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Nita and Richard Tarr with their son Gregory Tarr, 17, a 6th year student from Bandon Grammar School who is the winner of the 57th BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition.
Pic: Chris Bellew /Fennell Photography

Bandon student wins this year's BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

The winner of the 57th BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) has been announced as Gregory Tarr, aged 17, a sixth year student from Bandon Grammar School. Gregory has taken home the top prize of €7,500 and the BTYSTE perpetual trophy for his project titled 'Detecting state-of-the-art deepfakes'. The announcement was made at the first ever virtual BTYSTE awards ceremony streamed live from the Mansion House last week. Gregory presented his project in the senior age group of the Technology category. A further 35 awards were made to Cork students in recognition of their projects.

Gregory impressed the judges with his project using a sophisticated

artificial intelligence software program that can efficiently detect DeepFake media with state-of-the-art accuracy. The software, which is over 150,000 lines of code, made significant improvements on speed and efficiency when compared to the current best model without sacrificing its ability to accurately detect the fake. This tool could potentially be deployed at scale to filter out DeepFake media making the internet a safer place. This was Gregory's fifth time competing at BTYSTE having competed on four other occasions in the RDS.

Chair of the Technology judging panel, Mr Leonard Hobbs from Trinity College Dublin, said that "the winner this year demonstrated an expertise in computer science

which was well beyond his years. The level of coding he deployed in developing the extremely complex program which detects fake videos, was guided by his deep understanding of the state of the art of this leading edge technology". He went on to say that "the judges have been continually impressed by Gregory's projects at the BT Young Scientist competition over the past few years and they were delighted that he had progressed to winning the top award this year".

Gregory will also represent Ireland at the European Union Contest for Young Scientists, which is scheduled to go ahead in Salamanca Spain in September 2021.

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Realising the value of our iconic seals

While the pandemic has forced so many of us to slow down, organisations such as Seal Rescue Ireland have been exceptionally busy. West Cork is lucky enough to host some of Ireland's seal population and members of the public, forced outdoors in greater numbers due to lockdown, will have noticed an increase in seal activity along our coastline recently. The reason for this is that pupping season has just ended for the Grey seal and it has now entered its moulting period.

Melanie Crose, Executive Director of Seal Rescue Ireland chats to **Mary O'Brien** about the work carried out by Seal Rescue Ireland, the hugely important role that seals play in our ecosystem and what members of the West Cork public should do if they do happen to come across a seal in trouble.



Melanie Crose, Executive Director Seal Rescue Ireland, holding a common seal pup that was rescued from Sligo.

Seal Rescue Ireland (SRI), initiated in 2010, is a registered charity focused on the rescue, rehab and release of sick, injured and orphaned seals from all over Ireland. As the only such organisation in the Republic, SRI is always looking to recruit, induct and train new volunteers to its network. "Anyone can join our network," says Melanie "and as we're now training over Zoom, it is actu-

ally a far easier process and we can also hold training sessions more regularly."

The training is focused on teaching people how to observe seals in their wild environment and identify any that need to be rescued. "We often get calls about seals that are actually healthy and just hanging out in their natural habitat," explains Melanie, who emphasises that the last thing SRI wants is for

people to pick seals up off the beach that don't need to be rescued because oftentimes this can actually do more harm than good.

"Another reason that it's really important for members of the public to maintain a safe distance from seals is because they are in fact closely related to dogs and bears so of course they do have sharp teeth and they will bite!"

Unlike whales and dolphins, seals are semi-aquatic, which Melanie explains means they spend about half their time on land. "This is because they need to rest and rear their pups."

Moulting season for the Grey seal ends in March or April. Common seal pupping season starts in May or June.

Most mammals and birds undergo moulting, during which hair or feathers, respectively, are renewed. The annual moult in Grey seals involves the shedding of year-old fur and the growth of a new pelage.

"As a result, this time of year is when we'll often hear about a seal over-population problem but that's only because there are these small pockets of credible habitat where it is safe for the seals to moult, so they'll all cluster up there," explains Melanie.

The reality is that the vast majority of the Irish coastline is inhospitable to seals.

West Cork is fortunate to be home to both the Grey and Common seal, the Grey species being the larger of the two. "Common seals are more like cats," explains Melanie. "They're more shy, reserved, less social and not so loud. Grey seals resemble dogs more. They're bigger, more vocal, have large personalities and are really fun to watch. They also tend to be more aggressive than the Common seal."

Despite the name, there are only between three and four thousand Common seals in Irish waters. With declining numbers, this is a species of special concern, which means that every Common seal we can protect or rescue is really important to the Common seal population. "South of the Beara peninsula has a small Common seal population,

which is really special, as most of the Common seal population found around the North West," says Melanie.

There are between eight and ten thousand Grey seals in Ireland. The species is recovering from near extinction, so therefore it is protected under EU and Irish law. The numbers are now starting to slowly climb but Grey seals only have one pup per year, of which approx. only 50 per cent survive their first year. Unfortunately seals still face huge environmental threats from things like plastic pollution and unsustainable fishing, which threatens their food source.

"It's important to keep in mind that there are fewer Grey seals in the world than African elephants, so the ones we are lucky enough to have here in Ireland are iconic and really valuable," says Melanie passionately.

"It's important to keep in mind that there are fewer Grey seals in the world than African elephants, so the ones we are lucky enough to have here in Ireland are iconic and really valuable."

Seals are a native keystone species, which means they help hold the marine ecosystem together. "Seals are critical to keeping a balanced ecosystem," she emphasises. "It's like the wolves at Yellowstone. As an apex predator, they were removed because people thought it would give other animals a chance of survival. What actually happened is that certain species got overpopulated, which decimated certain areas and ended up changing the landscape."

"Seals in Irish waters are our 'wolves'," she continues. "They're keeping a balance in the population and also recycling nutrients. All marine mammals poo a lot, which spreads nutrients along the surface water, which is where plankton needs these nutrients to help them grow. Without plankton we have nothing and without marine mammals, it really would all come crashing down."

There is a seal population on the east coast but they are losing a lot of habitat due to such factors as coastal erosion, sea level rise, coastal development and increased human activity on our beaches.

The Seal Rescue Ireland

centre is based at the central location of Courtown in Co Wexford on the east coast. "I've been here for three years," says Melanie "and I've only seen one or two wild seals ever; and I walk on the beach every day."

Open water swimmers may have noticed that seals, in particular the Grey Seal, will approach and follow them in the water.

"Seals are marine mammals, built for speed and agility in the water," explains Melanie. In the water they are in their comfort zone; it's much easier for them to escape if they feel threatened, so they do tend to be more curious, which is completely normal.

This curiosity rarely turns to aggression unless the seal feels under threat. "There have only been very rare cases, if any, that I've heard of, where someone has been bitten by a seal while they're in the water. Saying that, we do urge people not to approach seals, as if they do feel threatened, they could get defensive or even aggressive."

On land, seals are slow and vulnerable, so usually very cautious about getting out of the water when there is human activity in the area. "Much of the time when a seal has to be rescued, it's because a person has disturbed a seal pup and, as a result, the pup is abandoned by its mother. The increase in storms is another factor; many sea pups are getting a really brutal start to life."

SRI will usually see a huge rise in calls following a storm. 2020 was by far the busiest year for the organisation with 170 seal intakes.

While on one hand, lockdowns, and as a result increased human activity, has been good for seals because the rescue organisation are getting more calls about ones in trouble that otherwise may have been missed; the downside is that there are some people who don't realise that this is the seals' natural habitat so they shouldn't be disturbed until absolutely necessary. "The majority of the public just want to help," says Melanie, "however if the public gets too close, it means the seals can't carry out their natural behaviours, for example, resting, looking for a meal or keeping an eye out for predators. If a seal is even looking at you, it counts as disturbance and it's that repeated exposure that can really have a long-term impact on these creatures."

Melanie's advice for members of the public who see a seal they think might need help is to keep a safe distance and call the Rescue Hotline for help. "Please don't approach the seal and maintain a distance of at

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least 100m (keeping dogs on a lead) and call our 24/7 Rescue Hotline at 087 1955 393," she says. Seal Rescue Ireland will ask the caller for a description, location and a photo to determine if the seal needs to be rescued, and then send a trained volunteer out.

Volunteer

If you are interested in joining SRI's network of nationwide rescue volunteers, the organisation offers virtual trainings throughout the year. Registration can be done through the

website (sealrescueireland.org).

Even if you don't live by a coastline, seal transporters are needed everywhere,' says Melanie. SRI has 700 trained volunteers around the country and always looking to recruit more. Timing is of the essence, especially with a young seal pup. The quicker we can get them in, the more likely it is that they will survive.

Donate

SRI relies on the dedication of volunteers and the generosity of public donations to continue

its work. Donations and third party fundraisers are welcomed, and there are also adoption, membership, and sponsorship programmes available as other ways of getting involved. More information can be found on the website (sealrescueireland.org)

Seal Rescue Ireland is also very involved in habitat conservation and restoration and is currently carrying out a tree-planting project, designed to keep sediment out of our waterways and make our ecosystem cleaner.

West Cork Seal Rescue – 'Phoebe'

Phoebe is a grey seal pup that was reported to SRI by a member of the public on December 12, 2020 in Trafaska, Baltimore. She was very small in size and had a large number of deep wounds to her shoulders and neck, which could have been the result of a dog attack, or possibly from getting caught up by rough seas and becoming injured in rocks. Upon receiving the photos of her, SRI sent one of its trained volunteers to lift her from the beach to start the journey to the SRI centre in Courtown for care.

Happily, Phoebe has recovered from her wounds and is steadily putting on weight in one of the centre's rehabilitation pools. If all goes well, it is expected that she will be back to full health and ready for release back into the wild in about a month.



Largest quantities of vaccines expected during the second quarter of 2021

News of an "abundant level" of vaccines to be made available in the second quarter of this year has been welcomed by Ireland South MEP Deirdre Clune.

MEP Clune said: "In this week's committee we had the opportunity to put questions forward to the EU's lead negotiator on COVID-19 vaccine contracts, on the latest developments regarding contracts, transparency, authorisations, availability and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines.

"We heard that there will be an "abundant level" of vaccines to be made available in the second quarter of this year which I very much welcome.

"In Ireland we're at the important stage of vaccinating the most vulnerable members of our society and with time vaccinations will become available for all who wish to be vaccinated."

MEP Deirdre Clune is

a Member of the European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee.

BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved by the European Medicines Agency. The Moderna vaccine arrived in Ireland this week. The BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine is currently being administered in Ireland and across the EU. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) received the application for the AstraZeneca vaccine this week too and the conditional market authorisation is expected at the end of January.

The Health Commissioner noted that she expects Johnson and Johnson to seek approval from the EMA in February and if all goes well the AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson vaccines would be approved for use and we could have four vaccine types available by Spring.

MEP Clune said: "The evalu-

ation of the vaccine will proceed under an accelerated timeline. The EMA has already reviewed some data on the vaccine during a rolling review and has been working hard to scrutinise vaccines to ensure their safety and efficacy.

"The European Commission last week purchased an additional 300 million doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine. This enables the EU to not only cover the needs of its whole population but also to supply vaccinations to neighbouring countries."

The largest quantities of vaccines are expected during the second quarter of 2021, as already agreed in the existing contracts.

"The European Commission's role lies in negotiating on behalf of Member States to secure vaccine doses. The responsibility of vaccine deployment strategies lies with each individual Member State."

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Clonakilty to get new fire station

Cork South West TD, Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan has welcomed the announcement of €1.6 million for a new fire station for Clonakilty and confirmed that the tender will be finalised early in January 2021: "This is something that I have been campaigning for over a number of years, so I was delighted to receive confirmation from Minister Darragh O'Brien that €1.6million is being allocated to the project.

"This is a good new story for Clonakilty's fire fighters and for the people who live in the vicinity. It also opens up an opportunity for an exciting development on the site of the old fire station that will be of benefit to the town."

Construction on the new station is due to commence in the second quarter of 2021. Located on the western side of the Clonakilty ByPass, it will allow far easier access to all the major routes; this should improve response times, as dispatches from the present town centre location can potentially be delayed in traffic.

Local Councillor Paul Hayes

has also lobbied Cork County Council for a new fire station since first being elected in 2014. "Plans for the new facility were presented to Councillors back in 2017, before going through Part 8 planning requirements in early 2018. Frustratingly, the previous Government would only sign off on one new fire station per year nationwide and Clonakilty began to slip down the list of priorities, being overtaken by Kanturk and Macroom. I'm glad that at long last, our local fire service personnel will get the facilities they deserve and badly need to carry out their vital work."

The new facility will be state-of-the-art – a drastic improvement on the current fire station, both in terms of the facility itself and the working conditions of the firemen. As well as proper shower and changing facilities, which are currently not available to firefighters, the site will incorporate a training area and sufficient storage for equipment.

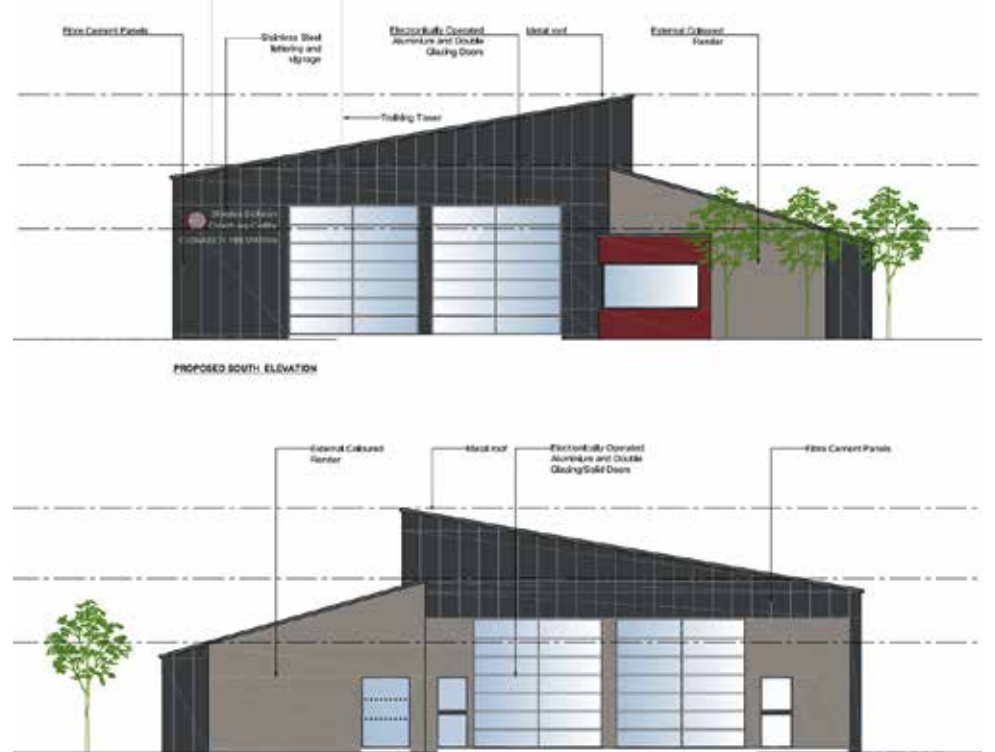
Ronan Archibold has been a firefighter in Clonakilty since 2002 and Station Officer for the past three years. He says the

crew of 10 retained firefighters are delighted at the news that they will soon be moving homes. "The fire station in Clon has served the town well but, with the modern Fire Service's enhancement of training and equipment, it is now outdated.

"We have training in areas such as Road Traffic Accidents and Casualty Care every Monday night but, due to lack of space here, we often have to find alternative spaces. Having onsite training facilities will make a huge difference to us."

The crew has been kept busy this month attending road incidents caused by icy weather. This year has seen an overall reduction in car accidents because of more people staying at home but Ronan says there has been a rise in electrical house fires.

"House fires in the past were mostly caused by chimney fires getting out of control. Now a lot of the fires we attend are caused by electrical devices, especially by cheap phone chargers – but even the branded ones can be dangerous; never leave your device charging overnight or when you are not at home. Also don't leave a phone or laptop



to overheat on something like a duvet. And most importantly, set a day each week to test your smoke alarm."

Councillor Hayes says that Cork County Council hopes to develop the site of the existing

station in the near future and will be putting a call out to the public for their ideas for it. "While a section of the new building there will be dedicated to civic offices for Council staff there may be room to include

something like a theatre, which is something I'll certainly be pushing for!"

Above: Plans for the new fire station on Clonakilty Bypass.

Noreen Cronin appointed Assistant Manager at Bantry Credit Union



Bantry Credit Union has appointed Noreen Cronin as their new Assistant Manager. From Ardnacloy in Ballylickey, Noreen is a long-serving staff member at the credit union having celebrated her 20th work anniversary in May 2020.

Chairperson Eddie Mullins said that the Board of Directors were delighted to announce the

appointment, which they believed would be hugely popular with both members and staff alike. "Noreen has long been recognised as a tremendous asset to the credit union. Her knowledge of the credit union's operations is second to none. That, combined with her empathy with members, her work ethic, and her dedication, makes Noreen the ideal candidate for

this important position."

Noreen is well qualified in the areas of credit union and financial services, and holds a number of professional certificates and diplomas from the LIA/UCD.

Noreen succeeds Siobhán Geoghegan, who has moved on to take up a position as Compliance Officer with Global Shares in Clonakilty. Thanking

Siobhán for her dedicated and valuable service during the past five years, Mr Mullins said "Siobhán's contribution to the development of Bantry Credit Union during these recent years of change is greatly appreciated. On behalf of the Board, BOC and staff, I wish her every success in her new career."

A New Year message from Holly Cairns TD

"We need a government that listens," says Holly Cairns TD. "Above all, public representatives need to listen.

"To really understand how public policy and funding can be directed to help improve our society and quality of life for all, we need to engage with communities and groups on the

ground.

"Before I make a speech in the Dáil or contact a Minister, I talk with people who are directly affected by the issue at hand, be it disability services, the

hospitality industry, or island communities. Regretfully, this is a capacity that the Government parties have lost.

"Many of the government's controversies stem from not listening to people and from a hubris that they and their Departments know best. The Minister for Education Norma Foley's mishandling of schools last week is a clear example of this. The Minister announced the re-opening of special schools and classes, which was welcomed with justified concerns from staff, and the return of leaving cert students for three days, which was widely opposed by students and staff. However, the Minister and the Department had not engaged with student representatives or fully discussed the plans with opposition and unions, and, as a result, had to make a dramatic u-turn.

"There are many other

cases like this. The 221+ Patient CervicalCheck Support Group were treated deplorably by the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, the Mother and Baby Homes Legislation was rushed through the Oireachtas with no input from survivors of the institutions, and the Department of Agriculture introduced a fisheries support scheme during the summer which was not taken up by the majority of fishermen and women because it did not address their needs. We saw the same mismanagement when it came to the recent Forestry Bill. The list goes on.

"In the midst of a pandemic it is vital that the government is willing to listen to those impacted by their decisions. 2021 is a more hopeful year, but it will still be challenging. Ministers need to engage with communities and groups to help them make informed decisions. Only then can they develop policies

that can gain greater public support and confidence.

"People are understandably frustrated at state systems that are inflexible and at times hostile to new ideas. Time and time again, Community Associations and support services will present innovations and solutions to existing problems, such as an absence of paediatric therapies, flooding, or new recreational amenities; but then they encounter bureaucratic barriers, and despite assurances from government little happens.

"We need a government that listens, that is proactive and that rewards creativity and empowers local areas.

"Although I cannot meet constituents in my offices, at markets, or during community events at the moment, I am always available to listen to your concerns and ideas. Please reach out at holly.cairns@oir.ie"

HOLLY CAIRNS TD
Cork South West
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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.

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A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

Every January, it is traditional for columnists to write about New Year's resolutions. However, I feel that might seem a bit presumptuous, given the year we've just had and the uncertainty of the year ahead. A resolution to go to the gym three times a week seems a bit tenuous when you don't know when they might be open again. As I write, we are again confined to a 5km range, which as I wrote last time, is quite limiting when you live deep in the countryside. A Clonakilty friend who lives in New Orleans recently posted that she wished she could be walking on Inchydoney beach. I commented, "So do I!"

Resolutions tend to be all about control, which is in rather short supply during a pandemic. So instead of resolutions, I thought that I would write about lessons learnt last year. 2020 was one hell of a learning curve: A master class on how to cope in the face of something, over which we have no control. Here, in no particular order, are a few of the things that I have learned.

Fleece is my friend: I have always been a fan of the fleecy pyjama bottom. The pandemic has taught me that the comfort of fleece cannot be underestimated. It has also taught me that fleece can be found in a number of other items of clothing:

Lessons from a pandemic

socks, tracksuit bottoms, tops and hoodies, hats, gloves and scarves. Wearing them all at once is like being enveloped in a soft protective armour. My dressing gown, which is also fleecy, is big enough to wrap around the many layers covering my body, keeping it all together and preventing even the sneakiest draft from getting in. It is not the most attractive look, but another lesson learnt is that I have no vanity left at all, at all. I was not very vain to start with, but whatever shame I had at being caught looking like a layered version of the masked Michelin man has dissipated. Anyway, it's not like anyone is likely to pop in for a visit. The postman and delivery people are the only ones who get to see me in my full fleece pandemic regalia, and I'm sure they've seen worse. I don't even bother to accessorise my facemask.

Time is fluid and there is never enough of it: Has there ever been a year that has been so slow and yet so fast? Some days flow like black treacle, only to jump to dinnertime in a flash. I remember everyone complaining about the slowness of January 2020. Then before we knew it, we were back to the beginning of a new year again. What was that about? When I look back it's all a bit of a fog. A French proverb states "The days follow one after another and do not resemble each other." (Les jours se suivent et ne ressemblent pas.) It means that life is ever-changing. However, for me, 2020 was one long day that looked pretty much like yesterday. Many tried to take advantage of the situation by taking up new skills to pass the time. I applaud anyone who managed to learn a language,

fold origami, build a garden shed, or in fact start any project and finish it. I have a long list of projects that I abandoned this year, from knitting to watercolours, and from yoga to learning to play the piano. I have also not produced a novel, though I've been complaining of a lack of time in which to write it for years.

Simple joys: It is well known that being grateful is a great source of peace and joy. 2020 taught me to be grateful for a number of things that I had taken for granted. There are the obvious ones like walking on the beach, meeting up with friends at the pub, live music... Less obvious are simple joys like talking to strangers, walking around with no particular place to go, or going into a shop just to browse. I have always been what the French call a 'flâneur', which translates rather charmingly into 'someone who saunters around observing society'. 2020 made me have to plan my every move, and to have a good reason to do it. There is no sauntering during a pandemic.

I am, of course, grateful for many things, not least the fact that all my daughters are safe and in Ireland. I have Brexit and Covid to thank for that. Vaccination is on its way, like a tiny flame of hope on the horizon. (For the record – I will get the vaccine as soon as I can.) Spring is also on the horizon. The days are getting longer and though I intend to remain encased in fleece for a good while, there is the hope that I will emerge from my cocoon sometime in 2021. In the meantime: Stay strong. Stay safe. Here's hoping we'll all be sauntering around again soon.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the January edition of West Cork People.

I think Louise O'Dwyer summed it up best in her lifestyle column this month when she said we could be forgiven for thinking that 2020 just put a wig on and emerged as 2021! We're not even halfway through January and already we're back in Level 5 lockdown with our children out of school; and bombarded with media stories of attempted coups, riots, our ICUs being overwhelmed by Covid cases and this week the Mother and Baby Homes report published by the Commission of Investigation – a shameful chapter of Irish history. Let's not forget the Climate crisis we are facing, a challenge far greater than any pandemic!

It wouldn't be hard to get paralysed by fear if dwelling for too long on any or all of the above; my way of coping is to try to concentrate on the small things, the stuff that's closer to home and within my control. When I started getting anxious last week because of the rising numbers, I made a list in my head of all the things I'm grateful for and what I'm looking forward to doing when this pandemic ends. And if all else fails (especially when it comes to online schooling), I'm still jumping in the ocean as a tonic. Hopefully once the vaccine rollout picks up steam, life will get easier.

Against the odds, one of the things we are grateful for is to be able to bring you a January edition of West Cork People in 2021, which we have strived to keep as positive as possible, focusing on what's good in the world right now.

Inside this issue, you'll find articles on various species, from the rare and wondrous barn owl to the iconic seal. We also have gardening plans and advice to get you started; health advice to boost your immune system; and mindfulness practices to use when you feel overwhelmed. We also have advice for businesses affected by Brexit from Paul Healy in Cork Rubicon's Centre and Kieran takes us on a journey back in time to look at some of the world's greatest vaccination successes. For this and more, see inside. I hope you enjoy the read.

Stay home and stay safe.

Until next month,

Mary



One of first people in Bantry General Hospital to receive the Covid 19 vaccine on January 11 was Amanda Murphy, Clerical Officer at Bantry General Hospital.
Pic Michael Mac Sweeney/Provision



Mary O'Brien
Editor



Sheila Mullins
Creative Director



Ronan Ryan
Sales Consultant

West Cork People
Old Town Hall,
McCurtain Hill,
Clonakilty, Co. Cork.
www.westcorkpeople.ie

Contributors

Kate Arbon
Karen Austin
Hannah Dare
Tina Pisco
Louise O'Dwyer
John Hosford
Sean Creedon
Tania Presutti
Noah Chase
Shane Daly
Pauline Murphy
Kieran Doyle
Sherna Malone
Tommy Moyles
Jean Perry
Fiona Hayes
Grace O'Sullivan MEP
Rosari Kingston
Dr Jeff Featherstone
Pat Culhane
Paul Lordan
April Danaan
Eugene Daly
James Waller
Jacques Brennan

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West Cork People

Bandon's Cian Walsh fighting for students with the Irish Second-Level Students' Union

Transition Year student Cian Walsh of St. Brogan's College, Bandon has been elected, alongside Anna Keyes (Edmund Rice College Carrigaline), as a Cork County Regional Officer of the Irish Second-Level Students Union. Meg Foley (Ballincollig Community School) and Eva McDonnell (Ursuline Secondary School Blackrock) will be working as the Cork City Regional Officers. The Irish Second-Level Students' Union is the national representative

body for second-level students in the Republic of Ireland. Cian took up his role on January 1, and is looking forward to working on behalf of all students across the county.

The four were elected on the back of their speeches presented at last year's Regional Council Of Schools. They are all extremely passionate about advocating for student wellbeing, especially through Covid-19. "We want to bring the student voice to the forefront of the conversation, we

believe that student opinion is an essential and vital part of society today and it should be treated as such," explains Anna Keyes. Meg Foley adds, "Even though we've only been in office for less than a week, we've had the amazing opportunity to engage with topics like leaving cert contingency plans. We're really excited to see recognition of students' opinions by decision makers and are definitely looking forward to what's to come!"

"Many 6th years such as

myself have had to deal with a ridiculous amount of stress due to school closures and the leaving cert," says Eva McDonnell. "I feel really lucky to be placed in a position where I can campaign for clarity and change on their behalf."

Cian Walsh agreed with this, stating that "the Covid-19 pandemic has put an unthinkable amount of pressure on students in exam years and it is critical to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the decision making process for the State

Exams 2021 contingency plan."

The Regional Officers plan to work alongside local TDs and County Councillors in their term, and also to grow the ISSU in the Cork region for the year ahead. The ISSU has played a central role in many of the decisions made around schools and exams during the Covid-19 pandemic, and Cian, Anna, Meg and Eva plan to ensure that student voices are heard at a local and national level for the year ahead.

Thank you for the good work.

The fishermen of Castletownbere, Union Hall and Baltimore have played their part in helping remove more than 400 tonnes of marine waste to help protect Ireland's marine environment.



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#Fishingforlitter
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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



EUROPEAN UNION
This measure is part-financed by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund



Coxswain Kieran Cotter retires after 45 years with Baltimore RNLI

December marked the end of an era for the Baltimore Lifeboat with the retirement of Coxswain Kieran Cotter after 45 years of service.

At age 17, Kieran first became interested in Baltimore Lifeboat and he officially joined the crew on January 1, 1975. In the early years as a crew member Kieran was involved in the dramatic rescue of the 1979 Fastnet Race. Baltimore Lifeboat was the first lifeboat launched and spent the longest time at sea during the tragedy. At the time it was the biggest rescue operation since World War 2. Kieran and his brother Liam were also involved in the rescue of Charles J. Haughey in 1985.

Kieran held the position of second Coxswain for a number of years before becoming Coxswain following the retirement of Christy Collins in 1989. During his 45 years at the station Kieran has received multiple awards for his roles in many rescues. Most notably, in 1991 Kieran was awarded the Bronze Medal for gallantry and the Maud Smith award for the bravest act of life saving that year following the 26-hour rescue of the fishing vessel the Japonica and her 15 crew, who referred to Baltimore lifeboat and her crew as "The Mad Men in the small boat" and the rescue of the yacht Atlantis Adventure and her five crew. Coxswain Cotter and his crew also received recognition from

the Swiss Embassy in 2008 for the outstanding bravery and commitment shown during the rescue of Swiss nationals in hazardous conditions and from the United States Congress for the rescue of the crew of Rambler during the 2011 Fastnet Yacht Race.

Kieran has seen many changes during his time at the station including the arrival of four different classes of all-weather lifeboats and the reconstruction of the lifeboat station and pen at Bull Point to accommodate the current Tamar Class all-weather lifeboat the Alan Massey and the Atlantic 85 inshore lifeboat the Rita Daphne Smyth. In September 2019 Kieran accepted the 100th Anniversary Vellum on behalf of the crew, management and fundraising team at Baltimore station.

Owen Medland, RNLI's Lifesaving Lead Ireland, paid testimony to Kieran's service. "It is true to say that the RNLI is built upon its people and in Kieran the team in Baltimore have had firm foundations. One of the longest serving Coxswains in the country entrusted with the safety of Baltimore's lifeboats and crews since the late 80s having joined as crew in 1975 Kieran has a remarkable record of lifesaving service and community commitment. As with every volunteer this service would not have been possible without the support of family and we are equally grateful for this support which has enabled Kieran to serve his

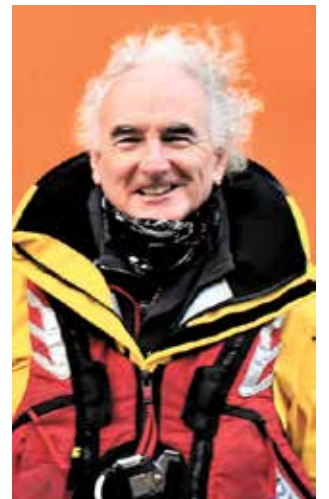
community so well. We wish Kieran every health and happiness in his next chapter and he leaves the RNLI in Baltimore in good hands to continue their lifesaving work on the challenging coast of west Cork. Kieran has left a legacy of lives saved from the sea and witnessed the evolution of the RNLI's service provision in the area over five decades for which he should be justifiably proud - thank you Kieran Cotter."

Declan Tiernan, Chairperson of Baltimore Lifeboat, paid tribute to Kieran saying: "Natural leadership is a rare gift which Kieran Cotter has in abundance. It is the ability to instill confidence and trust in the people around you, calmly dealing with new and unforeseen circumstances without raising your voice. The ability to assess a situation, come up with a plan that your crew will execute because they have the utmost confidence in their leader.

"Kieran is also a wonderful communicator; in dangerous situations he can put people at ease, at other times journalists will want to go to Kieran for the most accurate report.

Napoleon Bonaparte famously said that he'd rather have lucky generals than good ones. Well, Kieran Cotter is not only a good leader but also brings luck with him.

"Kieran Cotter gave 45 years of service to the Baltimore Lifeboat and when you think that in 2019 we celebrated the centenary of the first lifeboat arriving in



Long-serving Baltimore RNLI Coxswain Kieran Cotter and Crew member Ronnie Carthy on their last exercise before stepping down in December. Pic: RNLI/Emma Lupton



Socially distanced and by a fishing rod, Kieran Cotter hands over the lifeboat keys to Baltimore RNLI's new Coxswain Aidan Bushe. Pic: RNLI/Micheal Cottrell

Baltimore it really puts Kieran's service into perspective."

Tom Bushe, Baltimore RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager, added "I first worked with Kieran when I started as crew in the 1980s. Over the years his dedication and commitment to the Baltimore RNLI has been exceptional and his advice to me in my role has been invaluable. Fortunately, Kieran's

vast array of knowledge and experience will not be lost to Baltimore RNLI as he is going to continue to be involved by becoming a Deputy Launching Authority. I must also mention Ronnie Carthy, another long serving crew member who also retires this week. Ronnie was also an outstanding crew member of the lifeboat for almost 30 years."

Kieran is leaving the Alan Massey and her crew in good hands, with second Coxswain Aidan Bushe now taking over the role as station Coxswain. In these times of social distancing Baltimore Lifeboat Station was sadly unable to give Kieran the send off he deserves, but looks forward to celebrating with him sometime in the future.

Write for Rights - Change for the better in 2021

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

Khaled Drareni is a journalist who shares the common dream of freedom and equality with many Algerians. When people took to the streets in February 2019 to demand these principles, Khaled, as a journalist, made sure the world knew what was happening

inside Algeria. Through his journalism, he made a point of covering protests. This placed him at odds with the authorities who targeted him, detaining him many times. On March 29, Khaled was arrested while covering a demonstration, and subsequently sentenced to two years in prison.

UN human rights experts have condemned the prison sentence. They called on Algerian authorities to overturn the sentence and release Drareni from prison.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms this two-year prison sentence imposed on a journalist who was simply doing his job, and call on the Algerian authorities to reverse it and set Mr. Drareni free," the experts said.

Drareni, 40, had been

sentenced in August 2020 to three years in prison for filming police attacking demonstrators in Algiers on charges officially called "inciting an illegal assembly and endangering national unity". Although a reduced two-year sentence was confirmed later (on appeal, 15 September), "it is still grossly inappropriate because the charges brought against him are a blatant violation of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and of association," the experts said.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights describes the case in their website www.ohchr.org.

The organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) describes Khaled Drareni as a symbol of press freedom in Algeria.

Sample Letter

Addressed to: Abdelmajid Tebboune, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, El Mouradia, B.P. 16000 Algiers, Algeria

Your Excellency,
I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release Khaled Drareni, an independent journalist, sentenced to prison simply for doing his job.

He was reporting on a HIRAK demonstration on March 27 when he was arrested. He has been detained ever since.

Khaled just wants a fairer, better Algeria that cares for and benefits everyone. He is held on the unjustified charge of inciting an unarmed gathering and "harming the integrity of the national territory".

Khaled should be back on

the streets, reporting the news, not locked up for his principled journalism.

Please, release him without delay.

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.ie.

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).

Clonakilty Credit Union has you covered with a car loan

One of the greatest benefits of a Credit Union car loan, unlike PCP finance, is that you own the car straight away. There are lots of other positives in taking a loan out from Clonakilty Credit Union, for example you won't face penalties for early repayment, there are no restrictions on the type of car you may buy and there is up to 100 per cent finance available.

Sinead O'Sullivan (pictured on left) took out her car loan out with Clonakilty Credit Union because she felt their loans were straightforward and competitive. She also found them very easy to deal with. "After looking into PCP finance with different garages, I found there were a lot of hidden terms and conditions, plus I didn't need or want a brand new car (who needs a brand new car on these roads!). I applied for the loan with Clonakilty Credit Union and got approval within 24 hours: I could not recommend them

enough. The staff are pleasant to deal with and are always there to help...thank you."

Eimear O'Regan from Timoleague (pictured on right) is currently completing a PhD in Biomechanics at CIT Cork. As she is living at home, she needs a car to travel to college, and so approached Clonakilty Credit Union for a loan. "Because I was returning to college, I wasn't sure if I would qualify for a car loan, but Clonakilty Credit Union were more than happy to loan me the funds I required. I ap-



plied online and the loan was approved within 24 hours. So easy and quick. Thanks."

For more information on Clonakilty Credit Union car loans go to

www.clonakiltycreditunion.ie



Ireland represented at One Planet Summit

Ireland's participation in the virtual One Planet Summit for Biodiversity (OPS) is an important step for preparing for the next decade, Cork South West Deputy and Fianna Fáil spokesman on biodiversity, Christopher O'Sullivan said.

Minister for State Malcolm Noonan joined heads of state and government as well as leaders of international organizations, financial institutions, the business sector and NGOs, to make commitments for concrete action to preserve and restore biodiversity and to launch transformational initiatives for

nature.

"Minister Noonan's attendance at the event is another positive demonstration of Ireland's commitment to nature and biodiversity," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"Reversing the trend of biodiversity loss is one of the major challenge of the coming decade, so it's reassuring to see that Ireland will be represented at the (virtual) One Planet Summit for Biodiversity next week."

"It is an opportunity to raise the level of ambition of the international community on the protection of nature, while also responding

to the new questions raised by the current global health crisis."

Deputy O'Sullivan said reversing biodiversity loss is a challenge that demands concerted action across sectors of society at all levels (international, national, local).

OPS's ambition is to mobilise political will in the international discourse leading up to COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and help foster conditions for agreement on an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.



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A bird's eye view of West Cork in new book

'A 50 Year Journey in the Sky' is the result of 50 years of flying light aircraft for Cork man Pat Punch. Pat's journey began in Cork airport in 1970, although his interest in flying began much earlier, "while gazing with amazement at a wall chart displaying an aircraft from WW2 vintage".

This book, which details flying experiences over the years, contains details of Pat's most memorable flights, as well as interesting snippets of information on all aspects of flying

as a recreational pilot. There are also many interesting photos of West Cork and other parts of Ireland, of locations seen at their best from the air (pictured on the right is Baltimore village as seen from the skies).

All proceeds of the book will go to two Cork charities, Marymount Hospice and ARC Cancer Support House.

'A 50 Year Journey in the Sky' is available to purchase from Coughlan's Bookshop, Clonakilty; O'Farrells, Bandon, Hickeys, Bandon; and Kinsale Bookshop.



Celebrating St. Brigid (Naomh Bríd)

In Irish folk tradition, St. Brigid's Day, February 1, is the first day of spring, and thus of the farming year. It is the festival of Ireland's much-loved Brigid, who is often called 'Mary of the Gael'. She built her convent in Kildare (Cill Dara, the Church of the Oak).

In pre-Christian Ireland, February the first was the feast of 'Imbolc' ('Imbolg' in modern Irish), which means 'giving

milk', when sheep and cows began to lactate, and it also marked the quickening of the earth. St. Brigid's Day marks the loosening of winter's grip. Brigid, the bright maiden of spring, bringing light and new growth, takes over from the 'Cailleach', the hag of winter. To see a hedgehog on St. Brigid's Day was a good weather sign, as the hedgehog comes out of his burrow, looks about

to judge the weather and stays out if mild weather is coming. From Irish folklore we read: 'St. Brigid was very generous and her feastday is an omen of good times to come. She ushers in a more plentiful season, for when her day comes, the 'Dubhluachair', or the darkest, severest part of the year, is gone. The 'Dubhluachair' is between Christmas and February 1. In this severe weather the rushes

turn black.

Brigid shares her name with the goddess 'Brigit', who was honoured as the source of fertility, abundance, of all the aspects of nature. When Christianity became established, it Christianised many of the old festivals and gods of the old religions. Some of the aspects of everyday life that came under the patronage of both Brigit the goddess and Saint Brigid include smiths, the hearth, poets, midwifery and healing. As a Christian spiritual figure, she became associated with the 'disempowered of humanity', including the displaced, the impoverished, and the socially stigmatised people, such as disabled and illegitimate children.

Countless people bear her name; churches, convents and holy wells are called after her, not only here but in many other countries as well. She has from an early period been linked with the church in Kildare where she founded a convent and, as abbess, ruled over priests and nuns. Some scholars believe that Kildare itself had originally been a pagan sanctuary of the Celtic Goddess, Brigit. Then when Christianity came, a saintly woman bearing the same name as the goddess, took over the pagan sanctuary and turned it into a convent. Here in this part of West Cork, there are at least four holy wells named 'Tobar Bríde' (Brigid's Well); these certainly are pre-Christian and were places of devotion before the coming of Christianity.

Much was written about Brigid from the seventh century on. Two fundamental ideas about her life are her great faith in God, and secondly, her extraordinary charity and love for others, both human and animal. She never allowed the poor to go away empty-handed. Much of her life story is concerned with domestic life and running



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.

a house and her miracles deal largely with the multiplication of food and drink and with healing.

The making of 'Cros Bríde' (St. Brigid's Cross) was the most widespread custom connected with the festival. Woven from straw or rushes, they are diamond-shaped. It is still customary for children to make them in school. They were hung in the dwelling house and in the cattle byres as protection for the family and the animals. The most usual was the diamond shaped ones, made of straw, rushes or osiers. They can be seen today in many houses and are also a popular item in some shops catering for the tourist industry. The cross was hung in the house and also in the cow

byre, to protect the family and the cattle. The cross was also considered to be a protective agent against storms, lightning and fire. Protection against fire was particularly important at a time when most houses had thatched roofs which were highly inflammable. There are many tales telling of how Brigid made the first cross. According to a story from Co. Clare, a certain woman disliked Brigid and wanted to kill her. Her chance came when Brigid visited her house. She bade Brigid welcome and offered her a drink of milk into which she had put some poison. Brigid, however, got a little straw and made the sign of the cross over the milk. She drank the milk and remained unharmed. The people heard of this miracle and began the custom of making crosses in honour of her, and hanging them up in their house.

A story from Co. Derry relates how Brigid had no food left in the house for her father's meal as she had given everything to the poor. She prayed earnestly and made crosses from rushes and placed them in the cheese presses. Her father returned and found the presses full of cheese. This story places the emphasis not so much on protection from danger but rather on the plentiful supply of food for the household which St. Brigid guarantees to those who hang up her cross in their homes. St. Brigid's Cross was the first logo of RTE but was replaced in 1995.






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Now that it's here, are you braced for Brexit?

Paul Healy is the General Manager of the Rubicon Centre, Ireland's largest enterprise incubator centre, which he has grown since it opened in 2006. With over 25 years' experience in developing start-ups/scale ups across all technology sectors, Paul has first-hand experience of raising finance, accessing new opportunities, strategy, and company development.

He is a graduate of UL and University College Cork and is an advocate for further Economic Regional Development particularly in West Cork.

Paul brings to our attention some of the things business owners need to look at if they are to stay ahead of the curve on Brexit.

If you own a small business, which employs just you or several hundred people, Brexit is a word, which will face you in 2021.

Some of you may remember Customs Clearance practices prior to the Free Movement of Goods under the EU. The world of Commodity Codes, Customs Clearance Points, and the inspections of shipments at points of entry to Ireland. Some of you have experience importing or exporting outside the EU already. But for many, this will be new to them.

For the business owner, Brexit will mean additional work, which needs to be completed either by the owner or an identified third party.

Do you know how your suppliers ship their goods into Ireland?

Up until now, business owners were very happy to see their goods arrive safely from their supplier. Since the New Year, you now need to know how your goods got to you and what borders they had to cross.

In the case of goods imported from the UK or crossing the UK borders on the way to Europe you now need to register for an EORI number.

Cashflow

With Brexit comes some cash-flow implications. Additional cash needs to be put aside to pay Duties/VAT on goods coming from the UK or passing

through the UK borders.

In the case of Goods importing or exporting to the UK you may have a Duty/VAT requirement, which will have to be paid once the goods land into Ireland. In the case of goods passing through the UK to or from Europe, you will have to have monies available to guarantee Duty/VAT implications, which might arise if the Goods did not pass into Europe again.

To provide for this additional cashflow requirement, business owners may need to take on additional borrowing or bank guarantee schemes to cover this new requirement. Ireland's main banks and Microfinance Ireland have put in place facilities to support this requirement

Carrying Stock

Many business owners have already taken on additional stock to cover delays of deliveries to them due to additional transit times from their suppliers. While this is a good strategy for some business owners, caution should be applied if this is your preferred route to dealing with delays.

Other options to look at should include looking at if you can source supplies outside the UK, and maybe source either in EU Countries (not using the UK Landbridge), or better still locally. Talk to your existing suppliers, who may already have thought of ways to reduce transit times and duty/vat issues to your company.

Remember, carrying high levels of stock has cashflow implications, as well as using up space in your business premises and the danger that some of the stock will go out of date.

Terms and Conditions on Contracts

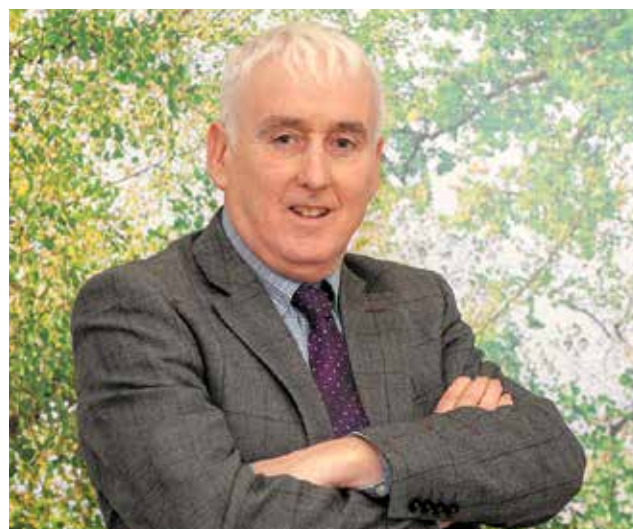
From January 1, terms of trade used on supplier/buyer agreements will become very important for anyone doing business with the UK. Initially, care will need to be taken on agreements made where you agree to buy or supply goods, which previously you would have paid for the shipment to the customer. The business owner needs to be aware of potential exposure to Duty/VAT charges when using the term, 'Delivered', or 'Delivered Duty Paid'.

Business Owners may opt for 'Ex Works' agreements until they become clear of the full costs of transactions between Ireland and the UK (Excluding Northern Ireland)

Appointment of Person to complete transactions

The business owner has several options to look at:

1. Use a Freight Agent
Freight Agents (Shipping Companies-Road/Sea/Air) may be best placed to complete the Import/Export Transactions for you. Before any future shipments take place, you need to make sure that your Freight Agent is happy to complete the transactions for you and



has the capability in-house to do it when you need it. Freight moves 24/7 so be aware of coverage you may need. They will need additional information on your invoices to complete the transaction.

2. Appoint an Agent to work on your behalf.

A number of new business operations are setting up to serve the needs of business in this area. These offer to complete transactions for a fee to cover the work. This option may be suitable for businesses who will not have many transactions per year but need to access the knowledge that these agents have.

3. Appoint a Full time/Part-time Internal Resource

If the business has ongoing transactions, a dedicated person should be nominated to complete this work. Training and Grant aid is available to cover some of the costs of this resource are available

So, what things should you do now?

1. Register for your unique EORI number, which you will need from now for all imports/exports to and from the UK, including transit through the UK. To Europe. Available through ROS. (www.revenue.ie)

2. Agree who is going to do the transactions for you.

3. Establish the UK tariff codes for items you are importing or exporting. Carry out this exercise in advance of your transaction. www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk/sections

4. Take a LEO training course on Brexit Preparation. All courses are now on-line.

5. Take a 1:1 Mentoring session with an expert. www.localenterprise.ie/CorkNorthandWest/Training-Events/Online-Bookings/Remote-Brexit-Support-Sessions-Expression-of-Interest.htm

6. Visit the Enterprise Ireland Website: www.prepareforbrexit.com/

7. Talk to your regular Suppliers/Customers ahead of any business you may do in the future. Discuss plans they have put in place to deal with Brexit transactions.

8. Arrange for additional finance to cover cashflow issues, which may arise before they occur.

Finally, any preparation work you do now, will avoid delays in supply, or unplanned costs which you did not expect to complete a transaction in the future.

Shoppers urged to act with caution when buying from the UK

With the UK no longer part of the EU there are now significant changes for Irish consumer rights when buying from retailers in the UK. Ireland South MEP Deirdre Clune has urged shoppers to be very aware when shopping online now. Changes are also in place when it comes to sending parcels to the UK so it is vital consumers are aware of the new rules. Deirdre Clune is a member of the European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Affairs.

MEP Clune said: "Things are very different now for shoppers when it comes to buying from the UK. There are also changes when it comes to sending parcels to the UK so it is so important to be aware of the changes so that shoppers are not hit with unforeseen extra charges. Consumers need to be mindful that additional charges such as custom duties or VAT may now apply to goods purchased from the UK.

"When a consumer shops online from a business in the EU, they have strong consumer rights under EU consumer protection legislation. However consumers no longer automatically have these rights when buying from a UK-based business.

"I would urge shoppers to find out where the business they are buying from is located. It is not enough that the website has a .ie domain name or that prices are in euro as the business could still be located in the UK. It is important that if in doubt, check the T&Cs on the website for their physical location."

For more information people can check out ccpc.ie



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Local Enterprise Office Cork North & West

2021 supports for small businesses in West Cork:

We are here to continue to support your business in 2021. Whether you are an entrepreneur, a new start-up or an established business, we can support your business with:

- Brexit support clinics
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- Financial supports: subject to certain eligibility criteria
- Trading online vouchers: worth up to a maximum of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure.

All of our supports are currently available online so please go to our website to check availability and to make a booking:
www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest

Contact us at our Clonakilty, West Cork office on:
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The King that exploded

“So I chastised a great multitude of men and women with the lash of starvation and, alas! was the cruel murderer of many thousands...” – William the Conqueror



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.

William the Conqueror is most notably known for being the King that triumphed at the Battle of Hastings. In 1066 William and his army defeated an English army under the Anglo-Saxon King Harold Godwinson, beginning the Norman conquest of England. Prior to this victory, William, a French Viking, was known as ‘William the Bastard’ as he was an illegitimate child, born out of

wedlock circa 1028, to Robert I, the Duke of Normandy, and Herleva, who is traditionally described as a tanner’s daughter. After the success of battle he became known as ‘William the Conqueror’ and went on to hold the title ‘King of England’ for 21 years, ruling with an unheard of brutality, even for the time.

Every English monarch who followed William, including Queen Elizabeth II, has been a direct descendant of the Norman-born king. According to genealogists, more than 25 per cent of the English population is also distantly related to him, as are countless Americans with British ancestry. All lands, wealth and assets that are currently in possession of the Royal family of England can be directly traced back through lineage to being the spoils of William’s 21-year conquest and colonisation of England.

It is historically agreed that William’s reign saw a viciousness, and callous disregard for life, that was unprecedented. This is well-documented. However, what is less well known is that he ‘exploded’ at his own funeral.

Though William instituted constitutional and social reforms, forged close ties with France, and ended Viking

influence in England during his reign, he was also, as mentioned above, a tyrant. In 1069, he began what would become known as ‘The Harrying of the North’, a campaign of putting down rebellions by burning villages and crops, as well as slaughtering herd animals and even villagers. Those who survived became desperate (they reportedly resorted to cannibalism) and many starved to death. Being King, William lived and ate like one and, as a consequence, became enormously overweight. It was his size that eventually contributed to his death as he was engaging in a battle with his own son, Robert, in France.

Robert was aggrieved that he was not afforded land he believed he was owed and sided with his father’s enemies with the aim of getting what he felt was rightfully his. William mounted his horse to prepare for battle but the horse unexpectedly reared, thrusting the wooden pommel of the saddle into his abdomen with such force that it punctured his intestines. The mortally wounded king journeyed to Rouen, where he spent six agonising weeks dying... with knights, noblemen and clergy by his side.

According to Orderic Vitalis’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*,

the king eventually confessed that what he had done during his reign was terrible (although this claim is largely disputed by historians):

“I treated the native inhabitants of the kingdom with unreasonable severity, cruelly oppressed high and low, unjustly disinherited many, and caused the death of thousands by starvation and war, especially in Yorkshire... In mad fury, I descended on the English of the north like a raging lion, and ordered that their homes and crops with all their equipment and furnishings should be burnt at once and their great flocks and herds of sheep and cattle slaughtered everywhere. So I chastised a great multitude of men and women with the lash of starvation and, alas, was the cruel murderer of many thousands, both young and old, of this fair people.”

On September 9, 1087, William finally died. His body was then removed from Rouen to Caen, a small village in France. This journey is roughly 70 miles and would have taken a considerable time. As the corpse slowly made its way, by water and by road, the bacteria in the late King’s gut leaked into the rest of his body, decomposing the tissue at a frightening rate



and filling the late king with putrid gas. In an unusual twist of fate, the night the King’s body arrived in Caen, the village had succumbed to a fire, leaving some parts of the city in ruins and others untouched; but most importantly the fire delayed the funeral mass even further while residents fought the blaze. Furthermore, whilst the fire was successfully extinguished, a sickly heat could still be felt during the funeral; this along with the poor embalming methods of 11th century funerary practices, combined with the extensive journey, ultimately became a deadly mix that would soon become apparent to the funerary procession.

By the time the mass was over and the burial could actually take place, it was weeks since William’s death. The residual heat from the fire, combined with the delay it caused, had

resulted in William’s bowels inflating to capacity and his remains swelling beyond previous measure. While trying to lower William into his final resting tomb, the king’s corpse would not fit. When the gravediggers attempted to force the body into place, “the swollen bowels burst, and an intolerable stench assailed the nostrils of the by-standers and the whole crowd”, according to Orderic. The crowd was immediately covered in the former King’s putrefied innards and overwhelmed by the scent of decomposing flesh. The horrified funeral party immediately left the church and didn’t return. The funeral was hastily finished, and quickly forgotten, which to this day, is most likely why the explosion is a relatively unknown fact about William the Conqueror.

Ireland’s greatest love stories told in a new series on TG4

A new 6-part series about Ireland’s greatest love stories began this week on TG4. *Scéalta Grá na hÉireann* explores the most iconic love stories throughout the history of our land. These stories echo through time and each one has played a major part in the formation of modern Ireland. From the stormy passion of the ‘Pirate Queen’, Grace O’Mal-

ley, to Oscar Wilde’s scandalous affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, Ireland’s Greatest Loves reveals the greatest romances of the most iconic people ever to shape our nation’s remarkable history.

The series premiered with Ireland’s greatest and most tragic love story, the love triangle between Michael Collins, Kitty Kiernan and Collins’ best friend

Harry Boland. In Ireland’s greatest and most tragic love story, Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan kept their love alive through the 300 letters they exchanged between 1919 and 1922.

Programme Two on January 20 examines the doomed love affair between the Irish patriot Robert Emmet and Sarah Curran that took place during the

Irish rebellion of 1803. Emmet’s fight for a free Ireland brought destruction to himself and to his beloved. He gifted Sarah a delicate brooch (pictured right) in the shape of a harp, a lasting symbol of his love for Ireland and his sweetheart. The brooch can still be seen today in the Cork Public Museum.



Bantry farmer celebrated for fundraising efforts by Concern

A Mealagh Valley farmer who has helped raise almost €90,000 for the world’s poorest people has been given an Outstanding Commitment Award by the Irish development organisation, Concern Worldwide.

Patrick O’Sullivan has been running an annual raffle for Concern for over 40 years, after he saw images of the famine in Bangladesh on TV while in a friend’s house.

“I was playing cards, and the news report came on the television, we didn’t have a television at home at the time as we’d no electricity, and you couldn’t help but be moved. I won a couple of turkeys through card games, and got



two more and went door to door to about 40 or 50 houses selling raffle tickets for them. I’ve been

doing raffles around Christmas time ever since,” he said.

A cash price has replaced the

turkeys, which Mr O’Sullivan and his family donate from their own pockets. He estimates he visits over a 100 houses every year, about ten to eleven a night. “Most people like to see me coming, they’re expecting me. We have a bit of craic, I tell them a few stories, some nights I might get to only one or two we’re having that good a time.”

Along with running the raffle Mr O’Sullivan also does the church gate collections in Enniskeane and Drimoleague parishes, with help from his daughter Alison. At one stage he looked after nine churches but that had been reduced down to three.

2019 was the first year Mr O’Sullivan didn’t run the raffle

due to the ill health of his wife, Bernadette. She sadly passed away earlier this year in February. “We were married 51 years, we had a great time and lots of laughs, we had nine children, they’re all over the world now,” he said.

Concern’s Chief Executive, Dominic MacSorley, praised the organisation’s volunteers and all those who support them in their efforts at the awards held virtually in December.

“The extraordinary commitment of Concern volunteers has kept a flame of compassion alive in communities around Ireland,” he said.

“Their commitment has been integral in sustaining Irish people’s solidarity in action across

the world’s hardest hit areas. We cannot thank them enough for their support, particularly at this most challenging time.”

Concern’s Volunteer Awards began in 2013 to celebrate the vital contribution made by the charity’s 1,700 volunteers around Ireland. Many raise funds that enable the organisation to continue to alleviate poverty and hunger in the world’s poorest countries.

Concern was formed by volunteers in 1968 as part of a major humanitarian response to the Biafran famine in Nigeria caused by civil war. Last year the charity helped over 28 million people in 24 of the world’s poorest countries.

What does history say about vaccination?



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

The Greeks are often cited as the fathers of modern philosophy. One strand of philosophy they debated centred around the nature of truth. How can we trust any information? The answer – to disbelieve everything you know and relearn it through personal experience and empirical knowledge. They also concluded this was impossible to do. So where does that leave us 3,000 years later? Pretty much in the same place the Greeks found themselves in. Who do we trust or, more importantly, what sources do we trust in our lifelong quest for the truth?

I once put a question to one of my history classes: why should they believe anything I teach them? One answered “because we are using a school textbook”. Another referred to the curriculum as set out by the government. Yet another declared that I had been educated and trained as a teacher so was a trustworthy source. The best response was when one lad said he never listened to a word I say anyway, but in all seriousness, if I were a teacher in Stalinist USSR, Nazi Germany or modern North Korea, none of those answers would guarantee that I was telling the truth rather than simply fulfilling the propaganda of the state in my role as a teacher. Thankfully, we don't live in an authoritarian state run by a dictator but there are many people who believe that the neo-liberalism of Europe is just as bad; that secularism is now the agenda, that there are too many bureaucrats, and that closer international co-operation is a bad thing. It is not an unpopular thesis. Indeed it is the central tenant of Brexiteers, Trump supporters, religious fanatics and currently, anti-vaccinators.

One of the best things we can teach our children is that a healthy level of skepticism is a good thing. In a classroom, an interpretation of a poem or a story in English class can elicit a variety of different yet relevant answers, not just one standard response. The aim

has always been to develop a student's critical thinking – not simply a regurgitation of the facts. Always question the information. Always question the source and, in a growing world of social media influence, always question the platform. A recent example of this is when Twitter began to fact-check the unsubstantiated voting fraud claims posted by followers.

Hundreds of thousands of disgruntled Trump supporters left it for a new platform called Parlor. Why? Because you can say what you like on that platform with no fact checking, leaving only an echo chamber where people's conspiracy theories flourish in a space that allows skepticism, but from dubious and unsubstantiated sources. This is the danger with the internet. Why read a book when a 10-minute YouTube video can tell you all you need to know about the dangers of a COVID-19 vaccine? Social media is constructed to grab people's attention with catchy headlines and punchy clips with little or no substance. Alternatively, one may find a well-written piece but who or what is behind it and what is the agenda? Money is always a good place to begin and the anti-vaccine campaign is making millions for some, with revenue streams via advertising, subscriptions, and donations.

In the USA, anti-vaccinator, osteopathic physician Joseph Mercola has amassed a fortune selling natural health products, including vitamin supplements, some of which he claims are alternatives to vaccines. According to the Washington Post, he recently donated 2.9 million dollars to the National Vaccine Information Center, which aims to promote anti-vaccination and delay immunisation, including against measles. Interestingly, you can find his products advertised by that organisation. The 'Centre for Countering Digital Hate' (CCDH), a non-profit organisation with bases in London

and Washington, has recently shown that anti-vaccine sites are worth approximately one billion dollars in revenue to tech giants. It's an industry and clever people know that the anti-vaccination message is about money and not the perceived good of humanity.

There are others who more accurately are defined as 'vaccine hesitant' and this is a different prospect. I am no scientist and certainly it is natural to worry about side-effects and other medical issues. I am willing to place my fate in doctors, GPs and scientists. If this isn't a satisfactory response, then do what I do – look at the past and examine the history of vaccination and its success.

The most successful vaccination was against Smallpox, a disease that existed for thousands of years causing millions of deaths. Through vaccination the deadly virus was eradicated in 1977, the last case being found in Somalia. It took 10 years to eradicate this disease from the globe once a worldwide immunisation policy started in 1967. Vaccination is not a new science. It has been practiced for 200 years and the globe is still standing, despite the doomsday soothsayers. Edward Jenner is credited with the Smallpox vaccination. In his field studies, he found that

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milkmaids who often contracted Cowpox, a mild disease, did not contract the deadlier Smallpox. He did what some people are terrified of to this day... he inoculated people using a minute amount of the cowpox virus.

The result was that the patients were immunised from the deadlier and fatal Smallpox disease. Unlike the many safety features, hurdles, and clinical trials that modern vaccines have to undergo before they are given to the public, Jenner simply took fluid from a Cowpox blister and scratched it into the skin of James Phipps, an eight-year-old boy. Next, he inoculated the boy again, this time with Smallpox matter, and no disease developed. We've come a long way from using people as human test tubes but 200 years later people are still hesitant, despite the data and testing regimes.

Growing up Cork City, it was not uncommon to see adults in my community living with the effects of Polio. There was a major outbreak of Polio in Cork City in 1955/56, which caused death and, for many survivors, debilitating after-effects. We bicker today about school closures, sports being cancelled, tourism and businesses having to close, as if it's some sort of unprecedented response that no other generation has faced. There are others who make fantastical claims of a world conspiracy and refuse to consent to inoculation. Guess what happened in Cork City in 1956? Schools closed, businesses had to shut their doors and the All-Ireland hurling final between Cork and Wexford, along with the football final between Cork and Galway, were postponed because the Dublin Health Board did not want Cork fans coming to Dublin for fear of transmitting the virus. Does that sound familiar? The end game was that Cork lost those finals in re-arranged fixtures, but we won the battle against Polio thankfully, because of mass vaccination. It came

CHRISTOPHER O'SULLIVAN T.D.

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

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE:

40 Ashe Street, Clonakilty.

(Closed to the public until Covid-19 restrictions are lifted)

christopher.osullivan@oireachtas.ie

023 8811011

FIANNA FAÏL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

too late for those poor people but many more were saved. Mercifully, the fatality rate for Polio in Cork in 1956 was 2.3 per cent, lower than the current global rate of 3 per cent for COVID-19 (according to the John Hopkins University statistics on COVID-19, www.worldometers.info).

The Polio vaccine was developed by Dr Jonas Salk in the USA in the mid 1950s, once again through experimentation in ways that are immoral, unethical and illegal today. It's hard to believe now, but the subjects he chose were resident children in institutions for the physically and intellectually disabled. This is unimaginable today, with vaccine testing now having some of the strictest regulations of any industry. Unfortunately, in the mid 1950s this practice was common and, while it was only 70 years ago, society lagged behind our modern standards, in everything from medicine, human rights, race, gender, animal welfare, you name it. Society has advanced and so have our standards, including for vaccination trials. The result of the Polio vaccine was that the disease was eradicated in the USA by 1979, the Americas by 1994 and Europe by 2002. Of course what stops the vaccine getting to the developing world is poverty. Tragically, this may turn out to be the fate of those countries yet again; they don't have the purchasing power to

buy enough vaccines to treat their people.

History teaches us that vaccines have worked for the good of humanity. Unfortunately, yes some people can experience side-effects. However, if one takes time to read even the leaflet for headache tablets, there are some awful side-effects listed, but we don't tell people not to take medicine when they are sick. Despite the science, despite the history, some people may never be convinced. The free HPV vaccine, which protects against cervical cancer, has an uptake of 70 per cent in Ireland, which means 30 per cent still don't trust it. Measles is making a comeback in the USA because the growing anti-vaccine messaging has persuaded parents not to inoculate their children.

As I wrote in the introduction to this article, the Greeks philosophised about the nature of truth. If we cannot trust anything we are told, or anything we read, then we can only learn through experience. Is the virus real or not? Will I be safer without the vaccine? It is not a gamble I'm willing to take? When my turn comes, I will be eager and grateful to take it and sadly reflect on the millions that have died so far, who didn't get that choice.



New president for West Cork branch of Network Ireland

Network Ireland, a progressive, dynamic organisation supporting the professional and personal development of women, has welcomed Katherine O’Sullivan as West Cork Branch President for 2021. Speaking about her new role, Katherine said: “I am honoured to be elected the fourth President of Network Ireland West Cork. Together with the new committee, I hope to continue the great work of the previous presidents. I am ready for the challenge and the opportunity to share my knowledge and skills with others and to empower the committee and members to help each other and learn the benefits of giving back.”

Katherine is General Manager of Skibbereen company, O’Donnell Design, Ltd. and winner of the 2019 Employee Shining Star Network Ireland National Award. When asked about her plans for the year ahead, Katherine said “I have a number of objectives for the year ahead. Developing the networking skills of our members in a Covid World is very important, which will result in bringing benefits of additional business and learning to our members. Also, I’m passionate about embracing West Cork and all it has to offer and I want to further reach out, highlight and support the incredible businesses all across West Cork.”

For more details on how to join, visit networkireland.ie/west-cork/ or follow on social media @NetIrlWestCork.

Bantry Bay Lions Club Diary

The Bantry Bay Lions Club is delighted to announce the results of its Christmas Food Appeal for 2020. Thanks to the generosity of the local community enough money was raised to provide 62 food vouchers to the value of €40 each. Special thanks to SuperValu and Lidl for all their help and co-operation. Pictured is Past President Nora Lynch presenting the vouchers to Michael Healy of St Vincent De Paul. Well done everyone.

The Bantry Bay Lions have collected thousands of used spectacles over the years. These spectacles are refurbished and distributed to allow people in the third world to see. There are drop-off locations in Bantry

General Hospital (inside the front door), Bantry public library, Kenneally eye centre Bantry, Newton Pharmacy Glengarriff road, Mealagh Valley Centre, Glengarriff Pharmacy, Drimoleague Pharmacy, Bara House Glengarriff road and St Finbar’s Catholic Church. Please donate your used spectacles, without cases, at any of these locations. If you have any queries, please contact Joan O’Donovan at 086-0563185.

To learn more about the Bantry Bay Lions you are cordially invited to visit their website at www.bantrybaylions.com.

Provided by John Dervan, PRO – Bantry Bay Lions Club



people Farming

Nominations are now open for the Farming for Nature Ambassador awards 2021

Farming for Nature (FFN) is a national initiative which highlights the positive role that some farmers play in looking after nature on their land and which shares – through short films, podcasts and farm walks – the invaluable, practical insights gained by these farmers in tackling our biodiversity crisis. Now in its fourth year, Farming for Nature now has an active network of over 40 Ambassadors who are inspiring many other farmers across Ireland to be more aware of nature on their land. They wish

to further expand this network in 2021 and are seeking nominations of farmers who are going that extra mile for nature.

The awards are sponsored by Bord Bia’s Origin Green programme and the wider FFN initiatives, which includes a range of farmer-friendly resources, is supported by a wide range of farming and conservation interests including the Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Rural Network.

Describing the awards pro-

cess, project co-ordinator Brigid Barry explained the nomination and selection process for the award: “Farmers will be nominated by a panel of over 200 heritage specialists across Ireland and then shortlisted based on agreed criteria. We are hoping to hear about farmers who do great things for nature, who farm in a manner that is agriculturally, economically and socially progressive, and who are willing to share their story with others. Short videos of the ten shortlisted farmers will then be made and used as part of

an online voting system by the public in early Autumn.”

One of the founders of, and volunteers with Farming for Nature is Dr. Brendan Dunford of the Burren Programme. He said: “For the past few years, with Bord Bia’s support, we have been able to acknowledge and celebrate farmers across Ireland who are doing great things for nature. Seeing and hearing these farmers share their love of nature, and knowing that they work day in day out to make sure nature has a place on their farms, is really inspiring

– to me these people are our unsung conservation heroes. We want to share these stories to inspire other farmers as we are convinced that, with the appropriate, targeted financial and technical support, farmers represent a great resource in tackling our biodiversity and climate crises”.

Thomas O’Connor and his wife Claire won the public vote in the 2019 awards. They run a mixed organic farm producing vegetables, meat, poultry and eggs among other things. As a Farming Ambassador, he

explained the importance of Farming for Nature to him and his family. “It’s great to be able to meet all these people who think the same way as we do. Delighted to win the public vote but the real winning was being nominated and meeting like-minded farmers from across the county.”

For more information or if you would like to nominate a farmer in the West Cork area who would be a suitable candidate, then go to www.farming-fornature.ie or contact Brigid on info@farmingfornature.ie

Hemp for a Sustainable Future

– Teagasc award at BTYSTE 2021 announced

Cian Walsh, a transition year student at St. Brogan’s College, Bandon has been announced as the winner of the Teagasc award at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2021 (BTYSTE). Cian’s project looked at the social, economic and environmental benefits and drawbacks of growing hemp and to determine if it can promote sustainable farming in Ireland. Cian’s teacher is Ms Laura O’Regan.

A variety of Cannabis sativa, hemp is often confused with marijuana; and, although it contains the same active ingredient, the concentration is much lower in hemp. Hemp was one of the first plants in the world to be spun into useable fibre and has since been used for many

other purposes. Cian explains: “100% of the hemp crop can be processed into many different eco-friendly products; some examples include hempcrete, hemp insulation and hemp bioplastic”.

Cian surveyed farmers to determine the current knowledge surrounding hemp. He found that there was a great interest in the crop, but that only 36% of those surveyed would consider growing the crop. Cian explains: “This was a figure I set out to change. I hosted a hemp information meeting on Zoom with the farmers’ surveyed, which included a presentation on hemp research in Ireland by Barry Caslin, Teagasc’s Energy & Rural Development Specialist. At the end of the conference, I resurveyed the farmers and

found a significant increase in interest in growing the crop (from 36% to 64%) if there were hemp processing facilities near to their home farm.

Cian added: “The benefits of growing hemp are endless, farmers are willing to make the change. But it is government investment in the industry that will be needed in order to grow Ireland’s hempire”.

Barry Caslin, complemented Cian on his excellent achievement saying: “There has been a huge interest from farmers and industry representatives in developing a hemp industry in Ireland. Many farmers are seeking land use alternatives, especially in light of the lack of income from the drystock sector which was highlighted in the recent Teagasc National

Farm Survey report. Hemp is an excellent break crop bringing other benefits to crop rotation, including higher yields in following wheat crops”.

Teagasc Director, Professor Gerry Boyle, congratulated Cian on his award and commended all the students who took part in this year’s virtual event. Professor Boyle said: “There has been a fairly rich history of hemp research in Teagasc even going back to the 1950s at An Foras Taluntais. This research was geared towards the agronomy of hemp; although there were different uses of hemp in mind. This research proved that industrial hemp can grow well in Irish soil and climatic conditions”.

The Teagasc special award is presented to the project that best demonstrates a thorough



Cian Walsh from Bandon, winner of the Teagasc award.

understanding of the science of agricultural or food production, or the use of science to improve technologies available to agricultural or food production.

The Teagasc Farm Business Options webinar scheduled for

Tuesday January 19th at 11:00 will focus on the Opportunities for Industrial Hemp in Irish Agriculture. For further information see www.teagasc.ie/farmbusinessoptions

Waiting for the dust to settle on Brexit



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.

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Well Brexit has finally come to pass. The knock-on effects will become clearer with time. Perhaps they would be more obvious if the UK's time outside the EU began in a world free of Covid-19. However, with travel restricted and extra logistics already required, it's a bit tricky to pick out the exact changes yet; so it's a case of sit and wait to see what happens.

Prices

There are noticeable differences between the latest Covid lockdown and the first one. Last year with the closure of restaurants and takeaways, beef price took an immediate hit. As society has adapted there is less of a panic on the takeaways in particular and, as a result, meat prices have held pretty well. Indeed since the New Year, there has been a lift in prices for beef and more noticeably for sheep meat. Milk price has remained relatively stable in comparison. Marts seem to be the main

ones affected by the latest level 5 restrictions. They are strictly online only for the next number of weeks.

Cow numbers

Over Christmas, I found recent stats for suckler cow numbers. They were broken down into herd size recently and they made for interesting reading. I'm a terrible man for being distracted by statistics and maps. Useful for quizzes but not a lot else.

What stood out for me was the fact that there is a similar number of suckler farmers with nine cows or less than there are dairy farmers. Even within the suckler herd, there is disparity.

There are almost as many suckler herds with five cows or less than there are herds of over 30 cows.

Cow numbers always come up when climate change in Ireland is mentioned and I can see the Irish cattle herd contracting organically over the next decade or so. There will be succession issues on farms across both bovine disciplines. On top of that, a rise in dairy numbers will be stymied by environmental constraints and a disparity in income with their peers will see a fall off in those running suckler herds.

Farm routine

The daily farm routine is relatively mundane at the moment. It's a case of feeding and looking over stock. Preparing the sheds for calving and fence maintenance will be the main jobs for the next few weeks. All the young stock are on a diet of silage with the bull calves getting some ration. The heifer calves are on silage only with an odd treat of ration during the week. The reason for this is they will be the first going to grass and that is a cheaper than giving them purchased in feed. If weather doesn't get too extreme, I hope to let the smaller weanling out to grass by day soon. Ration will be used as a tool then to get them in. They can be trained easily enough

and become very familiar with routine.

The weekly feeding regime for the cows is currently about five days silage; and hay or straw feed once that is gone. The reason for mixing the diet up is that the cows are carrying a good bit of condition; if they are too fat, this could lead to difficulties at calving. The heifers that are due to start calving in late February will be seeing their hay intake increase to try and ensure a smooth calving.

Spreading slurry

The window for spreading slurry has opened again, so getting that out onto the fields that need it most will be a priority. The decisions on where to go will be determined by ground conditions, soil sample results, how much grass is on a paddock and how soon it will be needed for grazing. There was good grass growth through most of December so covers are strong on the paddocks that were closed earliest. Growth eased off then during the cold snap in early January. There's a bit more to slurry than meets the eye!

Water Quality

On a related topic, in early December, I attended an online information meeting as part of the ASSAP programme last week. ASSAP is the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advice Programme. It is a multi-agency programme run by the Department of Housing and it works with farmers on improving water quality. In general water quality in West Cork is in good order, however there are a number of catchments that have seen their water quality decrease. A lake in our catchment has gone from a poor standard in the 2008-2013 EPA water quality report to bad in the latest report. So there is going to be an extra effort put in to improve the situation.

The event was useful and helped get a handle on what is required and what can be done at a very local level to improve water quality.



A cow and calf grazing among some birds foot trefoil, a nitrogen fixing plant.
Pic: Tommy Moyles



All animals are housed on Tommy Moyles farm. Cows are fed a mix of silage, hay and straw over the housing period.

While there are potential domestic and agricultural sources behind the deterioration of water quality, the extra focus on the catchment will go a long way to resolving the issue. There hasn't been a dramatic increase in cow numbers and while there has been an increase in domestic dwelling over the last 20 years around here, it's not like a town has developed at the same time. The issue for farmers is that when it comes to nitrates, 99 per cent of them are as a result of farming activity.

I think water quality will be

driver of what agriculture can do in future. The results will drive policy on a macro level and farm practice on a micro level. Like other businesses when it comes to putting a business plan in place in future rather than it being a straightforward financial projection you will now have to keep a look out on which way the wind is blowing in terms of environmental policy or other developments in the locality. Some farmers will face a bigger culture change than others but it will impact us all across the

sector. It doesn't just apply to farmers either. It will impact all businesses and when it comes to water quality, everyone has a role to play.

If the blame were put at farmers' doors without science behind it, we'd be looking for scientific results. Now, because the results will lead to a change in the status quo, we can't just dismiss them.

Whatever happens, it will be interesting to see how water quality can be improved in the lake over the next few years.

Calf Care Virtual Week

Animal Health Ireland (AHI) and Teagasc are working together to run their annual series of CalfCare events this month. This time however they are going virtual and covering a wider range of topics relating to calf health. CalfCare Virtual Week runs from Monday January 18 until Thursday, January 21, 2021. The events will comprise a combination of webinars, videos, podcasts and supporting newspaper articles.

According to David Graham of Animal Health Ireland, 'The areas to be covered during this important week are of importance to both dairy and beef farmers as they prepare to implement high standards of calf health and welfare on their farms across spring 2021. The range of topics to be covered include preparing for the calving season with practical tips, calf housing, colostrum management, vaccinating the pregnant cow, calf health and feeding'.

Speaking in advance of the upcoming CalfCare Virtual Week, Stuart Childs, Dairy Specialist with Teagasc, said: 'With over 1.6 million calves expected to arrive on beef and dairy farms by the end of April 2021, spring has become an increasingly intense part of the farming calendar. Heightened awareness of calf health has resulted in improved standards and increased survival rates reported from dairy and beef farms nationally. The purpose

of CalfCare Virtual Week is to remind dairy and beef farmers of the key practices necessary to maintain those standards in the busy spring period'.

'The principle of having a calf per cow per year is the cornerstone of profitable suckler farming. The care of the cow in last 2 months of pregnancy and management around calving are key areas where suckler farmers can really push towards this goal. These videos and webinars are a

timely reminder of what needs to be done to ensure a live, healthy suckler calf, while also focusing on the important factors in rearing bought in calves,' said Martina Harrington, Cattle Specialist with Teagasc.

Register to attend the webinars at www.teagasc.ie/calfcare

The CalfCare videos will be available each day through Social Media and AHI and Teagasc websites.

Carbery Housing Association recognised for its work in sustainability

Skibbereen-based CLG, Carbery Housing Association (CHA), was awarded a commendation for its work in sustainability by Cork Environmental Forum at an online ceremony on December 10. The Mayors of Cork City and County paid tribute to the work CHA has done over the past 15 years and the award was accepted by José Ospina, Chairperson

and Founder member. Carbery Housing Association was set up in 2001 as a non-profit approved housing body with charitable status, by a group of residents in Skibbereen and Baltimore, West Cork.

CHA was set up to provide housing for those not able to afford the open market, but also wanted housing to be energy efficient and to integrate renew-

able energy.

Twenty years later, this vision is becoming a reality, step by step, CHA is purchasing existing homes where owner occupiers are unable to pay their mortgages due to loss of employment, family break-up or other reasons.

Using private loan funding and local authority loans under the Mortgages to Rent Programme, CHA has to date bought 12 properties where families were in danger of repossessions and is conveying a further 28. These properties usually have very low energy ratings. A study carried out with NCE Insulation of energy poverty among our beneficiaries showed that 94 per cent of them could be classified as Energy Poor.

Registered as Sustainable Energy Community, CHA carried out a Masterplan for taking its properties to Near Zero Energy. They have begun to move forwards toward this target in partnership NCE Insulation, carrying out full fabric retrofits and installed heat pumps in two

properties, modernising installations, and installing photovoltaic panels in another property. One tenant had this to say about the recent improvements to their home: "The house is certainly more comfortable and maintains/retains heat in a way it hadn't done before the retrofit... [it] is very cosy now, so many thanks." CHA has also helped six more families register for the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme, which is funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

CHA are partners in the Interreg North West Europe funded Project REDWoLF, and with this, is planning to install PV panels, storage, and smart meters in a further five homes. CHA will secure the balance of funding required as a loan from Clann Credo, the ethical finance body.

CHA is also partnering four new EU proposals, two under the Horizon 2020 Energy programme and two under the Green Deal, energy retrofit Call, with proposals aimed at improving energy awareness

and developing smart energy management of homes.

CHA is looking forward to continuing close collaboration with Cork local authorities and other environmental and housing agencies over the coming years. You can help support CHA and help spread the word about their work by purchasing

their charity Christmas cards, available to purchase now on their website: www.carbery-housing.eu/chachristmascards.

For information contact: Ana Ospina, Operations Manager, Carbery Housing Association Tel 083 8731931 or redwolf@carberyhousing.eu.

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Ana Ospina (Operations Manager) and Jose Ospina (Chair) of Carbery Housing Association holding the certificate that CHA was awarded.

people Health & Lifestyle

Keeping healthy during level 5



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.

Last year was trying to say the least; we had to learn new ways to stay healthy, to socialise and be responsible, and from the looks of it, this will have to go on for quite a while still.

However, don't throw your towel in the ring and retreat to the sofa and Netflix just yet. While Covid-19 probably kept some from making New Year's health resolutions, it is now more important than ever to stay healthy. So, if the worst comes

to worst, your body is healthy and fit to fight the virus and hopefully keep you unscathed.

As gyms and dance and fitness classes are cancelled, I know it can feel like a big challenge to keep active, without anyone to 'be held accountable to'. It's always easier to get things done if other people count on you – whether it's your trainer or coach, or teammates and dance partners.

The DIY Fitness and health column this month will therefore solely consist of tried and tested advice for you – to stay healthy (and in the same breath keep your wits) during level 5. If you are a regular reader, you'll find repeat advice, which I hope won't bore you, but hopefully you'll also find new inspiration to live a better life.

Five best practices during lockdown

1. Commit to spend one hour outside every day despite rain, sunshine, wind and snow. If you have kids or pets at home with you, dress up appropriately and take them with you. Fresh air is your best ally to a strong immune system, as well as good sleep and, not least, a positive mindset.

For toddlers, my experience is to bring a scooter or bike with you, unless they like walking around. Also have lots of pa-



tience to stop and look at snails, flowers, rocks, beetles and whatever else catches the attention of young eyes. If you're alone or with older kids (or your partner) a jog or run would be a great option. You can plan a route from home within your 5k radius that's approx. one hour (or longer).

Being outdoors will boost your immune system, as you will obtain Vitamin D through your skin (when the sun is out). Exercising also mobilises pathogen and inflammation-fighting immune cells. In other words exercise helps the body fight inflammation and boost production of white blood cells to help fight infections.

Exercise further brightens your mood, due to the release of endorphins, helping you sleep better at night. I notice a big difference in my toddler as well: On the days we spend more time outside, he seems to sleep earlier and better.

2. Eat well. Your body needs vitamins and minerals to be healthy and while supplements are a great way to get this, the best source is non-processed food, for example clean meat, veg, fruit and grains. It should be noted that frozen and canned vegetables are often just as good as fresh when it comes to minerals and vitamins. Food like chicken nuggets, sausages (not butcher), white bread, fries and sweetened drinks are all examples of processed foods, full of additives, sugar and processed fat. This is not to preach or say you should never consume these products. Every now and then I enjoy a fizzy drink and white bread is a staple in my house but we do make sure to eat a lot of clean produce-based meals as well.

3. Boost your immune system. Besides eating nutritious foods, you can also make smoothies and hot drinks to help boost

your health. You'll find great advice in West Cork People from my knowledgeable colleagues on health-boosting food and drinks. Further inspiration can be found online of course. Just type in healthy smoothies and you'll get recipes to last you until mid-summer. My favourite winter drink is raw ginger tea with honey and lime. Peel a small thumb-sized piece of ginger and julienne it. Squeeze lemon juice or add a slice of lemon and a teaspoon of honey into the cup. Pour over boiling water and 'voila' you have one of the best winter immune-boosting drinks. Bonus tip: If you suffer from pollen allergy: Use local honey and it can help you to be less affected in the pollen season.

4. Strength training at home. As you might know if you read my column, I've got a pair of dumbbells, which I love. They are great for anything from short five-minute 3x10 sets of various arms and back exercises to being included in a longer session. But you don't need equipment to keep your strength or even build muscles. Make a plan to do 20 push-ups a day (or the equivalent to your training prior to level 5) or every other day as a starting point and see where it takes you. Keep it up and before the lockdown is finish, I promise you will see

results and feel different. Remember consistency is the key.

5. Drink water. Should you fall down onto the couch, turn on Netflix by mistake, and have a hard time getting back up, don't fret. Even once the world returns normal, we all need some time off. Just don't forget to drink water. It's cheap, it's clean and it's zero calories. It's all too easy to gain weight by drinking calories. We often don't think of drinks – alcoholic or not – as a source of calories, whereas everyone knows the dangers of chocolate and crisps. However, drinks, whether it's beer, wine or spirits, smoothies or fresh squeezed juices, are full of calories. So, if you do find yourself on a Netflix binge, don't put on the Netflix weight. Drink water.

Last thing for me is to say: YOU GOT THIS! I know we are all tired of Covid-19, but we need to get through this together and we will. And I hope – if you only take one thing away from this – please do get some outdoor time. It'll do wonders for your mood and can help you to get to the end of level 5 in better shape than you went in.

Questions and comments are welcome as usual at taniafitnesskitchen@gmail.com or via [@trainwithadane](https://www.instagram.com/trainwithadane) on Instagram

people Health & Lifestyle

What's so great about the present moment?



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 is not an easy time for any of us. I am sure that many of us had hoped or imagined that we would be in a very different place by now, but instead we find ourselves, in these early days of 2021, in the midst again of a rapidly evolving situation with regard

to Covid-19. And, unfortunately, that is our reality in this present moment. It reminds me of a conversation I had about mindfulness a couple of years ago. Someone I know was having a hard time and asked me, "What's so great about the present moment?" I can certainly understand the rationale behind the question, yet, the present moment is all we have, and, though we are facing many difficult moments these days, it is by staying, or 'being with' the present moment, however hard it might be, that we can be here for the best of our lives too, present for all the joy that we can miss out on when we're living our lives on autopilot.

There is a lot going on in the world just now and we may well be feeling anxious, overloaded, depleted or exhausted. Finding new ways to mind ourselves during this crisis is vital. How are you taking care of yourself and minding your physical and mental health? Are you feeling resourced and supported? I have no doubt that the skills of compassion-based mindfulness can help resource and sustain us through this pandemic, along with supporting us to manage all our other everyday issues and

challenges that have not gone anywhere.

It is human nature to want to be happy and to distract ourselves from unpleasant occurrences, people, situations or events. No one wants to feel bad, so we tend to push away what we consider to be negative thoughts or emotions and perhaps deny or bury them. These strategies may provide temporary relief but tend not to work in the long run. We can support ourselves in a more sustainable way by practising mindfulness meditation, often compared to training the mind to gently come back, to stay, to be present, here, now.

The definition of mindfulness that I work with is Rob Nairn's 'knowing what's happening, as it's happening, no matter what it is'. This means sitting with the present moment, gently facing into it, whether it's joyful, exciting, difficult, challenging or even painful. This is a new and quite radical concept for us, as we are so conditioned to distract ourselves with activities that we perceive to be more pleasant than the present moment, when we are feeling any kind of emotional discomfort or having difficult thoughts.

Learning to live in the present moment helps us to process things as they're happening, for example, our thoughts, emotions and physical sensations, so we can gently pull ourselves back from catastrophic thinking and the multitude of 'what if's' that can flood the mind in seconds. By practising meditation, we get to know our minds and bodies a bit better. We learn to rest and recalibrate, allowing ourselves some time and space to notice and process what's happening in our minds and bodies. We notice habitual patterns of thinking, we can 'be with' emotions and learn, over time, to respond rather than react to stressors. Our mindfulness muscle may be weak at the beginning, so we start small, taking it step by step, going easy on ourselves. As these skills grow stronger, they can be applied to our everyday lives. Then we can bring mindfulness to everyday activities, like taking a shower, swimming, walking, eating, speaking and so on.

I recommend practicing 'both' formal mindfulness meditation and the more informal mindfulness in everyday life and would encourage you to keep an open mind about trying out mindfulness meditation. It helps us to

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cultivate qualities like patience, kindness and endurance, all very helpful during this pandemic. So, even if you've tried mindfulness meditation before and found it hard to sit with yourself, would you be open to trying it again? It is described as a simple practice but not easy. My view this New Year is that every day is different, every breath is new and, no matter our circumstances, we can allow ourselves permission to try something new. The beauty of mindfulness and each new breath is that we can always begin again, in this present moment.

Online meditation sessions via Zoom continue on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8pm, please do consider joining in, whether you have tried mindfulness meditation before or are new to it. These small group sessions are personal, down-to-earth, informal and donation based. Individual sessions are also available.

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

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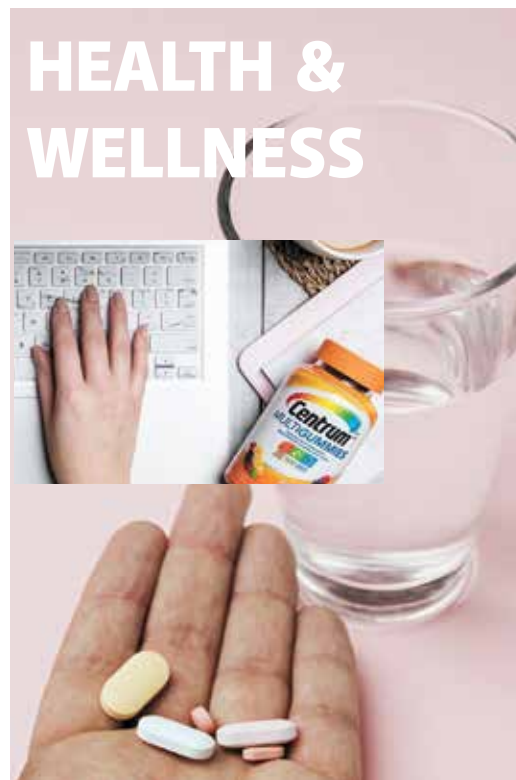
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Beyond skincare – the non-invasive treatment loved by celebrities



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.

When it comes to ageing well, non-invasive aesthetic treatments are gaining a lot of interest and, done well, are no longer about noticeably changing your face but freshening it up. The aim is not a fake look, rather one that communicates good health and enough sleep. For those for whom it's a hard no to needles? A quick, effective treatment offering a payoff far beyond the reach of skincare alone is Ultherapy. One of the most popular treatments in Irish skin clinics and a celebrity favourite, Ultherapy works naturally, stimulating a mega boost of your own collagen production. Having read many great reviews and seen impressive patient results, I was only too delighted when the opportunity arose to have the treatment

myself in the Dr Mulrooney Clinic Dublin.

Firstly, what is Ultherapy? Ultherapy is the only FDA-cleared, non-invasive treatment that lifts the neck, chin, and brow, and improves lines and wrinkles on the upper chest, naturally. Using ultrasound energy to jumpstart the regenerative process within the skin that produces fresh, new collagen and elastin, this scientifically proven treatment dramatically improves the appearance of lines and wrinkles giving a visibly lifted, younger, fresher looking appearance. Unlike other technologies, Ultherapy bypasses the surface of the skin to deliver the perfect amount of ultrasound energy to the place where it will benefit you most, at the right depths and the right temperature, for natural-looking results that improve over time.

Ultherapy Treatment – what's involved?

The actual treatment involves the application of ultrasound gel to the skin. Ultrasound imaging is then used to see deep within the skin so the practitioner can visualise exactly where they are treating within the skin which makes the treatment so unique and totally customised to each and every patient, patients can opt for a natural looking brow lift, a more defined jawline or perhaps wrinkles on the décolletage is their concern. Once the areas to be treated are decided, the energy is then applied beneath the skin's surface using a hand-held applicator. During the treatment delivery, you will feel tiny amounts of energy being deposited to precise depths, indicating that the collagen-building process



Kirsty Gallacher, Ultherapy UK and Ireland Brand Ambassador

has been initiated. I had the treatment performed on my face and neck, paying particular attention to my jawline, brow, and eye area. Treatment time took about two hours, and this included a detailed consultation and photographs. During the consultation we discussed what my requirements were and the results I was hoping to achieve in order to decide on a treatment plan that was right for me. The length of your treatment will depend on the area being treated and your individual treatment plan. From start to finish, my experience at the Dr Mulrooney Clinic was informative and professional.

Did you experience any discomfort? Is there any downtime?

I was extremely comfortable throughout the treatment. There was minimal discomfort when the ultrasound was delivered to certain areas of my face, but it

was completely tolerable and definitely worth it! When you go to a Doctor led practice, they can advise and administer pain relief to manage any discomfort prior to treatment. Everybody will have different sensitivities to the heat, but your practitioner will advise you on how best to manage. If present, any post procedure discomfort (such as tenderness or bruising) typically resolves within two hours to two days. I had a little tenderness along the orbital bone and on my neck, jawline, but this was short-lived. As for downtime, there is little or no downtime, I was able to go about my business for the rest of the day and enjoy some time with my family in Dublin.

When will you see results and how long will they last?

The proven results are clear, appearing over two to three months post treatment, as the growth of new collagen and



Ultherapy Results Three Months Post Treatment

elastin work to lift skin on the neck, chin, and brow—as well as smooth skin on the upper chest. Results may improve over the following three to six months and can last a year or more (results vary with individuals). This picture is me three months after treatment, while the lighting is different, the improvement in the jaw and neck area, along with the crow's feet is remarkable. The skin around my jawline has become tighter and looks more lifted and the lines on my neck and around my eyes are smoother. I'm looking forward to seeing how the results continue to improve over time.

Ultherapy has been appointed as the Gold Standard treatment for non-surgical lifting and tightening by a panel of experts and is great for areas where skin is thin, delicate and/or has gone quite lax; possibly best for those in their mid-forties and beyond.

So, if you are looking for a non-invasive treatment, one where you still look like you – just fresher, smoother, and more lifted, then look to Ultherapy. Based on my own experience, I would highly recommend Ultherapy, it's such a great option for those like me who are wanting to achieve naturally lifted results, but are not quite ready to go for more 'extreme' treatments. I'm delighted with the improvements thus far; I still look like myself, just a more refreshed version! For more information about Ultherapy and to find an Irish clinic visit www.ultherapy.co.uk. Prices may vary depending on the area being treated.

All details of my facial treatments and skincare consultations visit www.shernamalone.ie. Follow me on Instagram and Facebook @shernamalone.ie



NATURE TALKS

April Dannan

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.

Winter Wellness

It is well into the winter season and we are going through days of glorious frosty cold and harsh wet windy weather that only these months can bring. The fresh air has been invigorating and the icy mornings are good for the soul.

Of course many of us just want to be curled up by the fire in the evenings and keeping warm during the day with hot drinks, toasty socks and plenty of movement to keep the circulation flowing. In fact anything that can keep us warm inside and out is of benefit.

That's where a good digestion comes in handy. Not only

does the breaking down of your food into nutrients consume about 70 per cent of your energy, it can also help to keep you warm on these unusually cold days and nights.

Anything that we can do – the little habits and the good routines that we create within our daily self-care – will make a life-long difference, often within a very short period of time. And there are so many things that we can add into our days to give us that little bit of an edge over the elements.

You absolutely know what I am going to say next!

Yes – apple cider vinegar is a miracle of life inside a bottle.

A fermented elixir that might help sort out and tweak tiny digestive issues, aid your body in breaking down nutrients and positively affect your absorption.

Most of the benefits of apple cider vinegar are historic and anecdotal in nature, however it has been in continuous use for millennia and nearly always used for the soothing digestive properties it is known for.

However, there are so many other things that when done daily or often enough, add up to great health benefits;

- Daily walking (must be brisk) for at least 20 minutes.
- Stretches in the morning, or

evening, or afternoon!

- Three minutes barefoot in the grass, even when it is cold.
- Dance, sing and party for one in your kitchen to a favourite tune.
- An apple or handful of nuts for a snack.
- A daily chat with a positive friend.
- Eat your main meal a little earlier in the day
- Turn off the TV and listen to an audio book to switch things up
- An extra helping of broccoli
- A glass of water upon rising, with lemon and apple cider vinegar.

Pick a place to start and be-

gin. Even if you can't manage all of them every single day, aim for a couple of things that you do just for the health of it and don't look back. I like to have a mini checklist in my mind and pat myself on the back when I get a few of them done for the day.

Well-being and a healthy digestion are far more than what you eat; they are also how you feel about your life and surroundings. So, let's add some good vibes to each day whenever we can.

Simeon's approach to improving fitness, strength, and mobility

Personal Trainer and Holistic Massage Therapist, **Simeon Reed**, is passionate about helping people improve their health and wellbeing. As a result of growing up in a Wellness Centre he was naturally drawn to the area of health and fitness and the need to combine a healthy lifestyle with fitness and strength.



computer or a repetitive strain injury in your shoulder, it is likely you have a muscle im-

balance. "This can be improved through strengthening the external rotators (the most neglected part of the rotator cuff and shoulder) and the rhomboids in-between the shoulder blades, which draw back the shoulders, which is essential for good posture and is activated through horizontal pulling movements," he says.

Do you have trouble squatting? "I noticed that a lot of people get into the habit of starting the squat with their pelvis tilting forward, putting pressure on their knees, and cannot get any depth. This is going against the body's natural positioning through bad muscle memory learnt from modern living."

Often when people have lower back pain, their pelvis is out of alignment. "Sometimes stretching exercises will help," he explains "but more often deep tissue massage will release the knotted muscles and aid the body in moving back into alignment. You may also look

at your leg lengths and if one is shorter you can stretch that side. If you still have discomfort a realignment option is more appropriate."

According to Simeon, most people are suffering with their health unnecessarily, whether it's a misalignment with their back, or due to poor exercise or diet habits. "A lot of people are destroying their health through means they are unaware of and by pointing them in the right direction they can make great headway to becoming fitter and stronger," he says. For Simeon, job satisfaction comes from seeing the progress that his clients make on this journey.

Simeon Reed offers massage therapy and personal training at Rineen Natural Healing Centre. For more information or to make an appointment phone 087 096 3815 or email srheed421@gmail.com.

"I love doing inductions in the gym, as I see the potential for improving strength and pain relief through activating postural muscles," he explains. "It is important to commit to a program to achieve your goals."

Simeon explains that if you are suffering from shoulder problems from working at a

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Five tips to beat the pandemic blues

Claire Marie Barton, a sound-healer, musician and author living and working in West Cork, shares five things that can help increase our sense of well-being during lockdown.



wrap up very warm and go and sit outside even for just a few minutes or sit by an open window if this is not possible.

Going outside is magic for lifting gloom when you feel fenced-in. Listen to the sounds of nature; the wind, the birds, and the sea if you can get there and let them invigorate you.

3. Keep a gratitude diary. Everyday write down five things you are grateful for in your life. They can be big or small, like gratitude for getting a call from a loved one or that you have a roof over your head, especially when it's freezing outside. If you are feeling down, you can

read your diary. We really do have a lot to be thankful for.

4. Have you a hobby or a project at home in the garden that has been put on the long finger or do you want to learn something new? Now is the time to do it. January is a fantastic time to start new projects because there is a sense of shared momentum that we can tap into.

If you have always wanted to learn an instrument but never got around to it, the ukulele is a great instrument for beginners and is lots of fun. Enrolment is now open for my home-study online ukulele course.

5. Meditate or pray daily. If you find mediation hard, you might like to listen to some sound meditations. Simply by listening, you naturally enter a meditative state, and in this place you can feel calm and at peace.

If you are curious, you are welcome to check out my youtube channel where I have created a resource for coping with the pandemic.

I also run a monthly online sound bath. This is a live event, which you can listen to in the comfort of your own home. A replay is also available if you can't make it along live.

The sound bath is an immersion of sound, both voice and

instruments, and is a lovely way to relax and feel good.

'New Beginnings' Online Sound Bath, Friday, January 15, 7-8.30pm.

The '2021 Sound Journey' is a year of monthly sound baths to support you at this time. There is a 50 per cent discount if you sign up this month.

For more information and to get your ticket, visit www.clairemariebarton.com

The media is full of Covid and, with the rising numbers; it's easy to feel overwhelmed and fearful. Being in this state over a period of time can erode your sense of wellbeing and affect your mental health. But what can we do when everything seems to be out of our control?

1. Limit your exposure to the 'news' to once a day, whether you check the newsfeed on your phone, on the radio or you watch the 9 o'clock news on the telly. Tuning in multiple times a day creates stress and worry, and doesn't help anything.

2. Get outside every day for a walk so you get some exercise and some fresh air. If you can get out in nature all the better. Take some nice deep breaths and be really present (put your phone away). Notice the birds, the trees, flowers and clouds.

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people Health & Lifestyle

Changing your food can improve your mental health

There is no doubt that making sure we are eating well and keeping active throughout our lives will help us to improve our physical health; but did you know that what we eat and how we exercise also has positive affects on our mental health?

Research shows that our

gut health has a direct link to our mental health. In other words what we eat can lead to feelings of irritability, anxiety and depression or make these feelings worse. What we eat also influences behavioural issues like ADHD, OCD and addiction.

Therefore maintaining good gut health is central to support-

ing our mood and behaviour, as well as giving us the best chance of avoiding major health problems.

There are certain things that are universally good for all of us, like drinking water and making sure to get enough sleep, however when it comes to food there is no one diet that suits everyone.

There is also a huge amount of misinformation out there about food. We are being bombarded with marketing daily that promises products with health benefits of gluten free, fat free, sugar free; but when you understand the labels, you can see that these products may not be as good as they promised.

If you are suffering from anxiety, depression, irritability, low mood, control issues, fatigue, low appetite, cravings, IBS, bloating or abdominal pains, these can all be signs of poor gut health. Unfortunately stress can make any of these symptoms worse, so for that reason, a tailored approach managing stress, as well as changing your food can be very important.

If you have a desire to feel better but are worried about travel and face-to-face consultations, then you may be interested to hear that it is possible to work with a therapist online to improve your health from your own kitchen.

Online sessions are secure, confidential and just as beneficial as face-to-face. All you need is a



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

smartphone, tablet or computer. It doesn't matter your age; if you are comfortable with video chat then it is a good option and can even be better, as some clients feel more confident and comfortable to speak about difficult experiences when their session is online.

Online consultations are a great way right now to access the help you deserve from the comfort of your home. Or perhaps you are a parent of a child already in therapy and want to

be more involved in your child's recovery. If this is the case, then looking at what they are eating and making subtle changes will support that therapy process.

If you are curious about online therapy, I am offering you a free 15-minute online consultation so you can see if this option could work for you. If your house is busy, don't worry. When I work with clients online, I expect and plan to be interrupted, if it happens we just take a few minutes to deal with the interruption, which might be your kids, cat or dog or something else and then return to the session. Some clients prefer the privacy of their car, so that is an option too.

Amanda Roe is an Anxiety and Trauma Therapist offering a range of therapies that include Life and Health coaching, Clinical Hypnotherapy and Acupuncture. If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment, please send a text or give her a call or email today. Phone: 087 6331898 or email amanda@marketstclinic.com.

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Three simple things to support the immune system

There are a lot of misconceptions out there about which supplement to take to help boost your immune system and, whilst it is true that some supplements will help, so will organic coffee or green tea – depending on which part of the immune system you are trying to influence. The reality is that supplements are not necessarily the most effective (or cheapest) when it comes to supporting the immune system.

So here are three easy things that will have a more beneficial effect on your immune system:

Sleep and circadian rhythms: It has been shown that sleep has a very positive

effect on the immune system by exerting a strong regulatory influence on immune cells. During a normal sleep wake cycle the number of immune cells in circulation is boosted during early sleep, which has a positive effect on the number of immune cell that have an ability to immediately kill off pathogens, when you are awake. The key thing to remember is that the beneficial effect is felt from going to bed early enough, ideally around 10pm, and having seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep. It also helps to keep regular bedtimes.

Increase the amount of soluble fibre in your diet: This may

seem like a strange one but there is a fundamental link between the health of your gut and more specifically your gut bacteria's ability to modulate immune cell function. The gut and mucosal membranes are the main sites of immune activity in the body, as these are the areas of greatest exposure to pathogens. In order for your gut to be healthy, you need to have a healthy balance of gut bacteria and this is where the soluble fibre comes in. In order to survive, the bacteria need soluble fibre. The best source of this is from vegetables and fruits so actively increasing your intake can help to boost your immune function.

You should be aiming for five to six portions of vegetable per day and one portion of fruit. You can get a further boost by adding high fibre sources like psyllium husk or chia seeds to smoothies and meals.

Diversify the vegetables you eat: Not only is it important to boost the amount of fibre you are eating, it is also important to eat as wide a variety of fruit and veg as possible. What researchers are discovering is that the diversity and richness of the microbiome is just as important as the amount of bacteria. With this diversity the body has the maximum ability to adapt to the environment and that means you are better able to deal with new pathogens. In immune terms, eating lots of different vegetables will improve your oral



Eoin Roe

Chiropractic

tolerance; when we start to eat limited foods or the same thing, day-in day-out, the diversity of our microbiome is effected and ultimately our health.

This also a better strategy than taking probiotics, as you will be increasing the amount of fibre

at the same time, so not only diversifying your microbiome but feeding it as well.

I hope you find these tips useful all three have the added benefit of inexpensively boosting your overall health and wellness. Having said all that, if you were to take one supplement for immune health, I would encourage you to take Vit D3, especially in the winter. It is widely available at pharmacies and health food stores.

Dr. Eoin Roe DC MChiro is a Functional Medicine Practitioner and Chiropractor working at Market St Clinic, Skibbereen, Co Cork. If you would like an appointment please call 087 9582362.

Obstetricians and NIAC issue information on the COVID-19 vaccine for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

The Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists together with the National Immunisation Advisory Committee at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland have compiled information for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and their doctors about the COVID-19 vaccine. This information has also been endorsed by the HSE National Women and Infants Health Programme.

"We are issuing information to help to inform women who are pregnant or breastfeeding about the COVID-19 vaccine and also for their doctors which can help to inform discussions at this critical time," said Dr Cliona Murphy, Chair of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

She continued, "It is important that women seek trusted information about the vaccines and can assess their risks with regards to COVID-19 and the vaccine in consultation with their healthcare providers."

The information, titled Questions and Answers for pregnant or breastfeeding women and their doctors about COVID-19 vaccination, is available on The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland's website www.rcpi.ie

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A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

We've entered the New Year with a lot of uncertainty but luckily the chickens are tuned in to the universe and their inner egg radars have turned back on. It is amazing how quickly that incremental increase of daylight brings on the eggs. Which really and truly proves once again that life goes on, we've nothing to complain about and things will look up.

On the culinary front it's

A good slaw for a healthy start

good to look for healthy foods in January to boost the immune system and conquer the extra pounds gained in Christmas feasting.

Winter slaws are the business when you crave something bright and crunchy and they use vegetables that don't mind wintery weather. There's no need to use fragile jetlagged vegetables, as local seasonal vegetables are perfect to shred and dress. The bright oranges, greens and purples are like sunshine in a bowl.

The key ingredients for a slaw are usually some kind of cabbage – red or green and then whatever you have or fancy in the line of fennel, beetroots, carrots, radishes, onions, endive etc. Apples, oranges and pears also make good additions, as do toasted nuts and seeds. They can be dressed with vinaigrettes or creamy mayonnaise. The options are endless so you can let your imagination go riot.

Here's the recipe for the slaw that I made today from our post Christmas vegetable basket (and the remaining red cabbage from the garden) Salting the cabbage briefly makes the cabbage sweat and the juices run, softening the cabbage to a delightful succulent crunch.

Ingredients:

- Half a small red cabbage
- 1 fennel bulb
- 1 red onion
- 1 pear
- 1tsp sugar
- 2tbs white balsamic vinegar or white wine vinegar
- Salt
- 1tsp Dijon mustard
- 100mls olive oil

Method:

Finely shred the red cabbage – discard the core. Sprinkle it with a little salt, toss well then leave it aside for 10-15 minutes.

Finely slice the fennel and toss with a little salt. Leave

aside for 10-15 minutes

Peel and finely slice the red onion, sprinkle a little salt over then massage until the rings separate. Put the sugar into a bowl, whisk in the vinegar then toss the onions in the mix. Leave aside for 10-15 minutes

Peel and chop the pear.

Put the cabbage onto a clean cloth or kitchen roll then dry well to remove excess liquid and salt, tip into a bowl the repeat the process with the fennel.

Put all the vegetables except for the onions into a big bowl.

Drain the pickling liquid from the onions and use this as a base for the vinaigrette

Add the onions to the big bowl.

Whisk a teaspoon of Dijon mustard into the onion vinegar then slowly whisk in the olive oil

Pour the dressing over the vegetables then toss everything together.

The slaw is ready to eat but



it'll also sit happily in the fridge for a day or two.

Our shop is closed once again due to the Covid pandemic but we'll re-open as soon as we safely can.

Happy New Year everyone, we hope to see you soon!

Karen

Lettercollum Kitchen Project,
22 Connolly Street, Clonakilty
info@lettercollum.ie
www.lettercollum.ie

Understanding our four to five-year-old



DO WE UNDERSTAND OUR CHILD?

Diana Radeva

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist

In this series of articles 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.

In focusing on four to five-year-olds, this article looks at the changes that take place when children start to explore relationships beyond

the family, and the world of friendships. Children at this age are so intensely curious about the world around them, this can prove to be both a source of joy and exhaustion.

The primary focus of children at this age is on relationships, especially adult relationships. In other words, how do people join up? How did Mummy and Daddy join up? Where do I fit in this? In order to be able to form friendships of their own, the four- to five-year old has to move from the wish to have an exclusive relationship with one parent, in order to make a space for the other parent, as part of what becomes a triangular relationship. That is the way children develop a sense of themselves as different but connected to the parental couple.

In some ways this age is a precursor of what is to come during the adolescent years, in terms of the struggle between the continuing need for parental care and attention and the desire for independence.

One of the most delightful aspects of children at this age group is their endless curiosity about the world and their wish to understand their place in it. This is the time of questions: 'Where do I come from?' 'Why...?' 'How...?' and so on, sometimes to the extent of driving the parents mad.

The child is also beginning to be able to empathise, in other words, to put themselves into others' shoes and imagine how



they might be feeling. This ability to feel concern for others and care about their feelings is a major milestone in their development. However, when it comes to siblings, being able to 'read' and emphasise with them goes with knowing exactly how to wind them up and what will annoy them the most!

This, of course, is also the age at which the first major transition takes place – whereas, before going to nursery school or playground was a choice, now going to school is a legal requirement. Learning is more formalised, although in most reception classes nowadays there is a good balance between 'work' and play. Some children manage their anxiety by being intellectually able when they are not so socially at ease. Other lucky ones flourish in all ways. But most come somewhere in between, sometimes feeling left

out and rejected and sometimes being right at the centre of things. Children have to learn to share a teacher's attention; they also start to grasp more fully what it means not to be the special and the only one.

Friendships are becoming more solid, and more based on shared experience. When the rising five-year-old starts proper school, even if this is simply a transition from nursery to the reception class, it helps enormously if a child has firm friends who will be going on this journey with them. It is important to feel known and accepted by others outside the family. We can often see the delight on a child's face when they locate a friend in the playground, and the despair when the friend is absent.

But all children of this age have one in common – a desire to find out about the expand-

ing world. Perhaps the most important thing of all for a child this age is to feel that there is a space for them in their mother's mind, where they feel that they are understood, and that their fears can be named and made manageable. They can then in turn transfer the feeling of having a space in another person's mind to their teachers

and friends, and perhaps more importantly, develop a space in their own mind where thinking can take place. The child's sense of identity as separate but connected to their family will grow stronger, as they feel themselves reflected through the eyes of not only the mother but those of all the other significant people in their life.

Why do we sometimes find it hard to understand children?

When we struggle with our child's emotional distress or behavioural problems what can we do or what can help us?

Child psychotherapy practice is a proven and reliable method of addressing and treating a number of issues including:

- **Pre-school children:** difficulties within mother-infant relationship, eating, sleeping, and toileting, separation and developmental difficulties.
- **School-age children:** social difficulties, difficult behaviours such as defiance and aggression, ADHD, ASD, learning and attention problems, emotional problems such as anxiety and fears, family breakdown issues and relationships at home and at school.
- **Adolescents and young people (up to 27):** trauma, anxieties, worries, depression, low self-esteem, peer and family relationships problems, gender identity difficulties.

DIANA RADEVA

BPsych (Hons) MPsych Clin Mpsych psych

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist

Over 15 years of experience. ICP Registered, MACP

083 8930386 dradeva.childpsychotherapy@gmail.com

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“My job is now so varied and rewarding”

Matt Gardner CNM Nutritional Therapy Graduate

Despite already being qualified as a nutritionist, I felt something was missing and there was more I needed to learn to expand my knowledge and advance my career.

After training in Sports and Exercise Sciences at University and doing a Postgraduate in Sports and Exercise Nutrition, I became a Sports Nutritionist. I was interested to understand a different perspective and look at

the body in terms of systems so I decided to study the Naturopathic Nutrition diploma at CNM.

I wanted to diversify my practice and be able to work in private healthcare in the corporate wellness sector as a Nutritional Therapist. The naturopathic nutrition training offered at CNM was completely different to the way I was trained at university.

Whenever I set foot in the college, I felt a sense of calm and anticipation to sit back, listen and learn. The immediate warming nature of the team and the guest lecturers made me feel

instantly at home. Being able to attend lectures and clinical practice on the weekends was a huge bonus as I was very busy working full-time Monday to Friday.

I found the final year clinical practice extremely valuable as it enabled me to learn from experienced practitioners and my peers. The real-time problem solving that took place in my final year allowed me to put science and anecdotal evidence into practice.

After studying nutrition with CNM you have the wonderful opportunity to establish a nutrition business online or in person

and set up your own clinic. You also have the opportunity to work as a Nutritional Therapist in a business.

I now work as a Nutritional Therapist for Nuffield Health part-time and I run a nutrition consultancy service online where I deliver 1-2-1 consultations remotely and create content for business in the form of nutrition education. I also host a podcast called Big Feed Up HQ which focuses on nutrition, movement and outdoor experiences. I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without gaining insurance to practice through studying with CNM.



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Trying to conceive



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 practice she specialises in infertility and digestive issues. www.rosarikingstonphd.com

Blocked fallopian tubes are one cause of why women are not able to conceive. These tubes are the pathways from the ovaries to the uterus. At ovulation, usually the middle of the month, an egg is released from the ovaries and travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus. Conception also happens in the fallopian tube. If an egg is fertilised by sperm, it moves through the tube to the uterus for implantation. If a fallopian tube is blocked, the passage for sperm to get to the egg, as

well as the path back to the uterus for the fertilised egg, is blocked.

Oftentimes, it is only when a woman investigates why she is not conceiving that she discovers she has one, or both, fallopian tubes blocked. This is because the condition often, does not give rise to any symptoms. However, in some cases, blocked fallopian tubes can lead to mild, regular pain on one side of the abdomen. This usually happens in a type of blockage called a hydrosalpinx. This is when fluid fills and enlarges a blocked fallopian tube. Other conditions, such as endometriosis, can lead to a blocked fallopian tube can cause their own symptoms. These symptoms may include very painful and heavy periods and pelvic pain. Other conditions that may cause blocked fallopian tubes are,

Pelvic inflammatory disease as this may cause scarring. I have already mentioned endometriosis, which is a build up of endometrial tissues in the fallopian tubes. Adhesions that block the fallopian tubes can also be formed by the build up of endometrial tissue on the outside of other organs. Some sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea can cause scarring and this in turn leads on to other problems. Fibroids can block the fallopian tube, particularly where they attach to the uterus and a previous ectopic pregnancy may also lead to scarring in the tube. Any surgery on the fallopian tubes may also lead to the formation of adhesions with the same

end result – blockage.

Surgical options for this problem include, salpingectomy, fimbrioplasty, and selective tubal cannulation but there are some natural therapies too. These options are of benefit on their own and before and after surgery.

The first option is a herbal tonic designed to clear inflammation, infection, hormonal balance and optimise blood circulation. Alongside this, abdominal massage helps in supporting the health of the fallopian tubes. It increases circulation and helps to break down adhesions and scar tissue.

There is another technique known as Wurn, which is a specialised physical therapy technique and is completely natural. This technique is reported to be very successful, so, if blocked fallopian tubes are preventing you becoming pregnant, ask your physical therapist if they are familiar with the technique.

A more traditional, and common therapy is the castor oil pack. This is a cloth soaked in castor oil and then placed on the skin. By placing the pack on the abdomen, circulation is enhanced, and the lymphatic system is boosted. The castor oil pack works well with massage and herbs to optimise the health of the fallopian tubes.

So, as well as, instead of, or with surgery, a combination of herbal medicine, massage, physical therapy and an old-fashioned castor oil pack can help this particular cause of infertility.

Is there a silver lining to the Covid Cloud?



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.

Well Happy New Year everyone, or should I say Hopeful New Year. I mentioned last month that we would be in a mess if restrictions were relaxed over Christmas and 'voila' here we are. Our smug self-congratulation was too premature, and yes, popularity politics certainly drove the resurgence.

I find myself screaming at the radio when politicians are interviewed. Most interview so badly. No straight answers, no real plan, and huge gaping holes in a lockdown policy, whilst allowing people to fly into Ireland from all over the world.

Generally trusting everyone to self-isolate and be sensible does not work. Most are careful but look at the discarded masks littering the place and don't start

me on the amount of filth tipped from cars along our country roads. I live near Ring and we have just removed a filthy duvet and two five-gallon containers spilling oil from the hedgerows on our walks over Christmas.

God bless the joggers I see carrying plastic sacks to remove litter. If only we all took responsibility and were kinder to one another and cherished the environment we live in. Next time I see the jogger on the Ring road, I will applaud him!

I think GPs have done a great job. This is the silver lining. They have embraced technology big time. They are doing video consultations and directing patients through a phone triage system. There are good lines of communication between GPs and pharmacists saving patients travelling and being exposed to infections.

Covid infections are up but flu is right down. Lives are being saved. The diligence and expertise from GP teams has helped save the hospitals being swamped.

I remember my days when I worked in Anfield near Liverpool football club; surgeries would run from 9am till 1pm, the waiting room would be crammed with patients coughing all over one another whilst five doctors beavered away giving five minutes to each patient. Home visits were seen as every

patient's right and woe betide the doctor who did not respond accordingly. A dreaded complaint could follow. Round 2 took place between 3 and 6pm. Home for 7pm and a very large scotch, not good.

GP is now mainly office-based and technology is really helping. Let us not return to the bad old days of packed-out waiting rooms and patients asking for home visits on a whim.

GP education has shifted from having to travel at night to a post grad centre after a busy day to Zoom meeting, which can be followed at home and IT links to expert opinions.

I feel that the hospitals where I work now could learn so much from the way GPs have responded to the pandemic.

I meet aspiring GPs in the Hospital. They are going to drive the way Primary Care goes in the next few years. It takes them eight years or so before they can practise as fully-fledged GPs after qualification and I believe some of the changes we are seeing, like better co-operation from patients, better premises, point-of-care testing with immediate blood results, ultra sound training etc, and yes, a decent contract and better remuneration for a job well done, might retain a lot more in Ireland.

PS: I had my Covid vaccination on New Year's Day – make sure you get yours when invited.

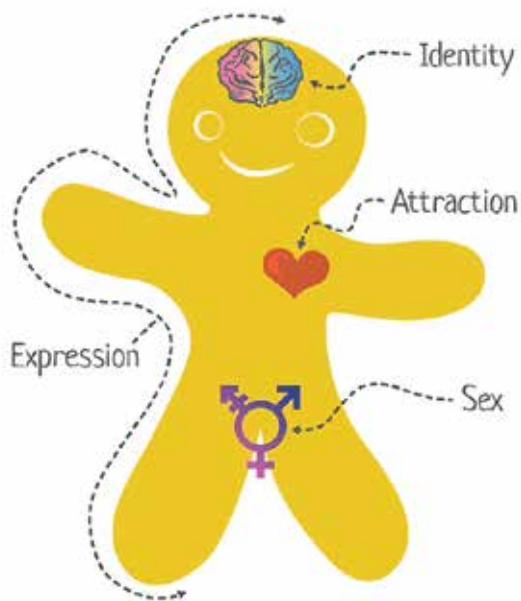


The colours and terminology of the rainbow



LGBTI+ MATTERS

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



The rainbow flag is a symbol used by – and associated with – the LGBTIQ+ community. **Lisa Brinkman** explains how the different colours of the rainbow represent the many different sexual and gender identities and orientations that exist outside of the heterosexual and cisgendered norm.

In the early to mid eighties, the term 'LGB' was first coined as a social movement advocating for the rights and needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in society. Soon after, the letter 'T' was added to include transgender people as well. In recent years the letter 'Q' was added to include queer identities, as well as the letter 'I' for intersex people. A '+' was also added to include any other gender or sexual identities under the umbrella of the community.

Throughout the month of December 2020, BRÓD ran a 'terminology advent calendar' on our social media, each day explaining a different term relevant to the LGBTIQ+ community, which was incredibly well-received. Many people (inside and outside of the LGBTIQ+ community) weren't familiar with some of the terms and welcomed our definitions and explanations. In this month's column, we would like to give an overview of some of the terminology, abbreviations, and language used in regard to the LGBTIQ+ community and hopefully further peoples understanding some more.

So let's start at the very beginning and look at the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity':

Sexual orientation refers to who one is sexually and romantically attracted to. If one is attracted to people from the opposite sex, we speak of *heterosexuality*.

Being attracted to people of the same sex is called *homosexuality*. People who are attracted to both men and women are termed *bisexual*.

A relatively new addition to the list of sexual orientations is *pansexuality*. Pansexuality refers to being romantically and sexually attracted to a person based on their personality, independent of their gender. To a pansexual person the gender of their partner isn't relevant, meaning they could be male, female, transgender, non binary, gender queer, etc.

Another recent addition are the terms '*asexuality*' and '*aromantic*', which refer to people who don't feel a sexual or romantic attraction to any other person.

Gender Identity refers to what gender we identify with. To understand Gender Identity fully, we need to first distinguish between the term gender and sex. In this context, *sex* refers to the biological sex of a person, which is determined by chromosomes, hormones and internal and external genitalia. In most cases, these are either typical male or typical female.

The term *gender* refers to how people feel and express their femininity or masculinity and is far more individually and socially constructed.

People who's biological sex and gender are in alignment and who identify with the sex they were born in are called *cis-gender*. People who feel that they were born in the wrong body and their gender doesn't align with their biological sex are called *trans-gender*.

Many transgender people start a process called *transitioning*, in which they change from living in their biological sex to living in the gender they identify with. For most transgender people this means transitioning from male to female or from female to male. This transitioning is mainly a social and psychological process, but is also often assisted by medical interventions such as hormone treatment and surgeries.

As mentioned, most transgender people identify within the binary system of male and female and transition from one to the other. However, some transgender people don't identify with their biological sex (either male or female) but don't necessarily identify with the opposite gender either but identify outside of the binary system. These people identify as *non-binary*, *a-gender*, *gen-*

der queer or *gender-fluid*.

Intersex is a category of its own and is neither a sexual orientation nor a gender identity. It is far more an umbrella term for a multitude of different medical conditions, in which the biological sex characteristics of a person don't all correspond to either male or female.

As mentioned earlier, our biological sex is determined through our chromosomes, hormones and internal and external genitalia.

For an intersex person, these don't always all align in the typical male or female way and can be both or neither.

The 'Q' in the LGBTIQ+ stands for '*queer*' and is mainly an umbrella term for anyone who identifies outside of the hetero- and cis-norm. Sometimes, the 'Q' is also interpreted as '*questioning*', referring to a person who may be questioning their sexual orientation and gender without fully identifying with any category or term (yet).

The growing number of

terminology and abbreviations added to the LGBTIQ+ umbrella is not so much a sign that the number of people identifying as LGBTIQ+ is significantly increasing.


It is far more an indicator that we as a society are creating more openness and safety for people to name and express


their inner and outer realities.

There is still a lot more work to be done, but we are definitely on a good trajectory.

To find out more about anything LGBTIQ+ related or what we are up to, follow us on our Facebook and Instagram page.

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after Covid19)

Astrology of 2021

2021 is not the endurance ordeal of 2020 but there is no point in pretending that 2021 is the reward for getting through the last year. This year has more positive highlights and things are moving along at a much faster pace now so we can get a better feel of what we have to work with. It could be a bit of a rollercoaster ride as we adjust and re-adjust to all the dynamics that are on the Astro schedule this year. We get a good mid-year taster of some of the benefits coming along in 2022 but we'll have to wait until 2023 to feel we have come through and out the other side of something big. 2021 brings many twists and turns and some unexpected events that alter the course of our lives to varying degrees, but we have plenty to be optimistic about as long as we stay with the Aquarius trend of the current times. Taking a step back from the emotive scenes we are bombarded with through the media and getting some perspective that reconnects you to your local reality and your community is the best remedy for any of this year's turbulence. Being open-minded, openhearted and allowing the creative solutions to flow is the way to make an opportunity out of a crisis. That's the main message and the way ahead this year.

Saturn in Aquarius square Uranus in Taurus

Exact on February 17, June 14 and December 24.

We have one dominant theme this year that gives us the signature for 2021. This dynamic suggests we are in for a rocky ride in 2021, as the square between these very different planets is in the background throughout the year.

Saturn (tradition) is challenged by Uranus (change) and the main topics are around reformist ideals and social constructs (Aquarius) versus the security of material resources and the body's basic needs (Taurus)

Square aspects demand action and they get our attention so we DO something to arrive at a new position or perspective. This energy asks for change so we can have a new experience.

The two planets involved have very contrasting energies and the constraints and stability of Saturn will thwart the rash overthrow of Uranus whilst Uranus will provide the unexpected twists and turns than any good plot requires ensuring Saturn doesn't provide a dreary and predictable conclusion to this chapter of our lives.

So as the 'warp speed' plans to move humanity into a digital 'smart' world get challenged by unforeseen delays and resistance, we may find that all is not going to plan when it comes to resetting our social and economic systems. On the other hand, it is all going according to plan if we allow for the chaos factor of nature and the random wild card element that has always made essential digressions and pushed evolution to its next level when required.

There will be a strange mix of ideals, ethics and personal values as many previous choices and preferences will reverse or at least overlap in ways that couldn't have been expected before now. Those who would be natural freedom seekers and outsiders will find themselves wanting to conserve a status quo or be defensive of traditional values. Whilst many previously

conservative people will be the first to adopt the 'new normal', as society is reformed at an astonishing pace.

Some of the biggest causes of division that we will experience this year will be a clash of moral or ethical values and fighting over what we value. Opinions and beliefs will become even more divergent or extreme, and each will believe they are right. The problem arises when one side wants to use force to ensure the compliance of the other. The tensions will rise and lines will be crossed. There is little doubt that we will see a lot more rebellion and resistance in 2021.

We will see many issues that highlight our access to resources in 2021. We will have serious questions about who 'owns' the land, homes, property and even the money. Who has the 'right' to access these resources will be a point of contention. It's not just about the big things and global resources, it's also about the basics at a local level. Who owns our food, or the ability to produce it from a garden or farm and our water and fuel supplies too. There will be argument and clashes, confrontation and riots over these things, all around the world. The global economic systems will be under stress and our local systems will need to step up to fill the gaps.

The issue of ownership and fundamental rights will become a major topic of divisiveness this year. There will be those that seek to overrule personal needs and wants, as we are asked to sacrifice all that we hold dear for the so-called 'good of all'. Some will continue to trust those people or organisations that preach that the new ways are necessary to maintain personal and collective safety and security. As people in their masses seek to be saved from the things they fear most, they will surrender their autonomy in exchange. Not everyone wants this new system, which involves little personal governance. Many will choose to fend for themselves by pooling their skills and resources on a local level so they can maintain

their ability to manage their community systems and structures. Each will see the other as a threat to their survival and this can bring out the more basic survival instincts in people.

This is certainly a time when we must consider deeply our relationship with our environment and how able we are to harmonise with nature. We need a new approach, which integrates technological advances with the natural rhythms and cycle that we have become estranged from. We need to adjust the way we organise our social patterns and how we share our resources so there is a more balanced and cohesive system in place. The planetary signatures do speak to us about 'now', as the time for this. There is a massive and seemingly necessary shift occurring and a new paradigm being initiated. We are at a point of choosing which way we want to proceed.

What we currently see being promoted by the media is only one way forward. Those who hold influential positions are all singing the same tune and no one else is getting the chance to be heard or seen. Being given only one option for our collective future is not a choice, it is a dictate.

Will we become more aware and connected with our deeper and more refined spiritual nature and intuitively find the balance and harmony required. Or will we insist on following our fearful mind and self-limiting beliefs to design what we are told is the right and only way?

Neptune misinformation and confusion

A theme that carries over from 2020 is that we are being kept in the dark or just can't see our way ahead with clarity.

Neptune, the planet of mystery and illusions, is in a challenging square to the Moon's nodes since mid-2020. The nodes represent our destined path and what we are growing into for our future as well as what we are releasing from the past. When Neptune is involved



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

there is often an inability to see what is going on behind the scenes and it's as if things are being distorted leaving a sense of unreality to whatever is happening.

Certainly, it may not appear that we are deluded or mistaken because the illusion is very effective. We just know that things don't add up or they make no sense when we try to put the pieces together. This dynamic concludes in early February. Once this veil is lifted many things may become apparent. There is likely to be revelations of deeply held secrets or deliberate deceptions. We should at least get some clarity and see where we are heading now. There may be a backlash as some people feel cheated or angry at being taken advantage of over the past months.

Some of the barriers to feeling compassion and empathy are going to lift and we may be more able to resonate with others despite being of differing opinion.

For many people, this phase will have helped them look more deeply for the hidden truths in life and brought them a sense of connection with something more spiritual or of greater meaning.

Mars is on the move again

After spending an extraordinary amount of time in one sign in 2020, nearly half the year in Aries, Mars is now going to transit eight signs in 2021 serving as a timing trigger. This movement from the action planet signifies the fast pace of change and the rapid evolution of events that we can expect this year. It is also the planet of friction and conflict. Not all conflict is war but this planet makes some very volatile contacts

with several other planetary big shots as it whizzes by. Mars travels through each sign and stirs things up. The nature of each sign gives us the clues as to how well this goes. It triggers the Uranus in Taurus position on January 18, which can ignite some heat around bodily integrity and food resources. This opens up the challenges that we will be facing surrounding these topics this year.

When Mars challenges Jupiter on January 19, we could see some heated action and conflict around justice and social reforms, and then some shift or resolution, a finale of sorts, from the opposition on July 28.

On July 1, Mars opposes Saturn and this frustrating energy can cause the pressure to break something apart during the few days either side. In the fire sign of Leo, it could be a literal firewall problem. Some resistance to the enforcement of restrictions or significant leadership changes.

In late October and early November, Mars moves from the air sign Libra to the water sign Scorpio, as it makes a powerful and challenging square to Pluto, then Saturn followed by an opposition to Uranus. This is certainly going to be a turbulent few weeks and a peak period of disruption this year. We can expect power clashes and maybe riots or civil disturbances during this time. There could be natural events that create upheaval, as the Lunar eclipse also falls into this time frame, October 20 to November 20.

Jupiter in Pisces provides a preview

Jupiter just arrived in Aquarius at the end of 2020 to make its grand conjunction with Saturn. It takes about a year to transit one sign so we have this expansion of Aquarian themes for 2021. Aquarius does not get entangled in sentimentality or get swayed by emotional reactivity. It casts a clear and detached mind over the issues it perceives and seeks a progressive solution that will benefit humanity. So there is a high level of innovation with new technologies that are designed to create a better world for our future. At worst there is an exaggerated level of ideology and altruism with a sense of almost divine righteousness.

Jupiter briefly moves into Pisces, on May 13 until July 28 when it starts the retrograde back into Aquarius and it won't return to Pisces until December 29. But this short spell of the benevolent planet in its own sign of Pisces is like a breath of fresh air amid so much unrest and restriction. Pisces

is a creative and even mystical sign that connects to other dimensions with ease. It can be inclined to want to escape the material world in exchange for something more spiritual. Its true expression is more towards freeing the spirit from the confines of the mundane and expressing a more intuitive and compassionate connection with the world and its inhabitants. Jupiter in Pisces allows us to reach out and expand on our higher aspirations and goals. Our imagination is strengthened and we can be highly intuitive and inspired. We seek broader and better horizons that are aligned to values beyond the material world. It takes some of the fear away and replaces it with optimism and faith in a brighter future. There is a sense of being guided or aligned with a divine force.

The retrograde of Jupiter back into Aquarius will allow us to return to the business of reforming and working on our connection with humanity before we get to working on reconnecting to our divinity during the Pisces transit.

Mercury Retrogrades to get us thinking

*January 30 to February 1 in Aquarius.
May 29 to June 22 in Gemini.
September 27 to October 18 in Libra.*

In 2021 Mercury has three retrograde phases, which in itself is nothing unusual, but this year they all occur in the air signs. This emphasis on our thoughts goes along with the Aquarian theme and the power of our mind and thoughts being of great significance. Mercury represents our ability to process information and make sense of what we hear or see. In a time when so much of what we are presented with as fact or knowledge is actually distorted to support an agenda, we really do need to approach information with clarity and discernment. Many responses to ideas, opinions and suggestions are rebuked with an emotional reaction rather than a level-headed assessment. During these Mercury retrograde phases this year there is likely a need to review what you thought you knew to be true. Many presentations of news and truth are revealed to be less than honest during 2021 and during the Mercury retrograde phases, we are likely to see some of the supposedly reliable sources unravel.

Use these retrograde phases of 2021 to meditate and contemplate. Take time out to research or re-examine information you

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use to make your choices. Be prepared to reconsider and re-evaluate everything.

More than ever now it is important to be aware of what you think and where your attention and mental energy is focused. Your attention creates more of what you focus on. Keep your attention away from the issues that make you feel powerless.

The very thoughts that you think are powerful in creating your version of reality and so if they are mostly fearful or anxious your world is a much more difficult place to navigate. Whereas if your thinking is peaceful and you possess an open mind you will be assured of a much more enjoyable experience in life.

Eclipses start a new cycle
May 26, Lunar eclipse in Sag-

ittarius.

June 10, Solar eclipse in Gemini.

November 19, Lunar eclipse in Taurus.

December 4, Solar eclipse in Sagittarius.

This year's eclipse cycles bring the ending to the previous Gemini Sagittarius polarity in exchange for the Taurus Scorpio one which becomes the eclipse pattern for 2022.

Sagittarius represents the imaginative thinking and exploration of new ideas and experiences that expand our understanding (ruled by Jupiter). Gemini represents the interpretation of information that requires a comparison of ideas and provides contrast and options. (ruled by Mercury)

The eclipse cycle moves into a Taurus Scorpio phase for

2022. The November 19 Lunar eclipse gives us a head start on the coming year trends. We begin to discern between actual reality and overly emotional responses to what we think is reality.

A big signature of 2020 and 2021 is the way we are reacting to anyone who is coming from a different perspective and opinion.

One of the big lessons for us all is to refrain from this divisiveness and to stop needing to be "right" and make the other wrong to prove our self.

Being truly awake and aware does not exclude deep feelings, compassion or empathy but it does not involve any emotionalism and reactivity. This is a truly freeing way of interacting with the world and others, as each moment is fresh and

untainted by any imprints or residues from the past.

The November eclipse comes amongst several other tense alignments and we may not see the full effect of this eclipse until it unfolds in the early months of 2022. There may be some purging and transformation on many levels that will clear a path for what is to come in the following year.

We can see that 2021 is really a preparation year for the next several years that follow. Doing the groundwork this year will help to design the future that is wanted by ordinary people who want to live ordinary lives. Remembering that we are each extraordinary, unique and powerful is the way to achieve this.

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January Sun Signs



Aries: You have the desire for strong bonds with your friends and you are especially sensitive to how they treat you this month. You are both caring and concerned for their personal development, but easily hurt if they let you down in any way. Ensure that you spend time only with people that elevate and support you. Disconnect from the daily grind and tap into your lighter side for a while. Count your blessings and remember that enjoyment of the good life is more about your own sense of wellbeing, not money, friendship or possessions.



Taurus: You have a strong sense of duty and you can feel that your role is primarily to live up to family or social expectations in early January. You may have been striving to achieve some predefined goals and you want the recognition now. Over the coming weeks, you can reach out for what you want for yourself. Stand in the spotlight whilst acting the part of your unique self in all your glory. Ensure you take time out to wave your own flag and get noticed for your contribution before a new surge of personal creativity rolls in.



Gemini: Think big and stretch your imagination this month. In the past, you will have unconsciously been affected by the convictions and values of those close to you. The powerful need for a strong belief to hold on to that is solid and true for you demand your attention now. During these few weeks as your interest in philosophical and spiritual areas is heightened use the time to expand your inner window on the world and break new ground. The feeling of suddenly having understood something can have you wondering now what to do with it all, but that will take care of itself down the line.



Cancer: As January progresses your experiences will confirm that you must not depend on other people or your possessions to provide emotional security for you. This could be a very transformative few weeks when you might unearth resources within yourself that you were previously unaware of. Allow yourself to stand aside for a moment and recognise where any deals and contracts have tied up your energy. You no longer need to rely on certain items or belongings as you become more emotionally stable. Clear out any useless things you've been hoarding, the sense of space and freedom will do you good.



Leo: The focus falls on your relationships from early January and you have difficulty distinguishing between your own feelings and the people closest to you. Tune in to yourself, and allow your partner or close friends to have their moods without imagining they always have something to do with your own actions. Connecting with others in a special moment can be enjoyed when close allies or partners become your focus but you could be thinking that you have all got a little too involved or caught up with each other recently and soon you'll need to stand back.



Virgo: You may waste too much energy on menial tasks, thus getting distracted from the broader visions in your life during these few weeks. You are likely to make yourself indispensable through being of service to the physical needs of others, and generally happy to take on a lot of tasks – both in your career and around the house. If you are not careful, however, other people will take advantage of you. Now though you should be really getting things together for yourself whilst you can keep the focus on the details. Once done, you'll be able to stand back and take pride in your accomplishments.



Libra: Spontaneity is the keyword for you this month and it's time to loosen up and have some fun. Taking the lead and making some bold statements is also an option. Going just a little bit over the top will be acceptable now as this is a general time of celebration for all. Passion and intensity can run rampant as your enthusiasm overflows so get creative with your energy. You have a strong emotional need for some romantic encounters but you do know how to nurture and maintain the romance in an existing relationship too. So go the extra mile and enjoy!



Scorpio: During January you might find you need to spend more time at home and you can find great pleasure in looking after loved ones, cooking, making home improvements etc. You feel very sensitive to the moods of others, especially if you share your personal space. Although you'll be strongly motivated to create a caring and secure environment, a crowd can be claustrophobic. You can get on each other's nerves. This is a time to acknowledge the comfortable and familiar environment that supports you. Draw on it as a source of strength but avoid being over-dominant or demanding.



Sagittarius: Any trying or difficult emotional experiences you have early this month result from having strong differences of opinion with someone you have to deal with every day. When you argue your case you are easily swayed by irrational arguments and emotions. Could it be that everybody is trying to get their message through but no one is listening? Try not to get distracted whilst you tie up important loose ends and meet deadlines. You need to keep some time for a new project or mental challenge in later weeks. You could be making plans for travelling or starting a new class or training programme.



Capricorn: Mid-January will find you focusing on your personal resources and economic fluctuations. You can be a very kind and giving person but you also need to feel secure. Being a little more concerned with your financial status now is probably a good thing although some people may view you as unusually materialistic and possessive. This is a time to cash in on some of your hard-earned investments and name your price for your efforts. Be confident in your skills and abilities and turn them to good use now as others will notice and reward you later.



Aquarius: By mid-month you are likely to have put doubts behind you and become a glowing example of both vitality and attractiveness. Let your personality truly shine and you can expect to have a powerful impact on your surroundings through your moods and feelings. You may be seen as unusually emotional or sentimental, but you know how to provide a truly nurturing environment for others. You're motivated to show how much concern and care you have for them now. Bring any critical personal projects to a conclusion whilst you have the energy required to satisfy your own high standards.



Pisces: You need to withdraw from the world from time to time and commune with nature or your inner feelings. During January you are extremely sensitive to your environment and could spend a lot of time enveloped in a very private emotional world. Ideally, create a place of your own which is sacred to you where you can be alone. In this private retreat, you can become aware of your many dreams and longings. Try to work more consciously with the inner world of your imagination through creative work or meditative practice for a few days.

January has a New Moon at 24° Capricorn on the 13th at 5.01am and the Full Moon is at 10° Leo on the 28th at 7.17pm.

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Ger Fleming is a registered homeopath in Clonakilty. Having just recently returned to work from maternity leave, Ger is now offering online zoom appointments.

“Homeopathy is a safe, gentle and effective form of complementary medicine, Ger explains. “It is suitable for all ages and stages of life, from pregnancy through childbirth, for infants, children and teens to adulthood. It is useful in the treatment of so many conditions from acute to chronic complaints, both physical and emotional.

“I first discovered homeopathy over 15 years ago and was really amazed at how it worked on and improved my health. Now, a husband, three children and a vast array of pets later, I have come to rely on homeo-

pathic remedies and use them whenever necessary on the whole family.”

So what is homeopathy and how can it help? Ger explains the principles behind it: “Homeopathy is a medical science based on the principle ‘like cures like’. Put simply, any substance that can produce symptoms in a healthy person can also cure similar symptoms in a person who is sick.

“For example: When you peel an onion, it makes your eyes water and often your nose burn. If you are experiencing hayfever symptoms like watering eyes and a burning nose, then a homeopathic remedy

made from onion can relieve it.

“Homeopathy also works on the principle of the ‘minimum dose’ in that you give the least amount of medicine necessary in order to achieve a healing response.”

If you would like more information on homeopathy, or to book an appointment, feel free to call/text Ger on 086 6773288 or email: ardnacarrig@hotmail.com.

Initial consultations generally last approximately 60-90 mins (fee €70), while follow up appointments (fee €50) are approx 30-45 minutes long.

Spare us all...it's January



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

No matter how hard we try, there is no avoiding the month of January. At one point in time we may have hibernated around this time of the year but unfortunately this is not the case now, no matter how hard some of us try to linger in our PJs or stay stuck under our comfy quilt. Our priority today is to stay healthy in mind and body. There are times when it looks like 2020 just put a wig on and reappeared as 2021 but please remember that it is only early days yet, stay hopeful, and colourful, and smile – even when you feel like cursing everyone, including the donkey down the road.

We can only control what we each do ourselves; it is futile to believe that we can have control over anyone else. I was slapped with that reminder, as we buried our cat yesterday – poor little Jimmy. Try as I may, he loved his freedom and always stayed at the back of our house and garden but his curiosity got the better of him eventually. The road must have looked

very attractive and it was there that he met with his demise. We are all sad and I've been asked a few times why I didn't keep him inside all the time, but how could I take away his freedom and try to control it? He loved roaming with the dogs and stalking them and he had a wonderful, albeit short life, full to the brim with fun and games. If you are wondering why I am telling you all of this, it is because we have lost our freedom and we are all undoubtedly struggling now. Our routines and day-to-day habits are askew and we are afraid to even think about what the future holds. All I can say is be a 'Jimmy'! Have fun whenever and wherever you can, find a new way to enjoy yourself, find new habits that don't involve incessantly watching the news, googling the daily numbers or starting every conversation with 'Strange times...' So what if you have gained some lockdown pounds or hit the festive sweets with the vigour of a lion stripping a carcass, you will lose it again if you really want to. If not there is elastic in almost everything now, so 'Happy Days'.

If there is one foolproof way to feel better, then it simply must be NOT to live in leggings if you are working from home. They fall into what I call the 'danger zone'. It's all too easy to go from day to day in them, as they are just too comfortable. There is nothing wrong with slipping back into them after dinner in the evenings but they prove to be detrimental to keeping your weight on track. They just grow with you, silently and without you noticing at all. That is true for all of the loungewear this year; it is soft and comfortable and overly stretchy. While most people won't even

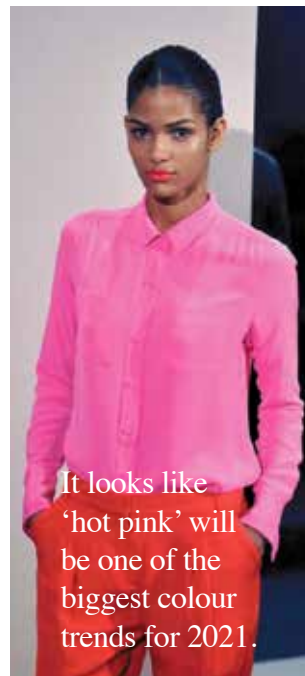
notice a few extra pounds, your 'good' clothes will immediately scream 'imposter' when you try to jam yourself into them... at least that's what I think they roared when I put on a skirt the other day. On the plus side (no pun intended), the weather has been encouraging us all to get out and walk or run, so let's be grateful for that. Try to continue to make an effort at looking your best. Let's be honest, if you are not going anywhere, it is easier to not have to make any effort at all with yourself but that has a knock-on effect and it's not a good one. If you, pre-Covid, used to wear make-up every day, then continue to do so now. It will boost your mood and at the moment we need to grab on to anything that does this. The same goes for your hair; style it as if you were going out to work. There is no better time of the year to smother yourself in body lotion, your skin is crying out for hydration. I'm back to letting my feet linger in a basin of hot water and Epsom salts, the best and cheapest detox for the body, and my feet feel amazing afterwards. My face gets a mask of pure Molaga Honey once a week – you won't find a face mask that will contain as many vitamins and minerals to feed your skin. It is a bit messy and sticky but the resulting glow is so well worth the effort.

Can I suggest that you spend an evening or two revamping your wardrobe? Pull everything out, absolutely everything, and lay it across your bed and anywhere else that you can. You'd be amazed at how many items of clothing we all forget about or have never even worn – it might work perfectly with something else now! Every season brings with it some new

colour combinations, so don't be afraid to mix and match. The addition of a colourful scarf can and must never be underestimated. It's instant PZAZZ, especially when we tend towards darker colours this time of year.

Bobble hats are always a cute addition for a casual look but a bucket hat is très chic with a long trench coat or oversized jacket and jeans. It is a fresh addition, especially if you love hats. Rediscover the art of 'belting up' by throwing on a belt over anything. Obviously, they work very well with jumper dresses but certain winter coats can have a new lease of life just by adding an eye-catching belt.

One of the quickest ways to fall into 'wardrobe humdrum' is to choose similarly shaped pieces over and over again. If you always wear very fitted clothes (like me), then opt for something loose and oversized and do it at least once a week. It's quirky and new and fun.



It looks like 'hot pink' will be one of the biggest colour trends for 2021.

Smart pinstripe loose trousers can look incredibly smart with an oversized jumper, brogues and a smart handbag, especially if you keep your hair neat or tied back – it gives a more sculpted look. Believe it or not, the denim skirt that has been hiding away, whether it is a mini or knee length, needs to be pulled out and worn with knee-high boots and a smart chiffon blouse; 10/10 for smart casual with this look.

It looks like 'hot pink' will be one of the biggest colour trends for 2021, so keep an eye out. If you already have some in your wardrobe, it looks strikingly bold worn with black. Check is still going strong and since we will need coats for quite a while yet, you could invest in a check coat that adds colour over black or denim. Skinny jeans will never go away but they will take a backseat to looser, ripped denim – you might even have a pair at the back of your wardrobe that still fits so check them out.

It is an absolute must that you seek out some playful prints to get 2021 off to a fun start. They are sure to put a smile on your face and perhaps to anyone you might meet during the day. Don't be afraid to pair 'bold colours' – it is a refreshing look if not for the faint-hearted. Shades like red, blue and green in individual pieces look fantastic together. Skinny jeans with a sharp blazer create the ideal combination of casual and sleek and are a great look for when we can go out to dinner once again.

You might have a little more time than usual right now so use that time to benefit 'you'. Take time to google new looks and 'how to do it'. Don't be afraid of failure – experiment to your

Marie Keating Foundation seeks part-time nurses

As part of its ongoing development the Marie Keating Foundation wishes to recruit two part-time nurses for its cancer awareness, support and survivorship services in community and online settings.

The foundation requires a part-time nurse for its service in the Southern Region which covers South Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, Kerry, Waterford.

You should be available approximately six to eight days per month and have the flexibility to travel within your region. You must be currently registered with National and Midwifery Board Ireland (NMBI) you should have 5 years post registration experience in oncology as well as an interest in the area of health promotion.

To apply or to receive the full job description, please forward your CV and covering letter to Helen Forristal, Director of Nursing Services at hforristal@mariekeating.ie, by close of business Friday 21st January 2021.

heart's content until you find what works for you. Challenge yourself and repeatedly push yourself to step outside your comfort zone.

My message to you for January is to stay safe, stay connected, have fun, give lots of virtual hugs and, like Jimmy, go out and explore where you can, but safely. Spring is on the way... we will bloom again.

people Health & Lifestyle

Editor's beauty picks:

French spa and beauty brand THALGO has recently launched a new anti-pollution treatment and skincare range, specifically developed to help tackle the impact of city living and urban stress – particularly addressing the effects of pollution and exposure to free radicals and toxins to the skin.

The brand new, innovative range of **Spiruline Boost** products and professional detoxifying treatments include a complex of active ingredients to relieve skin stress and aid the rejuvenation and regeneration of skin cells and encourage detoxification. Combining Energising Spirulina with anti-stress Marine Magnesium, the new products aim to reduce skin fatigue and prevent signs of ageing.



With higher levels of hydrolysed proteins and sugars, nutrients that boost the cell and energy metabolism (ATP), the Energising Spirulina optimises epidermal renewal and structure, reducing the signs of skin ageing and the impact of urban stress.

Soothing, tension-relieving Marine Magnesium has a relaxing 'botox-like' effect on the skin's features, helping to reduce the general signs of fatigue and skin stress.

The full range of Spiruline Boost creams, gels and oral products from THALGO are now available in Ireland at select salons and spas nationwide.



The last year has been especially harsh on our hands what with increased handwashing as well as the added use of hand sanitisers and anti-bacterial sprays. It is important to give our hands some much needed TLC, especially during the cold winter months, and **Dr. Hauschka's Hydrating Hand Cream** offers relief for tired, dry and sore hands.

And to add an extra bit of New Year's cheer until February 19, 2021, Dr. Hauschka's Hydrating Hand Cream is available at a very

special price of just €15.45 (normally €19.45) so its never been a better time to treat your hands to some extra special care.

For further details on the full Dr. Hauschka range, call your local stockists or to shop online log onto Dr. Hauschka's website: www.drh.ie

Letter to the Editor:
Citizen's Health Jury

Dear Editor,

I am writing to ask if readers of the West Cork People would be interested in becoming members of a Citizens' Jury to discuss the matter of access to health information?

As individuals, our healthcare professionals need to be able to review our health records to best determine our care. However, that information can also serve the public interest by offering key insights into the development and innovation of our health services for future generations.

One might ask should our health information only be used for our own individual needs? Or should it also assist in wider societal healthcare needs? Can a balance perhaps be struck between both positions that ensures transparency and trust and, if so, how?

The aim of the jury is to learn more about our health information, to deliberate on who might access those records, and to what end.

An initiative of the Irish Platform for Patients' Organisations, Science & Industry (IPPOSI), we want to assemble a group of 25 people, who are broadly representative of the Irish population.

The jury will hear from experts offering various perspectives on these matters. Its recommendations will be submitted to policy-makers in Ireland to inform the development of new health information legislation, as well as the creation of a national Electronic Health Record.

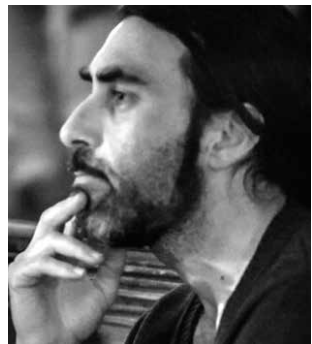
We are looking for people aged 18 years and above, from diverse backgrounds, and who are resident in Ireland, to join our Citizens' Jury.

The jury will sit virtually during the month of April for a series of two-hour sessions. Successful applicants will receive a €400 gratuity; however, the bigger reward will be the opportunity to have your say on this matter of huge national importance.

Application can be made online at www.ipposi.ie/citizensjury and the closing date is Sunday January 31, 2021.

Yours sincerely,
Derick Mitchell, CEO IPPOSI
77 Camden Street, Dublin 2

people Arts & Entertainment

THE SHAPE
OF THINGS

James Waller

James Waller is an Australian born artist and poet based in West Cork. Through this new column James will be exploring the world of art, introducing the reader to major works of art and artists and reflecting on what makes them so engaging.

Whether it is a song, a poem, a dance, a painting, a performance or film, there is usually something we can recall that has moved us, resonated with us, made us laugh or cry, or held us with a quiet truth that we deeply recognise. Art has this incredible capacity to open us to ourselves and others, to trigger a sense of wonder, to excite our own creative desire, to reveal a sense of unity where before we felt none. Art draws us when it feels whole, complete, because we are not complete in ourselves. This is how it

Reflections on Matisse

inspires. Dynamic, mysterious unity in a great piece of music is not only thrilling, it is healing: within it we can place all that is disordered and incoherent in our lives. We say to ourselves: "this composer really gets it, this singer understands me, I know this." This is how art serves: by being a repository for untold feeling.

Art therefore is not escapism (though it certainly offers escape from the mundane and superficial). On one level it sparks wonder and a sense of possibility, and may trigger us on our own creative journey. On another level it is a way of deepening and refining our sense of empathy. Far from escaping, it brings us closer to an awareness of ourselves, and others.

At home and in the studio I often have art books open displaying works that inspire me, a habit that has prompted much journaling over the years. The last such series of journal entries I made was during lockdown last year, when I wrote a series of 60 daily reflections on various artworks. I will be using those entries as the basis for this new column, a journey into the world of art for all ages, called 'The shape of things'.

I began the series of meditations with Henri Matisse's 'The Sorrow of the King' (1952), a monumental paper cut-out, which he created bed-ridden,

two years before his death in 1954. 'The Sorrow of the King' is for me one of the most joyful and uplifting compositions in Western art. Measuring almost 3 x 4 metres, its scale is wonderfully immersive. It has an unerring and magical sense of unity, a lyricism of shape and a visual syntax that is unequivocally Matisse.

Within 'The Sorrow of the King' we find celebration in the face of departure. It is as if the central 'figure' floats between this world and the next, the form of the body a cloak of night, upon which drift golden flowers and guitar. Is this figure the 'king', the artist himself, singing his own swan song? It is compelling to think so: the artist, incapacitated through illness, cutting his shapes, arranging his song, delighting in its gradual revelation and power. The work has also been linked to Rembrandt's painting, 'David Playing the Harp Before Saul' (1655), which would go some way to explaining the title (Saul being, according to the Old Testament Bible, the first king of Israel).

Matisse employed in this composition the powerful form of a spiral, and there is nothing more visually magnetising. You can follow the spiral from the centre, below the lower white 'hand', clockwise around the rim of the black 'cloak' leading to the white 'figure',



Henri Matisse's 'The Sorrow of the King' (1952)

and then around again and again, to the outer edges of the composition. The powerful arcs of gouache-painted paper are countered by a grounding arrangement of coloured rectangles, their horizontal and vertical rhythms echoing outwards to the perimeter of the piece and beyond. Together they form a background 'beat' upon which the floating 'song' of arcs can resound.

Matisse developed a language of flat-coloured shapes, where the colours were separated,

rather than mingled or blended. Colour, for Matisse, had the highest value, beyond concerns of line, form, illusion or narrative. He made colours sing and helped liberate others to do the same.

As a creative project you could try creating your own paper cut-out. All you need is coloured paper, scissors and glue! Try beginning with a single coloured sheet as a base. Using other coloured sheets, cut any forms you like the shape of (it can be completely abstract).

Then begin arranging them on your base sheet. You could try placing them in a spiral-like form, or in any way you choose. Remember, using black will lend intensity to your colours. Happy creating!

James offers a range of studio-based courses for children and adults in Classical painting, drawing and printmaking at Clonakilty School of Painting. See www.paintingschool.jameswaller.org for details.

people Environment

Become a beekeeper

Bees have been a part of **Mairead Love's** life since childhood. As Chairperson of the Fastnet Area Bee-Keepers Association (FABKA), she gives an insight into the value of bees and pollinators. If you are interested in learning more and becoming a beekeeper join the association's online training course in February at www.fastnetareabeekeepersassociation.net.

My late father was a prolific beekeeper so I picked up tips and tricks along the way. My siblings and I were gently persuaded (bribed) to work in the apiaries and do behind the scenes jobs also. We didn't like it much but it provided pocket money. Adulthood took me into a professional role where bees were less prominent in my day-to-day life until some 25 years ago. Only then did I realise the value of bees and pollinators, as I had a fondness for gardening, I then became what I describe as a 'keeper' of bees with little or no input. It slowly dawned on me that the keeper of bees is one of the biggest threats to the bees' future and I needed to

know more about the management of diseases and be able to carry out thorough inspections to enable me to become a beekeeper. I'm still learning and, after most lectures or courses I attend, I realise that I must learn more. That's the beauty of this wonderful craft – you get 'sucked in'. Ten years ago I moved on and set up home in a little cottage in the midlands with a nice tidy acre out back. I now had time to spend with the bees and the plants. I met my husband later on during the time I was representing FIBKA (Federation of Irish Beekeepers Associations) as the 'Queen Bee' for a year where I had the honour of visiting various parts of the country for honey shows and so on. Michael originates from West Cork and helped his uncle with his bees when he was young (but he says hindered him). With no dragging or persuasion, I set off down south and brought the bees with me.

We should remember this: Fastnet Area was made famous in the bee world by the late FIBKA Member Diarmuid Griffin from Goleen who won the world cup for best in class at the prestigious London Honey Show, amongst the best of the best. Diarmuid used to meet my late parents, Finbar and Dody Dineen, at the FIBKA Annual Summer School held at Gormanstown County Meath. What a small little world we live in!

Our hope is that our new members and students will

be able to attend the summer school at least once in their beekeeping life. It's the one place for one week that visiting attendees from all over Ireland and around the World from all professions can rub shoulders and the common language is Bees. Great 'craic' to be had also!

We knew that there was no local FIBKA Association down in these parts and our nearest meeting place then was Cork City where we were members. But the journey on winter nights from home and back took so long – a four-and-a-half-hour round trip. We grieved about this to the FIBKA management and this led to us starting our Fastnet Area Beekeepers Association FABKA in February 2020. The group is for local beekeepers who appreciate the benefits of belonging to the federation in this lovely country area and also for training. This is all done on a voluntary basis and we would like to thank our members for their help, especially Mary Downey, Katie West and Owen Kelly. Both Mike and I could not have done this without their invaluable support. 2020 was a challenge. Because of COVID restrictions we were unable to meet in the traditional way every month or do in-person training. This led to online training and the 'hands on' part has to catch up when we are permitted.

Our name, Fastnet Area Bee Keepers (FABKA), fits this area perfectly because on a fine day driving west from Cork City you get glimpses of coastline and then the Fastnet Lighthouse comes into view. We look out on the Fastnet from our home. Michael used to count the light reflections, as it circled on the bedroom wall, going to sleep when he was young. Unfortunately the lovely old reliable light was digitalised recently so that experience is no more, another bit of history lost forever.

New people joining these days are blessed with the wealth of beekeeping information available to them in print, video, and educational opportunities, which makes for fewer mistakes going undetected. The best teaching tool has to be the 'Hands On' approach, which we also provide for our students. We are proud to say that we have started a demonstration apiary for that purpose. There is also a greater awareness of the environment and the importance of pollinators. Teagasc, with the aid of Catherine Keena, are doing a great job for the bees by advising landowners to preserve hedgerow boundaries



Apiary at Deelish Garden Centre in Skibbereen

and fences for all pollinators because it is forecast that if the bees become extinct, so too will everything else: If our plants are not pollinated the food chain will diminish and its structure will be no longer viable and hence die out.

Years ago, when hundreds of country folk had a few boxes of bees at the end of the garden, there was no public media questioning decisions made or challenging law makers on their ill-informed approvals. But nowadays beginners and all levels of beekeepers can take heart that their small efforts are worthy and are creating a real awareness as to the importance of preserving life into the future. By being a member of FIBKA, through our FABKA association, we collectively have a louder voice in Europe with our association with the Irish DAFM Departments that deal with bees; and therefore will keep addressing the insecticide, pesticide issues and so on. We need to stop poisoning our land, sea, and air in the name of profit for massive pharma-type companies who have investor's interests first. We would love to get younger farmers involved because they are key influencers in the preservation of pollinators; for example, the current generation of Irish farmers have planted approx 10,000 km of new native hedges, making it the most significant planting in more than 200 years.

The immediate benefit of joining FABKA is that you'll meet fellow beekeepers, as we hold regular meetings in the Teagasc Office in Skibbereen. (currently restricted) All members are issued with a monthly magazine 'An Beachaire',

which is not only a fantastic read but full of advice and links for all levels. Live demonstrations and workshops will be held periodically through the year, restrictions-permitting. Once you are a member of FABKA you can also join any other FIBKA Association for a small sum and avail of what they are offering. For the more academic there is an exam structure available and you can go up the grades, maybe even becoming a lecturer or judge, as many have.

On reflection, there is so much to be gained from caring for and learning about these fascinating creatures. What could be better than serving up your own honey to family and friends knowing that this is 100 per cent pure and hasn't been adulterated, because the sad fact is proof of adulteration in mainstream product has been established. You might even learn to make candles, polishes, creams and soaps from the by-products from the hive. After an inspection of the bees a cup of tea and a honey cookie would be just what the doctor ordered!

There are enormous benefits to being a member of FIBKA. The list is a page on its own. For further information visit FIBKA online (irishbeekeeping.ie) and judge for yourself. Established in 1881 and reconstituted in 1943, FIBKA is the largest organisation of beekeeping associations in Ireland and is a not for profit federation. There are currently 48 affiliated associations with 2800 members (until update) So if any or all of this article has touched a nerve go to www.fastnetareabeekeepersassociation.net and join our training course, which

will be hosted by qualified and experienced beekeepers, commencing February 17, 2021, covering eight modules. Apiary demonstrations will be done when restrictions are eased.

RTÉ launches Eye on Nature, a new wildlife photo competition

RTÉ has joined forces with The National Botanic Gardens to launch an exciting new wildlife photographic competition, 'Eye On Nature'.

The overall winner will receive a cash prize of €1000 and the 12 finalists' photographs will be exhibited at The Botanic Gardens from mid-March. The finalists will also receive an annual family pass to all OPW attractions.

So if you've snapped a beautiful butterfly, a delightful deer or a fantastic fox in 2020 you could be in with a chance of winning.

People have until Friday 5 February to submit their entries to rte.ie/eyeonature, where full details are available plus terms and conditions and photography requirements.

The finalists and winners will be chosen by a panel of three judges: award-winning wildlife and nature photographer Sheena Jolley, Niall Hatch from Birdwatch Ireland and Dr Matthew Jebb, Director of The National Botanic Gardens.

The competition and lots of great nature and wildlife content will be featured on RTÉ's Today Show, Radio 1's Mooney Goes Wild and www.rte.ie from now until March. The finalists and overall winner of 'Eye on Nature' will be announced live on a special edition of The Today Show from The Botanic Gardens in March.

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people Environment : Making a difference

Will 2021 be better for the Environment?



ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

As 2021 starts in pandemic-induced lockdown we could all be forgiven for being dismayed about progress in environmental and climate change issues.

In the first seven months of 2020, more than 13,000sq km (5,019sq miles) of the Brazilian Amazon was burned; we saw wildfires raging through Australia and the West Coast of the USA; we saw hurricanes battering the Philippines, Central America and the Gulf of Mexico; swarms of locusts invading the Horn of Africa, and Ireland ranking worst in EU for performance on climate action.

The EPA's State of The Environment Report, which provides 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, makes depressing reading, but also provides a mass of information. It can be found at epa.ie.

This EPA reporting is vital.

If we don't measure, how will we make progress; there is also good news for the Environment as we enter 2021.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action has published 78 recommended amendments, including the banning of imported, fracked gas, adaptation to climate measures, stronger policy language accompanied by greater accountability in order to substantially strengthen the Climate Bill.

They recommend that policy on Climate Change should be worded as "The State shall both pursue and achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest".

This is much clearer and gives rise to the possibility of holding government at both National and Regional level accountable for decisions that will hinder the transition to climate neutrality, climate resilience and an environmentally sustainable economy while protecting biodiversity.

The committee recommends that the government policy should specifically name Sustainable Development Goals, the National Biodiversity Strategy, nature-based solutions and public health; and must take these into account such that Ministers in each Department are required to ensure five year carbon budgets are met, with a legal obligation to course-correct and compensate when targets are not met.

It is reported that Ireland will now report greenhouse gas emissions and removals from managed wetlands (including bogs) as part of progress towards EU greenhouse gas

targets.

These recommendations have come about because the community group, Climate Change Ireland and Friends of The Irish Environment were successful, winning their case against the Government. In June 2020, the Supreme Court required the Government to revise its national climate policy in light of its legal obligations and stating that the Bill must go significantly further if it is to create legislation that fully aligns with science and climate justice.

The public have been consulted, with Climate Case Ireland having organised zoom conferences for members of the public to speak to their public representatives about the changes they feel are necessary and having sent in their list of recommendations for discussion by the committee.

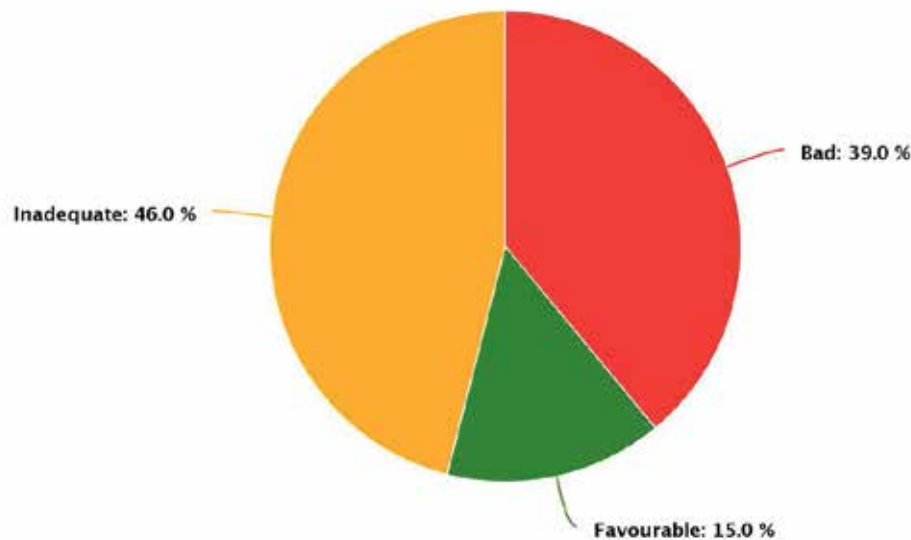
All across Ireland changes are made by the grass roots. Regular people work away voluntarily to make things happen.

In West Cork, Save Our Skibbereen have been distributing funds that were returned to them via the courts, after their successful challenge of planning for a polymer compounding factory. Among the community groups who successfully applied for grants between €500 and €5000 were

- 'Bantry Bay: Save our Native Kelp Forests' who are still battling to prevent the destruction of vital Kelp Ecosystems by mechanical harvesting;
- 'Green Skibbereen CLG' who are developing proposals in consultation with the Mis-

Conservation Status of EU Protected Habitats In Ireland

National Parks and Wildlife Service



sionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSH) for the development of a Climate Action Centre based at Myross Wood House and grounds at Leap. This Centre of Excellence for Climate Action and Sustainability at Myross House will be developed with inputs from the local community and other stakeholders.

- 'West Cork Oceans Plastic Project' which researches the plastic waste littering the Atlantic and Irish seacoasts of Ireland. Primarily starting in West Cork and working together with the Transition/ fourth year Secondary School Students, they now have four schools involved in the project and are collecting all kinds of data from micro plastics and larger more upcycled plastic and water

samples. They are building up a knowledge base of the worst affected areas. The aims of the project include teaching marine knowledge and building up a picture of the scale of the plastic waste in our seas.

These are just a few of the amazing projects that are being started and carried out by the people of West Cork.

Indeed we DO need policy changes at government level. We also need a groundswell of change to both direct and support that policy change.

These small scale projects, once successful, can be replicated and scaled creating greater change, creating a new norm.

Because time is of the essence the biggest need in 2021 is for people not to give up and for more people to get involved

in grass roots projects and programmes.

Major change always follows when enough people make their voices heard and one of the best ways of getting your voice heard is by supporting local campaigns and projects. If we the people start to live differently and to reject unsustainable living, at the same time as letting our public representatives know where our concerns lie, then we have far more chance of creating a new story, a new future.

Will 2021 be better for the Environment?

That is very much up to the people. Up to you and up to me. What will we do to ensure that change happens and happens rapidly?

What will you commit to making happen in 2021?

Oceans Plastic Project celebrates funding from Save Our Skibbereen

Along with 12 other community groups based in and around Skibbereen, the Oceans Plastic Project was successful in securing funding from the Save Our Skibbereen SOS 2020 Fund.

This fund was available due the success of the Save our Skibbereen campaign in overturning planning permission for RTP Company's Plastic nurdle factory, which would have been built on the outskirts of Skibbereen.

Save Our Skibbereen won their case in the High Court. The campaign was also awarded their costs and it was from the monies they had collected that the SOS 2020 Fund was created.

On Friday, December 11, Oceans Plastic Project CEO, Rory Jackson, met with Transition year students at Skibbereen Community School to share in the presentation of the cheque.

The funding will primarily go towards the developing a website to facilitate publicity and data collection. "It is a very exciting time for Ocean Plastic Project and we look forward to making a difference to the environment of West Cork where the Ocean plays such a huge part in our work, life and leisure," said Rory.

Please see www.oceans-plasticproject.ie for further information.

Below: Typical waste found washed up along the shores of West Cork



Right: Goose Barnacles living on polystyrene found at sea.



people Environment : Making a difference

Barn owls in County Cork



Dave Rees, Chairman of BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch, on the beauty of barn owls, which sadly have become an increasingly rare sight, although there are encouraging signs that the numbers of Barn Owls are beginning to pick up again.

There is something about seeing a Barn Owl that brings a shiver down the spine. It is not just its ghostly, ethereal appearance or that you tend to see them in the middle of the night. Neither is it entirely due to its habit of living in ruined castles or spooky old houses. It is, in part, down to the sad fact that it has become an increasingly rare sight. To

come across a Barn Owl now brings a sense of wonder, as you realise that it is such a long time since you saw this beautiful bird. Maybe you've never seen one before and are amazed at how beautiful it is, or how silently it hunts over areas of grassland. Maybe your first clue is its eerie call before it perches on a window ledge of an old building. Whatever the circumstances, to see a Barn Owl is a magical experience.

Sadly, the chances of seeing a Barn Owl have decreased, as their numbers have declined. This is down to a number of causes. Barn Owls feed on rodents such as mice, rats and voles, and need areas of rough grassland or good thick hedgerows to hunt for their prey. In the drive for more intensive agriculture, we are losing such areas. Barn Owls also nest in holes, sometimes in old mature trees or else in old buildings. Increasingly we are seeing mature trees and hedgerows cut down in our countryside. Barn Owls are also very vulnerable to accidental killing. Many people don't realise that the poison bait they put down to control rats and mice can have a dev-

astating effect on Barn Owls. The owls will pick up sick and dying rats and mice and the poison then will accumulate in the owls leading to their death from secondary poisoning.

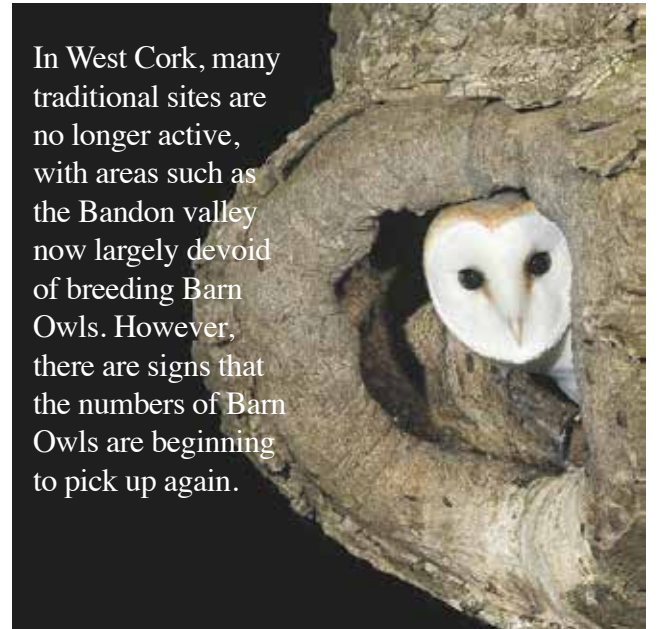
Barn Owls are still found throughout Ireland, though their stronghold lies in Munster, and particularly in Tipperary, Kerry and Cork. The decline in the numbers of Barn Owls since the 1980s is also evident in Cork. In West Cork, many traditional sites are no longer active, with areas such as the Bandon valley now largely devoid of breeding Barn Owls. However, there are signs that the numbers of Barn Owls are beginning to pick up again. This is thought to be mainly due to the presence of the Greater White-toothed Shrew. This small animal is not native to Ireland but is thought to have been accidentally introduced into the country. It was first noted in Barn Owl pellets in County Tipperary. The Greater White-toothed Shrew is much larger than our native Pygmy Shrew and provides a much better meal for a Barn Owl and its hungry brood of chicks. Since its discovery, the shrew

has spread rapidly and is now found across north Cork, from Mitchelstown to Newmarket, and as far south as Cork City and Cloyne. This has resulted in a noticeable resurgence of Barn Owls. Traditional nesting sites that had become disused for years are now becoming reoccupied and new sites are being discovered every year.

Numbers of Barn Owls and their breeding success are being monitored by volunteers from Birdwatch Ireland with the help of funding provided through Cork County Council. These volunteers are now looking at further ways to help encourage the return of the Barn Owl, by providing nestboxes in suitable locations. You may have seen a recent item on the six o'clock news showing Alan McCarthy, a Birdwatch Ireland volunteer making nestboxes and then putting them up in trees. These nestboxes will be monitored to see if they are being used by Barn Owls and whether they are successful in raising young birds.

If you'd like to help out Barn Owls and think the area where you live is suitable, then you can find an excellent guide to

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making and putting up nest boxes for Barn Owls on the Birdwatch Ireland Cork Branch website, birdwatchcork.com. You will need a suitable habitat nearby for Barn Owls to hunt and, if you have a problem with rats or mice, use traps rather than poison bait. If you'd like further advice, you can always contact your nearest branch of Birdwatch Ireland. Who knows, you may well experience the spine-tingling sight of a Barn Owl in your area before too long.

For more information about the Branch contact Nicholas Mitchell at secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie or join the mailing list by sending an email to mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie.

BirdWatch Ireland is Ireland's leading wildlife conservation charity. Its primary objective is the protection of wild birds and their habitats in Ireland. By joining as a member today you will be making a direct contribution to the protection of Ireland's birds and biodiversity. Joining can easily be done online on birdwatchireland.ie.



GROUNDLED

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.

A strange new year

I've been attempting the usual resolution-making and contemplation of the past 12 months, as I like to do in the early days of any new year. It has been challenging. The past 12 months have certainly been a rollercoaster, with who-knows-what ahead of us for the next 12 months.

As I write, in the hours and days after the shocking attempted coup in the United States, it seems the world is off-kilter on so many levels. It's tragic that five people lost their lives over the course of those truly appalling events that brought the themes of death and instability onto our screens, front and centre again in global news in the opening days of another year. It struck a chilling and sombre tone to the start of what we had hoped would be a time for looking forward with optimism, as we rest in something of a limbo, at the early stages of a vaccination roll-out.

Covid-19 has been to the forefront of our news and personal concerns for the past 10 months and a lot of my communications over that time have been directly or indirectly related to Covid. It has turned our lives upside down and visit-

ed tragedy and loss on countless families at home and abroad.

At time of writing, the rates of infection are at their highest ever in this country, with 8,277 cases recorded yesterday, January 8. It's sobering to think that we have gone from having a low rate, to a chillingly high rate per head of population, in such a short space of time.

Because of my work, I live between my hometown of Tramore in Co. Waterford and Brussels. I've been based at home for the majority of the time over the past several months and any movement between countries has been hyper-cautious and for blocks of time, which have included multiple Covid tests and isolation.

I consider myself lucky to have been able to work from home for much of the last year. That's challenging of course, but like so many, I've just had to get on with it and make the most of it. In very recent days and weeks, on a personal level, it has been particularly worrying, with Covid rates around Waterford and particularly Tramore, rocketing to deeply worrying levels. It makes me fearful for the well-being and safety of people close to me, particularly my mother

and older relatives and friends.

I feel I'm one of the lucky ones in terms of my immediate loved ones. My daughters are safe and well. None of them has to go to work at the frontlines, where the world's most heroic and dedicated people are putting their own lives at risk in the fight to save lives. That my daughters and I, and people throughout the world, have frontline staff, particularly healthcare workers, undertaking daily and hourly acts of the purest bravery for us, is humbling and a fact that I remind myself of on a daily basis.

It's horrifying to think that

It's horrifying to think that this virus has been proven to have stemmed from an animal source. As an ecologist and through my work in the European Parliament around the area of health and the environment, I'm acutely aware of the unsettling implications.

this virus has been proven to have stemmed from an animal source. As an ecologist and through my work in the European Parliament around the area of health and the environment, I'm acutely aware of the unsettling implications. The connections between this pandemic, the impacts of climate chaos and habitat destruction and further risks unless the world unites and significantly increases efforts to reverse the dangerous trends, is a subject I will cover in more detail in a future column.

As I prepare to return to Brussels for essential direct input in the next crucial stages of my work on the legislative review work on the 8th Environment Action Plan, I don't underestimate the importance of setting and putting in place international goals, monitoring and measuring tools and the framework for increasingly committed worldwide targets. The 8th Environment Action Plan is about all of these things and more. I'm honoured to be the Rapporteur (European Parliament's lead negotiator) on such hugely important legislation at a time when this area of work and learning, action and implementation are vital for our

future survival.

We're moving into another year and as time passes, the urgency around addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency we are immersed in, becomes ever more pressing. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has, even with the extreme measures being taken internationally, killed almost two million people throughout the world. Hope is in sight, in the immediate task of saving lives and addressing the current pandemic with the help of a vaccine roll-out. We have sadly seen first-hand what a global health emergency can look like. To prevent the further zoonotic pandemics that 'will' come our way unless preventative steps are taken, there has to be committed intervention in the form of increased dramatic environmental action at a global scale.

I ask you to come on board and make 2021 the year where you commit to informing yourself and joining the global fight to save our planet and the species that inhabit it. Our lives, and the survival of the human species into the future, depends on massive agitation and engagement and real, decisive, action.

people Sport & Fitness

Fun is the cornerstone of Enya's success



A SPORTING LIFE

Pat Culhane

Enya Breen is a high performer, both on and off the pitch. At 21-years-old, the West Cork native already has a number of full Munster and Ireland rugby caps and is completing a physiotherapy degree at the University of Limerick (UL).

Enya has a lifelong passion for sport. Earliest memories include playing various ball games her five siblings. "As soon as I could walk, I had a football or camogie stick in my hands most days in the green across from the house or in Shamrock GAA club in Shanbally near Cork city. I started playing rugby in the Carigaline club with my brother's team from about the age of eight for a couple of years. We moved to Castletownsend when I was about 10, but I continued playing with them for another year after that." It's clear that Enya was dedicated to her sport, even during her formative years.

"I played lots of [Gaelic] football in Castletownsend National School and with the O'Donovan Rossa club. There wasn't much access to Camogie, unfortunately, in West Cork at the time. I attended Mercy Heights post-primary school in Skibbereen, where I mostly played football and basketball."

"I'd say I was kind of a teacher's nightmare at times because I made myself part of every possible team I could have been in. I missed so many classes. I've an All-Ireland table tennis medal, badminton medal and participated in many other things. Once it got me out of class, put me on a bus and I was ready to go."

"I just loved the freedom that came from playing sports and the ability to express myself. Sport has helped me build confidence in myself and social skills that I use day-to-day outside of sport. Growing up, it was just about a load of kids having fun.

Really that's what it was. I started off having fun and I still try to keep it as enjoyable as possible, even to this day."

Enya's family is steeped in sport. Her father, Ian, was match-of-the-match, as part of O'Donovan Rossa 1993 All-Ireland senior club football final win, and played rugby for Douglas. Her uncles on the O'Mahony side had lifelong involvement in hurling, with their father, John, being chairman of the St. Vincent's club in Cork for a number of years. But it was her mother, Catherine, that acted upon an advert she spotted in a local newspaper, which proved to be pivotal in the development of Enya's rugby career.

Bantry Bay RFU had started a girls' team when Enya was around 14-years-of-age. It didn't take much convincing for her to check it out, nor for her parents to make the 70 to 80-minute round-trip. And with local friends, including classmate Claire Coombes (sister of Munster star, Gavin) also joining, it made the experience all the more meaningful. "As we moved to under-18, we had some girls who represented Munster. We also won the Munster league, cup and 7s [7-a-side] competitions around that time. For a newly formed, small club in West Cork, it was showing real promise. West Cork has a great rugby tradition, of course, with a club in most towns, which helps, but mostly men's rugby."

Despite showing prowess in a number of sports, it has been rugby that Enya has advanced most in. In recent seasons, she has progressed all the way through the IRFU Player Pathway, starting with Munster Under-18s and Ireland Under-18 7s teams. Enya also thrived in club competitions and received the Women's All-Ireland League (AIL) Rising Star award with UL Bohemian in the 2018/19 season. Now a regular starter with Munster and Ireland, she made her senior international debut against France in the 2019 Women's Six Nations championship, playing in the centre position.

When asked what in particular has sustained her involvement in rugby, Enya notes that "it just captured my interest from day one. One particular day that stands out for me when I was quite young was when the pitch was destroyed. I think it had been raining a lot and, after training, we just started doing mud-slides down the pitch. My parents had to buy bin bags and line the car seats. I think the physical contact element of rugby must suit me. And with the success I was getting from it, it was naturally the one that I



Pic: INPHO, Laszlo Geezo



Enya (right) with Shamrocks GAA club at about 9-years-old and at Mercy Heights Secondary School at age 15.



chose."

"Playing with the boys team and my older siblings growing up helped me prepare for the physical element of game. The boys didn't show me any mercy and, so, you just have to get stuck in and get on with it. I had to learn to deal with the onslaughts. This is the same approach I took when stepping up from Under-18 to senior teams. Playing other sports, especially basketball and football, helped me build my skills."

Enya was 15-years-of-age when first spotted by Munster rugby and was selected for Under-18 development squad for three consecutive years. On her second year, she made the Irish Under-18 7s who played in the European championships and made this squad the following year too. "I was still in school throughout all this. I continued playing basketball with Skibberreen Community School, until I finished there, doing my Leaving Cert. The last game of football I played was in 2018 for the victorious O'Donovan Rossa team against Castlehaven, ironically, in the county junior football final

replay. Straight after Under-18, I was selected for the Munster senior team. And then the Irish senior teams after my first season with Munster. This is when it started getting more serious and became my sole focus."

Enya transferred to the UL Bohemians club in Limerick when she started as a student in UL. During her first year, she played a number of intervarsity games and AIL games concurrently. "Since breaking into the Munster and Ireland teams, I have had to get cleared by management to play in the college games, which is a bit disappointing but I can see the great cause behind it. I am still a very active member of the club off the pitch."

"In terms of a playing season with Munster, it's the same as it was underage. It's just one interprovincial competition. Last year that increased to five games, so we play a round-robin tournament and then there's a semi-final and final, all played at the end of August and September. From then on, we can play with our to an extent, in as much as the international schedule

allows. Most of our national team training camps would be at weekends, which limits the amount we can be involved with the club. While we train with the club during the week, we only play a handful of games in the year. But like missing the college games, I understand why it needs to be this way."

"Around 6 Nations time, we'd have an international training camp or match-day camp every weekend. October and November would be the other intense period, where we'd be at training camps every weekend in Dublin. A typical week in January, for example, would involve a Monday off where I catch up on study or do some recovery work. On Tuesday we'd be in the gym in UL. And then on Wednesdays we'd either have a running session to do, or else we could go club training and then on Thursdays we would be off to recover before we're in camp on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

This demanding training and game schedule hasn't affected Enya's performance off the pitch, as she is now in her final year of her degree programme.

"I think sport helps me to be honest. It gives me a bit of a break from all the study and makes me manage my time a bit better, instead of lazing around and avoiding everything. Once I have the time to do something, I just to get it done."

Like many others, Enya has found the transition to online classes challenging with the onset of Covid-19. "I've just finished a 10-week physiotherapy placement in the University Hospital Limerick and all classes have been online in recent weeks. I find that environment a bit difficult. I'm more of a practical learner and there are too many distractions at home."

There is little doubt that an elite athlete reaches that level without the right support and influence and Enya is acutely aware of this. "I was a huge Ronan O'Gara fan growing up. In terms of coaching Damien Hicks in Bantry and Denis Stevenson and Ben Martin with Munster have been very supportive throughout my player pathway journey. They played at high levels themselves and have mentored me along the way. I couldn't thank them enough for the positive influence they have had on my career.

Having dedicated much of her life to sport, Enya reflects on what it all means to her. "Sport has provided me with an environment where I can be myself and it has helped me to figure out who I want to be off the pitch as well. It has given me the skills to communicate better, be a good leader, and opportunities to continually improve myself. I really want to see if I can achieve the goals I have set myself and make it to the highest level of rugby. I really love the game. Ultimately, sport has given me lots of friends and allows me to enjoy myself, both as a player and person."

"The plan over the next few months is to prepare for and play the 6 Nations in February, qualify for the World Cup, while trying to graduate at the same time. Hopefully, I'll get a seat on the plane to New Zealand to play in the World Cup against the very best players. In the coming years, I'd love to play rugby as a full-time professional."

Enya shows no signs of slowing down. In a rugby context, her natural talent, the right environments and access while growing up, have all been critical factors of this success. What seems to underpin it all is a deep determination, work ethic and sheer love of playing with others – all the while being humble. If young people in West Cork and beyond are looking for a role model, they couldn't do much better than Enya!

people Sport & Fitness



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.

Dunmanway's soccer maverick

The vast majority of renowned historians and casual observers will rightly contend that the year 1922 was an eventful one. The assassination of Michael Collins in Béal na Bláth was the latest in a series of high profile but historically important incidents to take place in the West Cork area during the War of Independence and Civil War era. However, it is interesting to note that an ever-diminishing number of Cork soccer enthusiasts will view 1922 as the year in which the original darling of Cork soccer was born.

Before John Caulfield and Conor Hourihane, 'Big' Seanie McCarthy came into the world in January 1922, just outside the town of Dunmanway. By all accounts, Sean was lean and did not quite reach six feet in height. However, his teammates at Cork United in the early 1940s attached the 'Big' moniker to differentiate him from a smaller teammate who also happened to be called Sean McCarthy. Like many Dunmanway lads during the

war years, Sean had to relocate to an urban setting to find work. Fortunately, he did not have to go too far. He settled in Cork and took to playing soccer in his spare time. He represented a plethora of youth and junior sides around Cork in the late 1930s with distinction.

Having gained a reputation as being the most talented centre forward on Cork's local soccer scene, Sean joined Cork United just prior to the commencement of the 1940/41 season. He found the net on his debut, in a very creditable 1-1 draw with a strong Shamrock Rovers side in Milltown. He would score a further thirteen league and cup goals as Cork United became the first non-Dublin side to secure a League and Cup double. The following season, McCarthy helped himself to 19 goals as Cork United retained their league crown, but failed to overcome a resolute Dundalk in the FAI Cup Final. A third league title followed in 1943, with McCarthy's 16 league goals ensuring that he led the

league scoring charts for the first time in his career. Sean's status as the greatest League of Ireland centre forward of his era was seemingly confirmed when he finished as the leagues top scorer in each of the following two seasons. In doing so, he became the first player to top the League of Ireland goalscoring charts in three successive seasons. Incidentally, Cork United also managed to secure league silverware in 1945 placing them at the top of Cork's domestic football roll of honour.

'Big' Seanie McCarthy subsequently made a high profile move to high-flying Belfast Celtic in 1945. He amassed an incredible 56 goals in his first season up North. As well as winning a Gold Cup medal, Sean was capped by Northern Ireland's Irish League. The widespread uncertainty around international eligibility (which was rife in the 1940s) also meant that McCarthy received a full Northern Ireland cap in a victory International against England. After a phenome-

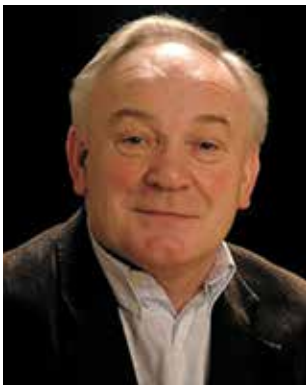
nal season in Belfast, Sean expressed a desire to return to Cork. With Paddy O'Leary established at centre forward, Sean reinvented himself as an inside right. He arrived just in time to contribute seven goals as Cork United secured the FAI Cup. He also subsequently topped the league of Ireland goalscoring charts in the 1947/8 season for the fourth time in his career.

The unfortunate demise of Cork United in 1948 saw a temporary cessation of League of Ireland football in Cork. Like many other proud Cork men, 'Big' Seanie McCarthy took up a position at the Ford factory in Dagenham, and commenced playing non league football for Dartford FC. He finished as the Southern League's top scorer with 21 goals, and his displays earned him a move to Bristol City. However, his one year stay at Bristol saw him struggle to establish himself in the first team, and he returned to Cork to sign for Evergreen United in 1950. His personal tally of 15 goals during the 1950/51

season helped Evergreen United to a fifth place finish in their maiden League of Ireland season. An appearance in 1952s all Cork FAI Cup final against Cork Athletic followed, but McCarthy finished on the losing side. As is the way with aging footballers, 'Big' Seanie McCarthy slowly drifted down the pecking order until he retired from professional football in 1956.

Upon retiring, Sean McCarthy relocated to London where he was to remain permanently. It is said that he attributed his success in the game to skill, football intelligence and a killer instinct when it came to finishing. Throughout his time in the league of Ireland, McCarthy is lauded for both the quality and quantity of his goal scoring exploits. It is said that he would almost certainly have received a full Republic of Ireland cap, were it not for the small matter of World War II.

people Motoring



CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

Mercedes GLA steps up in second edition

A few years back at a Mercedes 'refresher day' the company's Irish Sales manager Ciaran Allen said that buyers of new cars now spend approximately 11 hours researching information on a car before buying. But those prospective buyers spend only 30 minutes in garage forecourts. Buyers know what type of car they want before they go into a dealership; it's just half an hour of haggling over the price.

A lot has happened since that 'refresher day,' including two

lockdowns this year, during which time buyers had plenty of time to do some research on new cars.

Last week I drove the second edition of the Mercedes GLA, which was a really comfortable motor. The GLA, which is based on the A-Class, was launched in 2013. It had a make-over three years ago and now we get the second edition, which is a big improvement on the first version.

It's a massive step up from the old GLA, which suffered from styling issues and a cabin that was a bit cramped in the back.

I was told that in the offices where Mercedes decide on names for their cars, GL stands for Gelandewagen or off-road vehicle. I checked the word 'Gelandewagen' on Google and the English translation was that it's a cross-country or general-purpose vehicle. I didn't have any reason to go off road last week, but I'm sure the GLA would not let me down if I needed to leave the tarmac.

I drove the Mercedes GLB a few weeks back and noticed that instead of getting a 'beeping' sound if I crossed the yellow line on the road without

indicating, the brakes were applied instead. It's the same system in the GLA.

The new GLA could be described as stylish crossover SUV rather than an off-roader. The car looks imposing, but the dimensions are compact; it's 14mm shorter, 2mm narrower and 104mm taller than the car it replaces. Of course those are small measurements. It also has shorter front and rear overhangs.

Every time I sit into a Mercedes car I make the usual mistake of hitting the gear stalk when I want to indicate. It only happens once; I presume if I owned a Mercedes I would not make that mistake every morning. But every time I sit into a new Merc it's a dream come through for a country boy like me!

The boot is a decent size, 435 litres to be exact, but sadly no spare wheel. I had to deliver some new eight-foot long skirting boards to my daughter's house and they just about fitted in; it was a tight squeeze lengthwise. All the family appreciated the heated front seats as the weather turned really cold for a few days last week. The seats came in Artico leather/dinamica



microfibre black.

The 2.0 litre diesel produced 150 brake horse power and if it's speed you are after you can get from zero to 100/km in 8.6 seconds. To tell the truth I didn't check out that out figure. At my age I am more interested in comfort and that's what I got in the GLA.

Prices start at €40,022, but with AMG Line, metallic paint and a few more goodies, the price of the car as tested came to €50,442. Road tax on my diesel model is €270. And when you spend that half an hour hassling over the price, try and get a spare wheel also.

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people Home & Garden

The difference a year makes



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...

Looking back to January 2020 it is hard to believe the difference a year has made. This time last year my family was still running a Cafe and I was looking through seed catalogues for tasty new ideas, novel salad varieties, herbs and garnishes, exotic varieties of vegetables and fruit that would maybe give us an edge over other restaurants. How things have changed. With the Cafe now closed, this year I am looking for local varieties and those tried and tested vegetables that get us through winters and the hungry gap, things we can grow and store; I have even started saving seeds. I am very pleased with my small efforts so far. I have saved some salads such as cress and mizuna and French beans. I also saved some of my last years' garlic and onions, as I am trying to grow strains that are less susceptible to white rot, which I unfortunately have in my soil. It's a long shot but I

have nothing to lose. Madeline McKeever has a really good little booklet on saving seeds, look for it on her website.

I have been particularly pleased with the drying dwarf bean Dutch Brown. It is a very prolific variety; the green beans can be eaten as French beans when small and young but I left them to grow on and stored the dry beans. They are really tasty in stews and soups and I have also made my own version of hummus using the brown beans instead of chickpeas. It worked really well.

I have been going through my seed stores and reluctantly throwing away old seed. It really isn't worth saving half a packet of parsnips as the germination is really bad after the first year but some seeds last for years if you keep them cool and dry and as airtight as possible. Luckily, I have plenty of seed to be getting on with and only have to buy a few odds and ends. I won't be sowing any

seeds for a while but it is good to be organised.

There is still a lot of uncertainty. Whilst there is hopeful news about the vaccine I think that we are a long way from getting back to normal, whatever that is. Using our gardens to help us get through this seems just as relevant now, as it was last March. The satisfaction of picking something for supper or a few flowers for the house, some herbs, or even getting some exercise or the chance of sitting in the sun, all help with our mental and physical health.

Normally I am very flaky about making garden plans and keeping a diary but last year I managed to write something in my diary most days right the way through until mid July. A record for me! Looking back, there is quite a lot of useful information, so I am resolved to try again. I am also going to make a plan of the garden, particularly the vegetable and cut flower beds. Apart from



anything else it's a good excuse to stay in the warm.

One thing we have really enjoyed over the winter has been the birds. For the first time we have put bird feeders right outside our kitchen windows. It has been a joy. Every day, ten or more different types of birds come to our feeders. We were delighted to see a pair of black caps among the blue tits, siskins, chaffinches and the many other beautiful birds we more often see. Black caps normally leave and migrate to Africa in August or September but recently, due to climate

change, some decide to chance it and stay here. We are lucky enough to have some in our garden. Birds are such an essential part of the biodiversity in our gardens; they eat tons of bugs, disperse seeds, scavenge, recycle nutrients and give us those beautiful dawn choruses. So another resolution is to plant more with birds in mind, shrubs with berries, roses with interesting hips and plants with useful seed heads. I'll have more ideas on that theme next month.

Keep safe and warm.

Growing cut flowers together

Beginning in this issue, **Mags Riordan** of Bumblebee Farm is going to guide us all through the planning, planting and caring of a bed for cut flowers. By the time summer arrives the bed should boast an abundance of pollinator-friendly flowers ready for cutting and enjoying.



The glorious weather in the first week of January was just the tonic to prepare me for 2021. January for me is all about planning with planting plans, successional sowings and scheduling for the year ahead. Our Valentine's, Mother's Day and Easter flowers were all planted from last September with the majority under cover in tunnels. There's always the temptation to get an

early start with seeds, especially if you have a protected area to do this, but my advice is to wait because they can get leggy waiting for the weather to warm up sufficiently for planting out. Those sown in February or March will come on much better and probably overtake the earlier January sowings.

There's still plenty to be getting on with like cleaning and disinfecting containers and seed sowing materials. Do an inventory of what you have, what you'll need to replace,

check tools and possibly service them all, to get ready for the coming season.

I don't tidy up at this time of year because winter flying insects need cover but with the bare bones of the garden exposed it's the best time to evaluate and put that plan in place for the coming year. I do prune out the straight stems on my contorted hazel and prune back my wisteria but other than that, I leave well alone until March.

With the prospect of extended

lockdowns for the first half of the year and to mind our mental health, as much as our physical health, we've put together a simple planting plan for you to have a supply of cut, edible and pollinator-friendly flowers all summer long. My recommendations are for annuals, as these are the easiest group to start with. How you grow for cut flowers is different to how you grow in a garden situation.

Cut flowers need six to eight hours sunshine so do choose a south facing area for your cut flower bed. The plan is for a 120cm by 275cm. This will give you an abundance of cut flowers for your home all summer long, edible flowers for eating, cooking with and a vital food source for our pollinators.

The first step is to decide where to place your bed. Out of view is best because you'll be cutting these flowers not admiring them in the garden. Soil preparation is key; whether you're using no dig or till method, you have to prepare first by

digging out all weeds – perennial and annual – and working in organic matter like well-rotted manure and an organic slow release fertiliser. Then cover over the soil with black mypex, cardboard or some kind of mulch, at least 15cm thick, paying close attention to edges. This does two things: It stops weed seed germinating and helps warm up the soil ready for planting.

All our recommendations are easy from seed:

- Calendula art shades
- Cosmos mix
- Marigold (tagetes) jolly jester
- Cornflower classic mix
- Antirrhinum majus (so many to choose from but try to avoid F1 hybrids as pollinator food quality isn't great)
- Orlaya grandiflora
- Feverfew
- Zinnia Benarys Giant mix
- Nigella damascene mixed
- Rudbeckia hirta rustic dwarfs
- Nasturtium (compact varieties recommended although short stems, trailing varieties, will need trellis support)

- Mint (grown in containers submerged in soil) basil mint highest oil content, great for cooking/pestos, grapefruit best cut flower mint, apple mint most refreshing, tactile and emotionally supportive mint.

Those of you that were at our open days will have some of these already.

We're going to do this together in real time. Sunday, January 17 at 4pm we have an Instagram live where we'll go through everything: Preparing your plot, containers, seed mix, seed choices and so on. Expanded blog posts will also be added to our website answering any questions you may have.

A full downloadable PDF planting plan with recommended spacings, numbers and varieties will also be available. All you need do is email hello@bumblebeeflowerfarm.ie and we'll send it on to you.

Looking forward to being part of a growing community. Bee Kind.

Boiler DIY warning after surge in botched repairs

Householders in County Cork are being urged to turn to registered technicians to avoid life threatening complications.

The plea has been issued by OFTEC, the trade body for the liquid fuel heating industry, which says its technicians received a number of calls from members of the public who had botched repairs to their systems in 2020.

With more people spending longer periods of time at home, there

are fears that they could embark on dangerous DIY projects to their home heating systems.

Poorly completed DIY jobs on heating systems can leave homeowners vulnerable to issues such as oil and water leaks, the risk of fire and the potential for carbon monoxide poisoning.

When it comes to the installation of new and replacement home heating equipment, homeowners also need to be aware of the legal

requirements to be compliant with building regulations.

Botched repairs can also be detrimental when selling property and with house prices at a five-year high, there is every reason to ensure systems are serviced to add value to the home.

The advice from boiler manufacturers, SEAI and OFTEC is that your home heating system should be serviced annually by a professional; for gas that's RGII and

for oil it's an OFTEC registered technician.

By staying on top of servicing schedules you can often avoid costly repair bills and you have the peace of mind knowing your system is safe and working at its optimum level.

OFTEC technicians can explain about building control requirements and how a boiler passport or completion certificate can avoid problems down the line around

warranty claims or when the property is being sold.

There are always plenty of jobs around the home but during lockdowns in 2021 the message from OFTEC is to leave the major jobs to the professionals.

It is easy to find registered technicians across Ireland from the OFTEC website using a simple county search.

people Home & Garden

Gardening in January

Welcome to the start of a new gardening and calendar year. Planning and preparation this month will pave the way to a successful and well-organised garden in 2021.

Jobs for the Month

Protect vulnerable and tender plants in severe weather. Keep a watchful eye at this time of year on weather forecasts on the radio, television, weather apps and the Met Eireann website.

Hoe any germinating weeds with a good, sharp Dutch hoe.

Continue with winter digging, as soil and weather conditions allow. Take the opportunity to add some well-composted farmyard or stable manure.

If you don't have access to manure you can use organic soil enrichers such as Gee-up.

If snow arrives ensure to brush or shake off the snow as soon as possible from trees, shrubs and hedges. Heavy falls of snow can be the cause of a lot of damage if not attended to urgently. Plant deciduous hedges when soil and weather permits.

Choose and buy your herb, vegetable and flower seed. Secure your seeds early this year, as there maybe delays in some

products arriving from the UK and overseas.

Start early seeds such as Sweet Pea undercover. Early sowings need to be made indoors in a heated, frost-free area. For success, it is vital that recommended temperatures together with frost-proofing are maintained. If optimum temperatures aren't maintained you will end up no or very sparse germination. Use fresh compost when sowing and ensure seed trays and pots are scrupulously clean. Residues and debris from previous seasons crops can be the source of overwintered pest, disease and weeds.

Coming back to Sweet Pea, choose named colours if you are specific about your colour choices. Look out too for some of the delightful dwarf and patio varieties, which are deliciously scented. The dwarf or patio varieties are an ideal choice in window boxes, troughs and hanging baskets. If growing in hanging baskets, choose a deep basket. When the Sweet Peas emerge and develop to four sets of leaves, they can be transferred to a clean cold frame, polytunnel or unheated greenhouse, taking adequate precautions against slugs and mice.

Summer flowering bulbs such as Begonias, Dahlias, Gladioli, Nerines and Cannas will start arriving in the shops and garden centres this month. Most of these can't be planted out until all risk of frost is over. After purchase, they can be kept in a cool, but frost-free position and can be started into growth from February onwards. Place in a tray, pot or trough, ensuring they have adequate light as they come into growth.

Buy your seed potatoes early this year in case of any delays on seed potatoes originating in the UK. Put early and second-early varieties sprouting. Label the tray with an indelible marker or pencil. When choosing your seed potatoes, look out for varieties with blight resistance. When choosing seed potatoes, choose seed about the size of a hen egg: they should be firm and sound and free of any rot, softness or mould.

This is a good month to buy a good gardening book to get some inspiring ideas for the year ahead. Check out some of the monthly or weekly gardening magazines at your local newsagents.

Early January Colour

There are some delightful fra-

**GARDENING**

John Hosford
The Weekend Garden Centre

grant shrubs to provide winter colour and powerful fragrance at this time of the year. Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill' starts to flower in late November or early December and continues with a profusion of flowers, which are addictively fragrant right up until February or March. A 'must have' in the garden – it's a shrub that will richly reward you.

Consider too the witch hazel or Hamamelis, which come in shades of copper, sulphur yellow and ruby red with a delicious scent in the depths of winter. They reach a height of some 5m/5m spread. They

thrive in a sheltered aspect in acid, lime-free soils.

Do consider Prunus xsubhirtella 'Autumnalis Rosea' for continuous colour from late October through to March. It will flower continuously in mild spells and may pause during very cold spells.

Sarcococca has small but powerfully scented masses of white flowers borne on an evergreen, glossy-leaved bush.

The early Narcissi 'January Gold' is in flower since just before Christmas. It is a delightful early variety, which appears reliably and courageously at this time of the year. Protect from slugs.

Snowdrops will appear defiantly during the month. These will be followed by the delightful dwarf Iris and Crocus. Winter aconites will provide early masses of bright, yellow buttercup-like flowers.

Winter flowering Heathers will now be in full flower providing their most reliable carpets of flower.

Lawn Care

It is a good time to give your lawn mower and other tools an overhaul in readiness for the spring. Avoid too much traffic on the lawn during waterlogged

or frozen conditions. Rake up fallen leaves.

Fruit Garden

Check and remove any fruits in store. Continue planting of fruit trees and bushes when soil and weather conditions allow.

Apply potash to apples, pears and plums, strawberries, gooseberries, red and white currants.

Inspect apples and pears for canker. Treat if present. Ensure soil for fruit trees doesn't endure waterlogging for prolonged periods.

Continue pruning apples and pears except in hard frost. Collect and dispose of prunings off site.

Continue pruning established and newly planted fruit bushes.

Check all tree stakes and ties and make sure they are firm and sound. Prune grape vines before the sap starts rising.

Wishing you all a Happy, Healthy, Safe and Peaceful New Year!

The Weekend Garden Centre is open Saturdays from January 9th 2021 onwards 11.00am-5.00pm and Sundays 2.00-5.00pm.
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Moving you with Care

It's the start of a new year which means we get to start our growing journey all over again. With that being said, it's still winter, the days are short and cold, and the garden can seem uninviting. Our enthusiasm for GIYing generally doesn't show up until either February (when we can start sowing some seeds) or March (when you can practically smell growth in the air). Don't worry if you are eager to get growing again, there are things you could be doing outside. At the very least get your seeds ordered and get yourself ready!

If you haven't already done so, you could still spread some manure or compost on your vegetable and fruit beds and cover them down with black polythene to start warming them up for spring sowing.

Make sure that it's well-rotted manure and be careful not to spread fresh manure in beds which will take root vegetables in the spring.

If you don't have a compost heap, this is a good time of the year to get one started.

Timber pallets are a cheap and easy way to build a heap for all your garden waste.

Consider a compost trench for your legume (peas and beans) bed – bury kitchen waste at a spade's depth and cover with soil.

Don't be tempted to sow seeds too early. Be patient – it won't be long.

Decide What To Grow

The benefit of January is you have plenty of time to decide what to grow. Deciding what you will grow is typically a factor of the following:

How much space do you have? In a spaceconstrained garden or apartment balcony you probably won't want to be growing globe artichokes (big plant, little food). Focus instead on vegetables that give a high return for a small amount of space, like beetroot or carrots.

How much time do you have? Some vegetables are very easy to grow, requiring little maintenance (say parsnips for example) while others require regular attention (like tomatoes). Think about your lifestyle – can you spend a few hours on a Saturday in the veg patch or do you have to ferry children around to various activities? I reckon on average about

three to four hours per week is required to keep yourself and your family in veg all year round.

What do you like to eat? It sounds obvious but seriously, don't grow things you don't like to eat.

If you're time-constrained, think about the cost of food (though that's not always the reason why people GIY) – some vegetables are so cheap you might be as well to buy them and focus your efforts on more costly vegetables.

Shop Seeds at GIY: From aubergines to our wildflower mix there is something for all kinds

of growers. You can shop the full range on the GIY website. www.giy.ie



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