics we will be covering.

We're so busy getting orders out for Christmas but as soon as we have a break these will be edited and uploaded across our social media channels over our Christmas break.

I'm just as excited, hopeful and full of gratitude, as I was this time last year and despite everything, looking forward to 2021. I know it won't be the same this year, but I wish you all a wonderful peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Cork County's colourful heritage book returns

Following the success of Cork County Council's original 'The Colourful Heritage of County Cork' bilingual colouring book, a second volume has now been launched as part of the Council's 'Keep Well' wellbeing campaign.

Volume Two of the popular series features 30 brand new sites from across the county, from Bandon and Buttevant to Kanturk and Youghal. Supported by The Heritage Council and the Creative Ireland Programme, the publication is

bilingual in both Irish and English and covers a wide range of culture and heritage, from craft and archaeology to biodiversity and maritime heritage.

The Colourful Heritage of County Cork - Volume Two is available to download on Cork County Council's website at www.corkcoco.ie. A limited number of printed copies are available free of charge. To request a copy of the new release or the original publication, simply email cork.heritage@corkcoco.ie.



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By **Mike Collard** of
Future Forests

Hedges have been planted and tended for a long time in Ireland. It is likely that man was deliberately planting trees as long ago as the Bronze Age. The origins of the first 'plant nursery' are lost in the depths of time. Was it when a man, or woman, pulled up a little plant and moved it to where they wanted

it or broke off a piece of willow and pushed it in the ground near their living quarters to make basket making easier?

Undoubtedly some of the earliest fences were made from willow and hazel rods stuck into the ground and woven and often the willow would have taken root. Later the need for stock-proof hedges would have brought Hawthorn and Blackthorn to the attention of the farmer.

Some plants like Dogwood and native Privet would have been taken as cuttings; others, such as Holly, dug up from the wild. I wonder to what extent hazel was deliberately planted or how much was it spread through the hedgerows by squirrels and hedgehogs?

Birds would certainly have spread berrying plants like Elder and the wild roses. Some native plants seem to have had a more local distribution like Alder Buckthorn, Whitebeam, Bird Cherry and the Killarney Strawberry Trees, Arbutus.

Over the last 100 years, many old hedgerows have been uprooted, as towns and villages extend into the countryside; roads are widened and small fields are merged into big ones, yet we still need to plant hedges to provide privacy and shelter round our homes and gardens. Choosing to plant a mixed native hedge conserves our natural heritage, helps our environment by providing food and shelter for a whole range of wildlife: animals, birds, bees, butterflies and insects, as well as giving us year-round interest and beauty.



Planning a Hedge

So if we are thinking of planting a hedge these days, what species should we plant and how should we go about it? A lot depends on the space available and how neat you want the hedge to be. There is no point in planting Crabapple in a hedge that needs to be kept 4ft to 6ft high. Some plants can take hard cutting and be kept under control, others need more room to flourish and create a 'wilder' look. If you can go higher than 20ft with your hedge or screen then you could

always include some native trees, planting one for every 30ft of hedge.

Planting a Hedge

Bare-root whips can be planted from November to April. For a neat hedge, plant at 1ft spacing in a staggered row: For a taller, wilder hedge plant at every 1.5 to 2ft. Start by clearing the ground of any perennial weeds like docks or couch grass. It is usually best to plant in a trench wide and deep enough to take the roots comfortably, taking care that they do not dry out

while you are at the job. In very dry weather it can be useful to have a bucket of muddy water handy to dip the roots in. After planting, firm well and cut back any extra long whippy growths. During the summer, remove any competing grass or weeds that might smother the young plants and you may have to water if there is a prolonged dry spell.

Please see our website for more information about mixed hedges: www.futureforests.ie Future Forests Kealkill, Bantry, Co Cork 027 66176.

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Creating space for nature with nest boxes in West Cork

With funding from the National Biodiversity Action Plan, Cork County Council has embarked on a project, supporting BirdWatch Ireland's West Cork Branch, in their efforts to create new nesting opportunities for two of our most vulnerable bird species, the Swift and the Barn Owl.

One of our most iconic summer visitors, the Swifts, arrive after their cousins, the Swallows, in May, and depart again in August. Unlike Swallows, they're never seen resting on wires, instead spending virtually all their life airborne, nesting in urban rooftops, using holes

in the fascia and soffits to access roof space. As buildings are renovated, these sites can be lost, and sadly Swift numbers have declined in Ireland by a shocking 40 per cent over the last 10 years. Reasons for this include the loss of suitable nest sites.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Mary Linehan Foley commended ongoing conservation work, saying, "A BirdWatch survey found Swifts still occur in most areas, but are reliant on a very small number of buildings in our towns and villages. Working with community groups like Tidy Towns, the Birdwatch

Ireland Branch in West Cork, started a Swift Conservation Project in 2019 to establish baseline populations in West Cork towns and to create additional breeding spaces. Happily, our Barn Owl populations in the County have been making a comeback, but some of their old nesting sites are no longer suitable and some pose a danger to survival of young birds. This project aims to provide safe nest boxes for these two species and Cork County Council is delighted to be able to support this positive step in promoting and supporting our wildlife and biodiversity."

Funding secured by Cork

County Council from the National Biodiversity Action Plan to support these conservation efforts has helped purchase and erect Swift nest boxes on suitable buildings in the towns of Bandon, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen and Ballydehob; and similar provisions for Barn Owls in suitable locations across the entire county in collaboration with land/property owners where suitable sites have been identified.

Pictured on the left is the Bandon Swift Survey July 2020



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

Following on from my last article, which covered preparing your home for Christmas, I was going to write about new trends for 2021 in this article but I've decided to leave that until after Christmas. Instead let's focus on the here and now and try to brighten up our homes a bit more.

Planning for Christmas is a really big deal for some people, including me, as I tend to get lost in the creative side of it; every one of us decorates our homes in a style that suits our individual and family's personality! The holiday begins for me when the house is decked with festive decorations – from snowmen to Santa Claus, reindeer to nativity scenes, there is an endless amount of décor to choose from.

So in this creative festive spirit, I've put together a list of Christmas decorations for you to choose from.

1. Christmas Tree: It isn't Christmas without a family Christmas tree. This is a fab way for a family to celebrate together and decorate the tree with special trinkets and décor.
2. Tree skirt: This looks fab at the end of the tree; it also holds the pine needles, as they fall off. You can also use buckets, baskets, or whatever suits your home.
3. Ornaments: One of the most

fun parts of decorating for Christmas involves hanging the ornaments on the tree. You can decorate your tree to tie in with the colour of your room or maybe you have a colour theme that you love (purple, orange, teal, red, metallic or even a coastal feel) or perhaps you have some family ornaments or old photos that are special to you that sit on the tree yearly and evoke special memories for you.

4. Tree Topper: This sits on the tallest branch of the tree and completes the look, the most popular are an angel or a star, once again tied in with the colour scheme of your tree.
5. Christmas Wreath: These are placed on your front door and are circular decorations that help to dress up any door they are placed on. Add a set of LED lights on the wreath, if they are not on it already, to brighten it up. Nowadays wreaths are not only placed on your front door but on your outside gate and on internal doors. They can be created using evergreen foliage, berries and all sorts of natural materials.
6. Stockings (and stocking hooks): Hanging your stocking on the mantle is an old tradition; who doesn't love waking up Christmas morning with goodies stuffed inside.
7. Santa Claus and reindeer figures: Every home, especially if there are small children in the house, should own at least one Santa Claus figure and some reindeer.
8. Mini Tree: Evergreens are a big part of the Christmas Décor; it's impractical thinking you can put one in every room but why not buy some mini evergreen trees to place around your house, these are great to add a bit of cheer and festivity to a room.
9. Nativity Scene: It's important to remember that Christmas is a religious holiday. To celebrate the birth of Jesus, if you are religious and want to keep the true meaning of Christmas alive in your home, then a nativity scene is a must. You can purchase a large or small one and add animal and accents over time.
10. Garland: Who doesn't love a nice colourful garland? I love garlands, as I feel you can decorate them to suit your style; they can be used on the mantle, bannister, on



Brass ornaments from Chalk & Easel Ballinaspittle

shelves or sideboards. You can add greenery from outside, candles and ornaments to bulk it up.

11. Poinsettias: These can be purchased locally and are a fab plant to have in your home. A lot of people put them at the front door.
12. Candles: Bring the scent of Christmas into your home. I love cinnamon, cranberry, fresh pine, gingerbread, roast chestnuts. Also there are the battery-operated candles that can be added to wreaths, the dining table, sideboards, anywhere really without the worry of causing a fire in the home; they light up any space and give it that warm glow.
13. Nature: Go outside and see what you can bring in. Place the results of your foraging on the garlands or around candles on a vignette.
14. Vignette's: These are small trays where you can place ornaments, candles or plants on.
15. Mistletoe: Buy some at your local market to bring some Christmas romance into your home!
16. Nutcracker: These are a common Christmas Décor that resemble toy soldiers – they are supposed to be a sign of good luck.
17. Advent Calendar: This is a great way to count the days



'Land of Legends' heritage wreath from Bumblebee Flower Farm Drimoleague

down to Christmas.

18. Christmas crackers: These are fun to have on the Christmas table – consider making your own bespoke crackers.
19. Christmas Linen and tableware: Kids love the fun factor of having a Christmas themed tablecloth. Most people use plain coloured tableware with colour added through crackers, candles, and greenery to complete the dining table look.
20. Red Velvet Ribbon bows: These have been around for years, but now I see big red bows on front doors instead of wreaths. You can add a red bow to anything to make it look festive in the home.

I hope this has helped you in some way to create a festive vibe in your home this Christmas. See you in the New Year.

Buy a Christmas tree to help church funds

Alison and Bill Bailey at Kilcaskan Castle near Ballineen are raising funds for all local church denominations via the sale of Christmas trees, which they grow themselves.

Funds will be raised in two ways:

1. There will be about 50 trees – height 7ft-9ft (which could be reduced in size) at €40 each with all proceeds going to the churches.
2. Separately, they will donate €5 each from all the other trees sold at weekends, which is when they get most customers.

Kilcaskan is located between Ballineen and Ballinacarriga at Eircode P47 R286, Open every day from November 28 from 9am to 9pm; Tel 087 363 8623



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Garden cheer



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...

I'm looking through the window at another dreary evening, waiting for it to be dark enough for my chickens to head into their house, so that I can shut them safely in for the night and then relax, all my outdoor chores done. I find these short days depressing and make a real effort to go out every day, for at least a wander round the garden even if I don't do much more. Inevitably the weather doesn't seem as bad when you are out in it, and there are always



Hydrangas to be dried for Christmas wreaths

things to see and make note of. I noticed yesterday that we already have some primroses in flower, and bulbs are popping up all over the garden. A cold snap will certainly slow things down but meanwhile the primroses are very welcome harbingers of spring.

I do have hundreds of bulbs to plant and have been in denial for some weeks, but now I have to get down to it and the few bright sunny days are very welcome. It's much easier to head out into a dry bright day even if the ground is still very wet. Small bulbs need dealing with first, as they dry out very quickly, so crocuses, grape hyacinths and some species tulips were the first to go in. I am planting up a few terracotta pots with dwarf Iris and miniature narcissus to place on a small table just outside my kitchen door, to cheer me up

through the early months of next year. The last bulbs we plant are the tulips in pots; we don't usually start planting them up until December. There is a nasty fungus that can attack tulips and it helps to prevent it by planting them nearer Christmas when the soil is colder. Although I am quite reluctant to put my boots on some days, it does help to have a project in mind. I have been clearing Ivy from under some trees in order to prepare the ground for planting bulbs and I have really enjoyed the task. It has been very satisfying to pull away the ivy and weeds and reveal bulbs shooting through that I planted in previous years, as well as make space for more. It has also been quite a workout. I find that being among the trees is very calming.

This is the time of the year we tend to look back and reflect on our gardening year, and what a year it has turned out to be. We could barely have imagined what was ahead of us this time last year and for many people it has been very difficult. We all have worries and anxieties and I have never felt more grateful for the peace I have found in my garden.

Gardening in December



GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre



Crinodendron or lantern tree, native to Chile

The days may be short but there is still plenty to do in the garden before and after Christmas.

Jobs for the month

Book and choose your Christmas tree, keeping in mind the non-shed varieties are generally the most favoured. Keep in a cool place outdoors until you are ready to decorate it and have a reservoir of water in the Christmas tree stand at all times. Keep this reservoir regularly topped up with fresh water and make sure lights are switched off overnight.

Check winter garden structures such as arches, pergolas, garden sheds and greenhouses and do necessary repairs as appropriate.

Check that greenhouse heaters are in working order.

Insulate water pipes and taps against hard winter frosts.

Prune open ground apples and pears.

Prune Acers, Birches and vines before Christmas to avoid bleeding resulting from pruning too late.

Harvest leeks, carrots, parsnips, winter cabbage, brussels sprouts and remaining root crops.

Continue planting of bareroot and open ground trees, shrubs, shelter trees, hedging and fruit trees when weather and soil conditions permit.

Add an organic fertiliser at the time of planting.

If livestock are in the immediate vicinity ensure the site is adequately and securely fenced.

Protect against rabbits and hares with rabbit guards. Rabbits can do a lot of damage to young trees and shrubs if not sufficiently protected. Damage from rabbits, hares and deer can be fatal to young trees and shrubs endeavouring to establish.

Keep mice and rodents away from stored produce. Do take adequate precautions.

Reduce watering of houseplants. Watering is best done early in the day with clean,

fresh, lukewarm water.

Check out winter colour in your garden. Add hardy trees and shrubs, which will provide colour with winter flowers, berries and dramatic bark colour. The Cornus and Salix will provide bright red and yellow bark throughout the duller winter months.

You can still plant Narcissi and Tulips right up until the end of this month. Plant the bulbs in bold, informal masses of the same variety for the greatest impact and most dramatic display.

Move established trees and shrubs before Christmas, making sure to retain a good, intact rootball and adding organic compost and fertiliser prior to planting.

Plants for Christmas

Plants, trees and shrubs make great Christmas plants. They are good value and increase in size and in flowering and ornamental value, as they grow and mature. Crinodendron hookerianum is an evergreen shrub or small tree with leathery and nodding urn-shaped flowers in the leaf axils. They are available in red, pink or white flowers, producing prolific displays of flowers in late spring or early summer. Grow in a sheltered, moist, but well-drained soil with an acid pH. If your soil is alkaline adjust it by using ericaceous compost.

Crinodendron or lantern tree, native to Chile, will reach an ultimate height of four to eight metres in height. Ultimate spread is 2.5 to four metres, which it will achieve in 10-20 years. Do look out for the new pink and white shades, which are a very attractive addition to the range.

Hyacinths for Christmas make a superb gift and boast attractive, fragrant flowers in a pleasing range of colours including white, yellow, red, pink, blue. They last best in cool, bright rooms. If you keep Hyacinths in too warm a place they become drawn and elongated in growth. A cool, preferably unheated room, will produce much more compact, robust,

long-flowering blooms.

Christmas Narcissi

Rather like the indoor Hyacinths, Christmas Narcissi will last best in cool, bright conditions. Given the right conditions they will reward you or their recipient with a profusion of delightful flowers with a powerful fragrance.

Poinsettias

Poinsettias come in red, pink, white or multi-coloured bracts.

Keep in a warm, draught-free room and water with lukewarm water when thoroughly dry. Avoid splashes of water on the leaves or the bracts.

Solanum/Christmas Cherry

The Christmas Cherry is a very attractive pot plant in its own right or looks well planted in a combination bowl, window box, trough or patio container. Plant this in combination with ivies, winter heathers, evergreen ferns or dwarf evergreen grasses, winter heathers or late winter flowering bulbs. The attractive, bright berries, which are borne in profusion, will last well into the spring.



Indoor Azalea

Azaleas

Indoor Azaleas come in a bright cheerful range of colours and flower freely. Keep in a cool, draught-free position, placed on a saucer with clean gravel and a constant reservoir of water.

Wishing you all a very safe, healthy, peaceful and enjoyable Christmas!

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SPORTING
TALES

Paul Lordan

Paul Lordan is a sports and history enthusiast, and he is delighted to combine his passions in his column. Paul is well placed to comment on sport as a former hurler and footballer with Shamrocks. He is also a former Munster Senior League soccer player and manager with Avondale United, Casement Celtic, Garryduff and Passage AFC. Paul's grá for all things West Cork results from the fact that he is descended from a family of farmers in the Coolmountain area.

West Cork's part in shaping triumphant era for Cork hurling

In evaluating the successes and pitfalls of West Cork's sporting story, hurling is not a discipline that usually springs to mind when discussing past greats and events. In recent times the valiant efforts of Kilbrittain's Ross Cashman, Bandon's Michael Cahalane, and Doheny's Darren Sweetnam (rightly lamented as a huge loss to Cork hurling), have done a lot to put West Cork hurling on the map. On the West Cork side of the South East (Carrigdhoun) division, Valley Rovers also deserve an honourable mention for consistently producing inter-county hurlers throughout their storied history. Kevin Canty, Con Cottrell, Chris O'Leary, Eamonn Collins, Brendan O'Sullivan, and Con Murphy served both Valley Rovers and Cork with distinction. However, there are a rapidly dwindling number of observers who can recall the key contributions of a proud West Cork man to the Cork's golden era of hurling.

Dr. Jim Young was born in Dunmanway in 1915. Part of a Gaelic football dynasty, Jim's father, Jack Young, and his brother Eamonn Young represented Dohenys of Dunmanway and the Cork senior footballers. Both Jack and Eamonn won All Ireland Football medals with Cork, and many regard the latter

as one of the greatest players to wear the fabled red shirt. Amazingly, despite having a two year inter county career, Jack played at midfield in the victorious 1911 football decider against Antrim. Eamonn experienced success in the same position during the 1945 final win over an all-conquering Cavan side. Jim also played his club football for Doheny's and represented the Cork footballers at senior level. Although he lined out at full forward for Cork from 1939 until 1943, football silverware eluded him. However, he was able to console himself by playing a pivotal role in capturing the All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship on five occasions between 1941 and 1946! However, it is unlikely that this success would have been allowed to go to his head. Of their late father, Jim's brother Eamonn would later state "I was lucky to play in one All Ireland and to win it, and I think he was more pleased about the one football All Ireland – and Jim will hate me for saying this – than the five hurling All Ireland".

Having moved from Dunmanway to Cork City to commence his studies in Medicine at University College Cork, a young Jim Young turned his hand to hurling with Glen Rovers in 1938. Although a Cork minor player in 1932 and 1933, he



Jim Young and his Glen Rovers team being led out by Jack Lynch before the 1940 Cork Senior Hurling Championship Final. Jim is fourth from the left.

excelled in the company of star players, such as the immortal Christy Ring and future Taoiseach and member of the 'Hurling Team of the Millennium', Jack Lynch. The fact that Young managed to quickly break into a team that was in the hunt for a fifth successive championship is a major testament to his ability. While operating in the service of Glen Rovers, Young himself won a whopping eight Cork County Senior Hurling Championship titles over an eleven year period.

Young's assimilation into Cork's most successful club hurling half back line of all time, coincided with his emergence on to the Cork senior hurling

panel in 1938. Strangely, it can be argued that the most famous of his eight All Ireland final appearances ended in defeat in 1939. Jim Young played in hellish conditions in a half back line that also contained Johnny Quirke and Willie Campbell. The aptly named Thunder and Lightning Final, saw Kilkenny pip Cork by the narrowest of margins on a scoreline of 2-7 to 3-3. However, victory in the 1940 final would start an incredible run of five All Ireland championship successes in six seasons. Young would also represent Munster, featuring in five Railway Cup victories in a row between 1942

and 1946. He served The Rebels with distinction in a variety of positions across the half back and half forward lines over the coming seasons, before retiring from all forms of hurling after a Munster Championship Quarter Final defeat to Tipperary in 1949.

In retirement, Dr. Jim Young continued to practice medicine in Cork City, and maintained a keen interest in other sports. He became a Munster squash champion, and was appointed as a non-playing captain of the Irish Davis Cup tennis team in 1967. He also served as the President of the Irish Rifle Association for a number of years. Despite being a blow in from West Cork, Jim's commitment to his adopted club was all encompassing. He served as chairman in 1948, while still an inter-county player. He also endeared himself to subsequent generations of club members by frequenting the Glen field, and taking an active interest in club affairs until his death in 1992.

Dr. Jim Young was a key figure in the most successful club and intercounty teams in Cork's hurling history. Through his exploits, West Cork can lay claim to making a pivotal contribution to an era of unparalleled success that shaped the future of hurling in Cork.

people Motoring

CAR
REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

A car with French flair

diesel yet, but last week I got acquainted with the electric version, which is simply called the e-208.

I drove a top of the range GT version, which came in bright yellow and I certainly got a lot of attention in the various super-market car parks that I visited, all within the 5K limit of course.

The official colour was Faro yellow. We are told that Yellow is a truly joyous and radiant colour. It exudes warmth, inspiration and vitality. And that's was only the colour of the e-208!

The new 208 is longer, wider and lower than its predecessor, but only in millimetres. In the new version the exterior design embodies the DNA of the brand with 3-claw LED front headlights.

The classy design is replicated inside the car where Peugeot are very proud of their i-Cockpit with its heads-up display and touchscreen. The front is dominated by a neat sporty-looking steering wheel. I can confirm that the Apple Car-Play works very well.

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 being installed around the country when we finally get the better of Covid-19.

It's no secret that what happens in England, usually follows here. England's first electric vehicle forecourt is due to open later this month. Located near Braintree in Essex, Gridserve's EV forecourt will be the first of over 100 sites to be built over 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.

This has been a turbulent year for the car market globally, particularly in Europe. Although car registrations dropped by 29 per cent during the first nine months

of 2020 there are signs that Europe is all set for an electric revolution. According to figures released for September 2020, this revolution has already started. Can Ireland be far behind?

Prices start at €17,995 for the basic Active Petrol version. Diesels start at €19,250, while the electric starts at €26,809. My top of the range G Line version will cost you €30,440.

Peugeot claim that the range of 340km, but I think around 300km is more accurate. Don't let the battery get too low as it can then take a long time to power back up if you do. And of course if you are thinking of buying it's advisable to get a home charger.

Yes, the Peugeot 208 has plenty of French flair and now comes with an electric edge, the e-208.

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people Sport & Fitness



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.

As we are entering winter and holiday season, my December column is about the best indoor/at home training equipment. Maintaining strength, fitness, and not least mental endurance for coming cold dark months, is of the highest importance.

First, a small personal plea: If you need training equipment, or Christmas presents in general, please consider buying from your local shops when possible. Most have a website or other means of communication, so you can order from them and get it delivered to your doorstep. Amazon made billions during the first lockdown and doesn't need your hard earned euros. Your local shops do!

So please support local shops, and if that fails, look to national shops that deliver to West Cork. Your purchase will help make sure they will still be around after the lockdown, and

Get your bells on for Christmas

the shorter delivery distance is most likely much better for the environment as well.

With that said, here is my list of the best home-training equipment for everyone, regardless of fitness level and experience, followed by a little guide for training with Dumbbells (other equipment will be featured on my Instagram and in coming columns next year).

The Wishlist:

1. Dumbbells (No 1. because they are easy to use and don't require technique)
2. Rubberband (Resistance training with bodyweight – no technique)
3. Kettlebell (Correct technique required for certain exercises)
4. Fitness ladder (No technique)
5. Evil Wheel (No technique)
6. Push Up Bars/Handles (No technique)
7. A mat (No technique)
8. A Foam roller (No technique)

As you can see, the Kettlebell (KB) is the only item on the list, which requires technique. This is because some of the best KB drills can hurt your lower back if done improperly. So unless you already have experience with KB training, or someone in your household does, I will suggest you skip the KB and invest in Dumbbells (DB) instead.

Dumbbells are great for strength training at home, as they require little to no technique if you stick to basic drills. They don't take up much space to either train or store away afterwards. Here's a list of easy DB exercises – remember to warm up shoulders, elbows and back beforehand.

1. Bicep curls (for biceps

and core): Can be done standing or sitting. Grab the DB on the handle with palm facing upwards, relax and straighten your arm (knuckles facing down), bend your elbow and use your biceps to curl the DB upwards toward your shoulder. As you lower your hand/ DB again, keep the movement controlled. (Bonus info: Standing curls will challenge your balance more).

2. Shoulder press (shoulders and core): Can be done sitting and standing. Grab the DB and either keep your thumbs towards yourself or have your palms facing you. Lift DB to your shoulders and press them above your head until your arms are straight. Lower your DB to your shoulders again. Pressing and lowering should both be controlled movements.

3. Squats with DB (Legs and core): Grab one DB with both hands – or if lightweight a DB in each hand, bend elbows and keep DB at chest height.

4. Stand up straight, with a little more than shoulder width between your feet, squat down – keeping your heels on the floor and back straight, core tight – and stand up again, holding your DB in the same position.

5. Russian Side twists (Core - Abs): Lie down on a mat and grab the DB with both hands and hold it around chest/stomach area. Sit up keeping the DB in position, with legs bend. Lower your upper body a little towards the floor, so you can feel your abs/ stomach muscles work to keep you from falling. Now turn/ twist your upperbody to the left, while keeping the DB in front of you – or even lower it a bit to the left towards the floor, turn/ twist the opposite

direction to the right, again while keeping the DB in front or lower it towards the floor to the right side.

6. Single Hand Bend Over Rows (Triceps and back): You need a low sofa/ bench or bed for this one. Put your left knee and left hand on the surface, right foot on the floor, DB in right hand (Arm hanging towards the floor). Keep core tight and straight and lift the DB towards your shoulder. Lower it again with control and purpose.

7. Bonus info: If you are used to exercise, you can do this drill from standing with both hands. Just bend your knees a little and lean over a bit, while keeping your lower back straight. Lower DB towards the floor and lift up again to chest. Full control both directions.

8. Saxon Sidebends (Core, shoulders and arms): Stand up with shoulder width between your feet. Lift the DB with both hands, straight above your head. Bend a little by the hip to one side, like the grass in the wind, while keeping the DB above your head. When you can't bend more, stand up straight again and then bend/sway to the other side. Engage your core throughout the exercise time.

9. Burpees (Full Body incl. Cardio): Incorporate the DB in your burpee routine, by picking it up after the push up (ground), jumping up with it and pressing it overhead at the top of the jump. Bring it back down and place quick before doing another push up. Pro-tip: The faster you do the burpees, the better cardio exercise.



Russian Side-Twists

Schedule Ideas:

For beginners: Choose 4-5 exercises to do 2-3 times a week. Remember about eight minutes for warm up – especially in the cold months, where muscles are at risk to pull when they are cold.

Intermediate/ experts: Up to six days a week – as many exercises as you like.

All the above exercises are great for a 10x3 beginners' schedule. (10 repetitions/3 sets). For intermediate or experts, I recommend heavier DB or add as many reps/sets, as it suits your form, goal and time consumption.

Weight Tip: Your Dumbbells (DB) should be so light, that you can press them above your head with straight arms (one in each hand), but as heavy, as when doing 10 biceps curls, you should be pushing yourself on the last couple of repetitions.

When you're finished with an exercise, remember to put the DB down. Don't drop them, as they will leave marks on your floor.

Before I leave you with a heartfelt Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year wish in these times with Covid-19, lockdown measures and so on,

just a little note to say: If you find motivation hard to come by these days, or it's hard to find a rhythm or stick with a schedule, do not worry. Just keep at it to the best of your ability right here and now. Doing something – however little – is always better than doing nothing and, as you probably already know, doing something versus nothing makes a huge difference in the mental game.

Focus on what you have done, rather than what you missed – it'll bring you more positivity and resolve to continue than looking through negative glances.

So put on the 'Yes' hat, the sunglasses (because the sun always shine on the cool peeps) and bring the carrot rather than the stick; wish yourself and those around you a wonderful Christmas and a (hopefully) better New Year. Stay healthy, stay strong and stay positive!

Thank you for reading, see you in the New Year.

As always: Questions, comments and so on are welcome at taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com or via Instagram: www.instagram.com/trainwithadane

Clon RFC recognised at Munster Rugby Awards

Clonakilty RFC has been awarded Club Mini Section of the Year at the Munster Rugby Awards 2020 due to an extremely strong coaching structure that supports the entire minis section. As well as supplying regular attendees at regional workshops, the club has also hosted coaching courses and club workshops.

Clonakilty RFC has strongly engaged in the Club and School Hub Programme and has a presence in 10 primary schools, through both Munster Rugby Club Community Rugby Officers and their own Club Development Officers.

During the season the Club organised two school blitz days, with in excess of 800 participants. These were both fantastic days out and were very well



marshalled by club volunteers and coaches.

The club has girls' teams at

U8, U10 and U12s taking part in girls-only West Cork blitzes.

O'Sullivan: More youth facilities needed in our communities

Cork South West TD Christopher O'Sullivan is urging the community Clonakilty community to get behind building of a Skate Park in town as a first step to encouraging more youth facilities in the region.

Concerned over the lack of youth facilities in rural communities, Deputy O'Sullivan earlier this week spoke with Cork County Council about the possibility of a Skate Park in the town.

"It's the dream of Clon local Thady Trá for Clon to have its own Skate Park, and I'm with him all the way" Deputy

O'Sullivan said.

"He has identified a small triangle of public space in Deasy's car park, next to the small sports area.

"The good news is council are open to the idea of designating this area for a skate park.

"The next step will be for the proposal to be brought to the municipal district meeting where hopefully local councillors will support the idea."

"We don't have enough youth facilities in Clon or West Cork.

"This could be a stepping stone to something great."



Thady Trá