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**ARTS &
ENTERTAINMENT**
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Twins, and best friends, Cathal (r) and Harry Walsh from Kinsale. 12-year-old Cathal won this year's National Disability Authority's 'Someone Like Me' art competition with his 'Piano Man' portrait, which shows Harry, who was born with a cleft lip and palate, playing the piano, something he taught himself to do during the 2020 spring lockdown.

Pic: Finbarr O'Rourke



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Investment by Fáilte Ireland is welcome support for West Cork tourism businesses

Fine Gael Senator Tim Lombard has confirmed a new nationwide ~55 million investment by Fáilte Ireland that will provide a welcome support for tourism businesses in West Cork. The funding for the Tourism Business Continuity Scheme was secured in Budget 2021 and Fáilte Ireland is responsible for developing and administering the scheme. Senator Lombard said: "The scheme will support those tourism businesses that were not eligible for the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) payment or previous Fáilte Ireland continuity grant schemes.

"I am confident this will provide a positive support for West Cork's tourism industry and will be key to helping it survive and strengthen in

the year ahead.

"The first phase of the Scheme opens for applications on the 11th February 2021 to businesses including outdoor activity providers, visitor attractions not eligible for CRSS, caravan and camping providers registered with Fáilte Ireland, and Cruise Hire companies who meet the eligibility criteria.

"The Government will continue to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and ensure that appropriate supports are in place. We are now developing tourism strategies for survival through the pandemic and recovery in the medium and long term," Senator Lombard concluded.

The National Tourism Development Authority also announced its heavyweight domestic marketing plans, investment commitments in outdoor dining and urban animation

and its strategic priorities for the year ahead. The event entitled 'Survive to Thrive' provided industry with details of Fáilte Ireland's plans that will help support resilience and survival in the short term and the recovery of the sector in the long-term.

Senator Lombard said: "Amongst its key projects for 2021, Fáilte Ireland has also committed to the enhancement of urban areas through the 31 Destination Town projects across the country and two new funding schemes.

"The Outdoor Dining Grant Scheme will improve the quality of outdoor dining spaces and offer reassurance around safety and comfort, and the Urban Animation Grant Scheme will animate our cities and towns with innovative lighting and art installations.

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Love in the time of Covid

It's been a tough ten months; January felt like it would never end and the finish line seems to be moving all the time. Our lives have literally been turned upside down: Children are out of school, parents out of work and rising Covid numbers have confined us back to our homes. Dealing with fear, uncertainty, loss, and lack of space on a daily basis means that Covid is impacting all of our relationships in one way or another. Whether you're single or part of a couple or family, this pandemic has posed all sorts of challenges – from giving each other space to socially distant dating – and left us all wondering just what will emerge from our so-called 'bubbles' when Covid is behind us?

Dr Ray O'Neill is an assistant professor in Psychotherapy at DCU. He also works in private practice in Dublin and Beara. Dr O'Neill tells **Mary O'Brien** he believes that because the pressure has been building for so long with so few options available to us for any kind of release, we've hit that psychological block around the 20th mile that is so familiar to marathon runners.

“We have to remember that there is a finishing line,” Dr O'Neill says. “There is an end on the horizon and we are going to get through this; we just have to believe it will happen and run that little bit longer, or walk, or even stumble, but we have to keep believing and moving towards it.”

“January is dark and depressing on a good year but on a Covid year it's very hard and

we all feel very stuck without those usual releases like being able to go for a coffee or a meal, meet up with friends, or get away for a weekend.”

If this frustration or anxiety is affecting your relationships, Dr O'Neill's advice is to name what's wrong. “Sometimes just saying ‘Look I'm having a bad day’ or ‘I'm a bit annoyed with you or with myself’ or ‘We're not getting on, am I the only one who's upset, or angry or exhausted?’ can help. When we

name our emotions or frustrations in a non-confrontational way, they shift place. It is in the silence that we believe the worst of ourselves and others. While the issues are still there, the result is that we feel less lonely, less isolated.”

“How are you?” is such a simple but powerful thing to ask someone if you really mean it,” he continues. Just looking directly at someone, perhaps holding onto their shoulder and saying those words can help.



“It's these trials in life that can either strengthen or break someone; if they break you, then to move on from that you get help, crutches, a plaster cast, you don't let yourself stay broken as a person.”

For better or worse, some couples have already separated during this pandemic. “This kind of crisis can bring out the worst in people but it can also bring out the best,” says O'Neill, who reveals that many couples are actually separating with less conflict within the current climate. “As a result of having to continue to live together or having to respect the ‘bubble’, many couples are handling separation in a healthier or more civilised manner than they might have pre-Covid,” he explains.

Since last March our homes have become schools, gyms, pubs and working places. These high energy levels can cause exhaustion and, at times, leaves us with very little room to breathe. Dr O'Neill emphasises the importance of couples spending quality time together, and ideally outside of our office/school homes.

“Create space and time away from distractions – phones, TV etc. Don't bring screens and devices into the bedroom or to the dining table. It's small stuff but it will make the other person feel appreciated and minded. Sit or lie down together or go for a walk together. Sitting in front of a screen together is lovely but it doesn't really count, it is the viewing that is shared, not the relationship.”

Communication is also key to a successful relationship. “Everyone has their own experience and their own side of the story and if you want a genuine chance for yours to be heard, then we start in listening to the other persons,” he says.

“The couples who tend to be more resilient and adaptive will ask ‘how do we make the most

out of this tough situation?’”

A red flag in a relationship for O'Neill is when a couple has different attitudes towards something seriously critical within the pandemic, such as vaccination or wearing a mask.

“For me it's non-negotiable,” says O'Neill. “We need to think of other people beyond ourselves and there are consequences if we don't. I don't mean the relationship is necessarily over in this scenario, but to question what is going on in such a decision. There is a lot of fear around Covid and that fear finds its place in anger or resistance and defiance. When we recognise that this is about fear, then we can begin to talk it through.”

An interesting outcome of the pandemic according to O'Neill is that it has revealed that some people who have suffered and taken responsibility for their mental health issues or managing their anxieties have evidenced themselves as oftentimes being better equipped at navigating a Covid world compared to those people who haven't experienced any kind of debilitating depression or difficulties in life before.

“I think the Irish people learnt a lot from the last recession, which is the last time we had to deal with real difficulty,” he says. “We learnt that it's good, it's better, to talk. And perhaps this time around because we didn't have the usual Irish crutch of the pub and alcohol and we had to do things differently, for example over zoom, supports that wouldn't have been accessible before suddenly became available to us. There was a huge outreach for psychotherapy and counselling services in the first lockdown.”

If you are suffering from anxiety, Dr O'Neill recommends minimising your news intake. “Misery likes company and

unfortunately, as a result of this, misery sells,” he says. “We need good news too. I tend to buy a newspaper or watch the news on the TV; I stay away from the Internet, as I just end up getting upset by the online comments. We're more than that and we're better than that, which is what we need to remind ourselves of, particularly when we feel bombarded. We live in such a demand culture that we lose sight of the important stuff. Yes there are vaccine delays but we are still in a very privileged position a) because there is a vaccine available and b) because it will happen sooner for you and I than it will for 85 per cent of the world's population.”

The antidote to misery? “We need to have fun together. The best anti-anxiety medicine is happiness, joy or entertainment.”

“Within families, make sure that everyone gets a chance to propose a group activity, whether it's a board game or cooking together.”


Appreciate the company you have, because single people have had it very tough in this pandemic. “We might drive each other crazy at times in our family units, but that hug is priceless,” says O'Neill.

However it's not all bad for singles. While dating has become more challenging, O'Neill says that an interesting outcome of the pandemic in online dating has been that most timewasters have gone offline. This is good news for anyone looking for a relationship. “The quick and easy culture has been limited, which means it's a lot more possible to find someone interested in a serious relationship,” says O'Neill, who believes that alcohol being taken out of the equation also offers more nervous, but genuine, real encounters.

“People are having to be a lot more inventive and all these



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Love in a time of Covid..Cont'd from previous page

other possibilities have opened up around dating as a result."

Courting is happening over zoom chats, whatsapp and similar platforms – "which isn't a bad thing," says O'Neill, "as it involves conversation and is a good screening process."

The opportunity this pandemic has presented us with is the deferred gratification of meeting or going to the cinema together, sharing a meal or sleeping together, which means there is more chance for something authentic to emerge. I really think it's possible for people to make even more of a connection in this scenario."

"The long engagement traditionally offered an opportunity to really get to know each other to see if you were suitable for marriage," says O'Neill. "The opportunity this pandemic has presented us with is the deferred gratification of meeting or going to the cinema together, sharing a meal or sleeping together, which

means there is more chance for something authentic to emerge. I really think it's possible for people to make even more of a connection in this scenario."

Laughter again is really important here. "It's the best relaxant," says O'Neill. "When you're laughing, you're being yourself, and when someone responds with a smile or with laughter, you know they're meeting you. There is nothing, including Covid, that should stop us from laughing, whether it's over a phone, screen or for the fortunate ones, in person."

O'Neill admits he is curious about what will happen after this period in our lives. "How we live our lives is going to be very influenced by what we've gone through," he says.

"I think people will be exhausted and bored with the dating apps and turn to things like speed dating instead."

There are opportunities and positive outcomes in every crisis. "There are lots of positives from this pandemic and we may not appreciate them until later," says O'Neill. "It has made us see that we can do things different, whether that's Christmas, getting married, or working from home."

"One of the things I've liked about the Irish response to this pandemic is that, for better or worse historically speaking with the twitching neighbours' net

curtains and everything else, we are always looking to each other. We have in this pandemic buckled down to our individual detriment because we get that the community is important and what happens our neighbours in the next village and the next county is important. When I see so much of the selfish individualism flooding the US and what that's done, I feel very glad to be here in Ireland."

"We have been through national traumas, loss and deprivation as a country, for more years than we care to remember, on so many different levels. We're selfish sure, like all human beings are, but I think we do mind each other, which is something that should be celebrated at the end of this pandemic."

We also need to acknowledge what we have lost.

"Covid has prevented us from carrying out the rituals around death and dying that Irish people do so well and which show such humanity; the gathering as a community to support those who have lost, the handshake, the hug, the eye contact – that for me is the biggest grief in this pandemic. That goodbye to someone we love is so critical and for that to be taken away is devastating. We need to acknowledge this, as and when we move back towards celebrating together again..."

Public consultations on development of a new agri-environment pilot project now open:

Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan is urging farmers to make their views known following the announcement of a consultation process aimed at shaping government policy on agri-environmental schemes.

Funding has been made available for a new, results-based agri-environment pilot project. The pilot will explore new ways of approaching environmental actions, and will help government identify what value it can bring to Ireland's next national agri-environmental scheme.

"This will help raise awareness of farming methods that give the greatest environmental and biodiversity benefits," Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan said.

"For too long we have incentivised farmers to get rid of habitat and biodiversity on

their landholdings. This isn't a farmers issue, it's a policy issue that needs to be changed."

"This new pilot programme designed to incentivise farmers to deliver for the environment."

The Programme for Government commits to rewarding farmers for adapting to more sustainable methods of farming and to the development of a new agri-environment scheme capable of delivering broad environmental and biodiversity benefits that will align financial supports with climate objectives.

"Protecting and maintaining our environment is a national priority. Agri-Environment schemes like GLAS have played an important role in helping us to achieve our objectives," Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, said.

The pilot scheme's results-based approach can help identify the environmental and biodiversity returns from specific farm measures and allows a more focused use of funding.

Those with the best environmental scores receive the highest payment.

The pilot will only be open to farmers who have not participated in GLAS and are not currently participating in other agri-environment schemes.

The application process is expected to open in the second quarter of 2021.

A summary of the current proposal can be accessed at gov.ie.

The closing date for the receipt of views is Friday February, 26, 2021.

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Clonakilty Meals on Wheels helps cocooners feel less isolated

Meals on Wheels is one of those services that encapsulates everything that is good in a community: Selfless acts and words of kindness. The small team of valuable volunteers who keep the Clonakilty show on the road provide not only nourishment, but social support to the elderly and vulnerable in the local community. Meals have increased from 80 a week to 140 in the current pandemic. Rising Covid numbers and Level 5 restrictions means that so many more people are isolated and for some, the bi-weekly meal delivery on Tuesdays and Fridays is now the only contact they have with the outside world.

Clonakilty Meals on Wheels is under the umbrella of the Clonakilty Community Care Society, which has been in operation for the past 50 years. Norma O'Sullivan answered the call for volunteers in her parish church newsletter 19 years ago and has been with Clonakilty Meals on Wheels ever since. Bernie Harrington arrived on the scene a few years later. With the help of a small but dedicated and energetic group of volunteers such as Padraig O'Mahony, Marian Corcoran and Eileen O'Driscoll, they keep operations running

smoothly. On Fridays, Gerard O'Driscoll and Ann Kiernan give their time.

Drivers Kieran Murphy, Barry Kirby, Eileen Quinlan and Denis O'Hea are responsible for dropping off the nourishing two-course meals (a main and a dessert) to clients in Clonakilty and hinterland. No driver is ever too hurried not to stay for a chat.

"There's always a surprise in the bag too," says Bernie "something like a packet of biscuits, a carton of eggs or some kindling."

"It's the chat as well as the



meals that people look forward to," says Barry. "I'm a relatively new volunteer to the service and my eyes have been opened. There are so many people who are on their own and scared in the current climate and desperate for company."

The service usually closes for

two weeks at Christmas time but with demand so high, meal deliveries continued throughout the seasonal period in 2020. Small Christmas hampers were also made up and given to each of the 44 clients.

"It's the chat as well as the meals that people look forward to. I'm a relatively new volunteer to the service and my eyes have been opened. There are so many people who are on their own and scared in the current climate and desperate for company."

Driver Barry Kirby

Meals vary depending on donations and whatever produce is available from sources such as FoodCloud, a social service that connects businesses with surplus food to charities. Every Sunday evening, Clonakilty Meals on Wheels collects food through FoodCloud from Tesco in Ballincollig. "It's a fantastic service," says Norma.

Local businesses too have been supportive. Dunmore Hotel has provided weekly desserts when possible and a number of other local businesses in the hospitality industry have made food donations over the past 10 months. Local butcher Haulie O'Neill donated meat to Fernhill House Hotel for use in the cooked dinners they provided to the service,

a builder regularly drops off firewood, and Lidl in Clonakilty recently contributed a number of food vouchers to the service. Allfresh fruit and vegetable wholesalers donate fresh produce regularly. Dealz, a business new to Clonakilty town, has organised two collections for Meals on Wheels. Local Reverends and church communities have also made food donations. "Everything helps," says Bernie "and we're very grateful to those who have helped us in such a difficult time for so many."

"We've also had contributions from individuals – monetary, food and vouchers," says Padraig "which have all been very welcome, as we're unable to run any fundraising activities this year."

West Cork HSE Community Worker June Hamill has been very supportive and encouraging. "She advised us on applying for a number of grants, which we successfully qualified for," says Norma. "Last year we received a community grant from Cork County Council and National Lottery Funding."

"There was a time at the start of the pandemic, when we thought we'd have to close the service down," says Bernie. "There were so many guidelines and new rules to adhere to and we lost a few volunteers in the over-70 category – but June's help has been invaluable to us and we have thankfully managed to keep things running."

to be carefully and thoroughly carried out at the end of every day.


"We took everything off the walls at the start, as even the hanging pictures have to be sanitised," says Norma.

The two veg (sometimes three) and meat dinners are always ready for 11am with every meal distributed by 12pm. "The phone starts ringing if we're a minute after 12," says Bernie laughing.


Catherine Hayes has been picking up meals from Clonakilty Meals on Wheels for her mum, Mary Hayes (77), from Ardfield, since 2019. "It's a fantastic service, as she can't cook any more and I'm working fulltime," says Catherine. "It gives me some relief that her dinner is looked after a couple of days a week and she really enjoys them."

Three years ago Eileen O'Driscoll joined the Clonakilty Meals on Wheels team on a CE Scheme. After completing the scheme, she successfully secured employment in the kitchen of a local café but was made unemployed last year due to Covid. She returned as a volunteer to Meals on Wheels after a three year hiatus. "I love it," she says "and I'll miss it wholeheartedly when I return to work. It's like having a second family and there is such great craic with the volunteers and elderly clients."


To get in touch with Clonakilty Meals on Wheels call 023 8833107, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings between 9am and 12pm. Contact Norma on 087 2480759 or Bernie on 087 6244081.




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Kinsale pupil wins national art competition with heart-warming portrait that paints a picture of ability versus disability

A 12-year-old twin boy from Kinsale has been announced as this year's winner of the National Disability Authority's 'Someone Like Me' national art competition. Cathal Walsh, a sixth-class pupil at Summercove National School, won the prestigious competition with his 'Piano Man' portrait, which shows his twin brother Harry, who was born with a cleft lip and palate, playing the piano, something he taught himself to do during lockdown.

For the first time in the five-year history of the Someone Like Me Awards, the finalists, who were from 48 primary schools across Ireland, gathered online for a special virtual ceremony designed to overcome current Covid-19-related restrictions.

Cathal's winning entry was chosen by competition judges not just for its artistic appeal, but also for its heart-warming story, which reflects the

competition's aim of fostering more positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities by highlighting the similarities that exist between all people.

"This is my twin brother Harry, we are 12-years-old and in Sixth Class. I decided to draw Harry because he taught himself piano during lockdown and turns out he has a natural talent for it. He loves to play Queen, Abba, jazz, pop and he plays 'Piano Man' a lot," said Cathal.

"He was the first-born twin and was born with a cleft lip and palate. He has had five operations, first to repair his lip at three months, then palate repair, two palate correction operations and, last year, he had bone graft surgery. Thanks to the Cleft Lip and Palate Team at CUH (Cork University Hospital), Cork, Harry and I look even more alike.

"He never complains and wants to be a dentist when he is older, as he is really interested in all the dental-work he receives himself. Both Harry and I

are really grateful to lockdown, as it gave him the opportunity to discover his love of music and gave me the time to explore and expand my love for art."

County Monaghan's Killeevan National School's First and Second Class pupils were also named as recipients of a coveted Judges' Highly Commended Award for their comic book entry which tells the story of superheroes with different and similar superpowers who together play a role in saving the day against Covid-19, representing the different strengths and weaknesses of the pupils and how their strengths are often their own superpowers.

The competition, which is organised by the National Disability Authority, attracted more than 1,800 entries from national schools across the length and breadth of the country.

Congratulating Cathal Walsh on his success, Minister of State with responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte TD said she was

extremely impressed with the number of entries from schools this year, not least because of the challenges presented by the global pandemic.

"I would like to extend my deepest congratulations to Cathal Walsh, his teacher Jean Roberts and the wider school community. Cathal's entry is both an attractive and inspiring depiction of his twin brother who clearly has an ambition to use his own experience and ability for the benefit of others.

"I would also like to commend Killeevan National School for its Highly Commended entry, as well as all of the county winners who were selected from more than 1,800 entries received from schools right across Ireland. Taking part in this competition will go a long way towards fostering more positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities from a very early age by highlighting the similarities that exist between all people.



Cathal (r) and Harry Walsh. Pic: Finbarr O'Rourke



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A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

Though I have lived for nearly twenty-nine years in West Cork, I have mostly managed to retain my mid-Atlantic accent. I have however, invariably picked up on local sayings, and turns of phrase. I have often been accosted by a waiter in London, or New York and asked: "Are you from Ireland" because I accepted their offer of a coffee refill with "Thanks a million", or answered "I'm grand, thanks" when asked if I needed anything more.

Irish sayings are one the many delightful charms of the Emerald Isle. They also tend to creep into your vernacular no matter where you originally learnt English. Not only are they witty, they also often convey a layered multitude of meanings. My favourite, which I have written about before, is being told: "If I were you, I wouldn't start from here," when asking for directions. Another is asking someone: "Is it yourself?" when meeting up after a long absence, or better yet "Are you still here?" to someone who is clearly not a figment of the collective imagination, only to have that person answer "No. I'm long gone."

My daughter, who moved back to Ireland after twelve years away, recently admitted that she had started saying goodbye five times in succession, having rediscovered that it is the only way to end a long conversation. Bye, bye, bye. Bye, bye, is the only way to en-

Sure look...

sure that your interlocuter gets the message that this conversation is finally truly over.

Some sayings are so subtle that they mean the exact opposite of what is said, such as "I will, yeah", or "Yeah, right!" "Good luck with that," can mean just that, but is mostly used in cases where even luck won't help.

As we enter week whatever of Lockdown III, there is one saying that reigns supreme and that is "Sure look...", often accompanied by a shrug and a deep sigh from both speakers. A shake, or nod of the head are both suitable. "Sure, look..." is appropriate to pretty much any situation where words fail you. Lockdown III is a perfect example of a situation where words fail us to describe what we are going through both collectively, and individually. "Sure Look..." encompasses it all – the good, the bad, the comic and the tragic. It leaves any certainty hanging, and is both comforting and dismissive. It can convey both disgust and acceptance in equal measure. It both implies resignation, and the faith that things will change. It carries both hope and a sadness for which there are no words.

"Sure look, it's been a pretty mild winter so far." "Sure look, Spring is on the way." "Sure look, I can't remember what a pint in a pub tastes like anymore." "Sure look, so many people have it so much worse."

You can use it to excuse pretty much any Lockdown behavior, from eating a pint of icecream in your pyjamas at two o'clock in the afternoon, to taking up crochet. Worried about the vaccine roll-out? Sure look... Hoping that we'll be able to travel this summer? Sure Look... Going stir crazy trying to work remotely AND homeschool at the same time? Sure look...

February 1 marks St Brigit's Day. The start of Spring. The renewal of the land. Crosses made of rushes and a scarf left



outside for the Saint to bless. The daffs are pushing through the black mud. There are tiny buds here and there. There is more daylight every day. Soon it will be time to get the tunnel set up, the seeds sown and the raspberry canes cut. Four more weeks of Level 5 and who knows? We might even be able to visit each other again. In the meantime: Stay home. Stay safe. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. We'll get through this. We've been here before. Sure look...

St Vincent de Paul, Clonakilty thanks the local community

St Vincent de Paul, Clonakilty would like to express their thanks and appreciation to the local community who have generously donated over €70,000 over the Christmas period.

St Vincent de Paul assists such local projects as education, fuel and living expenses. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our most vulnerable neighbours across our community. As a trusted non-profit organisation SVP serves those most likely to be hurt by the current economic crisis. These donations from the local community will help to improve the situations that those facing financial hardship are experiencing.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the February edition of West Cork People,

I know I say this every year but thank God January is over. We're all exhausted from the long slog that has been the past 10 months and January, a dreary month anyway, has felt like a particularly long and tough start to 2021!

I mentioned at the beginning of the feature with Dr Ray O'Neill, how dealing with fear, uncertainty, loss, and lack of space on a daily basis has had a huge impact on us all. Dr O'Neill, an assistant professor in Psychotherapy at DCU believes we've hit that psychological block around the 20th mile that so many marathon runners run into. He reminds us that there is an end on the horizon even if the finish line seems very far off: We just have to pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off if we falter and keep moving towards it.

So much of what he talks about rings true. He mentions the impact that too much news intake can have on our anxiety levels (particularly bad news, which there is plenty of right now and especially on social media). Fortunately we're in the business of good news, so you'll find plenty of relief inside these pages.

He talks about how fun and laughter are some of the best antidotes to misery and anxiety. Dr Jeff has served up a healthy dose of laughter this month in his column and Louise is in the business of making us all feel good about ourselves so be sure to read both.

He discusses the Irish response to this pandemic and how because we get that community is important, we have minded each other. Inside this issue, you will find lots of heartwarming stories of selfless acts of kindness and people finding positives out of this pandemic.

As well as that, you'll find lots of great advice to get you outside in the Spring garden, motivation from Tania on how to lose the Covid belly and our new columnist, dog trainer, Liz Mahony shares her tips for preventing lockdown bad behavior in our pets. From farming and the environment to history and sport, we've got it covered.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Until next month,

Mary



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West Cork People

West Cork students receive Trinity College entrance awards

Four West Cork students – Anna Ferguson, Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty; Lucy Gilmartin, Presentation Convent, Bandon; Denise O'Brien, Grammar School, Bandon; and Eimear O'Regan, Community College, Schull – are among 527 students from every county in Ireland and 15 countries in the EU to have been awarded special Entrance Exhibition Awards from Trinity College Dublin this year.

The awards go to the student

accepted into the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme who achieves the highest points among Trinity entrants from their secondary school, above a minimum of 500 CAO points. Many former awardees have gone on to make a significant contribution to the economic, cultural, and political life of Ireland and beyond. Past Exhibitioners include Tannaiste and former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

Of the 2020 new entrants to

Trinity, 527 students qualified for an award, up from 452 in 2019. The students come from a record 455 different schools, 438 schools on the island of Ireland (up from 403 in 2019) and 17 schools from overseas.

For the first time, the awards were delivered virtually. Trinity Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast, said: "We are delighted to welcome these talented students to Trinity and only wish that they and their families could come to celebrate with us at the

University, as they usually do. Since we revised the Entrance Exhibition Awards in 2018 as part of our commitment to boosting diversity we are seeing an ever-growing number of schools represented and, this year, all 32 counties on the island of Ireland. We congratulate each student and wish them well in their studies."

Changes made to the awards scheme in 2018 meant that students who achieve the highest points among Trinity entrants

from their secondary school with a minimum of 500 points in the Leaving Certificate (or its equivalent second level final examinations) are eligible for an Entrance Exhibition Award. This includes bonus points for Mathematics.

Previously, any students receiving 560 or more points (excluding bonus points) were awarded Entrance Exhibition Awards, which meant that there could be up to 20 students from any one school.

ADVERTORIAL : BANTRY CREDIT UNION

PCP Finance Plan vs Credit Union Car Loan: What's the Difference?

By **Finbarr O'Shea**
QFA, Manager, Bantry Credit Union

A few clicks on the internet will quickly show that Personal Contract Plans (PCPs) are a topic of concern to lots of commentators. All the main newspapers have published articles on them. So have the main car-review and consumer-focused websites. There's even a website called mypcp.ie, which is hosted by Renault.

A reliable source for accurate information on this and so many other topics is ccpc.ie. It's the website of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC). This is Ireland's independent statutory body for enforcing competition and consumer protection law.

The CCPC says that "PCPs are very complex compared to other types of car finance" and that "it's important to understand all the terms and conditions before you sign up". The CCPC sets out in detail



these terms and conditions, very helpfully dividing them into three sections – Starting a PCP, During a PCP and At the end of a PCP.

A key issue for anyone considering car finance is flexibility. On this issue the CCPC states: "PCPs are among the least flexible forms of car finance. Because the repayments are fixed for the term of the agreement, you can't usually increase your repayments each month if you want to and if you want to extend the term, you may be charged a rescheduling fee."

The CCPC also compares a PCP with a personal loan. Its conclusion is worth quoting in full:

"The main difference between a PCP and a personal loan is that with a personal loan you borrow the money, pay for your car, and own it immediately. With a PCP you don't own the car: you are essentially hiring it for an agreed period of time, typically three years. You only own it if you pay the GMFV (guaranteed minimum future value). This is important because if you run into financial difficulty during your agreement you wouldn't be able to sell the car unless you had permission from the finance company – as they are the legal owner of the car."

Remember, those are not my words. They are the words of Ireland's statutory consumer watchdog.

To put flesh on the bones so to speak of this conclusion, I've compared the main features of a PCP and a credit union car loan. The results are presented in a Q&A format in the table below. if you want to find out more, just call your local credit union. We'll be delighted to help you!

Question	Credit union car loan	PCP
Do I own the car?	Yes. From the minute you buy it.	No. You are hiring the car until you make the final payment.
Do I have to pay a deposit?	No.	Yes. Typically 10-30%.
Are there any extra fees?	No. Never.	Yes. There are often documentation, administration and completion fees.
Can I make additional payments?	Yes. Always.	No. The payments are fixed. You can't pay extra each month. And you will be charged a fee if you need to restructure.
Is there a balloon payment at the end?	No.	Yes – anything up to 50% of the value of the car.
Can the car be repossessed?	No. If your circumstances change and you can't afford the repayments, the credit union will work out an alternative and affordable repayment plan with you.	Yes. If you don't make the repayments the car can be repossessed. The finance company can take the car back without a court order if you have paid less than one-third of the PCP price.
Can I sell the car?	Yes. At any time. Remember – you own it.	No. Remember – you don't own it. You are hiring it.
Is there a cap on the mileage I can do?	No. Remember – it's your car!	Yes. Your contract includes a mileage limit. Going over this can affect the final value of the car and incur an excess charge.
Does it matter where I get the car serviced?	No. You can do it yourself or go to your friendly local garage.	Yes. You are obliged to stick to a strict service schedule at an official dealer. If you don't, you will be penalised.
Is my loan insured?	Yes. Your loan is insured in the event of death at no cost to you (subject to T&Cs).	No. If you want insurance, you arrange and pay for it separately.

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*This is a limited time offer. This rate is applicable to completed car loan applications submitted to the credit union from 1st Jan - 28th Feb 2021. For a €10,000, 5-year variable interest rate loan with 60 monthly repayments of €198.02, an interest rate of 7.00%, a representative APR of 7.23%, the total amount payable by the member is €11,878.79. Information correct as at 20/11/2020. Loans are subject to approval. Terms and conditions apply. If you do not meet the repayments on your loan, your account will go into arrears. This may affect your credit rating which may limit your ability to access credit in the future. Bantry Credit Union Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

We need true leadership to get us through 2021

Since we started hearing about Coronavirus this time last year, life has been turned upside down. Thousands of families have suffered losses, local businesses have had to close and the basic connections we took for granted have become vital. The most important thing right now says Cork South West Social Democrats TD **Holly Cairns** is that the Government gives us real hope by providing true leadership.

The public needs to see a coherent strategy that they can get behind. Instead, the government is continuing with an approach, which results in rolling lockdowns – lurching from one crisis to the next. They keep altering their Living with Covid levels. Every week I open emails from

constituents who are unclear if they are an essential worker or not. The failed re-opening of special schools demonstrates the absence of planning, and the Minister for Agriculture and the Marine has only just agreed to a fishing task force, an intervention I have been calling for since last March.

Due to the absence of a coherent strategy to suppress the virus, we are continuing to go in and out of lockdown. This course of action becomes necessary when there are soaring case numbers. However, it is clearly not socially or economically sustainable. Countries such as New Zealand or South Korea show us that it is possible to return to normality. Instead of treating health and the economy as opposites, their governments pursued clear strategies, which have enabled the re-opening of society and the economy. They are clearly two sides of the same coin.

We all acknowledge that hard decisions are required,

but they would be much easier to understand and accept if they were evidence-based and communicated properly. We had the highest incidence rates of Covid-19 in the world throughout January and the Government still refused to quarantine people entering the country and they refused to pay nurses on placement and other healthcare students. Families and communities are making incredible sacrifices for the common good, but these efforts are being frustrated by a lack of leadership.

Small business and family enterprises need to be reassured that they will be fully supported through the coming months. Sudden lockdown announcements, changing support schemes, and a lack of clarity on rates and other issues add to the stress and uncertainty faced by shops, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses which are the backbone of the rural economy. There are businesses on the main streets of Bantry, Clon-

akilty, Bandon and Skibbereen, which have been there for generations, through recessions and even World Wars, which are in danger of closing permanently without strategic support from the government.

Finally, the government needs to plan for recovery. The pandemic has underlined the importance of local sustainable economies. We need greater investment in our towns and villages, we need more producer organisations and cooperatives to link producers and consumers, and we need accelerated broadband to enable more people to work and study remotely and for new businesses to open in West Cork.

Coherent and evidence-based planning will show us all the way forward. It will reassure people that health and the economy are two sides of the one coin. And it will give us all hope.



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

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

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Social Democrats

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Shopping online from the UK after Brexit

I ordered something online from a UK website – will I have to pay extra charges when it arrives?

From 1 January 2021, you may have to pay extra tax when having your online shopping delivered from the UK (this does not include Northern Ireland). This is because the UK has left the European Union (Brexit) and the transition period that was in place ended on 31 December 2020.

Depending on the item's value and where it was made (place of origin), you may have to pay:

- Value Added Tax (VAT)
- Customs duty

How will I know if I owe these taxes? If your package is valued at €22 or less (including the transport, insurance and handling costs), you do not have to pay any VAT or customs duty.

However, if your package is valued at €23 or more (including the transport, insurance and handling costs), you have to pay VAT. The standard rate of VAT for most items bought in Ireland is 21 per cent.

If the items were made in the UK and are valued at €150 or more (not including transport, insurance and handling charges), you do not have to pay customs duty.

However, if the items were not made in the UK and are valued at €150 or more (excluding transport, insurance and handling charges), you may have to pay customs duty. The amount of customs duty you pay depends on the type of product you buy.

You should be aware that the value limits are for the whole delivery, not just one item.

How do I pay these charges, and who do I pay them to?

You may have already paid Irish VAT and customs duty during the checkout stage of your online purchase. This is because some UK retailers are

registered with Revenue and automatically charge the relevant taxes as part of the purchase. Check your receipt (this is usually sent to you by email) to see if you have already paid Irish VAT or customs duty.

If the UK business is not registered with Revenue, the postal service or courier will send you a bill before delivering your package. This is because the postal service or courier completes all the relevant customs declarations, including where the product is manufactured. You will usually be charged an administration fee for this service, which can be a minimum of €10 to €15.

Are there any other changes to my consumer rights when I buy from the UK? As a result of Brexit, there are changes to your consumer rights when buying online from businesses in the UK. You will still have consumer rights but they will be set down in UK law and not EU law. It is very important to check the terms and conditions on the seller's website to find out your rights around:

- Returning the item if you change your mind
- Cancelling the item before it is dispatched
- Complaining if something goes wrong

Read more about buying online from the UK after Brexit, including what to do if things go wrong at www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer/shopping

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)

I attend a DEIS school and want to go to university. My family are not well off. Is there anything to help me go to college?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) helps school-leavers who may not traditionally go on to third-level education access it. Under the HEAR scheme, third-level places are allocated to school-leavers on a reduced points basis. For example, a HEAR student with 356 points might get a place on a course that usually requires 366 points.

Participating colleges also provide extra supports for HEAR students.

When you apply to the Central Applications Office (CAO) for a college place, you must indicate on your CAO application that you wish to be considered for HEAR. To qualify for HEAR, you must meet certain indicators or criteria related to your financial, social and cultural circumstances. For example, your family income must be below a certain limit for your family size. Other factors are taken into account such as having a medical card, attending a school in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme and living in a disadvantaged area.

You must apply to the CAO

by 1 February 2021 and complete your HEAR application by 1 March 2021. Copies of your supporting documents must reach the CAO by 15 March 2021. Late applications are not accepted.

You should start preparing your HEAR application as soon as possible. You will need to gather supporting documents, such as information from the Revenue Commissioners, a statement of income from the Department of Social Protection and whatever other documents are required in your case.

You can get more information in at accesscollege.ie. Your school can also provide information and support. You can get more information about HEAR on citizensinformation.ie

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you can find comprehensive integrated information online at citizensinformation.ie/covid19/ and you can get daily updates on what's changed on Twitter at @citizensinfo.

Know Your Rights has been compiled by Citizens Information West Cork which provides a free and confidential service to the public.

WEST CORK HELPLINE
0761 078 390

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



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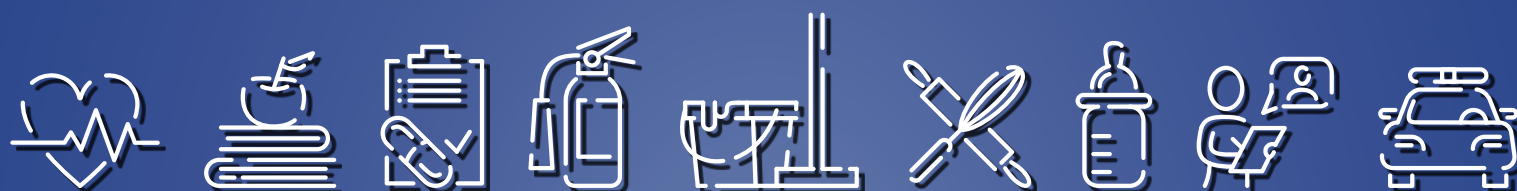
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Animal legislation often feels the 'Whip' of our political parties



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

If the pandemic has highlighted one thing, it is that Ireland is a dog-loving nation. Ireland is world-renowned for its famous breeds like the Irish Red and White Setter, or the Kerry Blue and of course, the Irish Wolfhound. Mahatma Gandhi, a giant of humanity, non-violence, and a lawyer of great intellect, enriched the world with many a great quote or philosophical musings. It may come as a surprise to many readers, but he famously said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." I've often marvelled at the magnificence of Roman architecture, education and civic society. When you apply Gandhi's qualification to the Romans, it places them in a shadowy light. Once they wiped out most of Europe's lions, tigers and bears for their bloodletting sports, they just kept going, creating one of the bloodiest sports of all time – the Gladiator games and the feeding of Christians to

whatever lions they had left.

It is not just eastern philosophy or religions like Buddhism and Hinduism that have left their followers with teachings regarding the kind treatment of animals. Christianity has left its mark too. In Proverbs 12 verse 10 in the Bible, we are told, 'A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are only cruelty.' In more recent centuries, Christian mystics have demonstrated a respect for and affinity with animals, such as Saint Francis of Assisi. Saint John Bosco's writings reveal he was protected by a dog called Grigio in his times of most need. It seems the humanists, mystics and saints all agree on something.

However, underneath this pretty painted image of our animal loving nation, lies an ulcer. Like most ulcers it is kept under wraps, away from the prying eye. One of these is the greyhound industry. This abusive use of dogs has been covered in detail in the press and on television. RTÉ Investigates highlighted the mass slaughter of up to 6,000 greyhounds a year, "for spurious reasons, ranging from a decline in performance to not being fast enough to compete on the track." €280 million has been given to the greyhound industry by the tax-payer since 2000 and what have we got for our investment? There are a lot of schools that could be built for that. When Holly Cairns TD bravely dared to lance this boil, she was met with threats, misogyny and the impregnable wall of the opposition's Party



Whip.

Coursing, another enigma of Irish society, is also an industry that seems to get special protection by some parties. Recently, Mick Barry, Paul Murphy and other TDs in the opposition benches have brought a Bill before the Dáil, the 'Animal Health and Welfare (Ban on Hare Coursing) Bill 2020'. It is a well-researched, scientific and evidence-based Bill, which highlights the inherent damage Coursing does to the Irish Wild Hare. Five thousand hares are captured a year, 600 seriously injured and 75 die, despite dogs being muzzled. The survivors, traumatised, are sent back to the wild and it is immeasurable to know what long-term damage has been inflicted on them. Yet the Bill's chances of success are slim, not because it is a bad piece of legislation, but because the big boys in government parties are more interested in maintaining a vote from those vested groups rather than doing the right thing. But hey – it's tradition, right?

Tradition is a great word, and you can defend almost anything by using it in a sentence. Tradition should never trump progress and morality. A whole article alone could be dedicated to the never-ending scourge of puppy farms – an anathema to any dog-loving individual. We still have mink farms in the country. They exist so people can still wear fur – yes in the 21st century. Even when we do agree on legislation to phase out our mink farms (mainly due to EU legislation and not our own

initiative), there are still three functioning in Donegal, Kerry and Laois despite the watchful eye of the Greens in government. We're more Roman than we think. Oh Gandhi – what would you say?

Another feature of the pandemic has seen a stratospheric rise in the stealing of dogs. Anyone who has had a dog will know the heartbreak it has caused owners. Those who do not have a dog may not understand it, but let's not pretend those emotions are not relevant for many. It has been going on with impunity for over a decade, chiefly because the government has limited and archaic protective legislation for animal welfare. In the last ten years, 17,000 dogs have been stolen and another 40,000 reported missing. Peadar Toibin, Aontu TD, is currently bringing a Bill to the Dáil that makes dog stealing punishable with ten months in jail, whereas of now, there is no punitive measure. When one broadcaster on the national airwaves, insinuated this was over the top, he was met with an avalanche of be-reaved dog-owners texting into the show, in favour of Toibin's initiative.

What Peadar Toibin, Paul Murphy, Mick Barry and Holly Cairns all have in common is the face of a mutual enemy called the 'Party Whip'. Essentially this means it is difficult to change anything in the political arena unless you get the support of the bigger parties. The Party Whip means TDs must stand united with their party when it

The Party Whip means TDs must stand united with their party when it comes to voting on motions, bills and legislation, even if the individual TD has a conscientious objection to it or may represent a constituency who favours a move in the opposite direction.

comes to voting on motions, bills and legislation, even if the individual TD has a conscientious objection to it or may represent a constituency who favours a move in the opposite direction. Though there is a place for the 'Party Whip' system, it highlights the limitations of the political process in democracies.

One of the problems with this unwritten law is that if a government (holding the majority) loses a vote, then it has lost its moral right to continue to govern? Why so? It doesn't need to be this way, except for that word again – tradition. It would strengthen the mechanisms of our democracy if we trust our politicians to engage in the debate, react according to the will of the constituencies, and allow our TDs to come at the debate, with their own intellectual musing and informed opinions on particular Bills. If the sitting government gets a bloody nose now and then, it just means the wheels of democracy are working. I'm not being disingenuous here. There is a need for Whips on issues of budgets, emergency legislation and votes of confidence. But the Whip system destroys what real democracy was set up for – giving all members of the legislative body a real say, so that we, the people, all have a voice too. Why is it so, that if party or TD in opposition, produces a well-constructed piece of legislation, it would be construed as a sign of weakness in the government of the day to accept it? If anything, it should be a sign of strength of our Dáil, and the people we all elect as its members.

Alas, what does it tell us, when animal welfare bills never seem the preserve of the big two parties? Who are they protecting because it certainly is not the vulnerable? Has the Green Party, drunk on the fumes of power, forgotten how it pushed for the closure of mink farms? Now firmly ensconced in government, we still wait for their words to become deeds. They were 'whipped' into handing over the greyhound industry hundreds of millions more, despite genuine ongoing cruelties, as expounded by Ms. Cairns.

Our system needs an overhaul. As it stands, TDs in government are not allowed, in a Dáil vote, to disagree with the Party Line. What is so wrong if you disagree with the Party Line on matters of conscience or have an informed opinion or represent a constituency that may be diametrically opposed to what your party is introducing? The Whip is king. I believe it is not a democratic way of conducting business, every time a bill comes for discussion.

To conclude, any time animal welfare issues are brought to the fore, they usually end up being labelled as minor issues when more serious ones need to be tended to first. I say life doesn't function like this. Imagine if we throw all our taxpayer's money at hospitals until they finally fix the health system. What happens to everything else in the meantime? Problems in society must be dealt with concurrently, no matter how large or small they are. It is because animal welfare is often 'last' on the list, that it needs highlighting now and again. We will never solve any of its ills otherwise.

How to recognise the signs of a scam and what to do after

With fraudulent behaviour at an all-time high, it's important to take time to familiarise oneself with the signs of a scam and how to deal with it.

Some scams, are of course, more obvious than others, but it's the new creative attempts to rob us of our money that we must all be on the lookout for. Phishing is a cyber-crime that uses disguised text messages and email as a weapon. The goal of the scammer is to trick you into believing that the message is something you want or need and is from a source they know or trust: For example, a request from your bank with a click to a link or a downloadable attachment or a notification to pay customs duties on a home delivery.

Speaking about the increase of scamming ploys and what we can do to protect ourselves, Anne O'Donovan, West Cork's Citizens Information Manager said, "There is a big increase in the number of people contacting us about scams. Some can be quite obvious, while others can be very difficult to recognise.

"If in doubt, do not open the message or email, click on the link, or engage in any way and don't hesitate to contact the company to

verify if the communication or message is real or not. If you have any concerns please contact your local Citizens Information Centre; we remain open and are here to answer any questions you may have."

Scammers are cunning and believe that they are above the law, this is why we must be one step ahead of them at all times and know the signs, and how to protect ourselves from scams.

Be very cautious of: Unsolicited contact from a company out of the blue; A deal that seems too good to be true; Sharing personal details; Being pressured to respond quickly or transfer money quickly; Being asked to pay by an unusual method, for example through a transfer service like Western Union or virtual currency like Bitcoin; Mis-spellings or grammatical mistakes; Unusual email addresses.

For anyone needing information, advice or have an advocacy issue, they can call a member of the local Citizens Information team in West Cork on 0761 07 8390; they will be happy to assist and make an appointment if necessary. The offices are staffed from Monday to Thursday from 10am to 5pm, and 10am to 4pm on Friday. Alternatively, you can email on bantry@citinfo.ie or log on to www.citizensinformation.ie for further information and contact details.



The power of letters

By Clonakilty
Amnesty Group

Amnesty International's 'Write for Rights' campaign takes place annually around December 10, which is Human Rights Day. Writing for Rights action-on-the-ground continues on throughout the year, aiming to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure. Another 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, you can be a part of West Cork's contribution to the international Write for Rights campaign even in this difficult Covid time.

In the West Cork People we provide readers monthly with case material, for them to take letter-writing action. But this month, for a change, we wish to show you the impact of past Write for Rights campaigns, as expressed in the words of four of those who benefited from them. This shows what your letters can achieve.

"To everyone who sent me countless letters from around the world, I want to express my deep gratitude. While in prison, these actions lifted my spirit." –



Taner Kılıç, Write for Rights 2017. Taner was the chair of Amnesty International Turkey and was arrested in 2017. He spent over a year in prison for his peaceful human rights activism and was released conditionally in 2018 but had to face trial again in July 2020. This court sentenced him to six years and three months imprisonment.

"International support is the most powerful tool that women like me can get. Every single signature for the petition to get me free, made a difference." – Teodora Vasquez, Write for Rights 2016. Teodora was freed in El Salvador in 2018, where she was serving a 30-year sentence since 2008. She had suffered a miscarriage (in the ninth month of pregnancy), which led to the false accusation and conviction for homicide under the anti-abortion laws of El Salvador.

"I feel joy, and so much emotion. To everyone who has stood by me, I give my heartfelt thanks. Without this support, my freedom would have been almost impossible." – Yecenia Armenta Graciano, Write for Rights 2015. In July 2012, Yecenia was taken by police in Mexico and tortured to get her to confess to involvement in an alleged murder. The police beat

and raped her and threatened to kill her children. She was released in 2016. The IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) congratulated the judge in question for taking the independent international experts report into consideration in the investigation and documentation of torture.

"I am alive today, after 33 arrests, because members of Amnesty International spoke out for me" – Jenni Williams, Write for Rights 2011. Jenni Williams is a founder of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA, 2002). The organization focused on public mass protests against Robert Mugabe, and grew to 70,000 members in the following years. By 2008, Williams had been arrested 33 times by the Mugabe government for her actions with WOZA.

Dear WCP Reader: Clonakilty Amnesty Group is grateful for your interest in the Write for Rights campaign. You can find further information about the campaign at (www.amnesty.ie/write-for-rights).

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).



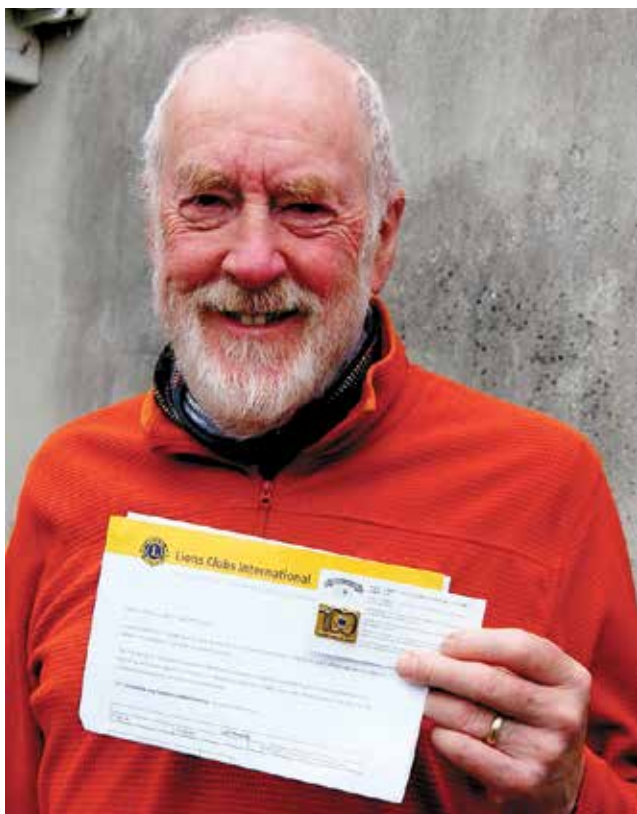
Every single signature for the petition to get me free, made a difference."
Teodora Vasquez

Bantry Bay Lions Club Diary – February 2021

Past President of Bantry Bay Lions Club, Doctor Francis Greaves, was awarded a certificate of recognition for recruiting and retaining Lions members during the Lions Clubs International Centennial Year (2018-2019). This award is usually presented well after the fact. Better late than never, as they say!

The Bantry Bay Lions Club normally meet at the St Goban's Centre at 7pm on the second Thursday of the month but due to Covid 19 restrictions they now hold meetings via Zoom. 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



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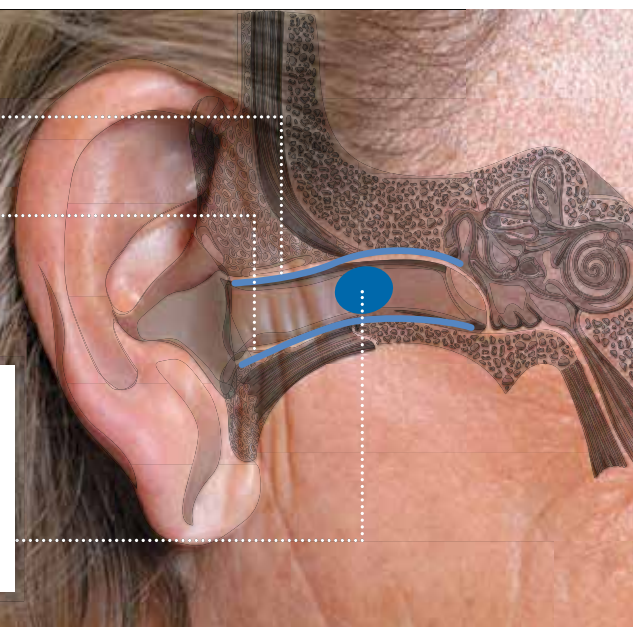
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Resuscitation Annie

“The challenges of learning more about her story and her impact as a cultural icon have given her even more significance....”

Megan Phelps

Anyone who has ever taken a CPR course will be familiar with the plastic mannequin used to teach the life-saving technique.

CPR has become a mandatory element of many workplaces annual regime. Many of us have signed up voluntarily to complete the course; we all know the benefits of gaining the knowledge. However, what we may not know is that the face used on the CPR doll is that of a real person and, not only does she have a name but she also has a fascinating history. The face in case belongs to the ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine or (The



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.

Unknown Woman of the Seine’ – more colloquially known as ‘Resuscitation Annie’ in recent times. She died in tragic circumstances and has been the focal point of the lifesaving technique since she was found drowned in the River Seine in Paris in the 19th century. She captured the imaginations of the Parisian public in the 1800s; her life and death has been the subject of

many theories for over a century and she continues to live on in popular culture today – Michael Jackson’s famous song ‘Annie, are you ok?’ is based on the unknown woman of the Seine.

L’Inconnue, who is estimated to have been about 16-years-old when she died, may have been a suicide. Nobody knows for sure, but there were no marks on her body, and many concluded she took her own life. After she was pulled out of the Seine, she was transported to the Paris mortuary, and put on public display alongside the bodies of other unknown dead for the purpose of identification. This was common practice at the time. However, nobody identified the teenager. The pathologist who performed her autopsy was so taken with her serene expression that he had a model maker create a plaster ‘death mask’ of her face. The mask was replicated and sold. In fact, the Lorenzi model makers, who according to the paper authors made the original death mask, still sell copies of it today under the title ‘Noyée (Drowned Woman) de la Seine’. Before long, L’Inconnue’s alluring, deathly likeness was reproduced in facsimiles sold in souvenir shops across Paris, then Germany, and the rest of Europe. The mesmerising mask of this unknown dead girl described by philosopher and author Albert Camus as the “drowned Mona Lisa” became a coveted cultural icon. In time, L’Inconnue’s frozen half-smile rested on mantels and hung in drawing rooms all over the continent. She was positioned in artists’ workshops, gazed upon as a mute, motionless model. At some point, L’Inconnue turned into a kind of morbid meme for early 20th century writers, who contrived countless dramatic histories for this mysterious figure engulfed by ill fortune and the weight of water.

Death in water was a very romantic concept. Death, water, and woman, was a tantalising combination; because of this, there were many stories or apocryphal tales about the unidentified young woman. One of the more harrowing is that she was one of two sisters, identical twins, who’d been born in Liverpool more than a century ago. One of them, it was said, had embarked on a love affair with a rich suitor and eloped to Paris, never to be seen again. Many years later the other sister visited Paris on holiday. Walking down a street she was shocked to see the mask of the drowned L’Inconnue hanging outside many workshops and shop fronts. She instantly recognised the girl as her long-lost twin, condemned – or blessed – to



Left: ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine. Above: Asmund Laerdal and Bjorn Lind demonstrate CPR on the original Resusci Anne.

the 1960s would be reluctant to practice CPR on a male doll’s lips. Making the CPR manikin changed the course of the Laerdal company from producing toys to medical devices, as it describes on its website, where Resusci Anne is still available for purchase. The company estimates that 300 million people around the world have been trained in CPR, most of them with the help of Resusci Anne. One of those people it seems was Michael Jackson, who included the refrain ‘Annie are you okay?’ in the song ‘Smooth Criminal’ after he was inspired by his own CPR training, according to the BMJ paper. This line is also used in CPR training when trainees check for a response in the patient.

But what about the ethics of making reproductions of a deceased person’s face and selling them without consent? In an editorial published in the same issue of BMJ, writer and ethicist Julian Sheather notes that although putting bodies on display and passing around death masks were common practices in the 19th century when ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine’ died, those practices would be ‘ethically troubling’ in the more modern world. Today the Laerdal Company estimates that two million lives have been saved by CPR.

remain forever young, while her sister grew old.

In the late 1950s, when medical students were just starting to learn and practice CPR, Archer Gordon, a member of the American Heart Association’s CPR Committee, realised that a CPR dummy could save medical students from the unnecessary pain and potential rib damage of practicing CPR on each other. To manufacture such a thing, he and a Norwegian colleague sought the help of Norwegian toymaker Åsmund Laerdal. It turned out, Laerdal had seen a reproduction of ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine’ on the wall of a relative’s house, and he decided to give the CPR manikin the same face. Thus in 1960 when the Laerdal company built the first CPR manikins, ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine’ became ‘Resusci Annie’, the CPR dummy, or ‘Resusci Anne’, as Laerdal refers to the doll on its website. Before making CPR manikins, Laerdal had manufactured a doll named Anne. Perhaps this is why the name stuck.

Laerdal felt it was important that the manikin should be a female, suspecting that men in

Michael Jackson included the refrain ‘Annie are you okay?’ in the song ‘Smooth Criminal’ after he was inspired by his own CPR training.

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Wild food in ancient Ireland



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 good deal of the countryside of ancient Ireland was once covered with trees and scrub with hazel one of the most important providers of food. The nutritious nut (*cnó*) of this tree can be kept for up to a year and must therefore have been a valuable winter food. It is clear that there was a trade in hazelnuts. The 'Annals of Ulster' record that in the year 1067 nuts were very abundant. That year was known as the 'year of the white nuts' (*bliain na cnó fín*).

The wild fruit most frequently mentioned in our sources is the wild apple (*fiaduball* in old Irish; *úll fiáin* in modern Irish). Because of this the wild apple-tree is included among the 'seven nobles of the wood' i.e. the seven most valuable trees. The other six are oak, ash, hazel, holly, yew and pine.

Archaeological evidence confirms that many kinds of wild fruit were consumed. Blackberry and elderberry

seeds, dated by radio-carbon to the eighth or ninth centuries have been excavated at Scotch Street, Armagh. An 11th century pit in Winetavern St. Dublin contained a large variety of wild fruit, including rowanberries, blackberries, wild apples, sloes, hips and haws. Acorns, normally valued as food for pigs, were consumed by humans when other more palatable food was in short supply.

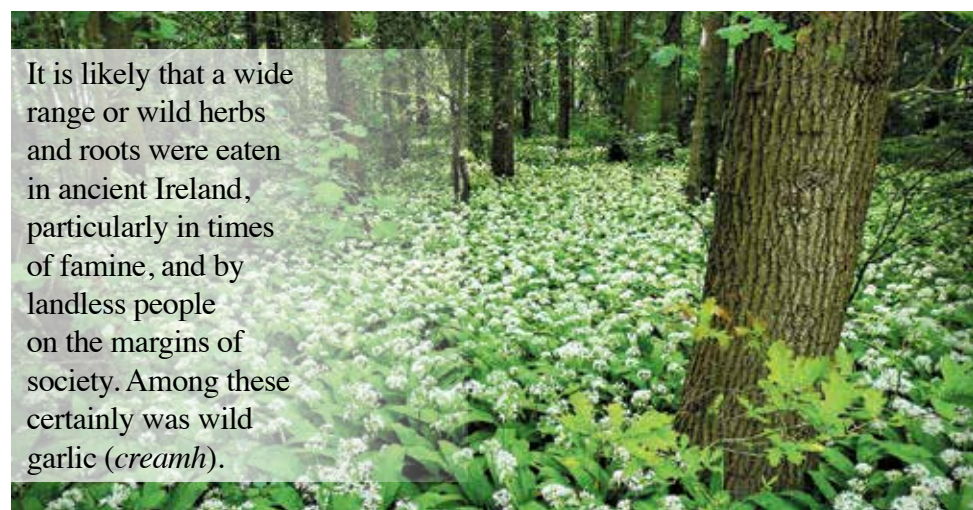
The importance of bilberry is clear. Seeds from the fruit (Irish *fraochán*, anglicised *fraughan*) are common in the excavations of Viking and Anglo-Norman Dublin. The townland of Frehanes in Rosscarbery parish, West Cork, is derived from *fraochán*. The last Sunday in July was up to recent times known as Bilberry Sunday, Fraughan Sunday or Garland Sunday. In Irish folklore there are vivid descriptions of people dancing, singing, making garlands, storytelling and gathering fraughans or bilberries at lakes, holy wells, or more usually on hills or mountains. The last Sunday in July is still, of course, a day for climbing mountains or hills, the most famous being Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo. Another plant related to the bilberry is the cranberry, which grows in bogs; it is known in Irish as *mónán* or *mónóg*, which comes from *móin*, the Irish for 'bog'.

It is likely that a wide range of wild herbs and roots were eaten in ancient Ireland, particularly in times of famine, and by landless people on the margins of society. Among these certainly were wild garlic (*creamh*), also known as ramsons; watercress (*biolar*); nettle (*neantóg*), and wood-sorrel (*seamsóg*).

The roots of a number of wild plants were eaten; of these the most prized seems to have been pignut (*cúlarán* in Irish, also known as *cnó arcáin*, *cnó milis*, *cnó talún* etc), bitter vetch (*corra meille*) and silverweed (*brioscán*). Wild garlic is a frequent plant of woods and damp shady places. It was a valuable food source and was prized for its medicinal properties. Garlic is rightly regarded as a great

food and its wild variety is used today by many famous chefs. In Irish folklore wild garlic was a metaphor for sharpness or bitterness. *Chomh searbh le craomh* – as bitter as wild garlic was a Donegal saying. Nevertheless, cloves of wild garlic were sometimes planted in the thatch over the door in Irish cottages for good luck. Its importance as a food can be gauged by the old Irish Brehon laws, one of which was a fine of the value of two and a half milch cows for taking wild garlic, seaweed or wild apples from private land without permission. In more recent times, in nineteenth-century Ireland, wild garlic was often used to flavour butter instead of salt. In Irish folk medicine wild garlic was highly valued as a preventative of infection, as well as a cure for coughs, cold and flu. It was also believed to clear the blood of impurities and wounds of infection, and to cure toothache.

Edible seaweeds were also collected by people along our shores and on the offshore islands. The inedible seaweeds were an important fertiliser by the sea and on the islands. On the islands of West Cork each householder had a portion of the shore designated to them, as well as offshore rocks and skerries. Seaweeds used in human diet supply iodine, iron and other trace elements. In modern times the best known edible seaweed is Carrageen Moss, full of useful medicinal and nutritional goodness. In ancient Ireland the most prized was duileasc (*duileasc* in modern Irish), generally anglicised 'dulse'. It appears that it was hung up in a sheaf, from which a handful was taken as required. One verse in the tale Cath Fionntrá (The Battle of Ventry), praises the sea produce of the islands of the south-west of Ireland. One verse goes like this: *Iascach mara muiride/a críchaib Baí is Béire, /medbán Faíde fírglaíne. /duileasc a cuanaib Cléire* (sea-fishing of the sea from the regions of Dursey and Beara, laver of truly clean Whiddy, dulce from the inlets of Cape Clear).



It is likely that a wide range of wild herbs and roots were eaten in ancient Ireland, particularly in times of famine, and by landless people on the margins of society. Among these certainly was wild garlic (*creamh*).



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Messages for The Mercy

As we head into another month of Level 5 restrictions, hospitals around the country are continuing to treat high numbers of patients for Covid-19. While we can follow guidelines to help keep cases low and in turn help our healthcare workers, the Mercy University Hospital Foundation is asking people to go a step further and send a message of support to front-line staff at the Mercy University Hospital.

This can include messages of thanks, encouragement, photos or drawings to help support staff through this new surge of cases and let them know how much they are appreciated.

Messages have already begun flowing in from the public and grateful patients. Some of the youngest supporters so far are James and Matthew Egan, aged 10 and 7 (pictured). The Ballinlough brothers' aunt, Eibhlín, works at the Mercy Hospital and is one of many staff members who have seen messages of support from the public over the last week. James and Matthew took the time to make colourful posters to thank all the staff at the hospital and their posters, along with other messages from the public, are on display in the hospital canteen for staff to view

every day.

Speaking about the request for messages, Interim CEO of the Mercy Hospital Foundation, Julie Harris said "The incredible staff at the Mercy University Hospital have been working so hard throughout the pandemic. They are going above and beyond every day to keep us all safe and we want them to know just how much they are appreciated. We are asking people of all ages to send in words of thanks or encouragement or drawings that might help staff through this difficult time. We hope that this will be a big boost to staff morale and will give the public a chance to directly thank those who have been working at the front-line of this crisis.

We are also giving people the option to send a donation with their message to allow us to continue supporting the staff and patients of the Mercy University Hospital."

Messages can be sent to staff by going online to www.mercy-fundraising.ie. While messages can be sent without making a donation, the Foundation says that all donations, big or small, make a huge difference at the Mercy Hospital and support areas from cancer care to the new Covid Triage area of the Mercy Hospital which is helping staff to treat Covid-19 patients.

For further information or to send in your messages of support, visit www.mercyfundraising.ie.



Remembering the victims of the Upton Ambush 100 years on

Shortly after 9am on February 15, 1921, a train heading westwards from Cork City, pulled in to Upton railway station, midway between Crossbarry and Innishannon. One of its carriages was carrying members of the dreaded Essex Regiment and IRA Brigade Commander Charlie Hurley was lying in wait with an ambush party and a plan of attack. However things went drastically wrong for Commander Hurley, as amateur historian **Pauline Murphy** explains.

Commander Hurley had positioned himself on the pedestrian bridge that spanned the railway line. Volunteers Flor Begley, Sean Phelan, Patrick O'Sullivan and John Butler were in the waiting room of the station; Paddy O'Leary stood at the wicket gate outside; Sean Hartnett was at the wall of the signal cabin and Batt Falvey was positioned in the goods store with Neilus Begley. Tom Kelleher and Denis Doolan hunkered down behind the wall at the goods yard, whilst Dan O'Mahoney and Denis Desmond were behind the wall by the post office. Paddy Coakley took up a position at the window on the top floor of the Railway Bar.

Before arriving at Upton the train had made a stop at Kinsale Junction, where unbeknownst to the IRA, a troop of British soldiers boarded. Sean Hartnett's brother Bill, who was at Kinsale Junction, hopped on his bicycle and sped towards Upton to warn the ambush party that they were outnumbered. Unfortunately, the train proved faster than Bill's bike and by the time he reached Upton the disastrous ambush had played out.

As the train pulled into Upton the IRA launched its attack by shooting into the carriage they thought was carrying only soldiers. However, the soldiers had mingled with other passengers and this proved deadly for the unfortunate civilians.

Upon realising how much

extra manpower the British had, and the number of civilians getting caught in the cross-fire, Commander Hurley called for an immediate retreat.

As Hurley jumped from the bridge a bullet hit his face. Under a hail of bullets Tom Kelleher managed to get to his commander and carry him away to safety. Dan O'Mahoney was also hit and carried away by Denis Doolan; O'Mahoney would die some years later as a direct result from the wounds he received at Upton.

Three of the IRA party were killed at Upton: Lieutenant Patrick O'Sullivan was hit but escaped by crawling through a drain. He made it to a safehouse but with wounds so severe that he was quickly taken under-cover to the Mercy Hospital in the city. The 37-year-old coach builder from Bandon died in hospital days later; 22-year-old Batt Falvey, a farmer's son from nearby Ballymurphy, was killed instantly when a bullet struck his head; 21-year-old Sean Phelan, born in Liverpool to Irish parents, was shot as he tried to escape through the waiting-room window.

Falvey, O'Sullivan and Phelan were buried side-by-side in the Republican plot at St Finbarr's Cemetery, Cork City.

In the years after the Upton Ambush a small iron cross was erected at the site. It was replaced in 1968 with a limestone cross commemorating the three IRA Volunteers who died there.



Upton station and Cpt Tom Kelleher at its original memorial.

There were no British soldier casualties that day but there were civilian deaths:

James Byrne was a 45-year-old man from Louth. Married with five children, he lived at No.5, St. Clare's Terrace, Dublin and had just started a new salesman job for the shoe company Cridland & Rose. On his first business journey south to Cork he was killed instantly when he was struck by a bullet while sitting in the train carriage.

John Spiers was a 58-year-old widower from Tyrone who had lived in Cork for over 20 years. He worked as a travelling salesman for the Warden & Co tea company. After his death in Upton, Spiers was buried in Douglas cemetery, leaving three children behind without their parents.

Charles Penrose Johnston was a 55-year-old coal merchant, originally from Cork but living at No.104, Upper Rathmines Road, Dublin. He was on a business trip to West Cork when he was killed instantly on the platform.

Richard Arthur was a 41-year-old ticket inspector from St Lukes, Cork City. The Tipperary native was an employee of the South Coast Railway for over 20 years. He was hit in the leg in the station

waiting room and was brought to the South Infirmary hospital, where his leg was amputated. He died four days later.

Thomas Perrott was a 56-year-old painter from Thorn-dale, Douglas Road. He was killed outright at Upton station and his funeral to Douglas cemetery was noted in the press

as being 'an impressive one' as he was a popular figure in the area. He left behind a wife and seven children.

John Sisk was a 48-year-old signalman from nearby Ballymurphy. He was caught in the crossfire between the IRA and British soldiers and took two bullets. He survived

long enough to be brought to the South Infirmary but died two days later. He was buried in Ballymartle and left behind a wife and five children.

William Finn was a 25-year-old merchant seaman from Rosscarbery. He was on his way west to attend the Baltimore Fishery School when he was shot dead.

Mary Hall was a 32-year-old servant who worked at Ballycurreen House in Cork City. After a busy Christmas in the big house, Hall was granted a few weeks off and was on her way home to Castletownbere to spend her break with her parents on their farm. She never made it back to Beara but was killed by a bullet while sitting in the train carriage.

The railway no longer goes through West Cork and the station at Upton has been silent for several decades. But the area hasn't changed much since that dark day 100 years ago; the station house remains, as well as the Railway Bar, along with the old post office and outbuildings. No doubt, the ghosts of those slain there also remain.

Left: The cover of an Italian magazine from 1921 that reported on the Upton ambush.



Cork cultural sites receive accreditation from the Heritage Council

Two Cork cultural sites, Cork Public Museum and Fota House, are among 11 to have received accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) from the Heritage Council, as the sector prepares a fightback against the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The certificates were presented at a special online ceremony this week. Accreditation certificates were awarded in 2020 but last year's ceremony was delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Selection under the MSPI is seen as a major accolade in the sector. Cork Public Museum and Fota House each achieved an accreditation certificate for excellence in caring for their collections; as well as museum management, visitor services, and education and exhibitions programmes.

Cork Public Museum's Interim Accreditation, and Fota House's Maintenance of Full Accreditation followed an extensive assessment process carried out by national and international experts. The rigorous assessment required the sites to meet internationally recognised MSPI standards across seven areas, including management and governance, collections management, and public or visitor services.

Cork Public Museum, located in Cork city, has a collection of exhibits that relate primarily to the historical and archaeological heritage of Cork city and county. In recommending Interim Ac-

creditation for Cork Public Museum, MSPI Assessors noted: "The on-site collections are generally well-cared for and well organised, while the curator's enthusiasm, passion and drive, both for the museum and its contents, is very evident."

Fota House, run by the Irish Heritage Trust, continues to apply and invest in the standards underpinning the MSPI programme. In recommending Maintenance of Full Accreditation for Fota House, MSPI Assessors noted: "Particularly evident is a strong emphasis on the quality of visitor experience and a high standard of volunteer management, both of which are contributing greatly to the sustainability of Fota House. These strengths are supported by a core of excellent collections, management and care, underpinning the richness of the offer at Fota House."

For further details on the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, visit heritagecouncil.ie.

Bank of Ireland supports customers in managing uncertainty and currency risk post-Brexit

Bank of Ireland 

For small steps, for big steps, for life

Brexit has impacted the currency markets since the UK's June 2016 referendum. This, coupled with the tentative emergence of the global economy from the ongoing pandemic, has led to heightened uncertainty for many Irish businesses, many of which are still unprepared for dealing with the fallout from Brexit. Keith Bracken who works as Bank of Ireland's Regional Treasury Manager for the South West region has been helping businesses to manage this uncertainty. He talks to **West Cork People** about how businesses can manage currency risk in a volatile market and gives an insight into some of the ways in which Bank of Ireland are supporting companies from every sector and scale.

“We look after both personal and business customers,” says Keith. In terms of a personal customer, exposure to currency risk might involve for example the sale of a house in the UK. All of a sudden the customer in Ireland has exposure to sterling because they are converting the funds from the sale back to euros. They want as strong a sterling as possible to get as much euros as possible after the currency conversion.

“Another example of a personal customer with exposure to currency risk is someone who has been working in the UK, renting property there, and has built up their savings in sterling. They may have decided to come home because of the pandemic or for work reasons and need to convert these savings to euros. I deal with a lot of customers in this type of situation,” says Keith.

Since the Brexit vote in 2016, sterling has weakened, which has worked out well for anyone sourcing product from the UK.

While Keith is positive about the year ahead, there is still the potential for a lot of volatility.

“Up until now we have been preparing customers, personal and business, for the volatility that was bound to happen with any kind of a Brexit deal or indeed in the case of a no deal scenario. Thankfully a Brexit deal did get over the line. While markets were expecting sterling to strengthen if there was a deal, the recent national lockdown in the UK is expected to further weaken the UK economy which is reliant on the services sector. In response to the outlook, the Bank of England may add further stimulus to support the UK economy and interest rate markets have already priced in a cut to 0% this year while the debate around negative rates in the UK is set to continue. If this does happen then the

sterling might weaken but it's very uncertain, as there are so many factors that influence the exchange market.”

Bank of Ireland can help companies to mitigate the impact of exchange rate changes. “We are open to any company calling us and talking about where their exposures lie from a currency point of view,” emphasises Keith.

How does this work?

Examining your currency risk exposure

The first step is managing currency risk and to do this it's important to understand and quantify the exposure your business is open to. “We would ask the customer what level of risk their company could tolerate and then look at factors such as cashflow and where the company is sourcing and selling product,” explains Keith. If a company has a contract agreed in sterling and is receiving in sterling, we will help that company in hedging sterling cashflow.”

What level of risk can you tolerate?

“Our main aim is to make sure that the company is preserving its profit margin. If the company is getting paid in sterling they should be hedging that cashflow and locking in today's rate, which allows them to lock in their profit margin in the background, which means the company is exposing itself to less risk in the future.”

“Irish people in general tend to have a glass half full attitude,” says Keith. “For example on the day of the Brexit vote, very few of our customers had looked at the worst case scenario; in fact many companies had deals agreed in sterling with no hedging in place. This meant there was a real rush to lock in cashflow after the vote.”

Bank of Ireland encourages

businesses to have a Treasury Policy in place, which means the level of risk inherent in the business is looked at and such things as risk exposure level is decided upon in the policy.

“The fact the UK has officially left the EU means that all our customers are legally entitled to ask for the price of anything purchased in the UK in both sterling and euro currencies and pay or receive in the cheaper currency. By getting two prices you can clearly see the effect of exchange rate differences, a mechanism, which has helped many businesses.”

Dual Invoicing

After deciding on the level of risk that the company can tolerate, the next step is to look at Dual Invoicing, which is one of a number of ways that currency risk can be managed.

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Forward Contract

Bank of Ireland also offers a product called a Forward Contract, which allows the company to lock in the sterling euro exchange rate at today's price as far forward as for the



next 12 months. “It is, in effect, ‘today's rate, in the future’,” explains Keith.

Foreign Currency Accounts

“If you're a business that's getting paid in sterling and also have outgoings in sterling, then we would suggest having a sterling account to cater for the inward and outward flow of the currency.” This means you don't have to convert from one currency to another and back again before transferring funds. It's called a natural hedge,” says Keith. “We cater for all of the major currencies in the world (21 in total). You'd be amazed how entrepreneurial Irish companies are; many of them are dealing with far-flung corners of the world.”

FXPay

FXPay is Bank of Ireland's fully mobile FX pricing and international payments web application. It provides customers with live FX rates and it's easy to use. There are no standard payment fees and international payments can be made securely. “You can log on from anywhere and get a live market rate, which updates every 20 seconds,” explains Keith. “It's a very important tool for a company if they're pricing their product in another currency.”

Other supports

Bank of Ireland supports companies from every sector and scale, from small business to multinational. The Markets and Treasury team have a wealth of expertise across areas such as market rates, funding, treasury and economic trends.

According to Keith, Irish businesses are “really good at thinking outside the box; look-

ing at new markets, sourcing cheaper products and so on. If I was to pick one good thing to have come out of Brexit, it's that Irish companies are now looking beyond the UK market. As a result, they have sourced good markets for their products elsewhere and are exposing themselves to less risk.”

Keith is hopeful that the Irish economy can bounce back quickly after this pandemic.

“Our economy was doing really well before this pandemic; we were outperforming all our peers in Europe, and my hope is that as soon as this pandemic ends, we will be one of the fastest countries to rebound.”

“There are lots of opportunities out there for businesses and in Bank of Ireland we cater for industries across the board, so what we are seeing behind the scenes is pretty amazing. While we have had quite a lot of concerned calls from customers due to Brexit, there are so many supports within Bank of Ireland that more often than not we have the answer for that concerned customer.”

Keith feels that the fact that a Brexit deal has gotten over the line, albeit a bare bones one, is a huge plus, because the alternative would have meant taking a huge step backwards. “The fact that the vaccine is now being rolled and that by the end of March there could be nine vaccines available is very positive.

“Our economy was doing really well before this pandemic; we were outperforming all our peers in Europe, and my hope is that as soon as this pandemic ends, we will be one of the fastest countries to rebound.

“Possibly a glass half full attitude,” he says laughing “but this pandemic is temporary, Irish businesses have a lot to offer and we are here to offer support in as many ways as we can.”

For more information related to trading abroad including rates and market news, our FX product suite and also up to date information regarding Brexit go to [bank of Ireland.com](http://bankofireland.com).

Bank of Ireland and its West Cork branches are committed to supporting customers during these challenging times.

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Rethink Ireland opens applications for Social Enterprise Development Fund 2021

Social enterprises from across Ireland are being encouraged to apply for the Rethink Ireland Social Enterprise Development Fund 2021. In 2021 the fund offers (up to) 16 awardees cash grants and a place on Rethink Ireland's Accelerator Programme.

In addition, the fund is offering the best social enterprise in each local authority where no social enterprise won a cash grant, a place on their Genesis Programme.

The Social Enterprise Development Fund is a €3.2 million Fund being delivered from 2018-2022. The fund was created by Rethink Ireland in partnership with Local Authorities Ireland and is funded by IPB Insurance and the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Speaking in advance of the opening the CEO of Rethink Ireland, Deirdre Mortell said: "Ireland has a strong and proud social enterprise sector; throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen social enterprises play a key role in supporting communities.

"Now more than ever, the role of Rethink Ireland in helping social enterprises to strengthen their impact is critically important. We have supported a diverse range of social enterprises from all over the country since the Social Enterprise Development Fund was introduced in 2018 and we look forward to working with more this year."

For more information visit rethinkireland.ie



President Higgins meets Wojciech Bialek (to his right) and other members of the Polish community.

Helping Polish people to become part of their Cork communities

Together-Razem, which supports the integration of the Polish immigrant community in Cork, received Rethink Ireland funding last year. Wojciech Biale, the founder and CEO of the Together-Razem Centre, speaks to **West Cork People** about his work.

Born in Poland, Wojciech has been living in Middleton for the last 15 years and is an experienced social worker and addiction counsellor. Inspired by his father, who was actively involved in the Polish Solidarity movement in his local factory in the 1980s, Wojciech has always been passionate about democracy, social rights

and activism.

"The catalyst to start Together-Razem was the need to help Poles in Ireland who found it difficult to settle in a new country," he explains. "When I first arrived, I realised that this country has become an increasingly diverse society, with different nationalities shaping its population. Polish people were, and still are, the largest population of non-Irish nationals here. According to the last Census the number of Polish nationals living in Ireland has reached nearly 123,000, with nearly 50 per cent aged between 30 and 40-years-old. There are 32,000 Poles living in Cork City and County, amounting to a quarter of the total Polish population living in Ireland."

Many Polish people struggle with adaptation-related issues caused to a large extent by their

lack of proficiency in English and, at the same time, they find it difficult to maintain their national identity.

"Together-Razem operates in a similar way to the London Irish Centre. We help Polish people in Cork to navigate their new life in an English-speaking country by providing advice, support and education in order to integrate them with the Irish community. On the other hand, we also work tirelessly to cultivate the language and traditions of their mother country."

The Social Enterprise Fund helped Together-Razem to draw up a strategy in terms of increasing its social impact. "It opened up new opportunities for growth and development," Wojciech says. "It inspired our hopes and gave us innovative ideas to bring a new lease of life to our charity."

Wojciech says that the Polish and Irish have lots in common: "We love the Irish nature and sense of humour. We have the same Catholic roots and were also living under oppression for centuries. We fought for our independence in a similar way and gained our independence almost at the same time. In fact, we published a magazine last year to mark our same rocky road to independence. You can read it in Polish or English on our website."

However, some differences exist too which can cause misunderstandings, such as Poles being very direct in their dealing with people, which can be read by Irish people as rudeness: "We do not like 'brushing things under the carpet' as the Irish tend to do!"

Wojciech has this message for Irish readers: "Our children

were born in Ireland but at the same time we want them to maintain their heritage, their mother tongue, culture and traditions. Therefore, it is very important that all people support diversity and respect our traditions and language. We feel welcome here and wish to maintain good relations with our Irish friends."

To Polish readers he says: "Let's get more active. Do not forget that we, as a Centre, are here for you but we also need your support. Fundraising is important for charities like ours to survive – Polish people think that foundations here have ongoing state support, as is the case in Poland. They do not understand that we fight for every penny in order to provide services. As a Centre we struggle financially so please support

our organisation as much as you can – every euro counts.

"Also please get engaged in Irish structures; become part of your local GAA club, join your local choir or engage in local fundraising events. Become active and engaged citizens and who knows, maybe there is a future Polish Lord Mayor of Cork down there in West Cork!"

Together Razem welcomes any enquiries from Polish or Irish people who are passionate about Poland and social change and have a willingness to join its Board of Directors.

www.together-razem.org

€100m Brexit Scheme boost for Agri-food Sector

Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan is encouraging West Cork food and dairy producers to apply for a new government investment grant aimed at easing the Brexit blow on the Agri-food industry.

The government on Wednesday opened the first call for applications under the €100m Scheme for the Agri-food sector.

"Artisan food producers have helped put West Cork on the map – from artisan chorizo, cheeses to black pudding – we have the best in the world," Deputy O'Sullivan said. "The aim of this funding is to help businesses remain sustainable, competitive and innovative and will help ensure our agri-food sector continues to grow in both existing and new markets. It means keeping jobs, and creating more jobs."

The scheme is open to large, medium or small enterprises, engaged in the processing and marketing of primary meat and dairy products to apply.

Up to €70m is available under the first call, which is being administered by Enterprise Ireland.

As with any public funding, detailed terms and conditions will apply to this scheme, which will be awarded by Enterprise Ireland on the basis of a competitive call.

A webinar for applicants hosted by Enterprise Ireland will be available on February 9 and companies can make enquiries to CIS@enterprise-ireland.com.

Active travel jobs announcement welcomed by cycling and pedestrian advocacy groups

Minister for Transport, Eamonn Ryan and Minister of State Hildegard Naughton TD have announced funding for up to 248 new jobs to implement Active travel infrastructure. They plan to employ 218 staff across local authorities with an additional 30 proposed for Regional Cycling Design Offices. The announcement has been celebrated by cycling and pedestrian advocacy groups around the country.

What will this mean for West Cork? West Cork cycle advocacy groups haven't seen the detail of this yet, but if implemented correctly, this certainly has the potential to be a game changer.

"We believe that it is crucial that these positions are used to build a suitably qualified multidisciplinary team that

operates at an adequately senior level in order to deliver what Eamonn Ryan refers to as 'high quality infrastructure,' said Ruth Bulloch from CycleSense, Skibbereen.

In the government press release issued in January, Minister Ryan also stated: "Developing high quality walking and cycling facilities will encourage more people to switch to active travel and will contribute to tackling climate change. Really good design is what is needed to connect communities and make walking and cycling attractive, safe and accessible to everyone."

These new staff are to be recruited to develop walking and cycling activity and will work across a range of areas including design and construction oversight as well as communi-

cation and community liaison.

They will form part of a team nationally who will support the delivery of almost 1,000 kilometres of improved walking and cycling infrastructure by 2025.

Allison Roberts of the Clonakilty Bicycle Festival said "My hope would be that this new cohort of staff will help to inject new thinking and ideas into the council and support local area engineers and local advocacy groups and will be more than happy to liaise in that process."

There is huge potential for connected communities where people of all ages and abilities can walk and cycle safely, to school, to work, to shop and for enjoyment.

Build it (properly) and they will come!



The future is bright with new remote work strategy

The new remote work strategy was published this January after two public consultations on Remote Work – the main points are as follows:

New legislation will be drawn up to give employees the right to request remote work; The right to disconnect will be established for all employees; Investment will take place in Remote work hubs throughout the country; Tax and allowances for remote workers will be reviewed; The National Broadband plan will be accelerated to meet the demands of remote working throughout the country.

Karen O'Reilly of Employflex, a flexible work agency, welcomes these new policies enthusiastically and says that no one could have predicted 12 months ago that this seismic shift on attitudes towards flexible and remote work would happen so quickly.

We have been lobbying for years for the right to request flexible work to bring us in line with the UK. The challenge now is for companies to embrace this and to view it as a positive step towards improving the quality of employees' lives. It has been proven that people working remotely or in a hybrid model of part office/part remote can be as productive – it is vital that companies develop the right policy and procedure around this now and ensure that both managers, leaders and employees are trained in this new way of working.

We have an opportunity now to market ourselves internationally as a country that embraces remote work and has an educated and talented fluid workforce to match that.

We can answer the cry from tumbleweed towns across Ireland who have seen their young people migrate to the cities for work, by distributing remote work throughout the island and breathing life back into these forgotten towns and villages.

There are so many advantages for all stakeholders to implementing this policy with

gusto;

- Relieving the burden on congested cities and alleviating the housing crisis, pollution and traffic congestion
- Narrowing gender inequality in the workplace and allowing parents to continue their careers in a more flexible friendly working environment
- For employers – saving on real estate and office overheads with less staff turnover and studies have shown, increased productivity and

thereby a healthier bottom line

- Employees will gain by reclaiming their autonomy at work and getting that work/life balance right. (Remember that remote working in the future does not equate working from home during a pandemic – indeed the future remote working model will be a complete breeze in comparison!)

The new strategy, while very welcome, is not without its challenges and will not suit all businesses.



- Some SME's may not have the resources to provide the equipment for people to work from home.
- Training will need to be considered for leaders, managers and employees alike to work in this new way. Communication, trust, collaboration and measuring results are completely different in a remote work scenario.
- There will be resistance from companies who favour the traditional presentee-ism model of bums on seats.
- If work can indeed be done anywhere, our labour force is at risk, competing with other countries, where the cost of hiring and pay rates are considerably cheaper. Why pay for a software engineer in Ireland when their Indian counterpart can do it for a quarter of the price?

All of these aspects will need to be taken into consideration when shaping the final policy.

Our candidates, who are 85 per cent women welcome this new policy and we sincerely hope that it can help alleviate the female brain drain from the workplace. The amount of women we speak to who feel they are forced out of the workplace because their employer offers no flexibility is astounding. It is really incredible, in this day and age that companies would risk losing superb talent because of their lack of understanding when it comes to offering flexible work to everyone in the workplace. Diversity and Inclusion policies are just lip service if flexibility is not on the table to allow primary carers to continue with their careers'

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar states

in the report that 'the pandemic has changed our world. It has also changed the world of work forever. Millions of people and businesses around the world had to change overnight moving from the office to home working and from interactions that occurred in person to interactions that occurred mainly online. This shift might have taken decades if it had been planned. Instead it took days.'

What we have now is the first stick man for our remote work policy – as they say, the

devil will be in the detail and all stakeholders should be considered when pinning this down.

One thing is for sure, the Future of Work looks a lot brighter for everyone than it did 12 months ago – every cloud has a silver lining!

Looking forward, remote working is not the same as working from home in a pandemic and we should anticipate a much better working day for everyone in this bright new future of work'

CHRISTOPHER O'SULLIVAN T.D.

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

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people Farming

Digital potential of a sustainable natural economy

The role of digital in securing a green rural economy is the focus of a joint virtual conference being held by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Teagasc on Tuesday, February 9.

It will bring perspectives and insights on the role of digital technologies to secure a green recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Professor Wayne Powell, Principal and Chief Executive of SRUC, and Professor Gerry Boyle, Teagasc Director, will jointly chair the event, which will include four 15-minute sessions delivered by researchers from both institutions, and an open discussion.

In the first session, Professor Donagh Berry, from Teagasc

and VistaMilk, will talk about value-creating decision support tools. This will be followed by a presentation on the digitalisation of the Dairy Value Chain by Professor Richard Dewhurst, Head of the Dairy Research Centre at SRUC. Dr Hannah Rudman, Senior Challenge Research Fellow and Data Policy Lead at SRUC, will show how new technology is being deployed in the natural economy sector and the real benefits it achieves, and Dr John Hyland, from Teagasc, will talk about delivering farm advisory services in the digital age.

Prof Powell said: "We are living in a time of immense technological transformation, which is changing how we live our lives. "Science and



technology are unearthing solutions that can help tackle food security, energy shortages and climate change. "This virtual webinar conference provides

an opportunity for Scotland and Ireland to showcase how digital solutions can be used to secure a sustainable natural economy – which is part of our vision for

the future."

Professor Boyle said: "The challenge of our times for organisations like SRUC and Teagasc is to support the creation of 'sustainable food systems'. "Every node of the food system, right from the production of food to its digestion in our gut and the valorisation of waste streams, has to be the focus of our research and innovation. "Data creation and its management is a critical platform to realise this goal and we hope this conference will help to clarify how digitisation can help us to achieve our vision."

Teagasc and SRUC have collaborated on issues of mutual interest and concern for many years. This process culminated in 2018 with the first of a series

of annual conferences aimed at identifying solutions and helping create new opportunities for rural economies. This Edinburgh-based conference examined the potential of rural areas and resources to deliver on a wide range of economic, social, and environmental challenges and opportunities benefiting all citizens of Ireland and Scotland. The 2019 conference, held in Dublin, addressed the major environmental, consumer and economic challenges facing pasture-based livestock systems in Scotland and Ireland.

The 2021 virtual conference will take place on Tuesday, February 9, from 11am to 12.30pm. For more information and to register, visit: www.teagasc.ie/sruc.

people Farming

Grass-growing season off to a good start

FARMING
IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

In association
with



Calving has kicked off or is on the verge of doing so on many farms over the next few weeks and, while driving about, you will notice cows re-emerging from their winter quarters. It feels like the last three weeks have been shrouded in mist. Out in Ardfield it has been so anyway, but that's the joys of coastal living.

Rain gives us a break from the mist on occasion but from a farm perspective there's a positive to it. Damp mild weather at this time of year is welcome, as it really gets the grass-growing season off to a good start. You have to pick out the positives of situations like that and the pick up in grass growth rates is noticeable. It's only early February and you have to be prepared for any conditions that could arrive between now and May. In recent years we've experienced blizzards, storms and even last year the early stage of drought between now and the end of April.

On the home front, farm life is boring at the moment. There's a very predictable routine that revolves around feeding and checking stock and and right now that makes it very enjoyable. All the more so because with the first cow due to calf in about three weeks time you know that lull could be broken at any time.

In the event of that happening, things are ready. Pressure was taken off slurry, and sheds are in order, except to tidy away a few small bits. I've held off moving the heifers into the calving shed just yet. They're in their own pen all winter and will be left there a little while long. The older cows won't be too far behind them once calving starts so the first dozen or so of those will be put in a group of their own and given access

back to a straw pen in case there are any early arrivals.

Housing

I must go through the list of predicted calving dates and group the rest up accordingly. The extension to the cow house will be very useful that way. Instead of all the cows running as one group, I'm now in a position to put them into pens of eight.

It's the first winter in my farming career that every animal was housed. Even the bulls got to stay in this year. They're both coming up on two years of age and will be heading for grass sometime over the next few weeks. For babysitting purposes, the last two cows to calf will be going with them. They're both placid enough bulls but for ease of movement and keeping them in check, there is nothing to beat a pair of experienced cows. The plan would be to get them across the road and out of the way of cows and calves that will be going to grass. Heading in the other direction will be the group of younger weanlings.

Breeding

It's coming up on selection time for the replacements too. They will be due their first BVD vaccine and I use the behaviour in the yard around then as a good gauge of the temperament. I mentioned previously that some calves from a young bull we used in 2019 were a bit on the flighty side. Luckily he had a bull to heifer ratio of 2:1



Normally packed, the seats in the calf ring remain empty at Bandon mart as Covid 19 restrictions mean selling is done via online methods only. Pic: Tommy Moyles

so there won't be many of his daughters retained. Off the top of my head I think there's two. They proved to be very easy to deal with compared to their comrades. There will be less heifers go for breeding on the back of this and the fact that there was a higher percentage of bulls last year. The flip side of that is you know at some point in the next few years that will balance itself out.

Mart sales

The latest Covid 19 lockdown means all mart sales are strictly online. The move to online sales will be a lasting legacy of Covid on the mart trade. Attempts at online sales were trialled a few years ago but never kicked off. Coronavirus changed all that

and future sales are likely to be a combination of old and new. It's had a few teething problems and maybe it's a coincidence but prices have lifted across a lot of stock classes since it's introduction.

I'll admit it's a bit unusual to see the ringside empty at the calf ring in Bandon. For the first few months of the year, the place is packed out the door. It's a surreal scene now.

This hasn't had a negative impact on calf prices so far. While they always get off to a strong start, prices for Friesian bull calves and Hereford and Angus calves are all up. Continental calves from the dairy herd are at a similar price to last year but they were always at the top end of the market anyway.

Calf prices start strong every year but taper off once the numbers start to emerge in Late February and into March. It will be interesting to see how it plays out this year.

In other mart-related news, Tom McCarthy, the manager of Bandon and Skibbereen marts is moving to pastures new. He is taking up a new role with AXA insurance after 15 years working for Cork marts. Initially joining Cork marts as manager of Macroom mart in 2005 before he took on the role in Bandon in 2007 and combining that with the manager job in Skibbereen in 2011. With Bandon regarded as the premier calf sales in the country there will be a lot of interest in seeing who his successor will be.

Network Ireland West Cork president
commits to creating awareness of
Embrace Farm charity

Katherine O'Sullivan, newly elected president of Network Ireland West Cork has chosen Embrace Farm as her charity for her year as president. Katherine grew up on a dairy farm in Dunmanway and the mother-of-three continues a farming tradition with her husband, Mícheál in Durrus.

Founded in 2014, Embrace Farm provides a bereavement support group for farm families. It helps families who have lost a loved one or who have suffered serious injury in a farming accident. Katherine said "I chose Embrace Farm as my charity as I was deeply moved when I watched a feature on them on TV in June 2020 and I was amazed to learn of the number

of Cork families that use their support service. I look forward to working with Embrace Farm; they provide an amazing service and support to the agricultural sector and I hope to not just raise funds for them but to create awareness for their efforts in highlighting the importance of farm safety and the devastating impact of farm accidents on families."

Network Ireland West Cork support women in business across all sectors and are also committed to supporting the farming and food industries; both are significant contributors to the economy of West Cork with the number of women involved in these sectors constantly growing.



"The West Cork economy is boosted primarily by the agriculture sector including farming, fishing and agri food," says Katherine. "Of course, we also are proud to welcome our many visitors annually which supports our tourism. However, in the current climate of Covid and Brexit it is important to support our core industries with agriculture being high on the list for West Cork. Many of our members have connections to agri food sectors as suppliers, customers, as well as employees of varying contributors such as Carbery Group as just one example." Katherine said.

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Caroline rewarded for being a top performer

Interview by
Tommy Moyles

The Overall Winner of the Grassland Farmer of the Year 2020 is Caroline Walsh, Ballinascorthy, Co. Cork. The competition run by Teagasc, The Irish Farmers Journal, Grassland Agro, AIB and FBD Insurance is now in its fourth year and rewards the top grassland farmers in the country who are growing and utilising more grass on their farms. The awards are supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and has an overall prize fund of €30,000. Caroline was announced as winner during an online awards ceremony on Tuesday, January 19. She won the dairy award and the overall award for top performance in grassland management.

The judges noted her focus over the last few years has been on increasing the amount of grass grown on the farm and improving the quality of that grass. Her focus on profit has actually seen Caroline reduce cow numbers from a peak of 80 cows in 2018 to 64 cows for 2021.

The farm

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Ballinadee, which is being run by my father and brother now, and all I ever wanted to be was a dairy farmer. I started on my own in 2009 when I applied for new entrant quota and I leased a 28.5 acre farm next to home. I started milking there in 2010 with 40 cows and



Caroline pictured with her family in 2018.

a second hand parlour.

My husband, Joe, runs a contracting business with his brother Paudie and their father Patrick. They were milking here up to about 10 years ago but, as the contracting got busier, they found it hard to keep on the dairy herd. In 2014 we made the decision to move to Joe's home farm and began milking there in 2015. It was a bigger farm than what I was renting, so we moved the cows there. There was an old parlour on the farm but we built a larger building and installed a second hand 16 unit parlour and bulk tank.

I've pulled the cow numbers back a bit since 2018 when there was 80 cows milked here.

I hope to milk about 64 cows here this year. Milking should take less than 45 minutes each then.

Cow Performance

We sold 485,000l of milk in 2017 and we sold 430,000l last year but because of the changes we made in numbers and the cows diet, there was a lot more money in my pocket after last year.

I'm aiming for 540kgs of milk solids for 2021. The protein averaged 3.39 per cent in 2018, it was 3.48 per cent in 2019 and I reckon it'll average at around 3.6 per cent in 2020. I'm putting this down to improved genetics and more grass

in the diet."

Winning Grassland Farmer of the Year 2020

It was a great achievement. I suppose with Covid, it was a bit different because it was announced on zoom. I thought it was a practice run we were doing on zoom that morning in case there were any technical issues that afternoon. Once he made the announcement, I was like 'ok we've done the practice run', so when he said 'Congratulations Caroline', I couldn't believe it.

Farm Activity

Everything is up the walls at the moment. Calving usually starts around January 14. We start

earlier to try and have the bulk of the calving out of the way before Joe and the machinery men get busy at the contracting. The busy period for them is from early March to mid-October. The first job is sowing maize. Grass silage is harvested all summer and the maize is harvested in the autumn.

At the end of January we have 50 per cent calved. Everything is going great thanks be to God. It's busy but as long as everything is going ok it's manageable.

Balancing the farm and home schooling

The five children are home from school so every evening

there are a lot of people and animals wanting feeding. With home-schooling you don't have that two or three hours catch-up time in the morning – registering calves, bedding the cows and feeding calves – that you'd have when they're in school. Those three or so hours that were vital around the yard in the spring are completely and utterly lost. But it is also important that home-schooling is done or they'll fall behind. We try to get school done in the morning between 9.30am and 12.30pm if we can and then all the time after dinner is free to get back to the grindstone.

Teagasc re-introduce COVID-19 telephone helpline for farmers

Teagasc has confirmed that the telephone helpline to assist with queries in relation to COVID-19 issues is re-opening for all farmers. The service provides farmers with advice on the range of issues that they may face as they continue to do their essential work in maintaining the food supply chain. The service was initiated during the initial period of COVID-19 restrictions, and is now re-introduced as an extra support available to farmers during the current restrictions. This helpline is open to all farmers.

Dr Stan Lalor, Teagasc Director of Knowledge Transfer, commented, "Teagasc are re-opening this dedicated

helpline to support farmers. The coming months are amongst the busiest periods on many farms, and Teagasc are conscious of the extra demands that the current restrictions are placing on farmers as they continue their essential work in crop



production, caring for animals, and maintaining food supplies. The helpline is staffed by experienced Teagasc advisors and is open to all farmers to help them with the day-to-day issues facing them during the current COVID-19 restrictions".

The information line phone number is 076 1113533 and it is open from 9.30am to 1:00pm and from 2pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

As always, the Teagasc website www.teagasc.ie is a prime source of information on the full range of issues facing farm businesses. Teagasc clients should continue to use their advisors' mobiles and office numbers to contact them as usual.

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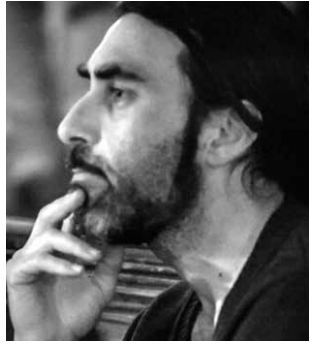
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THE SHAPE OF THINGS

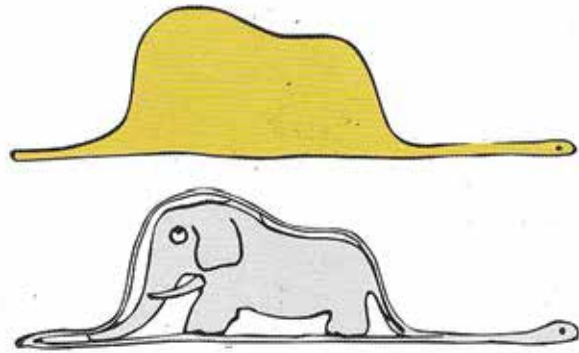
James Waller

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

At the beginning of the French classic, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine du-Saint-Exupéry, the prince discusses his drawing no.1 and his drawing no.2. He becomes exasperated by the grown ups who think his drawing no.1 is a hat. Of course, it is in fact an elephant being eaten by a boa constrictor, as his drawing no.2 demonstrates. Both drawings are the same shape, that is, they rhyme. Placing no.2 near no.1 one is struck by the *rhythm* the two snaky slopes create with each other.

When we speak of rhyme and rhythm it is usually in

Rhyme and Rhythm in Painting: Reflections on Dawn by Odd Nerdrum



reference to poetry, however these things are integral to all art forms, painting included. In my last article I wrote about the spiral form as underpinning Matisse's *The Sorrows of the King*. This time I'd like to discuss what I call a 'lightning bolt' composition, as demonstrated in a painting titled *Dawn* by the Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum. In *Dawn* we shall see how The Little Prince's drawing no.1 and drawing no.2 relate, that is, we shall see strong elements of rhyme and rhythm, and how these elements empower the painting. I'll conclude the article with some ideas for drawing games and activities, and some suggestions for the more ambitious painterly readers.

Odd Nerdrum (b. 1944) is a contemporary figurative painter, who, as a student in the late 1960s rejected the trends of modernism and instead

embraced the aesthetic of Rembrandt and the 17th century baroque. His work is astonishingly powerful, as much in delivery as in concept and composition. *Dawn*, painted in 1989, shows four identical figures, sitting in an Icelandic-inspired landscape, heads tilted to the sky as if in song. It is a strange, yet magnetizing image. It makes me think of how a choreographer might deploy dancers on a stage, and this is indeed a good way of approaching Nerdrum's figurative arrangements.

Dawn is, as I mentioned earlier, a 'lightning bolt' composition. This means that there is a series of diagonals that zigzag vertically down through the picture plane, starting with the comma-like 'clouds' and ending with the 'staffs' at the bottom. The figures, being identical, but of different size echo and amplify each other; the curve of their backs rhyme, generating



Dawn by Odd Nerdrum

strong linear rhythm; their noses are echoed by the pinnacle shapes of the rocks; the shape of the second head from the left is echoed by the shape of the rock directly above it (here we might spy a similar relationship to the Little Prince's drawing no.1 and 2). The dark cloaks are, equally, echoed by the mountains, whilst the mountains and the comma-like clouds echo the angle of the faces, from jaw to chin to nose.

The arrangement of the palette – that is, the colour selection – synchronises

beautifully with Nerdrum's program of rhyme and rhythm. The dark capes and caps are in synch with the silhouettes of the mountains; the skin-colouring is in synch with the creamy yellows and blues of the sky; the dark monochromatic browns of the landscape allow us to focus our attention on the relationship between the figures and the sky.

All of the above – both the linear and chromatic echoes – make the painting extremely powerful, causing the image to visually *resound*, as a song of colour and form, rising to the

light dawn.

As a fun activity you might try creating a drawing game, whereby one person draws a shape, and everyone else comes up with as many drawings (of things) as they can that rhyme with that shape. For those more ambitious artists you might try experimenting with different compositions, where you deliberately introduce elements that rhyme with your main subject. Happy creating!

West Cork musicians in 'Resound'

West Cork musicians raise their voices, with the clear message that the region's resilient music community is still here and looking forward to the time when they can share their music with you once more.

With so many missing the chance to share songs and stories, West Cork Music has announced Resound, a programme of original music by locally based artists. Filmed in Bantry House over four days in early December, the performances will be available on westcork-music.ie/resound and social media, every Monday and Friday.

It's an unusual time when the local community has been separated from the musicians in its midst. At no other time has the collective creation and sharing of music not been a central part of our society, whether in times of joy and sorrow, celebration



Bear Bojak in Bantry House.

or lament. Music in the community has always captured moments of our history, expressing and reacting to our situation and providing a sense of solidarity.

Bantry has a vibrant local creative scene and each year visitors are astounded by the amount of talent in the community. With restrictions in place and venues closed for much of the year, these local musicians have had no means of sharing their work or earning an income

from their music.

West Cork Music's Clodagh Whelan says, "I think everyone this year has felt the void, not being able to connect with people, sit around and share songs and stories. Resound attempts in some small way to hold that space, to reassure that this is a temporary situation - that we're still here, behind the mask, beyond the closed door and that we will be back together soon. It is more important than ever

that we should acknowledge the importance of music in our day-to-day lives, promote those who are continuing to persevere in these trying time. The creation and sharing of music is so very much at the core of our culture and society and is particularly so here in Bantry."

It is hoped that Resound will help to promote and share work of musicians living and working in West Cork on a much broader scale as well as the incredibly beautiful and vibrant place where we live. By doing this, West Cork Music hopes to build an interest both in the musicians' work and in the local community.

Musicians who participated in Resound include Bean Dolan, Irene Dunne, Dolce Ross Keogh, Alan Brooks, Aoife Doolan, Brendan Connolly, Alan Mahn, Stuart Wilde, Beth Cummins, Bear Bojak (Chris McDonald, Gemma Greany, Gráinne McCarthy and Joe Bracken), Frank Wieler, Polly Barrett and Eoghan O'Keefe.



Bean Dolan and Irene Dunne All pics: Joe Chapman Photography

people Arts & Entertainment

Painting from the heart

This pandemic has changed perspectives for people from all walks of life. For award-winning portrait artist Áine Divine it's been a catalyst for doing whatever makes her heart sing.

No longer tied to the studio from 9-5, she has been working more and more in mixed media, painting what's to hand around her, and sharing her teaching videos for free on YouTube.

"As Julia Cameron said, 'Serious art is born from serious play'," shares Áine. "This is a significant thing and not just in the life of an artist, in the life of anybody, through any medium."

"Mixed media is something I've turned to in all the years I've been painting and drawing in order to keep myself excited about my work and inspired."

A finalist in the 2014 Sky Arts Portrait Arts of the Year, Áine will be familiar to many; if not for her television appearances – in 2005 she painted Mo Mowlam for BBC 1s 'Star Portraits' – then for her West Cork roots.

Áine has lived in Scotland for the past 24 years but she grew up on a farm in Kilbrittain.

After graduating from Cork's Crawford College of Art and Design in 1991, encouraged by her mother, a schoolteacher, she gained a Higher Diploma in art teaching. On moving to Scotland she continued teaching in second-level education for ten years before deciding that teaching for exams was not her vocation.

Gaining recognition for her painting of Mo Mowlam in 2005, which now hangs in The National Gallery of Ireland, Áine's career in portraiture took off. "That was the first real

public thing I did, and I gained credibility, as well as confidence," she says.

In 2007, she painted Olympic triple jumper, Jonathan Edwards; and her commissioned portraits include footballers for the Hibernian Historical Society and winners of the British Open Golf Championship.

One of her self-portraits was selected for exhibition in the Royal Watercolour Society's annual contemporary art show at the Banksie Gallery in London in 2014 and won the Heatherleys Studio Award. She won the Winsor and Newton awards for her portrait of 'Matthew' in the same show in 2013, and for 'Carolina in Gold' in 2015. She has also painted Vincent Browne and more recently Ryan Tubridy for the Watercolour Society of Ireland's annual exhibition.

Today Áine is enjoying a change of pace; the slowing down that has come with lockdown. "There is more of an honouring of my own flow," she explains. "I found it tough early on in the pandemic because I value interaction with people and that creative community in person is irreplaceable. But I found that there is a different connection possible through online."

It is this online connection that pulled Áine out of the feeling of apathy or dullness that has affected most of us at some point over the past 10 months of living a restricted existence. "That, along with cold water swimming," she says.

As a Sky Arts Portrait of the Year finalist, she was invited to paint the TV presenter Clare Balding over lockdown. "I found it quite a taxing experience, managing cameras and tripods and downloading stuff, and that was really what prompted me to make the unconscious decision to concentrate on doing what I like, rather than trying to please

other people."

As a result, she has found her work now feels a lot freer; she is using more colour, her strokes are bigger and swifter; and the resulting semi-abstract paintings and mixed media artworks of flowers and still life's – subjects she would only have occasionally dabbled in before – are tending to extend beyond the page.

"It's a bit like open water swimming," she explains "that feeling of wild freedom you get; it's a response to our loss of control over other things."

She describes her approach to portraiture, as being an intuitive response. "Rather than excavating an eye in huge detail, it's about trying to find the eye by being attentive. The face tends to emerge," she explains.

From her own portfolio, Áine says her favourite piece is her painting of Neil Hannon, which she completed in four hours in front of the camera in the final of Portrait Artist of the Year. "I felt present in every second of that process, completely at home, and not a bit concerned about the outcome."

Áine is a proud mother of three beautiful daughters; the two youngest who live at home, Erin and Lily, regularly sit for her paintings. She videos these sessions for use in her portraiture classes to break down the process of painting in watercolour for her students.

Everywhere she goes she aims to capture a creative process (on video) for use in her classes. "Last year when I came home, my parents were the subjects," she says.

"Commissions are harder," shares Áine. "When you know you have a particular outcome to achieve and it needs to be pleasing to the person, it changes the process a little bit."

She usually starts a portrait from life, before going on to work from photographs. "Ideally



to work from life is the way to keep the life in the painting," she explains.

"The person's story doesn't matter so much, as long as you have that connection that comes with sitting or standing with someone for any length of time."

"The best models are those who sit in an alert state without it being effortful. You find out

more about people in that intimate space than any words could tell you."

Guided and coached by mentors in her Remarkable Women group, Áine is tuning into what she really wants to achieve in the future. "Bigger, brighter paintings in a bright open gallery space somewhere like New York. That's what I see,"

she says. "Not for any financial gain but to be seen by a wider audience."

In the meantime she will continue to do best what she loves and see where it leads her...

www.ainedivinepaintings.co.uk

Levis' Corner House Ballydehob has secrets to share

Since 2015, Secret Song in Levis' Corner House has been filled with excited punters and artists, and no one gets to know in advance who's playing.

Secret Song is an annual One Day Live Music and Spoken Word Festival that takes place in Levis' Corner House, Ballydehob.

Secret Song traditionally has taken place every October, with up to 20 acts performing throughout Levis' Corner House. Every room in the building and nooks of outdoor areas are programmed with music throughout the day. Due to the pandemic, Secret Song did not take place

in 2020. Now, with help from The Department of Culture and Culture Ireland, they will be able to mount a very special belated edition over Valentine's weekend.

Secret Song is a celebration of all artists and all the gigs that take place in Levis' throughout the year. Although this year will have a different approach whilst doors to the public have to remain closed, a special line-up of artists will make the journey to Ballydehob to perform in Levis' for an online edition.

Previous artists for Secret Songs have included: Jen Grant, Rozi Plain, Stephen James Smith, Niamh Regan, Ports,



Anna Mieke, Daoirí Farrell, John Blek, Susan O'Neill, Ger Wolfe, Ye Vagabonds, Mick Flannery, Joan Shelley, Bridget Kearney, Rose Cousins and Moxie to name but a few.

Secret Song Festival is exactly as it is titled – a Secret. On the day, everyone moves from room to room, to the back garden, from the Parlour, to the 'Outback' without knowing who is playing. They have even had 'a gig' in a cupboard. The performers themselves do not know who else is playing until the day. Every year audiences take a leap of faith and purchase tickets for the day, without knowing the names of the performers. Every

year it sells out. This year, they are asking for a bigger leap of faith in also supporting their first ticketed online event.

Levis' welcome established artists, and artists who are 'unknown' or unsigned. All amazing talented original performers. This year's line-up is made up of household names, and yet to be discovered gems. Secret Song will be presented over two evenings from 8pm Saturday, February 13 and Sunday, February 14. Each night will have five different artists playing.

"The guessing is glorious, and this year we are going to miss customers in the bar interrogating us in the run up... trying

(and failing) to find out who is playing. One year the rumour was strong in the village that Bruce Springsteen was playing, another year Lisa Hannigan came as a punter, and had a few people confused, assuming she was in the line-up. In short no-one knows what's going to happen, and it's wonderful" Joe O'Leary, Levis Corner House Owner and Secret Song Co-Curator.

Tickets are €15 per night, or €25 for a weekend ticket. There are also some special Secret Song bundles, all can be found here: www.leviscornerhouse.bandcamp.com

people Arts & Entertainment

West Cork's venues part of Live Venue collective

Over 2000 people were hired, 405 live shows hosted, and 416,000 audience members engaged, thanks to the pilot live performance support scheme, launched in December 2020, by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media and Minister Catherine Martin. The scheme provided an incredibly progressive and timely financial lifeline to so many in the commercial events sector.

A new report by the Live Venue Collective, a group of venues and producers, reveals how the scheme funds benefitted not just musicians, but also technicians and crews across the country.

Three West Cork venues took part in the initiative: DeBarras, Clonakilty, Levis' Corner House in Ballydehob and Connolly's of Leap.

Under the scheme, €5 million was allocated to assist commercial promoters and producers to employ artists, musicians, performers, technicians and other support staff in live performances, which may subsequently have to be curtailed, cancelled, or postponed due to COVID-19.

As part of the application



Susan O'Neill

for this funding, 23 of the 28 members of Live Venue Collective applied as a group to the live performance support pilot scheme. The application was successful, and the 23 Live Venue Collective members received €1.1 million in total. Overall, 59 organisations benefitted from the scheme.

Comprising of small to medium-sized independent live music venues, the Live Venue Collective was established in the summer of 2020, in the wake of the devastation caused by Covid-19 to music venues all over the world.

With the commercial events sector either shuttered or under severe restrictions since March, Ireland's culturally vital, but financially fragile, music ecosystem was, and still is, under serious threat.

Thanks to the support from Minister Catherine Martin and her department, each of the successful applicants were able to once again, for the moment at least, promote and produce shows hiring artists, performers, technicians and other support staff in their respective communities and present a series of unique and culturally significant performances, preserving our

vital collective experiences of culture, learning and expertise. It is crucial these supports continue for as long as restrictions on these businesses remain.

Throughout the 23 venues, each committing to 16 performances, there was a huge variety in shows from outdoor shows for 15 people, to streamed events with no live audience. Each show was lovingly created in collaboration and conjunction with each venue's regular music and production community. The collective of 23 venues worked unilaterally, diligently, and relentlessly to curate, produce and present a total of 405 shows of the highest cultural and technical quality, involving 2110 employees, 655 artists, 965 live audience members, and resulting in 24,000 minutes of digital content.

The feats recorded in the report are a testament to the dedication, hard-work and integrity of the collective.

The collective now anxiously await the next expended phase in the supports for the live sector, as committed to by Minister Martin. The positive impact and progressive nature of the pilot live performance support scheme has been a glimmer of

hope in a time of darkness and despair for so many in the live music sector. The funding has financially lifted venues, artists, technicians, crews and employees from the brink and positively impacted the mental health of all who engaged with the scheme. Simultaneously, it helped create truly world class musical moments that will forever document this unprecedented time in Irish history.

Among the 655 artists who participated in performances under the scheme last year were musicians David Kitt, Mary Coughlan, Mick Flannery, Lisa Hannigan, and Liam Ó Maonlaí from Hothouse Flowers, and bands including Scullion, Ham Sandwich and Saint Sister as well as comedians Karl Spain and Neil Delamere.

"I believe now that with the strong backing of Minister Martin and The Department through the Live Performance Support Scheme, we've risen up out of those cracks to show the true value of music, culture and community," Levis Corner House, Ballydehob.

www.livevenuecollective.ie
Facebook and Instagram:
@LiveVenueIre

Cork County Council launch Spring series of online writing workshops

Cork County Council's Library & Arts Service is delivering a new series of free online writing workshops for Spring 2021, designed to support creative writing throughout the county. Six online courses begin in mid-February, catering to a variety of ages and styles including adults, teens, songwriters, crime-writers, fiction and non-fiction. These workshops will continue the success of online workshops and collectives hosted by the Council throughout 2020, to foster creativity in the community for Cork County residents.

'Three Cords and the Truth' is the fantastic new song-writing workshop from songwriter, artist, winner of the 'International Song-Writing Competition' and 'Other Voices' alumnus Jack O'Rourke. Jack describes the craft of song-writing as "like getting into a cage with a lion – it's exciting and scary equally. You have to face who you are." With this course, Jack aims to offer a safe space for eight artists to share songs and ideas.

Billy O'Callaghan will present 'The Art and Craft of the Short Story'. Billy is the author of three short story collections: "In Exile", "In Too Deep" and "The

Things We Lose and The Things We Leave Behind" as well as the bestselling novel 'The Dead House'. Billy's latest short story collection, 'The Boatman and Other Stories' was released in January 2020. Billy is the winner of a Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Award for the short story, and a two-time recipient of the Arts Council of Ireland's bursary award for literature. Participants will join Billy for six online group sessions that explore the craft of writing short story fiction.

Following the success of multiple collectives and workshops delivered with support from Cork County Council in 2020, the Council's Writer-in-Residence Poet Matthew Geden returns with 'One World: Our Environment'. Participants will have the opportunity to work with Matthew in ten online group sessions that explore the world we live in through poetry, looking at classic and contemporary poems that examine aspects of our surroundings including nature poetry, the urban landscape, the weather, climate change and travel. Each workshop will also include class exercises and group critiques of each other's work.

Also on offer is 'Travel Writing Workshop 2021'. With over a decade of experience writing for major Irish newspapers and magazines, as well as broadcasting, Conor Power will help participants grasp the basics of how to approach a travel article, some of the secrets of the craft and trade, where travel writing stands today, how to pitch your ideas and how to improve your work. 'Travel Within 5km of your Home' will be the theme of the opening sessions and will include collaborative work on travel within 5km of where you live, helping writers to express themselves even within the current constraints.

Crime writer, Alex Barclay will deliver 'CSI: Cork', a crime writing workshop for writers of all levels, aimed at inspiring mystery and intrigue. The former journalist will help participants bring out the best of their creativity and share the many tricks he has picked up over the course of her career.

Cork County Council is delighted to present Colin O'Mahoney's Prose in the Pandemic aimed at those aged between 14 and 17. This writing course is a broad introduction to writing fiction, covering everything from

inspiration and getting started to re-writing and editing your finished stories. Although the workshop will focus on fiction, there will be an emphasis on writing what you know and self-expression, allowing each participant to find their own voice and learn to write the kind of stories that most appeals to them. Writing stories can be a powerful channel for imagination, creativity, and emotion, making this workshop a timely and important offering for young people.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley welcomed the new online workshops saying, "The changes to life as we know over the past year, and the opportunity it has provided for reflection and sometimes solace, will leave its mark on us all. In the months and years ahead, creativity and storytelling will play a vital role in shaping our understanding of the challenges our community has faced. By providing these workshops, Cork County Council is showing its commitment and support to everyone in the community who wishes to develop their creativity and contribute to our rich cultural heritage. I invite all those who



are interested to apply for these wonderful opportunities."

All workshops are free, but places are limited. Applications are open to people aged 14 to 17 or over 18 depending on the course and limited to those residing in the Cork County

administrative area. Participants will be selected by the facilitator and their decision is final. Closing date for applications is Sunday, February 7.

For further information, visit www.corkcoco.ie

UCC Film graduate in contention for Oscar nomination

A short film by a Kerry writer, director, and University College Cork graduate is in contention for an Oscar nomination, after securing a place on the Academy Awards' 2021 longlist.

Shaun O'Connor's 'A White Horse' tells the story of a scared and confused young girl in 1970s Ireland who enters a phone booth and rings home. Her parents are waiting for the call, and the conversation slowly reveals a hidden truth.

'A White Horse' stars Cora Fenton (The Young Offenders) and newcomer Amber Deasy, and was made with the Screen Directors Guild of Ireland ARRI Take Award. Filmed in Cork city and county, the story explores how mental hospitals were once used as catch-alls for people considered 'troublesome' or 'abnormal'.

Among the accolades garnered to date, 'A White Horse' won the award for Best Irish Short at the Foyle Film Festival in November 2019 - recognition that has led to a coveted place on the longlist for the 2021 Oscars.

people A flavour of West Cork

A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK
RECIPE

Karen Austin

It's a sure sign of going stir crazy when you get super excited about potato cakes. This past month has left me feeling almost rudderless; apart from our Monday shop painting stints there's very little structure to our days except for meal-times

It's a tricky time of the year when the days are long and grey. The bright days are fine – I hop up and get going; but on the wet ones I have to keep reminding myself that there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.

Try telling that to the chickens though who are miserably huddled in their muddy run, fed up with wading in muck, having eaten anything that had a semblance of green already. They are missing their daily buckets of yummy food scraps that usually come back from the shop. The time is coming when they are going to revolt and hop the fence of the chicken run, as it looks so delightfully verdant on the other side.

Our new glasshouse is up and ready to go, the seeds are ordered and in a couple more weeks, it'll be time to start sowing again. I'm very excited but super cautious about beginning in the garden too early though, as very cold spells can negate any head start.

One thing I have been enjoying is playing in the kitchen. Working my way through all the odd food in our pantry and trying out new recipes. Converting left overs is a great way

Tarting up mashed spuds



to be creative. We had a mound of left over mashed potatoes last week and I made these crispy potato cakes.

I must say we were impressed. The perfect way to tart up mashed spuds

The ingredient list is short – left over mash, onion, garlic, some kind of melty cheese and breadcrumbs.

I used panko breadcrumbs (which had been sitting patiently in our pantry). Panko are Japanese style breadcrumbs made from crust-less white bread. These breadcrumbs are flakier and drier than normal breadcrumbs and, as a result, absorb less oil; think of trying to mop up a spill with a dry cloth – it's not very absorbent. Because they are so dry they cook up super crispy and they have an incredible long shelf life – I guess as there's no moisture there's nothing to spoil but for sure they will keep happily in a sealed bag in a dry place so they are pretty handy. We sell them in our shop, which is currently closed until the end of February, but the little Asian shop in Spiller's Lane also have a good supply.

Any cheese that can be grated and melts will work in this recipe. I used smoked scamorza, which is a mild semi-hard mozzarella-type cheese but cheddar, emmental, gruyere or gouda will all bring their own creamy addition

Crispy Potato Cakes
Serves 3-4 people

Ingredients:

- 450g mashed potato
- 1 onion – peeled and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic- peeled and finely chopped
- 150g smoked scamorza or other melty cheese - grated
- 150g panko bread crumbs
- 50g flour
- 1-2 eggs
- Oil for frying

Method:

Heat a small frying pan and add 2tbs olive oil and the chopped onions. Cook on a medium heat without browning for five min-

utes. Season with a little salt, then stir in the chopped garlic and cook for one-two minutes longer.

Tip the cooked onions mix onto the mashed potato, then mix together and add in the grated cheese. Mix well with your hands, giving it all a good squish together. Form the potato mix into small balls then flatten slightly. I didn't add any salt, as the mash was already seasoned but taste your mix to check

Line up three bowls: One with flour, one with beaten egg, and one with the panko breadcrumbs. Taking the potato balls one at a time, turn them first in the flour, then in the egg and finally in the breadcrumbs. Turn until the breadcrumbs cover the potato. Do this to each potato cake. At this stage you could pause and put the potato cakes in the fridge for later but it's perfectly fine to cook them immediately

Put 2cms vegetable/cooking oil in a frying pan. The pan should not be too shallow – the oil should not come more than one third up the sides. Heat the oil then slip four or five potato cakes in at a time. Keep the heat on medium. If the potato cakes are browning very quickly reduce the heat. After a couple of minutes flip the potato cakes over and cook the other side. You'll need to cook these in a couple of batches so have a warm plate ready to receive them.

Perfect with some salad and salsa or just plain mayo for dunking.

We hope to see you one all one day soon.

Happy February!

Karen

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Michelin Star shines on West Cork

West Cork celebrated in January (as much as you can celebrate in lockdown) as Dede at the Customs House in Baltimore, was awarded a Michelin Star in the 2021 Michelin Guide Great Britain and Ireland just published.

The popular West Cork establishment is the only newcomer to join what is now an 18-strong list of Michelin Star restaurants in the Republic of Ireland.

No stranger to the Michelin Star, head chef Ahmet Dede was awarded One Michelin Star in the 2019 edition of the Guide when at the Mews restaurant, Baltimore, an accolade he retained in 2020.

Other Cork restaurants to retain their star status in the 2021 Michelin Guide Great Britain and Ireland are Bastion in Kinsale and Chestnut in nearby Ballydehob and Cork City centre Japanese restaurant Ichigo Ichie.



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people Health & Lifestyle



NATURE TALKS

April Dannan

April Dannan 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.

I actually begin my day 'planning the day' the night before. Late in the evening before I go to bed, I put the kettle on and get my herbal teapot

Put the kettle on

filled so it can steep overnight and be ready for me the next morning.

You don't have to do this – however if you are like me, the mornings can often be too busy and my own needs get lost in the melee of tasks to be done with children, animals and household stuff before I get down to work on anything that pertains to me.

When my little teapot is filled to the brim with cooled, well-steeped herbal tea, it is ready for me to add it to nearly anything! And I don't have to think about it as it is one less thing on my to-do list.

Usually most every morning the first thing I do is pour a cup of this cool room temperature herbal tea and top it up with apple cider vinegar, a squeeze of lemon and sometimes a spoon of one of my smoothie powders. This week I am using Beetroot

and Ginger for it's warming properties, as well as the blood cleansing beetroot. It really is such an underrated vegetable and there are so many ways to get this into us.

But we can do a beetroot session another time!

I drink about a cup of this herbal concoction to start off my day, however, as a regular sized teapot holds about three to four cups of herbal tea, I have lots left over for the rest of the day. What I find easy enough if I am going out on delivery or to the market or need a drink to take with me on the go, is to pour all of the herbal tea into a flask, top it up with apple cider vinegar, lemon juice and so on, and sip it as my very refreshing drink.

You can also drink it cup by cup or re-heat it if you prefer hot tea. It really does taste quite good. And if you try it, you will find that your body craves

it – something that hydrates you down to your cellular structure.

I can hear the wheels turning in your head. What kind of tea should I make?

If you want to feel good with energy (peppermint/chamomile/ginger); lose weight (dandelion/nettle/cleavers); keep warm (ginger/ginseng/rooibos/cinnamon); detox and cleanse (rose/dandelion/red clover/burdock); de-stress (ginseng/chamomile/milk thistle/fenugreek).

This is by no means a full list – use what you have on hand or can pull out of the hedgerows. Use anything you currently have in the press; we all have packets of herbal tea hanging around, find something that appeals to you (it might have fruit, spices and other herbs added, it's all good!) and boil the kettle – your body, mind and spirit will thank you.



Your gut microbiome has a direct influence on your health



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

There is extensive research confirming that the health of your gut microbiome has a direct influence on your mental, emotional and physical health. Good levels of

diverse probiotics and prebiotics are needed to sustain a healthy microbiome in the gastrointestinal tract and throughout the whole body.

Your bowels contain as many as 100 trillion bacteria with up to 1000 species playing a crucial role in gut health. Various strains of probiotic are available as tablets, capsules and liquid drinks, however the strains of probiotic are limited within manufactured products. Diverse probiotics are necessary for maintaining a healthy microbiome. The most varied form of probiotics is found in vegetables. Each vegetable hosts different varieties of probiotic so consuming a wide variety of raw vegetables and herbs provides the diversity needed.



The above drink has: carrot, purple sprouting broccoli, broccoli, parsnip, brussel sprouts, two different cabbages, celery, cucumber, and cooking apple

It's easy and cost effective to make a bio diverse probiotic vegetable drink at home. You need a wide variety of vegetables; organic is best, or homegrown. If that is not possible, go to your local farmer's market. Choose as wide a

variety as possible – spinach, chard, cabbage, turnip, carrots, cauliflower, beans, parsnips, broccoli, cucumber, lettuce, celery, beetroot and their leaves, fresh herbs, watercress and other sprouts are all suitable, however DO NOT USE RAW POTATO. If you find the drink is too bitter, add a slice of green cooking apple. You could also use a small amount of fruit that is in season.

Some people have problems with vegetables from the nightshade family, which include tomatoes, peppers, aubergine and potato; if you know that you have a problem with these do not use them in your drink, if you are unsure it is probably best to avoid them.

It is most beneficial to make this drink fresh and consume it within 30 minutes of blending. If you are busy you can chop the ingredients in advance, mix them all together, and freeze them. You can then take enough out each day and blend as needed.

Biodiverse Probiotic Vegetable Drink

- Select a wide variety of vegetables – the more diverse the better.
- Slice a small amount from each vegetable and then chop these into smaller pieces.
- Take a slice of cooking apple and dice into small pieces.
- Add a few leaves of fresh herbs (optional).
- Place all these ingredients into a blender with about half the volume of water.
- Whizz to puree consistency – you can add more or less water if you prefer
- Drink 6-8fl oz per person daily before a meal.

In addition to adding this Bio diverse Probiotic Vegetable Drink to your diet you should consider adding additional sources of fibre. Fibre (also known as prebiotics) is the food that intestinal bacteria need to be healthy. Soluble fibre found in vegetables, chia seeds, flax/linseeds, oats and psyllium

husks are all good forms of prebiotic. Adding pre-soaked chia seeds or psyllium husk to the Biodiverse Probiotic Vegetable Drink is a great way to consume additional fibre at the same time.

Note: Chia seeds and Psyllium husk absorb approximately 10 times their own volume of water ie hydrate approx one tablespoon per glass of water and stir whilst it soaks to stop it clumping together.

If you decide to add this drink to your daily routine, I would love to hear what benefits you experience, so do send me an email to amanda@marketstclinic.com and let me know how you get on.

Amanda Roe is an Acupuncturist, Clinical hypnotherapist and Life and Health Coach. For more information or to book a session call or text 087 633 1898.

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HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

We are excited to be hosting another Live Webinar on February 25 on the fascinating subject of Fasting Mimicking, with Patrick Holford.

Fasting Mimicking is a very interesting idea; basically it's how to achieve the benefits of fasting without actually starving yourself! I have tried it myself and it really does work. My sister Rachel and I both completed a fasting mimicking week last year. I loved it – I felt really energised and alive by the end of it and gave up (and stayed off) caffeine, which has been really positive for me. The diet we did was similar to Patrick's, but his recipes are far tastier! I'm really looking forward to my next session, now that I've seen his recipes.

Fasting Mimicking (actually diets in general) are not necessarily for everyone – the benefits can be immense, but it's not necessarily suitable for every body type. Hence we wanted to host this Webinar with Patrick to explore the benefits and allow you to ask him questions directly, to establish if it's the right thing for you.

This Webinar will also interest you if you'd like to know more about ketosis and the benefits of burning ketones and fat rather than carbs.

Fasting Mimicking with Patrick Holford

Patrick's approach to Fasting Mimicking is described in his book *The 5 Day Diet*, and that's what he is going to be focusing on for this Webinar.

Below is his description of how the diet worked for people who attended his Retreat Centre in Wales and followed the diet for five days.

How to Burn Fat Fast

"You might think this is a bold claim but a trial of a five day 'fasting mimicking diet' with 18 people in Autumn 2020 showed that energy scores almost doubled, brain fog lifted, pains and aches reduced by 50 per cent. Between 18 people, they lost 37.5kg (6 stone 5lbs). This was largely fat loss and maintained in the weeks after the diet.

That equates to an average of 5lbs per person – but bear in mind some were not doing it to lose weight, and the more you have to lose, the faster it comes off. The greatest loser was Niteen, a diabetic, who lost almost 10lbs. The next best was Lucy, age 24, who lost nine pounds.

These people were at my 5 Day Diet Retreat in the Black Mountains of Wales so had my support and encouragement. I did it as well and lost 8lbs. What is the Five Day Diet and why are the results so spectacular? The Five Day Diet is what's called a 'fasting mimicking diet', abbreviated to FMD. The reason it's called 'fasting mimicking' is that, in a total five day fast you can trigger a cellular repair process called 'autophagy' that makes new energy factories called mitochondria in your cells, stimulates the production of stem cells, reverses some autoimmune diseases, gobbles up cancer cells, viruses and harmful bacteria. In

short, it anti-ages you and resets your metabolism to fat-burning mode. Your metabolism switches from primarily running off glucose to running off ketones, made in the liver from your body fat. You become a fat burner, not a fat storer.

While the 5:2 diet and 18:6 (that's 18 hour carb fast having dinner at, for example 6pm, and nothing till lunch at noon) are good they won't trigger autophagy. It takes, on average: 12 hours to register ketones in the blood (ketosis); 18 hours to become ketogenic and start fat-burning; 24 hours (day2) to kickstart autophagy, recycling old proteins; 54 hours (day3) for insulin levels to hit their lowest, increasing sensitivity thus reversing insulin resistance and resetting your blood sugar control and cravings; 72 hours (day 4-5) - IGF-1 drops, generating new immune cells and stem cells

During the 5 Day Diet Retreats, which are seven days long, because you transition into the 'maintenance' low GL diet and we show you how, we measure your glucose, which falls over the five days. You want to get your glucose under 5 mmol/l, possibly around 4mmol/l. We have a number of diabetics and pre-diabetics so our 'average' blood sugar is higher since many have blood sugars above 8 until the 5 Day Diet magic kicks in.

Ketone levels continually rise. You want to get blood levels above 2 and ideally in the 3-4 range for maximum fat burning. On breath tests you can pretty much multiply by 15. For example, a blood level of 3 is roughly equal to a breath level of 45 on the KetoScanMini breathalyser. Breath ketone levels are a bit

more variable and depend a bit on how you exhale. Anything above 20 really means you've gone ketogenic, burning fat and turning it into ketones as your main fuel as opposed to running on glucose and storing excess as fat.

The diet has to be low calorie (800kcal), low carb and relatively high fat, with a tablespoon of pure C8 oil, which is the sub-fraction of coconut oil that makes ketones fastest. Also, it has to be meat and dairy-free since these foods switch off autophagy. Certain foods such as kale, broccoli, olives, cabbage, blueberries switch on this self-healing process. So too do certain nutrients – vitamin C, niacin, omega-3 DHA and hydroxycitric acid (HCA) found in Garcinia Cambogia, a type of tamarind.

By switching your metabolism from burning glucose to ketones you not only burn off fat fast but also trigger autophagy, which means you make more stem cells, rebuild healthy mitochondria, your energy factories. You experience this as a boost in energy usually on day

4 and 5 but even more so in the following week after the 5 Day Diet when you transition back to a slow carb or low GL diet.

I'll be explaining how to use this 5 day process to not only burn fat fast but reset your metabolism and rejuvenate your cells and give your energy a boost in my webinar for Organico on the 25th of February at 7pm."

To find out more read Patrick's book *The 5 Day Diet* and come to the webinar – and bring any questions you have and Patrick will answer them.

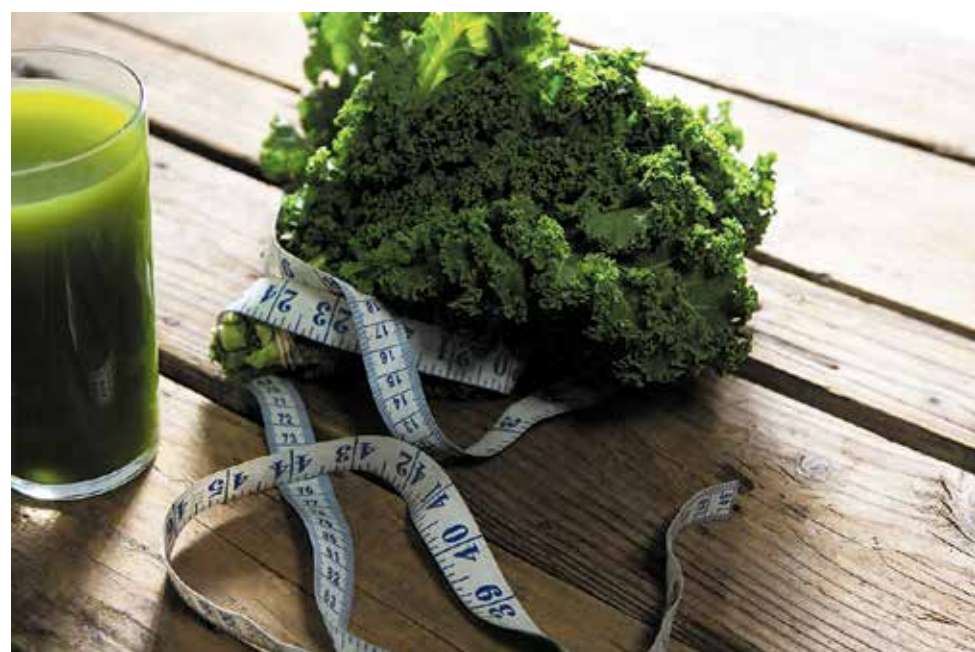
The Webinar costs €10. For more details, sign up to our Newsletter at www.organico.ie/ newsletter. We also have copies of the 5 Day Diet for a reduced cost of €10.

THE 5 DAY DIET WEBINAR with PATRICK HOLFORD

Learn about the benefits of Fasting Mimicking and how to reduce your body weight easily, without compromising your health.

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people Health & Lifestyle

A little light relief...just what the doctor ordered



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.

Covid fatigue is hitting hard. We are doing ok and will come out of this. We may in fact appreciate what we had and learn lessons. I want to lighten the mood a little and hopefully raise a smile or two. We all could do with a laugh!

I have recently had to renew a training certificate. The one to prove I am a good guy to have around if you have just collapsed clutching your chest. It is the BLS basic life support and ACLS advanced cardiac life support. All hospital doctors have to do this every two years.

Basically a plastic man or woman, the mannikin is the patient and is wired up to an ECG machine and the examiner comes up with increasingly complex scenarios, while the poor student has to remain calm and inspire confidence, and bring the mannikin back to life. It starts up nice and friendly; an inhaled foreign body a Heimlich manoeuvre, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and cardiac compressions to Barry Gibb singing

'staying alive' in a high falsetto to a collapse and a shock is needed from the AED. You have seen all this on Casualty. All really important and life saving.

Things then turn awkward... the plastic man is on Inchydoney Strand, he is in the water, he has had a probable heart attack, and been hit by a passing speed boat, and may have a neck injury. He is hypothermic, has a pacemaker and you and the paramedics arrive just as sheet lightning lights up the scene. He wears a bracelet saying he is allergic to the common cardiac drugs that you happen to have. Calling the Undertaker is not an option.

After two full days training, I passed; all good fun, and it put me in mind of the books I had read as a pimply teenager considering medicine. 'Doctor at Large etc' by Richard Gordon. It sounded great fun and actually after nigh on 40 years is. No regrets at all.

We use mannikins in the hospital for all sorts of training. Better to make a mistake with a plastic dummy than the real thing. When I was learning how to pass a colonoscope, the mannikin came with all sorts of grunts and groans if I happened to be a bit too rough. Training to use a laparoscope involves using the equipment to build a tower of bricks to improve hand eye co-ordination.

The level of sophistication and simulation is amazing. Yes, rather like a flight simulator, which I would love to try one day.

Anyway, in Dr Gordon's day you had to do an Obstetric exam and deliver a baby by forceps. The Mark 1 plastic woman was there on a delivery table and the baby was slow to appear. Time for forceps and, under the eagle eye of a bored examiner, the poor student assesses, administers an anaesthetic, catheterises Mrs Tupperware and applies the blades of the forceps to the baby's head and gently applies traction. All good so far. The baby does not budge! More pressure and the poor student sweats and puts his feet against the legs of the couch and leans back. The plastic baby is suddenly released flies over his head and Mrs Tupperware falls off the couch and the poor student ends up on the floor.

The examiner now sighs, hands the forceps blades to the student and says, "Now hit the father with these and you have killed the whole bloody family!" FAIL! The student eventually became an expert Obstetrician.

Not a single mention of Covid!



Research on video calls and hearing loss

During the pandemic, there has been a huge increase in the use of video calls as a way to stay connected with others and improve wellbeing.

Staying connected is especially important for people aged 70 and above who have been advised to self-isolate for long periods of time. There are serious concerns about the negative impact of the pandemic and lockdown on mental health and, in particular, on older people's

mental health. Hearing loss adds to the risk of being feeling isolated and lonely due to the impact of hearing difficulties on social interactions, and so, finding ways to communicate remotely with others is vitally important. Although there has been a marked increase in video calling during lockdown, for those with hearing loss, technology may not be ideal. Lack of confidence in using technology, or lags between audio and video and sound distortion can make

Living with epilepsy

International Epilepsy Day is taking place on February 8 this year. This is a global day of epilepsy awareness that provides the opportunity for people with epilepsy to share their lived experiences of the condition. They do this in order to raise awareness within their communities in an effort to reduce the stigma that can still often be unfortunately associated with the condition. Victoria Brook, who lives in Bandon, speaks to **Sheila Mullins** about the impact epilepsy has on her life.

Originally from Yorkshire, Victoria was 35-years-old and living in Spain when she had her first seizures (after two seizures you are officially diagnosed with epilepsy). After five years of EEGs, Pet scans and MRIs, she finally had a video EEG that is not routinely offered but which pinpointed the part of her brain affected during a seizure and allowed doctors to better treat her condition. Many more seizures followed but, now 15 years, and 14 different medications, later Victoria feels her epilepsy is under control.

"I haven't had a grand mal seizure in 18 months or so," she says. "Unfortunately I do still suffer from episodes of 'speech arrest' where mid-sentence my words become mumbles. I can hear it happening (and see the expression on people's faces) but I can't stop it."

Her epilepsy also means that Victoria struggles with navigation and as a result cannot drive. "I am allowed by law to drive but I even get lost around Bandon!" she exclaims.

Death from a seizure is called SUDEP (sudden unexplained death in epilepsy). Victoria's brother also had the condition and tragically passed away during a seizure, so she says there isn't a night that she doesn't worry about having a nocturnal seizure that would cause her to suffocate; she sleeps in the recovery position.

The support provided by

her excellent medical team in Cork and by Epilepsy Ireland has proven vital in helping Victoria to cope with the stress of her illness. "In Spain the neurologist was very abrupt and I was just sent home with drugs," she explains. "Here in Ireland, getting diagnosed isn't as easy but the after support is fantastic. I can ring up Epilepsy Ireland at any time, for any reason, be it for practical or emotional support, and they are there for me."

Victoria still feels that research, care services and education around epilepsy is hugely underfunded: "Diseases like breast cancer have huge public awareness campaigns but there isn't the same for epilepsy. Nearly 40,000 people in Ireland have the condition and it can strike at any age but there is still a lot of misunderstandings and stigma around it."

Victoria is happy to tell people about her condition and has a caresheet pinned up in the staffroom so that her co-workers know what to do if she ever has another grand mal seizure.

She offers this advice for readers if somebody has a seizure in front of them: "Timing the seizure is the most important thing so that medical staff know how long it lasted. Support the person's head and make sure they are given plenty of space – preserve their dignity by ensuring that onlookers don't crowd around them. It is an old myth that you should stick a spoon in their



Victoria Brook with her parrotlet Chilli, an emotional support bird.

mouth! A seizing person is more likely to smash their teeth on it or bite you by accident! If you don't know the person and their medical history, or if the seizure lasts much longer than normal, then you should call an ambulance. The person will be very disorientated when they come around so give them plenty of time and reassurance until they have recovered."

As Victoria concludes her phone interview, a squawk is heard in the background. "That's my parrotlet Chilli!", she says laughing. "He's actually registered as my emotional support animal and when I first moved to Bandon and didn't know anybody – and was getting lost all the time – he was such a comfort. He helps me to chill out and gather myself when I'm stressed."

International Epilepsy Day is on February 8 and there is also an Irish Epilepsy Day on March 26. Epilepsy Ireland is committed to working for, and to meeting the needs of, everyone with epilepsy in Ireland and their families and carers. See www.epilepsy.ie for more information and local contacts.

between). You can complete the survey online or, if you prefer, ask for a paper copy in the post. It should take roughly half an hour. There will also be a small number of in-depth interviews to find out more detail about people's experiences; you can volunteer for an interview via the survey.

If you're interested, and over 70 with some level of hearing loss, please go to www.ucl.ac.uk.



Acupuncture: an essential service that continues through lockdown

Through the healing and balancing effect of acupuncture on body, mind and emotions one may begin to live, rather than merely survive.

Currently, the use of acupuncture is growing at an exponential rate globally. The World Health Organisation (WHO) supports its use in treatment alongside and for conditions such as cancer, arthritis, fertility, pain, migraine and many more. In fact, it is becoming a common topic of discussion amongst doctors and GPs, particularly in a peer to peer review setting, this includes doctor referrals.

Experienced acupuncturist Stephen Landon is delighted to now be practicing from Fionnuisce Holistic Health Centre in Bandon, where he joined the other practitioners at the clinic in December 2020.

As well as traditional acupuncture, Stephen also offers

Electro Acupuncture. "This is a fantastic treatment for knee osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, cartilage and ligament problems," he explains.

"Electro acupuncture is a very effective natural healing modality that can be used for many acute or chronic musculoskeletal problems."

He is also a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine; TCM can be a productive component of an integrative health approach, which many people find to be beneficial to their mental and physical well-being.

"I provide an effective and customised treatment strategy for each patient. Whatever your health and wellness goals may be, I offer guidance and support with compassion."

With a few cold months still ahead of us, Stephen offers some quick advice: "Protect what is known in Traditional Chinese Medicine as your 'wind-gate'! This is one of the simplest and most effective ways to stay well in the colder months. Wear a scarf or fluff



Left: Some points used to calm and relax the mind/body, aid digestion and disperse anxiety. Right: Stephen treats a patient at Fionnuisce Holistic Health Centre.



up your collar to keep the back of your neck and upper back covered.

"This region of the body is a particularly vulnerable area, where wind is known to enter. Wind is the cause of a hundred diseases in TCM. Essentially, something (a pathogen) is mov-

ing from outside your body to inside. If wind invades this area of the body, you often see symptoms such as dizziness, blurred vision, the common cold, flu, neck pain, migraine (with pain moving to different parts of the head) etc."

Stephen loves what he does, and feels very fortunate to now be working in West Cork. He looks forward to helping you thrive in a holistic, natural way.

You can get in touch by calling or whatsapping: 087 4667467 or visit www.landonacupuncture.ie.



HERBAL HEALING

Dr. Rosari Kingston

Dr. Rosari Kingston PhD, M.Sc (Herbal medicine) is a medical herbalist practising in Dr. O'Reilly's integrative clinical practice in Clonakilty, Co. Cork as well as Church Cross, Skibbereen. Dr. Kingston's area of research are the healing modalities present in Irish vernacular medicine and she incorporates them, where possible, into her clinical practice. In her clinical practise she specialises in infertility and digestive issues. www.rosarikingtonphd.com

I am interrupting my series on infertility this month, February, to write about one of the Irish quarter days. These four days are, Samhain, Imbolc,

Lá Fhéile Bríde

Bealtaine, and Lughnasa and are approximately twelve weeks apart. The cross-quarter days are Nollaig, St Patrick's day, St John's day and St Martin's day. Taken together, they divide the year into approximately, six and a half week segments, which is very useful for planning a project.

Imbolc is February 1 and is also the feast day of St Brigid. Brigid is also known as 'Muir na nGael' (Mary of the Irish) and she protects the hearth of the home. St Brigid's cross is made by children in many schools, or at home during lockdown, and they hang over the fire, or the lintel of the door. Thus positioned, it protects the house for the coming year. Her feast day announces the return of spring, and being the goddess of fertility, healing and ironwork, this day reminds us that the work of propagation, preparation and planting needs to begin. This day also confirms that the days are getting longer with plenty time now to work outdoors. When the day is fine and sunny, there is a touch of summer about it, and green fingers become itchy to get

started in the garden as the sap begins rising in plants and the first green shoots appear.

But who was Brigid? If we read Irish mythology, we find out she was a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann and was the daughter of Dagda, a god, who is also associated with agriculture, and fertility, the movement of the seasons, as well as wisdom and magic. Cormac's glossary (10th century) tells us poets adored the goddess, Brigid, and that she had two sisters also called Brigid. One was known as Brigid the healer and the other as Brigid the [iron] smith. She can therefore be seen as a triple deity but was venerated as one goddess. This triune aspect of a god or goddess is a common archetype in the history of religion, and it is not surprising then, that so powerful a goddess could not be ignored by Christianity but was instead assimilated into the saint, we now know as St. Brigid.

Brigid is also associated with healing wells and Amanda Clarke's blog, (hollywellsorkandkerry.com) has a most informative account of a St

Brigid's well near Buttevant in Co. Cork, as well as an account of St Brigid's well in Lough Hyne. This latter well is associated with cures for cattle.

Another saint to be honoured this month is St Gonnait and her feast day is on February 11. Unfortunately, this year because of restrictions on gatherings, the ceremonies associated with her will not take place. However, the people of Ballyvourney may still do the rounds at this very illustrious site. She is associated with bees and is the patron saint of beekeepers. Since bees are so vulnerable at present, and we depend on them so much, perhaps it is time for all of us to remember this holy woman from the sixth century, who is also reputed to have prevented the plague from entering her district.

In this month of February, as we plant the first seeds, turn over the first sod, and clear the winter's debris, let us remember Brigid and Gonnait, who looked after the basics we need in our life – bees, plants, domestic animals, and crafts.

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people Health & Lifestyle

Are supplements really the answer?



Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

It is very common for people to try and overcome a particular health concern

using supplements, whether prescribed or available over-the-counter. It is unlikely that this will cause any harm, but it can become very expensive, with limited benefit.

I am going to talk about two areas: General supplementation and supplementation to deal with specific problems.

General Supplementation

If we take this to mean supplementing to cover the basics and assume that you are eating a well balanced diet, you should consider supplementing with Vit D3 (especially in the winter in Ireland) and Omega 3, both of which have some evidence

of benefit (*Bahrami et al, 2020*) (*Liao Y, 2019*). There are even studies showing support for taking Vit D3 to help with Covid-19 and respiratory infection (*McCartney & Byrne, 2020*).

If, for whatever reason, you don't eat a wide variety of vegetables, you should add a multivitamin as well.

Many people are advised to supplement with Omega 3, 6 and 9. This is often unnecessary, as Omega 6 and 9 are prevalent in most diets already and it is the Omega 3 that is lacking. The best dietary source of Omega 3 is oily fish like mackerel and salmon.

Supplementation to deal with a specific symptom

There is no doubt that many supplements can really help some people. Magnesium, B vitamins, Calcium, Iron, Digestive enzymes, antioxidants, to name a few, can all be really helpful.

However there are a number of issues that I have with just supplementing and hoping for the best:

1. Are you really helping by just supplementing, even if it makes you feel better, if you don't understand why you are deficient in the first place?
2. Most people do not look at their diet or gut health before supplementing – a healthy microbiome is more important than supplementing, in fact many supplements will not work unless there is a health gut microbiome
3. Many people who are taking supplements are just not taking enough to make any difference
4. Many of the supplements on the market are not in their most beneficial form.

If we use B12 (cyanocobalamin) as an example to work through the four points above;

1. There are many reasons that someone may be deficient in B12. As the majority of B12 in our diet comes from animal products, if you are

a vegetarian or vegan, then supplementing would be a good idea. But many meat eaters are also deficient, so there must be other mechanisms possible. One is an autoimmune condition whereby the person is producing antibodies to intrinsic factor, which is needed to absorb B12; gastrointestinal complaints or even lack of stomach acid will impair the absorption of B12.

2. In many cases the bacteria in our gut are competing for B12. Therefore someone with a significant Dysbiosis (microbial imbalance) can have a problem with absorption of B12.
3. What is a safe dose and which form should you be taking. With the possible issues with gut microbiome and B12 absorption, it may be better to think about using a spray, liquid, or supplement that dissolves in the mouth and bypasses the gut altogether.
4. The form of B12 is important. Many supplements are made from cyanocobalamin because it is stable but methylcobalamin and adenosylcobalamin are two better forms of the supplement, as they are in the active state and immediately available for the body to use.

In my opinion supplements

are not the whole solution and most people would benefit more with changes to their lifestyle and diet.

However if you are going to supplement here are some tips to make better choices.

- Understand why you are taking a supplement.
- If you are taking a supplement for a specific condition and notice no difference in that condition, consider stopping, or go back to your practitioner to discuss changing dose, or using a different formula.
- Try to find out what is the best most bio-available form of the supplement you wish to take.
- Pay more attention to your overall gut health. Increase fibre in your diet and eat as many different kinds of vegetable as you can. If you are concerned seek help

IMPORTANT

Before taking any supplement please check that it does not interfere with any medication you are taking, if in doubt check with your GP or the person who prescribed you the medication.

Eoin Roe is a Chiropractor and Functional Medicine practitioner based in Skibbereen. If you would like an appointment please call 087 9582362.

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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.

While we may agree that this latest lockdown is necessary, it is still very hard on us all. Life is quite different now and, while we cannot control how the future will pan out, we still have choices available to us. Have we really learned to slow down

Modelling imperfection

this past year? Have we really learned to go easy on ourselves and others? We might have ideas about how 'productive' we should be, or maybe used to be, but are we making enough space for ourselves to rest, to spend time with loved ones, and are we giving ourselves time to notice how we feel about that? There is, and always will be, something to be done, always some chore or task, however big or small, waiting to be completed. Can we choose certain things and leave others for another day? Eckhart Tolle says, "Wherever you are, be there totally". Can we apply this to our work, rest and play by prioritising tasks and doing them one at a time, being fully with what we are doing?

I decided instinctively and intentionally, in March, that the most important thing was to slow down, look after myself and be there with those that I love and hold dear. This was largely due to that initial fear and overwhelm caused by the pandemic. Being a mindfulness teacher, I also offered my time

and skills to a wider community with my online drop-in sessions, as I knew then that the skills of mindfulness could help keep us steady during uncertain times and indeed, they continue to do so.

So, like many others, I found myself 'doing' less in terms of what we might view as productivity, but 'being' more with the people in my life that needed caring for. To let go of the way we used to do things, to conserve energy for the things that really matter, including ourselves, is not always easy. In fact, it can feel very hard, and involve a long, slow process of re-adjustment and re-prioritisation. We are in the habit of constantly doing, doing, doing a lot of the time, therefore it can be challenging to make that transition to simply being where you are.

For many months, I really and truly practiced what I preach and sat to meditate at least once, often more, every single day and still do, consistently. I find it makes space in my mind for the day ahead and

having that space in the mind, in turn, seems to create more time. I also began cutting out anything, whether personal or home or work-related, that was not absolutely essential to do in any given day, and cleared as much time and space as possible for things like fresh air, swimming, walks, time with my elderly dad and our dog, connecting with close friends and a wonderful community of people practicing meditation online. Like so many others, I will never forget the rawness of last year, with the many precious, joyful moments and memories, alongside the many poignant ones and the people I shared the year with.

Yet, I sometimes found myself bothered by a nagging sense of somehow not keeping up, of falling behind, not doing enough. I can imagine that this feeling of not doing enough or somehow failing will resonate with others. One of the key concepts from my mindfulness teacher training is the idea of 'modelling imperfection' and this really helps remind me, that it's ok to struggle, to make mis-

takes, to be a little bit imperfect in every way. So, I made another intentional decision, this time to drop my own expectations of myself, to go easy, and continue to do only what was necessary each day and to leave the rest.

As a result, my house is much messier than it used to be; my paperwork often piles up. There are cards that will be sent late and overdue calls to be made. But I do what I can, when I can, bit by bit, moving slowly and steadily. I take time to celebrate small or big achievements with a walk or a swim, even a few minutes standing outside the back door taking fresh air in. Life has become necessarily much simpler and more acutely meaningful. When I notice myself feeling I 'should' be getting on with 'more important' tasks or attempting to barrel through a 'to-do' list, I take a pause, a few conscious breaths and I remember that we are human beings, flawed and imperfect.

I am gradually and gently letting go of that feeling of falling behind. Instead, I'm so grateful to be well-resourced to support

myself and others, and that feels so much more than enough. Just as the house or workspace doesn't have to be perfect, neither do we have to strive to do things perfectly. When we can allow life to be as it is, even if it's hard, there's a great freedom in it and we end up being present where we are, totally... at least some of the time.

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



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 eight to nine-year-olds, I will look at the 'latent' stage of child development when children gradually move away from reliance on their family and become more concerned with the outside world. This is the period when they have a rest from some of

the turbulence and passion of the early years and face a range of new tasks and challenges. School has been a feature of their life for about three years but it changes at this point into something a little more formal.

Questions about identity move beyond the confidence of the family. The child is no longer simply the child of their parents but an individual who feels defined in a more complicated way. Children will describe themselves not only by name but also by school, by year group, by neighbourhood, by favourite soccer team and possibly by friendship group.



When all is going well, and there are firm foundations to build on from the child's earlier experience, these 'latency' years are about the mastery of new skills and the accumulation of knowledge. Children are finding out about the real world, at the same time as enjoying forays into the world of fantasy, magic and mystery. They are

developing a sense of right and wrong and might become very preoccupied with questions of justice. The world is often seen as consisting of 'goodies' and 'baddies' and there is a strong preference for stories in which good triumphs over evil and there is a happy ending. Causes such as the protection of the endangered species are very appealing to children at this developmental stage and they may become zealous about environmental issues such as energy preserving or recycling. They need to believe they can make a difference and may be overwhelmed by some of the

harsher realities of life.

Children of this age tend to revel in making collections, whether it be of various kinds of stickers, cards or accessories. The collections provide the focus of some element of rivalry and competition, as well as an arena for the assessment of relative value and the development of bargaining skills.

Children respond enthusiastically to being awarded badges or stickers and thrive on praise and recognition.

Eight and nine-year-old children vary enormously in their physical development. Some are beginning to stretch out and look as if they are just waiting to move into adolescence. Others are still round-faced and somehow toddlers. By the age of nine, there may be some girls who have begun to menstruate, although this sign of physical maturity is unlikely to be matched by emotional or psychological development. For the most part, this is an age group in which boys and girls opt for friendships with their own gender and are intolerant of the other.

The next stage

There is something deeply significant about nearly reaching double figures. By the time they are 'nearly ten' most children will have a coherent picture of who they are and how they fit into the bigger system of home, family and school. They will no longer see things in simple terms, as either right or wrong, but encompass a range of views or even acknowledge their ambivalent feelings. For the past two or three years, the energy that has been directed towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills; now they turn back to focus more fully on the world of human relationships.

Understanding our eight to nine-year-olds

St. Joseph's Girls' National School Clonakilty

P/F: 023 8833050 www.stjosephsclon.com

E-mail: info@stjosephsclon.com



JUNIOR INFANT ENROLMENT 2021

We are now taking enrolments for
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from our school website or ring our
office to have one posted directly to you.

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Co Cork, P85AX90

or by email to:

info@stjosephsclon.com

(Please include a copy of your daughter's
Birth Certificate & PPS number)

Free and fun online community support launched for parents feeling the pressure



Psychotherapist and mum-of-three, Bethan O'Riordan has created a free online community to support parents. Specialising in

parent support, Bethan became concerned at the pressure parents are under in the current climate, juggling schooling with work and other activities, so she started an online community where people can meet, chat, hang out and learn.

Bethan uses her personal and professional experience to support and empower parents by sharing information, hosting challenges and inviting honest discussion.

The group, which can be found on Facebook under 'Calm and Confident Parenting', is really making a difference. Bethan said "I focus on structuring the group with mindset and motivation activities to support mental health. The group really normalises all the struggles, both for parents within themselves and the difficulties they experience with their children and their

emotions and behaviour."

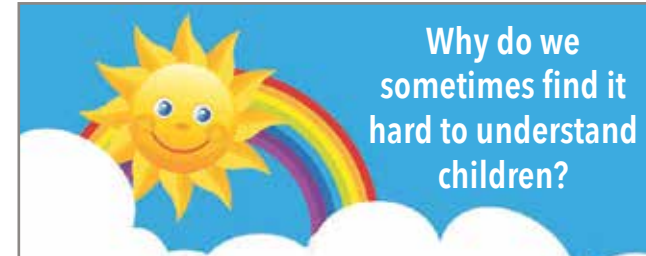
Each Thursday at 11am Bethan hosts a live tea break chat, inviting people to take a break and come and hang out. She uses this time to share professional and personal knowledge, interview other mums or professionals and talk through problems.

Bethan has been working closely with people for over 15 years and has been through the process of finding her parenting best. Her personal and professional experience has taught her that we all experience ups and downs in life. Her passion is working with parents, in particular on how a parent interacts with their children in the early years shapes a child's brain for life. Because of this, she is keen to support parents through their difficulties so they can then meet the needs of their children too.

The group is informative and fun. This month there is a 'Show yourself some love – You First' challenge, where she will be giving tips on self-care from a therapeutic perspective. There are some great prizes to be won, as she believes that effort needs to be rewarded! There is also a free Parenting Masterclass where she will coach parents in ways in which they can develop their skills for managing what comes their way.

As Bethan says, "being connected is hugely important to me – we are definitely better together. If we can make the toughest job in the world fun, why not".

You can find and join Bethan on Facebook 'Calm and Confident Parenting' or on Instagram. www.bethanoriordan.com.



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:

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- **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) MPsy Clin MPsy psych

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist

Over 15 years of experience. ICP Registered, MACP

083 8930386 dradeva.childpsychotherapy@gmail.com

Plugged in but switched off

Barnardos Children's Charity has launched a webinar on Digital Wellbeing and Screen Time for parents and professionals working with children after it found Irish children were 'plugged in but switched off'. As lockdown continues nationwide many parents have reported struggling with managing their children's screen time, which in turn is having an impact on their overall wellbeing. Supported by Google.org, the two-hour webinar taking place on March 30, will provide key insights to safely managing an increasingly digital lifestyle. For information go to www.barnardos.ie/pluggedin.



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

February Sun Signs

February is a good month, in the main part, from the astrological point of view. It certainly has a more positive vibe than we have become used to over the last several months. The potential for a shift in perspective and more options for uplift starts from February 1. Aquarius season is really going to dominate this month, as we have a total of five planets in this sign for most of February. This fixed air sign is all about ideas and those are very often not negotiable. So the trend for strong opinions and rigid agendas are still going to be a big part of unfolding events over the next few weeks.

Whilst Mercury is busy heading 'backwards' through Aquarius, we have Venus travelling at a pace and making rapid forward progress. This activity is almost like a relay team passing planet energy, one to the other. Mercury and Venus passing through Aquarius are triggering Jupiter and Saturn all month. This keeps pulling us back to the issues that became apparent at the Jupiter Saturn conjunction last December 21. Meanwhile, a frustrated Mars in Taurus keeps throwing out a challenging Square to the Aquar-

ius planets. This creates a busy, provocative dynamic that just won't let things rest. So still expect there to be plenty of challenges to any status quo or pre-defined direction. On February 1, Venus moves into Aquarius, which means that both the beneficial planets are here now, which helps to ease the tension we experienced in January. Mercury is in a retrograde phase in Aquarius until February 21 and, as the messenger planet, is doing a great job connecting the other planets, as it passes back through the sign. This is not a time of pushing forwards. This retrograde allows us to revise our responses and consider what we know before we make our choices or take action. We may come to a new conclusion and see the facts or information from a new perspective as we take a second look. As the month moves on we can expect more revisions and a quicker pace to the debate or public conversations, any news will travel fast and many things will need to be corrected, redacted or re-framed during these weeks. Mercury made a connection with Jupiter on January 11th and now it retraces the path to Jupiter's

current position. Buoyant Jupiter has optimism and opportunity to offer. It also expands and will even exaggerate what it connects with so there may be plenty of hype and situations get blown out of proportion too. With Jupiter, there is always a tone of positivity. There may be better solutions and a possible alternative suggestion for the way forwards. We get a sense of this around February 14, as Mercury reconnects to Jupiter before it goes forwards again to finally connect with Jupiter on March 4. This is when we may get some kind of conclusion or resolution to a theme that has been around since early January. Venus, our planet of sharing and love, connects with Saturn, the planet of duty and stability, on February 6 and you may find this makes you consider what you have adhered to that is of value. Who and what you choose to have in your life may be highlighted. Whatever has stability and enduring qualities will be preferable and there may be the urge to consolidate contracts or relationships if they have stood the test of time to date and look promising for the longer term. On February 7, Venus connects to Uranus, the

planet of change and excitement, so this can shake up any stale or rigid scenarios that you are involved in. You may find you need to have your autonomy and self-expression as your priority, and want to cut loose from what doesn't support you in your unique style or way of connecting. So these few days could see a few shifts and changes, as alliances are formed and broken. We have a very positive New Moon phase on February 11 with another opportunity for forging positive bonds as both the beneficial planets, Venus and Jupiter, connect that day. The signs Taurus, Libra, Sagittarius, Pisces will have the greatest positive impact from this new Moon.

We may find that some legal situation or an issue of justice is determined in favour of those asking for fairness or that moral ethics are to be upheld in favour of the common people. This is a time when we can look around to figure out how we progress now we have chosen who to have around us, the ones we want to associate with as we formulate a plan for the future. This potential for positive social connections and good news continues, as Mercury passes

Venus on February 13 and Jupiter on February 14.

The reminder that we are living in a time of change and uncertainty comes from around February 17, as we get an exact square angle formed by Saturn and Uranus. This is the planet signature of 2021 and an indication of the tensions and unrest that brings about rebellion and further restrictions.

The following days bring a subtle but important shift in the energies from the 18th, as the Sun moves into Pisces followed by Venus on the 25th. This well and truly breaks up the Aquarius party and things become more flexible and fluid. There may still be a theme of instability and uncertainty but there is a more inclusive and forgiving trend as Pisces reaches towards something beyond the mundane and material. Future projections and inevitable consequences are not as fixed or predetermined as they seemed to be since late last year.

February has a New Moon at 24° Aquarius on February 11 at 7.05pm and a Full Moon at 9° Virgo on February 27 at 8.17am.



Aries: It's time to think more about how your ideals fit in with the people around you. The real rewards from your efforts and hard work are going to become apparent. Use this opportunity to make a positive move towards openness and be prepared to accept or offer credit where it's due. If you are not getting the appreciation you feel you deserve then maybe it's time to up your game or move along. Only you know how much you have really invested and what you are worth. You may be pleasantly surprised to see who supports you and has your interests close to their own heart.



Taurus: As much as you love the security of knowing where you stand, you also want to get ahead and be appreciated. Now is the time to call up your wildest dreams and take the risk of following them. You will be able to step back and see the longer view this month so make your plans and set your course for a much more significant role. You'll soon have the opportunity of being out in the public eye or getting some promotion. Consider what really works for you and how you are making the practical moves towards the work or occupation that really resonates.



Gemini: It's a great time for planning, dreaming up new schemes, or rearranging the way you look at things. You are ready for new understanding and insight, and will probably find yourself wanting to read, study or research to gain clarity or knowledge. Patterns or habits you establish now do not need to be perfected until later, so you can stick to a vague outline until you've got the basic plan established. You could find an opportunity to connect with many more people or different cultures outside of your usual circles. There is so much to learn over the next few months.



Cancer: This is a time of renewal for you so be prepared for some real transformation. Start this phase with determination to throw out some old worn-out ways and unproductive thinking. February gives you a pause to assess how much your involvement with others is beneficial. You can address your anxiety about sharing and being interdependent. As you face where you may be vulnerable, especially on a practical day-to-day-level, you'll help guide others to make their own decisions. You dare to be honest with yourself and this encourages others to be honest about their own concerns. You'll be appreciated for the support.



Leo: This is the time to strengthen the bonds that are of value and loosen the ties that aren't. Find the balance in your most important relationships. It is not always equal but it has to be fair. Things have changed and it may take some renegotiation to see what works well now. Your increased receptivity to the needs of others brings you to a listening role in which you can give support and nourishment. There is always room for improvement and you may get some pleasant surprises as you offer an openhearted response to the people in your life.



Virgo: This month causes you to think more deeply about how you give your time and energy to others. Being of service and taking care of the important things in life is a worthy occupation. There may be many more opportunities to take on responsibilities or step up where it's needed. Consider which long term projects will give you the greatest sense of personal achievement. It's not always about other people though, and you may have to take a step back to see if you are trying too hard. It's your responsibility to ensure that your mind, body and spirit are being looked after.



Libra: Your desire for the security of love and intimacy is heightened this month. There is a practical and human side to all romantic connections. You may have been trying to fit reality to your expectations with disappointing results. Even if love affairs are not the main theme you will still want to be having fun now and not be tied to a tedious daily routine. If things have become stale then you need to find the reason. Your own ability to be creative and find the lighter side of life will make all the difference. Remember what you enjoyed most as a child and try to build on the simple pleasures for more lasting satisfaction.



Scorpio: The foundations of your past, your family and the roots that you sprung from are very significant now. You'll be thinking of ways that you can gather something from your previous experiences into your current life to enhance the future. There is an extra focus on the people and places that have been important in your life and someone may make a re-appearance. Its time to reconsider who or what to include in your current plans now. Creating a peaceful home and harmonious base for yourself is a priority and it's important to avoid being distracted by any other family issues.



Sagittarius: This is no time to be taking it easy because your skills are required in many areas and friends and neighbours will benefit from your knowledge or experience. It may be your job to sort the worthwhile from the unnecessary and dispel confusion over certain matters. You will be using all your communication skills and connecting with people to a greater extent in the coming months. Take your time now to consider your position and what you put across so you aren't seen as indecisive or unpredictable. Make sure you can still stand behind any advice and recommendations in the longer term.



Capricorn: You have a strong appreciation of what has value, and what doesn't, and as such, you can achieve success providing for the basic needs of your self and others. You may have reason to step back and re-evaluate some of your longterm investments this month. That's not all about finances though. This is about your time and energy, your focus and attention. The talents and abilities you have built up over the years are your security and if you put them to good use you will find the stability you're reaching for. Wise decisions are

based on knowing what is right for you and that's not always about playing it safe.



Aquarius: You want the chance to make some kind of statement about who you are. It's all about what sets you apart from others rather than what you share in common. Start with an identity reality check. This re-evaluation of how you put your self across may take your whole attention this month. Personal development, spiritual connection and physical well being all require an assessment. If you pass your own test that's great but you will still find ways you want to include more and push the boundaries a bit further. This is about you and your journey right now. Other people in your life are a valuable bonus.



Pisces: It's not a time for taking on too much. Start the month slowly with plenty of time to delve into that impressive imaginative resource that is your inner world. This is a time of reorganising yourself on a subtle level and it'll take a while to become aware of the changes. Spending time alone or out of the whirl of work or social demands gives you time to explore your creativity. Self-reflection is a valuable tool and your personal discoveries will serve you well into the future. Use your natural ability to connect to the universal flow and you'll enjoy the enhanced intuition and broader vision.

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Annie Breen,
CNM Nutritional
Therapy Graduate

I wanted to find more purpose in my life and embark on a career that got me excited! I was attracted to the depth and detail that the CNM course went into and the fact I could fit it around my full-time job.

For 10 years prior to embark-

'I loved the excitement of learning something that could not just change my life but that of others'

ing on my Nutritional Therapy journey, I worked as a Support Worker in many different remits, roles and locations throughout the UK including family support, domestic abuse, complex needs, substance misuse, mental health, homelessness and anti-social behaviour. Helping people in some incredibly challenging situations took me to a point where I wanted to know more. I'd played a role in and witnessed people change their external environment – housing, relationships and jobs, but this only got them so far. How could I help break the cycle of suffering and support them to take back agency of themselves, their health and their life? This is what led me towards Nutritional Therapy: I wanted to help people change from inside out so that they could feel empowered and thrive, not merely survive. I'm also someone who teaches what

I most need to learn, so this was very much a personal adventure. I wanted to understand how I could improve my own health and that of my family.

I found the CNM course to be thorough, scientific and empowering. I loved the course content – how cutting edge it is in terms of research as well as being rooted in ancient wisdom; the lecturers; the group and my fellow classmates; the excitement of learning something that could not just change my life but that of others; embarking on a new career.

I don't really describe what I do as a career, it is part of my identity. Our health is our wealth and having this invaluable insight has changed my life in every way. Nutritional therapy IS now my life, in so many ways. It has enabled me to get clear on my values and what's important. It has allowed me to

meet some truly awesome people in an ever-evolving network. It has equipped me with some of the most up-to-date, cutting-edge science and enabled me to not just help myself, but my loved ones. My daughter already has a pretty good understanding about the microbiome. And now and again I catch my husband parroting nutrition advice. I think the big one for me is how it's played a huge role in me becoming the person and mum I am today. I feel happy, healthy and empowered and that's a beautiful thing to be able to model to my daughter.

Since graduating I practise as a full-time Nutritional Therapist, I'm Edinburgh-based but work online. My direction became really clear after I had my little girl in 2016. Motherhood led me on a whole new personal and professional growth adventure. I now help exhausted, depleted

mums reclaim their energy so they can feel healthy and whole and step into their power.

The combination of my coaching experience, my CNM Nutritional Therapy qualification and my motherhood journey to date has really enabled me to walk in the shoes of mothers and help them get to the root cause of their symptoms (exhaustion, anxiety, overwhelm, brain fog, digestive issues).

My 'Healthy Tum, Happy Mum' programme is focused on helping mums rebalance and transform from inside out.

I like to describe it as science v. magic. I'm a huge fan of functional testing which was something I had the privilege to learn under the experienced eye of the CNM lecturers.

What I love about practising is the connection with my clients, the excitement of sharing this life-changing information, being

part of their journey, the coaching element and witnessing the lasting transformation.



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Well worn shoes most can only dream of walking in

WALKING IN MY SHOES

Elizabeth Walsh

Walking in my shoes – accessibility explained.

Each and every day our lives impact on each person's life whose path we cross, metaphorically and physically, positively or negatively!

Redmond O'Hanlon is a guy who has lived the dream; graduating from UCD, travelling extensively, attaining fluency in several languages, he has lived and worked, on several continents. He has never spared himself, throwing himself into life everyday and not just living it, but ensuring that those around him are living it too. Everywhere he has lived, he has found those in need, prisoners who have had no visitors, people who have needed help. His warm and generous spirit has always reached out to wrap around everyone like a big, soft blanket.

Redmond's circle of friends could wrap around the globe twice over. His black humour and quick, often acidic, wit, his loyalty and kindness, his caring good nature, his steadfastness, his fearlessness in standing for what is right, rather than what is popular, his personality is pretty much beyond description;

however he is loved beyond words, for the person that he is. He is the person you want at your party, definitely, the one to enjoy a civilised glass of wine with, as you discuss the world and life, laugh and joke, long into the night.

Having lived in far-flung localities, Redmond finally settled in Bangkok for 30 years, where he had secured a prestigious position, as a language teacher in the Royal Thai Air Force, at Don Muang Air Force Base. He taught all ranks, from four-star generals, down to privates. While he could have lived on the base, he preferred to live in an apartment in Bangkok and travel by motorbike taxi one hour, each way, to and from the base. In Bangkok, he had many friends of all nationalities. He found time to write to, and to visit, prisoners in Bang Kwang and Lard Yao prisons; at one point, writing to and visiting over 26 foreign prisoners. He provided them with items, not available to them, and beyond their reach, as they usually were without funds.

Redmond was an active and supportive member of communities in Bangkok, and contributed to the welfare of older people.

He enjoyed an amazing life style there; visiting family members in far flung places, travelling in Asia and beyond, going on trips in Thailand to places off the tourist track, going

on a Buddhist retreat annually, having dinner every Sunday with friends, their families and children, hosting family and friends who visited, meeting friends at the markets to shop, going swimming, going to films, cultural events and of course, in his position at the language centre, he was included in many official gatherings at the Royal Thai Air Force. An avid reader, he devoured books and newspapers.

During this time, Redmond, began to develop some odd symptoms, eventually being diagnosed with Friedrich's Ataxia. This is a pretty progressive, disabling, disease, however it did not alter Redmond's way of life, rather just how he achieved it. Thai people are inherently kind, empathetic, and helpful. Redmond continued to go by motorbike taxi to the base, even as his condition progressed and he required a wheelchair at the base. There was one motorbike taxi rider, who would still carry Redmond on his motorbike, safely, without fear. Redmond travelled, fearless. This motorbike taxi rider, on realising the challenges that Redmond was eventually encountering shoving, stepped in to assist each morning, prior to departing for Don Muang.

The Royal Thai Air Force did everything in their power to accommodate Redmond, as he is such an excellent language teacher, and they did not want to



Redmond
O'Hanlon

lose him. On a Saturday when Redmond went to get shopping, people whom Redmond had helped when they were in need now helped him. It was actually easier to live there and work – where accessibility is an unknown concept more or less, due entirely to the attitude, respect, friendship and goodwill of Thai people – than in Ireland.

When Redmond could no longer write legibly, he dictated letters to friends for the prisoners whom he looked after. As obstacles arose, he found solutions, facilitated by friendship and goodwill. Redmond had many falls, as his balance and co-ordination deteriorated; he picked himself up, dusted himself off and kept going. He revealed these incidents as hilarious anecdotes, when actually the tears would

come down your face, laughing not of course at his misfortune in falling, but at the manner in which he described it. There was one instance where he had taken a bus and the buses in Bangkok barely stop while you jump off. Well Redmond's athletic prowess at jumping had long since disappeared so, as he landed on the footpath, he fell, into some dog's dinner plate, degrading enough, except the dog then promptly bit him! He refused to give in or to choose a 'safer' option. He led a wild, enviable, somewhat charmed, incredibly happy, productive life; surrounded and supported by friends and colleagues, in Bangkok, until his retirement. The Royal Thai Air Force tried to entice him to stay for even one last year; they had never had a complaint from even one student and all of his students passed all exams with excellent grades. His boss in the Air Force, a two star general, Air Vice Marshal, told him that he taught with his brain and not with his legs!

The majority of people would be intimidated by a motorbike taxi ride in Bangkok, finding it inducive to a heart attack rather than exhilarating; definitely one for two hours every day in rush hour traffic to Don Muang Air Force Base, which until 2006, and the opening of Suvarnabhumi airport, was also the location of the main airport.

Redmond, a lifelong friend, introduced me to Thailand, to

locations off the tourist track, beautiful islands, amazing forest, night trains, elephant trails, the amazing northeast of the country where the impact of tourism is minimal. Of course, I too, through writing letters for Redmond, began to write also to a prisoner and visit her in Lard Yao.

Redmond has so much ability; it flows from him and engulfs you, like fresh water from a mountain stream on a warm day. Redmond's inspiring literary spirit amazes me to this day. He now resides independently, in retirement, with assistance from personal assistants (whom he teaches English to, as they are mostly non-native English speakers). Prior to the pandemic, he enjoyed (with family and friends) theatre, films, plays, cinema, football games, eating out, meeting friends, visiting home each weekend in addition to hosting friends and family. Since the onset of the pandemic, family and friends have joined forces to protect him. Redmond is not just provided with meals, they are gourmet meals, my mouth waters. His shopping is brought to him. He has a 'bubble', with people fighting to be part of it.

I look forward to when we can all sit together, perhaps with a glass of wine, share our stories and laugh together.

Try his shoes on for size... they won't fit!

people Health & Lifestyle



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.

In my last column I talked about ways to stay fit and stay sane during level 5 lockdown. While there are things on the horizon that look promising – vaccines and warmer days – I think a little ‘pick me up’ is due for February. So I wrote a little ode to motivation.

‘The biggest step to getting fit is getting out of bed or off the sofa’: Does this sound familiar? This especially applies now when group exercising and gyms are not an option. And even when all the gyms and classes are open, motivation can be a fleeting emotion. One moment it’s there – when you’re lying in bed Sunday evening thinking ‘Tomorrow morning I’m going to start my diet and exercise and lose the extra 5kg’ – and the next moment it’s gone. You guessed it; Monday morning comes around and you wake up and can either snooze 30 minutes longer under your warm duvet, or get up in the cold dark-

ness and do your exercises and cook a healthy breakfast. Which do you choose?

It could also be a case of having an excellent first week of dieting and exercising, but Sunday evening you fall into the rabbit hole of Netflix, crisps, drinks and chocolate and when Monday morning arrives, your motivation is gone; because why should you, when you just destroyed everything the night before?

So how do we break the cycle? Or get started in the first place? Or pick up training after a break?

It’s probably the biggest question people in the fitness and weight-loss industry have to tackle. It’s easy to coach people who are motivated. It’s easy to train people who show up; even now during the pandemic, personal trainers are doing online sessions, fitness group trainers are setting up Zoom classes and, as long as the clients are logging in, that’s half the job done.

But what to do when the client doesn’t log in? When the motivation is lost?

A good trainer finds the right trigger to keep the client motivated. Some like being told they’re doing great, others that they are improving. Some need the carrot, others need the stick. The essential in this scenario is that it’s a two-way street. It’s happening in the collaboration between client and trainer.

It’s much harder to stay motivated if you’re on your own, which unfortunately a lot more people are now than before Covid-19. So this is my February column – to give ideas and inspiration on how to stay motivated, or rather committed, if you’re on your own. And this is not only for getting or staying fit. These tools can be applied to a variety of goals besides physical activity. If you want to learn to cook, draw, paint, or write

a book, you might need that extra push some days where the energy feels low and inspiration is at a zero.

Here are three different methods to keep you going:

PS: Don’t despair if you don’t find success with the first method you try, it might not be the right one, or perhaps you need to mix and match? Keep an eye on your end goal: To stay consistent and motivated towards your goal, regardless of the mood you wake up in.

The Accountable

For some people the answer is being held accountable – either by a personal trainer, a friend, a diary or by posting to their social media account (and getting followers and likes). The way this method works is that the daily or every-other-day call to trainer/friend or post to Social Media or diary is your way of being held accountable. It’s also easy to track your progress this way by putting down the numbers (how long you train for, what you can lift/how long you run; and if you’re doing a weight-loss journey, it’s an easy way to keep track of your weight as well).

If you set up a social media account, you can connect with others on the same path as you, and interact if you like. Most likely you will also get more followers and likes, as you post more; this in itself is also a motivation for lots of people. Instead of having your trainer telling you ‘good job’, you’ll have likes and comments supporting you.

If you look at the blogosphere or Instagram, there are loads of weight-loss and transformation accounts to follow and get inspired from. Or you could start your own if this medium to self-motivation appeals to you. I follow a few accounts myself and it’s always amazing to follow people on their road

towards a goal (If you set up an account shoot me a message and I’ll be happy to follow you).

The Disciplined

Another way to combat lack of motivation, which appeals to some people, is through self-discipline. When motivation is lacking, it’s time to find the self-discipline. Sort of a ‘kick yourself in the butt and get it done’ talk. Personally I found this can work and it’s possible to give yourself the big ‘go do it’ talk and get it done. This method is driven mostly by the self-talk and ‘the stick’ (rather than the carrot), and it works great if you’re good at ‘not letting yourself off the hook’. So when you wake up Monday morning to the 30-minute earlier rise, your inner drill sergeant is shouting at you to get out of bed and do it; and you don’t let yourself roll over and let your inner sleepy-head mumble ‘tomorrow’ before hitting snooze and closing your eyes.

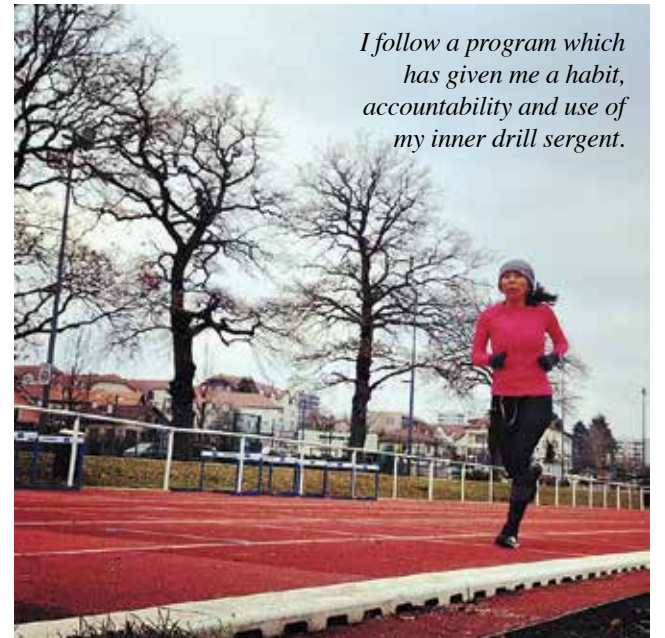
Self-discipline can also really boost your confidence when you’ve applied it successfully, because you can rightly feel that this is all your doing. Not your trainer, not your partner or a stranger’s like to your post (not that there is anything wrong with either). And that self-confidence boost can in turn help you keep this inner monologue going and getting stronger.

You often hear about career military personnel who, after they quit the military, still carry a lot of the discipline from their military life. These inner monologues about getting things done, get things done, and they also put things into order and can help in a time like this, when our world in many ways is being turned upside down.

The Habitual

Order and rules brings me to the last method: Habits! Create an

I follow a program which has given me a habit, accountability and use of my inner drill sergeant.



environment where habits can be formed and kept easily. Now that your Monday spin class is cancelled, make it a habit to go for a bike ride on that day. If you can link the bike ride to another activity, it could be even easier to get it done. Perhaps you can shorten your lunch break and go for a 15-minute bike ride? Have your bike, shoes and coat ready and go at the same time every Monday.

If you work from home and don’t wish to go out, then clear a space on the floor, set your alarm for 11am and take a 10 minute break to stretch, bend and push – or more.

If you use any equipment or have to dress for your activity, make sure you are dressed in advance or have your stuff ready at hand. Make it a habit to dress for your bike or run at a certain time and go out and do it.

Habits take a while to form before they become second nature, so give yourself everything from three weeks to three months to let the habit take root and become an automatic part of your life.

The great

thing about this is you won’t have all these conversations with yourself, on whether or not you should do the training/painting/studying – you will simply do it because it’s a habit (and a goal).

Most of all, don’t give up on yourself if you find your motivation lacking or sliding, but stay true to your goal and look for new ways to go on your journey. With Covid-19 still setting the agenda and another cold month ahead, do these things for you and keep your mind and spirit lifted.

I hope these three methods have inspired you to tackle any motivational lack you might experience, and remember of course, always tell yourself why you’re doing something: Because it makes you feel good, makes you smarter, stronger, faster, better. These are powerful, positive affirmations that will help you reach your goal too.

As always comments and questions are welcome to taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com or via www.instagram.com/trainwithadane

Once Upon a Parade in Skibbereen

Throughout February, artists Ana Ospina, Alice Halliday and Michael Stephens will be delivering a series of online creative activities welcoming all of the Skibbereen community - near and far - to participate. This team of artists will inspire and support you to create your own folklore and fairytale costumes for the Skibbereen St Patrick’s Day Virtual Parade. Over four weeks, they will show you how to design a character and share their top designer tips on how to make a costume and props, using easy-to-find materials

and simple making techniques. Each activity will come with step-by-step instructions, a list of materials, references and equipment required that can be downloaded from Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre website.

Your entries will be included in the online virtual parade that is to be screened as part of Skibbereen’s St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. “We would love to see photos of you to wearing your finished costumes and sharing them with the hashtags: #onceuponaparade and #skibbereenvirtualstpatricksdays,” the artists have said.

Thursday February 4 – Create your own folklore & fairytale character: Choose which section of the parade you would like to work on and design a Folklore & Fairytale character board using collage with help from lead artist and theatre designer, Ana Ospina. This will be the starting point for your costume and something you will refer back to throughout the creative process. Time to complete: 1-2 hours.

Thursday February 11 – Make your own enchanted cloak: Using simple sewing techniques, ethical fashion

designer Alice Halliday shows you how to create and decorate a unique cloak as part of your costume, from scrap materials. Time to complete: 1-2 hours.

Thursday February 18 – Craft your own magical parade props: Simple making techniques to help you create creative props and accessories to go with your costume from Ana Ospina. Time to complete: 1-2 hours making and 1-2 days drying time depending on which item you make.

Thursday February 25 – Fabricating mythical headpieces:

Your crowning glory! Learn to make an eye-catching headpiece or crown with help from Alice Halliday. Use materials you already have at home or sign up to receive a free kit, which includes the basic materials you will need to make your headpiece. This activity will be accompanied by a free online workshop which will



be streamed live via Zoom and Facebook at 3pm on Saturday February 27 at 3pm. Time to complete: 1-2 hours.

Go to www.westcorkartscentre.com to find out more.

Privilege and LGBTQI+



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.

Lisa Brinkmann is a Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist working in private practice in Clonakilty and is one of the core members of BRÓD. Lisa also has a degree in Sex Research and Forensic Psychiatry and works with clients with any psychological or mental health problem, but is also specialised in the area of sexuality and gender. Lisa is also a proud mother of two young girls and lives with her family in West Cork.

As a society we are constantly growing, changing and evolving. Each generation questions aspects of the previous status quo and often brings change to things that seemed totally unquestionable before. Some things change fast and easily, others require hard and prolonged battles, endurance and courage. Anything regarding topics of sex and gender definitely falling into the latter category. Examples for this are manifold.... The right to vote in Ireland wasn't granted to women until 1918, after decades of campaigning by the suffragettes. Homosexuality wasn't decriminalised until 1993 in Ireland, defining any same sex relationship as criminal offense until then. And it took until 2015 before same sex marriage was legalised in Ireland and same sex couples could benefit from



the same legal and societal protection of marriage as heterosexual couples could. The right to define which gender one identifies with wasn't granted in Ireland until 2015, and in this particular instance, Ireland was for once not catching up with European neighbours, but the first country to introduce this legislation and shine as an example...After LGBTQI+ and Transgender organisations advocating and rallying for this for years.

I am saying all this, because as a heterosexual and cisgendered woman, I have been blind and oblivious (and at times even ignorant) to this inequality and the many struggles and battles people from the LGBTQI+ community have and had to endure and in many instances still have to fight for to this day.

And these are only the big obvious things I pointed out.

Underneath the surface lie hundreds and thousands of subtle inequalities that are

interwoven into our everyday life, mostly not visible at first sight, but equally painful and destructive.

Let me shine a little light on some of these less visible aspects I am talking about:

I am a 40-year-old woman, happily married to a man and very happy in the female body, which I was born with. As a child, I was very content with the clothes my mother picked out for me and I remember clearly how excited I was about wearing a very beautiful dress at my communion. All movies I watched and books I read had either princesses (or female leads) I could identify with and princes (or male leads) I could admire. And the 'happily ever after' between prince and princess imprinted in me the deep trust that there was a prince out there waiting for me too one day. My parents never had any issues with my choice of toys (a lot of dolls) or activities (dancing, music and horse riding) and

encouraged me as much as they could.

From my teenage years, there was a keen interest from other girlfriends (and some well-meaning adults) wanting to know which boys I fancied or if I had a boyfriend yet. Any sex education I received in and outside of school was in regard to male and female genitalia and their relationship to each other (or not....).

Whenever I was in a relationship in my life, I could just do so without any announcement or need for permission and could show my affection to my partner in public at any time. My husband and I had the ability and choice to get married when we felt ready for it, which was celebrated by all our families and friends without hesitation.

I have never needed to justify myself or my gender for using power tools when single-handedly building a chicken coop in our back garden or not wearing make up on days when I just don't feel like it. And I can use toilets in restaurants, shops and cafes without a moment's hesitation and have never been bullied

or harassed for doing so.

All of this is a privilege I hold. Because I am heterosexual and cis-gendered.

And those are just a very few examples... the list could go on and on.

A lot of people don't experience this privilege. In fact, most people from the LGBTQI+ community don't. From the earliest time in childhood on.

In our hetero- and cis- normative world, there are expectations from parents and society to look a certain way or behave a certain way. For people from the LGBTQI+ community, there are no (or hardly any) role models in stories, books and movies that represent a different way of relating and being in the world. Instead, there is a need to justify oneself and who one is in love with over and over again. And sometimes that can even be dangerous and bring threat to one's emotional and physical wellbeing.

Everyday life things that I can take for granted (like being addressed with the right name and pronouns, being able to use a public bathroom) are not

a given for many LGBTQI+ people. And again, the list goes on and on.

I am making this point, because it is easy to see the big and obvious inequalities people from the LGBTQI+ community had and at times still have to endure. But it takes a little bit more investigation to see the small and subtle inequalities that still persist in nearly all areas of our society.

The good news is: It is very much in our power to change the small and subtle injustices and inequalities. Just by changing our language and narratives and being mindful and more inclusive of LGBTQI+ matters and realities, we can change a lot. It's a very difficult and strenuous process to change the big things, such as legislation and laws. But the small things, we can start with them right now...each of us.

And it doesn't take much.

And if we all do, then we are no longer in a place of privilege, but in a place of equality.

I for my part believe that would already make the world a better place.

During Covid19, the Gay Project is providing online services to Gay, Bi+, Trans, MSM and Queer Men in Kerry and Cork

GAY PROJECT
GAY | BI+ | QUEER | MSM | TRANS

To get more information

Email community@gayproject.ie,

Visit www.gayproject.ie

Follow us @GayProjectIRL

on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter.

or Call 0873647901

Network Ireland West Cork embarks on nationwide fitness challenge

The West Cork branch of Network Ireland have embarked on a nationwide fitness challenge having partnered with Empeal, an innovative digital health company that offers members free access to total health management at their fingertips.

The sudden switch to remote working, combined with the lack of available fitness resources has exposed employees and employers to the complications of burnout. Network Ireland identified this as having a potentially huge impact on their people and partnered with Empeal to give its members access to each of the platform's wellbeing management tools.

In addition to the health improvement tools offered by Empeal, the #NIFittestBranch Challenge will see participating branches across the nation competing to hit a daily goal of 10,000 steps. The winning branch alongside individual acknowledgements will be announced on International Women's day, March 8, a day of particular passion for both organisations.

Munster Gayze
Facebook Group

Black Rainbow
Writer's Club

Queer Vibes
Café

Queer Studies
Seminar

GOLD Older Men's
Café

Out-Lit
Book-Club

Gay Ramblers
Hillwalking Club
Occasionally Meet
in Kerry (returning
after Covid19)

people Health & Lifestyle

Neck creams to consider for your skincare routine

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.

Are you taking care of your neck? No matter how committed you are to complexion care, there is one significant area we all seem to neglect: the neck. As we age, the skin on our neck loses elasticity and collagen and this delicate area, can be one of the first places to show those tell-tale signs of ageing and perhaps the most noticeable! It is also more vulnerable to sun damage and photosensitisation from fragrances, not to mention 'turkey neck' (the term used to describe the sagging of skin around the chin) or 'tech neck' (the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles resulting from too

much straining over laptops and smartphones). So, with that in mind, it's time to invest in your precious neck skin and start using a targeted cream formulated to help firm, tone, and tighten that skin that has started sagging or showing crepey lines and wrinkles. Read on for my round up of six of the best neck creams to fight tech and turkey neck!

Dermalogica's Neck Fit Contour Serum

Described as your neck's best personal trainer Dermalogica's new Neck Fit Contour Serum is a skin care workout for your neck and décolleté. A lightweight, roll-on serum that immediately tightens skin and tones over time for a more visibly lifted and sculpted appearance. Using high-performance Flex Lift Contour Technology, which acts like invisible mesh to provide a visible lifting and tightening effect, it also smooths fine lines and helps protect skin against pollution, which can lead to premature signs of skin ageing. Neck Fit Contour Serum also comes with personalised neck workouts to help sculpt your neck's appearance from both the inside and the outside, €89 available in Dermalogica stockists nationwide and online dermalogica.com

NeoStrata Skin Active Firming Triple Firming Neck Cream

A concentrated anti-ageing treatment that helps lift and smooth the appearance of the

neck where signs of ageing are most prominent, this lightweight, non-greasy cream is expertly formulated with Pro-Amino Acid and NeoCitriate, which works to stimulate natural collagen production, whilst NeoGlucosamine gently exfoliates to lift away impurities and even skin tone. Enriched with Apple Stem Cell extract, it prolongs cell lifespan, leaving skin looking and feeling younger and lifted with a restored vitality, €77.40 available in NeoStrata stockists nationwide and online neostrata.ie

Vichy Neovadiol Phytosculpt Neck and Face Contours

Vichy's first anti-ageing, firming balm for menopausal skin, targeting the visible signs of ageing, it visibly reinforces, tightens, and redefines neck and face contours. Suitable for all skin types including sensitive skin. Along with Vichy Mineralising Thermal Water, rich in antioxidants, it also contains an active firming complex, which mimics DHEA, a hormone in the skin, which depletes during the menopause. The balm melts in contact with the skin to allow for absorption but once cooled down, the balm transforms into a film that lifts and firms the skin. Quickly absorbed and non-greasy, skin feels instantly hydrated, plumped and more even looking. Vichy Mineralising Thermal Water, rich in antioxidants, €30, available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

Thalgo Wrinkle Correction Rich Cream

Thalgo's new Hyalu-Procollagen range boosts the synthesis of collagen and hyaluronic acid in the skin, promoting a reduction in fine lines from underneath the skin. Their Wrinkle Correction Rich Cream is specifically meant for face AND neck, delivering a trio of hyaluronic acids and marine pro-collagen to plump up the epidermis, smooth and gradually fill in even established wrinkles. Formulated with plant butters and oils, its luscious texture nourishes dry skin on a daily basis, leaving it soft and

velvety. Wrinkle Correction is also available in a Gel-Cream texture enriched with aloe vera to adapt to the needs of normal to combination skin, €68 available in Thalgo salons/spas nationwide and online thalgo.ie

AlumierMD Neck and Décolleté Firming Cream

A luxuriously smooth firming cream that helps to prevent and improve the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, restoring a more youthful appearance. Low levels of encapsulated retinol firm and strengthen the skin and improve elasticity, texture, and tone. Encapsulated retinol al-

lows for a slow release into the skin overnight so you can enjoy all the benefits of retinol with little to no irritation. Liquorice root extract brightens and evens out skin tone while gentle flower acids exfoliate and promote skin renewal. Only to be used in your evening routine, apply a small amount after cleansing and applying treatment products and gently massage into neck and décolleté in an upward motion, as this contains retinol, ensure you wear sunscreen during the day, €84, to purchase email hello@shernamalone.ie or call 086 1451551.

Clarins super Restorative Décolleté and Neck Concentrate

If you're over 45, this cream has been formulated specifically for you and your skin's needs. Plant-based, it combines organic extracts of harungana and Montpellier rock with the soothing silkiness of oats to deliver a cream that evens out skin tone, reduces the appearance of age spots and boosts radiance. The directions instruct that you should use this both morning and night to maximise its effect and you should start to see a reduction in fine lines and neck creases within four weeks. With its uplifting botanical fragrance, non-oily moisturising effect, it immediately lifts the surface of the skin, smooths roughness, and restores velvety softness to the skin, €76 available in Clarins stockists nationwide and online clarins.ie.



Let us see that Spring in your step



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

Oh, my absolute goodness but THANK YOU all so much. I have been writing for so many years and the lovely messages that so many of you sent about last month's article has simply blown me away. Thank you all for taking the time to find a way to contact me or stop me on the street, I am so grateful. I've always tried to make sure that my message is clear, there is no 'looking good without feeling good' and, for some reason, the story about my cat seemed to resonate with people who don't even like cats! Wellness and safety come before everything else. The bottom line is that we are living in a 'pure mess' of a time and we are doing amazingly well. We are reaching out to each other more than ever before and perhaps laying down our cynical and judgemental side, which has

always been part of the curse of being Irish. I'm not saying that it's a 'curse to be Irish', but down through the years, we have many times over been proven to be our own worst enemy. Try your absolute best to stay away from those arguments online, opinions are always equally valid and finger pointing will always reveal four fingers pointing back at you. Everyone is trying their best, it might not be to the same standard that you hold yourself to but it's their best. Stop squabbling over who isn't social distancing enough or who has a mask under their nose – there have been times when I would arrive home and realise that I have my mask and coat on two hours later! Distraction my dears; we are all distracted to the point that life is now hard work, our brain capacity is continually being tested all the

more and we are struggling to stay on top of even the simple things.

I want to take this opportunity to applaud everyone who is working in supermarkets, newsagents and petrol stations, they deserve a super hero day – a day where they all get to wear a super hero outfit with a cape so that even our youngest children can see the people who made our lives so much easier in this mess. Lest we not forget the thousands of factory workers behind the scenes, the truck and delivery drivers, all around the country – a super hero outfit day for you too. I think it would make the entire country smile and we need that. The doctors, nurses, home help and all the medical staff, we have been loud with our support and we will continue to do so.

If you are reading this and

you are feeling like absolute crap, I hear you! Before you do another thing today, be as kind to yourself, as you would to a wounded animal that needed nursing back to health. Be gentle and patient and keep reminding yourself that nothing is permanent. Be kind to yourself with body creams and masks and I apologise for repeating myself with this one but putting your feet into a dish of warm water with lots of sea salt works wonders – it literally pulls all the stress and toxins out of your body and leaves you feeling refreshed and with beautifully soft feet. My dish is getting plenty of use at the moment and it might just be the best €5 or €6 that you will ever spend towards looking good from the inside out. You really can't paint a rusty gate, the rust comes through again very quickly;

but if you strip away the rust first, then the finished painted gate will be sure to stay looking beautiful!

How we get dressed can and does have a huge impact on how we feel but at the same time it reveals to others how we are feeling about ourselves and what our mood is. Because 2020 was all about 'clothes for around the house and the food-shop' for most of us, it meant that our 'going out' clothes feel neglected and cast aside. Designers were very aware of that so for Spring 2021 it's not surprising given the current climate that they looked deeply at what we really need from fashion. There were, more or less, two approaches here with some creating fantastical infectious and fabulous clothes to put that joie de vivre back

Continued on next page...

Romantic literature

Chick-Lit may not always be respected in literary circles but the romantic novel has provided a lot of pleasure over the years.

The genre first appeared in the eighteenth century. Previously books aimed at women were of the educational kind. Suddenly, young women were exposed to daring tales and dashing bucks. Romance was adventurous and exciting.

Below is an excerpt from the 'Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage' by Bantry-based writer and illustrator **Jenny Dempsey** – a how-to-manual for the modern woman should she find herself back in Regency Ireland.

READING

You will have been presented with conduct books over the years – Hester Chapone's 'Letters on the Improvement of the Mind' is extremely edifying. Reading by one's self is a diverting way to pass many a long, empty afternoon, and there are not many pleasures to equal a quiet evening at home listening to the person nearest the candle reading aloud. Spiritual books and moral guides have their place, but there is nothing like the piercing thrill to the bosom that one gets from the modern novel....

NOVEL

Samuel Richardson's, 'Pamela' first appeared nigh on 80 years ago – and has us still enthralled today. How we quake for Pamela's virtue and cheer when she wins her master's love! We may enjoy many other novels in this vein: 'Evelina' by Miss Burney, 'Belinda' by our own Miss Edgeworth to name a couple. Most recently we have been diverted by the work of a new

writer: a Miss Austen from England is showing some literary talent both in wit of phrase and lively characters. We hope she may enjoy some success.

ROMANTIC

Not to be confused with 'romance', the romantic sensibility is at present en vogue. Arising as a reaction to the cerebral Age of Enlightenment, followers of the Romantic are inspired by nature, passion and nostalgia. Our native, ancient architecture captivates us. We delight in discovering scenes of rugged nature and 'romantic' antiquity. If you would be desirous of a trip to an ancient ruin in a beautiful setting, we recommend

Muckross Abbey, near the estate of the Herbert family in Killarney. Take care to not expose yourself unveiled or without a bonnet. The head and face have no defense against the attacks of the atmosphere and tanned skin or a freckled face will disfigure even the loveliest of visage, rendering it hideous forever.

WRITERS

The themes of the romantic set and its celebration of the past, have in some way inspired an interest in Nationalism. Two books to exalt the plight of the native Irish are Maria Edgeworth's 'Castle Rackrent' and Lady Morgan's 'Wild Irish Girl'.

The fight for Catholic emancipation, is of course, the latest national cause.

The Romantic writer and poet Percy Bysshe Shelley came to Dublin some years ago to show support and to promote his pamphlet, 'An Address to the Irish People'. The young poet flung copies of the pamphlet from his balcony on number 7 Sackville Street to the crowds below. It is suspected the crowds were more interested in seeing Harriet his 16-year-old wife with whom he

had just eloped some five months previously.

STRANGER THAN FICTION Shelley proved to be a faithless fellow. Two years after the balcony incident, Shelley left Harriet and their two children to be with a different 16-year-old girl.

He had become smitten with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Rumour has it, they consummated their adulterous relationship by making love on her mother's gravestone. They spent some time in Switzerland, though soon returned for lack of funds. Meanwhile, Shelley's wife committed suicide by throwing herself in the river Serpentine.

Harriet's death allowed Shelley and Mary to marry and, once wed, they returned to Switzerland a second time. On this occasion, they were accompanied by Claire Clairmont, Mary's step-sister...

MONSTER

...who is in love with the most famous poet of our time, Lord Byron. She has recently given birth to his child. Lord Byron does not wish to form a permanent union with Miss Clairmont. In a recent letter he writes: 'I believe saw once that odd-headed girl [Miss Clairmont] – who introduced herself to me shortly before I left England – I never loved her nor pretended to love her – but a man is a man – and if a girl of eighteen comes prancing to you at all hours of the night – there is but one way.'

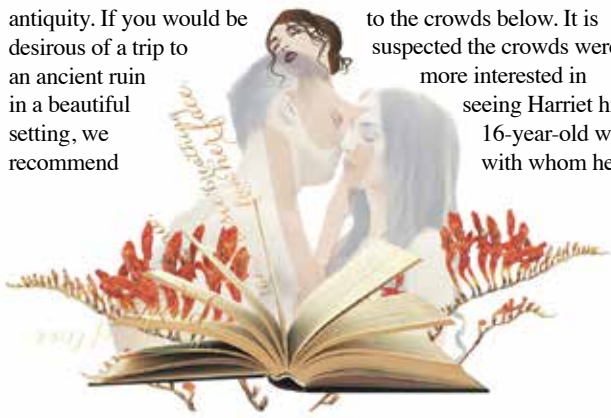


Image...Cont'd from previous page

into getting dressed while others gifted us with classic pieces that act as an extension of this year's comfortable ensemble. Basically, you will find a cross section of glorious slippers and dreamy ball gowns – how bad!

Who doesn't love a splash of colour and designers are always there to create exactly what we need. They know that we desperately need to have more fun, whether that is wearing a fabulous dress or the colours of the rainbow. We all need to concentrate on finding ways to prop ourselves up and if it means clothes shopping for you, then go for it. I have never seen so many full tulle skirts or dresses, they are romantic, dreamy and scream of flamboyant fun. We need lots of these! Hawaiian shirts and skirts are big this season too. Their sole purpose is to brighten up our day so we don't need to think about whether we will get to wear them on

holidays or not.

That little black dress never quite disappears as a fashion frontrunner but this season sees it back with an unmerciful bang. And it's the slinky body-con version that is front and centre. This is 'the' post lockdown dress to have in your wardrobe, ready and waiting for when you want and need to look fabulous. Teamed with heels, platform espadrilles, flip flops or runners – that is completely up to you and your signature style. Design teams have matched these dresses up with woven raffia tote bags – these gorgeous bags made an appearance last year – a wonderful way to tone down a more formal dress.

Bright bold colours in a multitude of textures and fabrics are ready and waiting for us. Pink is the standout colour; it has literally exploded everywhere, gifting us shades of watermelon, fuchsia and hot pink. There is

no better way to pack a punch than in hot pink. Tie-dye, not just a lockdown hobby, has come forward in swirly prints in the brightest of colours. Rainbow stripes look incredible too – they stuck their head out last year and are taking a firm foothold this season. Look them up and revel in their glory.

The Spring coat will undoubtedly be a trench coat, go for a classic colour – biscuit/taupe, navy or black. Denim dresses have seen sales increase by 50 per cent for this season so if you already have one in your wardrobe, pull it out and add a belt. Jeans sales have increased too but with a move away from skinny or slim to a more slouchy relaxed fit. People were looking for the shape and comfort of leggings, but in denim, so designers were sure to provide exactly that. Statement jewellery is back and very big, especially when it comes to earrings. They



look incredible with monochrome – a gorgeous white shirt, loose white trousers and big colourful long earrings or a full black look with the same colourful earrings – stunning!

Puff sleeves have dominated in recent years and that is set to continue right through this year, from tops to dresses to coats; prepare yourself for even more shoulder action. To hell with it if you are bemoaning the fact that you have gained a few lockdown pounds, hemlines are rising this year, so wear a mini skirt anyway. There are some glorious mini slip dresses and 60s style micro skirts. The past few years were all about the midi dress, it's not gone yet, the mini is just a new add in. The big pendant is a must have for its bohemian feel. I know that I don't need to remind you to shop local, it's a given now that you'll be able to peruse local websites. The best part is that

these shop owners know you and can advise you over the phone about sizing. We are so grateful for that.

Try to make a little bit of an effort with how you look everyday, it has such a wonderful knock-on effect. Smile, even when you don't feel like it. Cheer someone else on even if you are struggling yourself. Take a little time every day to watch the birds in your garden, soak in their beauty and simplicity. Encourage yourself every day, as you would a dear friend and never, not ever, put yourself down. You are your own super hero – did you know that?

'The first question I ask myself when something doesn't seem to be beautiful is why do I think it's not beautiful. And very shortly you discover that there is no reason.' John Cage

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For a short period, Shelley, his wife and Miss Clairmont joined Lord Byron in Geneva. This was during the year 'Without Summer', where the weather was so inclement that all outdoor activities were curtailed. To pass the time, the group – all avid readers and writers – devised a competition to write a ghost story. Mary Shelley wrote a Gothick tale, which she called 'Frankenstein'.

That most romantic of men, Lord Byron, has himself been unlucky in love. It is said he formed a passion for his half-sister, Augusta Leigh and that her child, Elizabeth Medora is his. A much-publicised affair with Caroline Lamb ended acrimoniously. That distraught lady was removed from polite society to Lismore Castle in Waterford. There she wrote the book, Glanavon a thinly disguised account of their affair. Byron next married Annabella Milbanke, cousin of Lady Lamb, but she has recently left him taking their daughter Ava

with her.

Circulating libraries allow even those with modest means to borrow the latest publications. A subscription is approximately 16 shillings a year.

The Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage provides the modern Irish woman with all she needs to know should she time-travel back to the Regency era and discover she needs to get married for financial security.

The Curious Lady's Guide to Marriage is a 90 page, full-colour A4 guide. Gentle humour and quirky drawings lead the reader through fashion and beauty tips, society gossip and the most up-to-date gynaecological information. Each book comes with hand-inserted letters, fabric snippets and wild flowers. The book is available from www.prettyinterestinghistory.com - price €28 (includes free shipping anywhere in Ireland)

people Health & Lifestyle

Public urged to get health concerns checked out

To mark World Cancer Day, February 4, The Irish Cancer Society and RTÉ's Marty Morrissey are urging people to contact their doctor if they are concerned about symptoms that may indicate cancer. The 'Your Health Matters' campaign aims to increase awareness of the importance of early detection and encourage those concerned about symptoms to contact their doctor. HSE data shows that the number of suspected cancer cases referred through the Healthlink e-referral system dropped by more than 50 per cent after the first wave of the pandemic.

Marty whose close friend's daughter passed away from cancer this year said, "I don't know about you but my guess is, most of us are the same. Maybe

we noticed something that doesn't feel right but instead of contacting our doctor, we put it on the long finger hoping it will go away on its own. But this year, even with everything that's going on, it's important to check it out. If it's clear that's fantastic but if it's not, an early diagnosis could make all the difference. Don't delay in contacting your doctor; they'll want to hear from you. Or try calling the Irish Cancer Society Support Line to speak to a nurse. Your health matters and so do you. Please... Make your health a priority".

Commenting on the importance of early diagnosis, Jane Jackson, 46, who underwent skin cancer treatment during the Covid-19 pandemic said; "It was my dental hygienist who spotted it – a mole at the back of my neck. She suggested I have



it looked at, but after speaking with my husband, Roy, we both agreed to keep an eye on it, as we thought it looked fine. However, some months later Roy noticed it had started to change so I made an appointment to see my GP. Despite the pandemic I was seen the same day I made the call. The GP immediately made an appointment for me days later at the dermatology department of the local hospital. I was anxious about how seriously the GP was taking this, and I was also very worried about going to the hospital in the middle of the health crisis.

It was decided at that appointment that the mole be removed immediately and sent

for testing. Days later I was called back to the hospital and was told that the mole was a cancerous melanoma and that I had stage 1b skin cancer. I cried when I was told. My doctor was so kind and apologised for her mask and that social distancing meant she couldn't comfort me and that I couldn't have someone with me. Since then I've undergone further testing and had more skin and lymph nodes removed. I now have to have full skin checks every 12 weeks, as there is a 70 per cent chance of recurrence.

My advice to others who are concerned about symptoms at this time is to just get them checked out with

their doctor. Melanoma can spread quickly, so I'm glad it was caught when it was, but if I had acted when the mole was first noticed I could have saved myself a lot of pain and anxiety. Once you make the call your doctor will start the process for you. They'll make sure you receive the treatment you need, regardless of the current situation. All you have to do is pick up the phone."

Dr Una Kennedy, General Practitioner and GP advisor with the NCCP, said, "I want to make this clear – we are working hard to make sure that anyone who is worried about any sign or symptom of cancer is seen, despite the pandemic. There are many challenges but detecting cancer early is a priority, and we are making sure that those who need it are receiving it. Please do not hesitate in contacting your doctor's surgery if you have any questions. Maybe something doesn't feel quite right or you have concerns

about attending a clinic or a hospital appointment. Even though there is increased pressure on our health services, ensuring potential cancers are detected as early as possible is as much of a priority now as it has ever been.

We are worried that people are delaying contacting their doctor if they have symptoms, which could be cancer. We certainly don't want this to happen. Your health matters. If a loved one told you about a suspicious looking change to their skin, a lump or abnormal bleeding would you tell them to delay contacting their GP? We want to hear from you."

Early detection is crucial to successful treatment of cancer. Contact your GP today to arrange an appointment. If you have difficulties getting through to your GP call the Irish Cancer Society's Support Line on 1800 200 700 to speak with a registered nurse. Visit www.cancer.ie for more information.

New Hearing Healthcare Clinic in Clonakilty

Hidden Hearing is bringing the 'hear and now' to Clonakilty this month, with the opening of a new audiology clinic at the Clonakilty Primary Care Centre.

The clinic will be open three days a week and appointments can be made on 1800 882 884 for free hearing tests along with a full evaluation of your hearing with an audiologist in the new clinic. Hidden Hearing Clonakilty will also offer a weekly wax clinic due to local demand.

With growing incidence of hearing being affected by wax blockages, micro-suction is now provided at a reduced rate of €50 for a limited time only by Hidden Hearing, the countrywide hearing health specialists. The service usually costs €70.

Symptoms of hard and impacted earwax can include sudden or impartial hearing loss, tinnitus, discomfort and a feeling of fullness in the ear, or earache. It can also be difficult to perform a full hearing test when there is a build-up of earwax.

'Micro-suction is the safest and quickest method of ear wax removal, it is also used to safely remove foreign bodies present in the ear canal. The simple and effective treatment uses a medical suction device and a microscope to see directly into the ear canal', according

to Donal Breheny, Wax Technician with Hidden Hearing.

No liquids are needed during micro-suction, so it is a totally pain-free and comfortable experience that is completed in minutes, the hearing specialist says.

Micro-suction can also be used for specific cases like perforations or grommets, instead of regular irrigation; where a blockage needs to be removed, but fluid, like ear oil drops, cannot enter the ear.

Manual removal of earwax is generally performed for soft wax, or where compacted wax is softened with drops beforehand, and tiny specialist tools are used to gently ease the wax out of the ear canal.

Earwax is a hardworking healthcare support, and shouldn't cause any trouble unless it becomes impacted.

"Wax is basically a self-cleaning service for our ears, and protects the sensitive ear canal from things like bacteria and debris that can cause infections. Never put anything in your ear, and, if you are bothered by the feeling of a blockage, make sure to see your GP or a hearing specialist", advises Breheny.

Hidden Hearing take safety extremely seriously and every clinic is fully kitted with PPE to protect customers and make sure they feel comfortable during their appointment.

On arrival to the clinic,



customers will witness the audiologist using hand sanitiser, cleaning all equipment with medical wipes and putting on fresh PPE before conducting the assessment. After the consultation, all equipment will be cleaned and the clinic coordinator will open the door so customers will not need to touch the door handle.

'The steps we have taken and continue to take are built on a solid foundation of providing a safe environment established over 30 plus years, strict compliance with safety procedures as set out in our Safety Statements located in the clinic' Donal Breheny says.

Hidden Hearing is an essential service which will operate even during lockdown, the clinic offers free hearing tests and encourages anyone concerned about their hearing to make an appointment by calling 1800 882 884. You can also book an appointment online at www.hiddenhearing.ie.

Maxi Zoo proves a frontrunner with donation that secures animal charity's survival

The future of a worthy animal charity, which offers homes to unwanted racing greyhounds is secure thanks to a significant donation from Maxi Zoo Ireland.

In a year that has pushed charities to the brink, Maxi Zoo, Ireland's largest pet retailer, has given a critical lifeline to Homes for Unwanted Greyhounds (HUG) through its Friendship Connects campaign, which was run throughout its 20 stores nationwide.

HUG is a national charity that provides loving homes for the gentle giants of the canine world – greyhounds that have been bred for racing and retired young due to injury or underperformance which would otherwise be destroyed.

Through Maxi Zoo's Friendship Connects campaign, over €27,000 was raised for the charity to secure its future which was in jeopardy and allow it to purchase a new vehicle to enable more greyhounds to be rehomed and ensure the continuance of its responsible rehoming and due diligence processes for fostering.

Noelle Long from Maxi Zoo said: "Charities need our help, now more than ever as they cannot fundraise like they would have pre-Covid. As part of our on-going commitment to support and work with animal charities, we ran our Friendship Connects – Together for Pets campaign, which allowed customers to purchase a bracelet in any of our 20



Pictured at the cheque presentation was Margaret Moran, volunteer for HUG. Pic: Julien Behal Photography

stores with 100 per cent of the profits donated to HUG. It's an amazing charity that works tirelessly to find loving homes for retired Irish racing greyhounds. We have the most generous customers who dug deep and we are delighted to have raised over €27,000 in our 20 stores for HUG. We're incredibly proud of the impact this funding will have for HUG."

Jessica Reid from HUG explained how, as a key link between unwanted racing greyhounds and the hundreds of people who wish to adopt the breed, its service was severely stunted due to a lack of funding. "We were quite concerned as to how, if, we could survive this year with the challenges faced with fundraising so this donation puts us in a much healthier position. We're incredibly grateful to

Maxi Zoo who have supported us over the last two years – it's not just the company but all the staff who have been so supportive of our charity. All our greyhounds come from trainers who no longer need them and might otherwise have them destroyed. We have a long waiting list of applications for adoptions and we can now focus on good quality rehoming."

Thankfully perception has and is changing in relation to greyhounds, which were unfairly thought of as 'hard work' rather than being excellent pets for their gentle, affectionate and friendly nature. This is why HUG was established to cater for the speciality breed, particularly those that have been bred for racing, that deserved an equal right to a new and loving home. www.maxizoo.ie.

Surviving lockdown with your dog



CANINE CORNER

Liz Mahony

Liz Mahony is an experienced Dog Trainer and Holistic Therapist for all animals. In her monthly column, Liz aims to promote mutual respect between carer and dog.

Lockdown took a while to get used to the first time around but once we accepted the restrictions, we knuckled down and got on with it. After all, we were 'all in it together'.

Our dogs loved it because they had our company 24/7. The trouble was that this created problems. We gave them so much attention and privileges they began to think they owned the place or developed

acute separation anxiety in our absence.

After lockdown, the majority of my home visits to people were to sort out just those sorts of problems: dogs that had literally taken over the home, becoming demanding to the point of being confrontational. I found I was setting up training routines for people to help get themselves and their dogs back in line. What was apparent overall was the lack of respect between owner and pet.

Look at it this way – if you give in to children every time they demand something and never teach them the meaning of 'no', they become horribly spoiled. The same thing applies to your dog. The only difference is that dogs get quite aggressive and will growl and bite to get their own way. But both grow up showing no respect.

This time around, lockdown is much harder and we no longer feel we're 'all in this together'! Our anxiety levels are that much greater, as there is nothing but doom and gloom in the news.

Dogs have always found it stressful living with us 'cheek by jowl' and this last year, and especially now, it's even more stressful for them. When we humans get over-anxious

it doesn't take much for our emotions to boil over and we explode. Now, imagine being a dog and living with us in 'stress mode'. It's enough to make a dog explode!

But it doesn't have to be all bad and, in fact, dogs can help us reduce our stress levels if we let them. So let's look at how we can make life easier for each other.

Set Boundaries: That means establishing and maintaining a routine for you and the dog. The boundaries are the things you allow or don't allow your dog. For example, if you taught your dog not to cadge from the table; not to jump up; not to sit on the sofa, then don't allow him those things during lockdown. Bad habits are much harder to get rid of than good ones!

If you're working from home, then it's especially important to have those boundaries. That's time for training, walking, feeding, 'quality' time for the dog and work time when you mustn't be disturbed.

'Me' Time: That's the time when you re-charge your batteries all by yourself doing whatever it takes to restore your equilibrium so you can face the rest of the day. If your dog is jumping on you, nudging

or barking for attention, that's definitely not 'Me' time. It's a precious time when you literally check up on yourself to see how you're doing.

For me, I found that on the days the sun shone with some heat, I would take my coffee and sit quietly outside. Juno, my own dog, came to lie quietly at my feet. I watched the birds at the feeder. But, mostly I sipped my coffee, took deep, slow breaths to ground myself enjoying the warmth of the sun. I could feel all the tension and anxiety slipping away.

Personal space: Personal space is that bubble that surrounds us and separates us from each other. Anyone, including a dog that jumps into your space uninvited, is unwelcome. Practice strengthening that personal space. It's worth it.

Be Consistent: Dogs are black and white. They thrive on routine, but, more than that, they like you to be consistent in how you deal with them.

These days that can be a huge ask. It's so easy to one minute cuddle our dogs and then shout at them for no apparent reason.

Be Calm: As much as you can, treat your dog as even-handedly as possible. That follows on from the above. So

try not to take out your anger, frustration, anxiety, etc., on the dog.

Your dog probably hasn't done anything wrong or differently but you may be looking at him through the perspective of your own stress. That's not easy, I know.

Last week, the dark, rainy days, really got to me. As a result, everything Juno did annoyed me! She hadn't changed

– I had. So I went off to have some 'Me' time and then tried to acknowledge all the good things that I love about her.

Find what works for you so that you all live together with as little stress as possible.

To get in touch with Liz, email: liz@corkdogtrainingclasses.com. www.corkdogtrainingclasses.com

Our dogs loved it (lockdown) because they had our company 24/7. The trouble was that this created problems. We gave them so much attention and privileges they began to think they owned the place or developed acute separation anxiety in our absence.



West Cork Bird Race within your 5km

What could be more romantic on St. Valentine's weekend than a walk with nature? **Dave Rees and Nicholas Mitchell** of the West Cork Branch of BirdWatch Ireland explain where the West Cork Bird Race comes in.

Like everyone else, the West Cork Branch of BirdWatch Ireland has been hit by the restrictions introduced to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that we have not been able to run any events or outings. Our last one was on March 7 last year! However, we do know that, if there is anything positive to be taken from these times, it is that people are taking more of an interest in their environment, whether it be feeding the birds in the garden, taking part in the Garden Bird Survey, or going out for walks and getting to know the local area.

One of the events that we

would normally run at this time of the year is the West Cork Bird Race. This is where teams of four drive around a predetermined area between Clonakilty and Rosscarbery, identifying as many different species of birds as they can over the course of a day. This has become a popular (and highly competitive) event.

Unfortunately this year, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it will not be possible to hold the Bird Race in this format. Instead, the Branch invites you to take part in a 5km Bird Race. The race will take place over the weekend of February 13 and 14.

The rules are simple:

- Over the course of the weekend, walk or cycle (leave your car at home) around the allowed 5km radius from your house and record as many bird species as you can. Please only go out with members of your household or bubble and stick to your 5km radius.
- Birds can be identified by either sight or by sound.
- The birds can be outside of your 5km radius as long as you see or hear them whilst you are within your 5km.

Email your list and the number of species that you have recorded, together with your name and location to Nicholas Mitchell (secretary@bird-watchirelandwestcork.ie).

The Branch will publish the top 10 on its Facebook page. There will be no prizes; this is purely for fun. Obviously those people that are lucky enough

to live close to the coast or by an estuary are likely to see more species than those who live further inland. Don't forget though; this is all about taking part and not about winning.

This is an ideal event for members of the family to take part in together, or for anyone just wanting to go out for walk by themselves. So get out, get

some exercise, and have fun identifying birds.

While you are out and about, stop walking for a moment, stand still and listen. Birds are starting to sing. You can probably identify some or all of your garden birds by sight, but what if you cannot see them? Do you know their songs and calls? February through to April is an excellent time of year to learn birdsong. There are no leaves on the trees, at this time of year, so it's much easier to see which bird is singing, and by the time that you have crawled through scrub and brambles to find him (with a few exceptions, it's mostly males that sing), his song will be imprinted in your memory!

The Branch would still love to hear about the birds in your garden, or of any difficulties that you may have with bird identification. You can post pictures, stories and questions on our Facebook Page (search for @BirdWatchIrelandWestCork on Facebook or Messenger) or on Twitter @BWWestCork.

Covid has had a severe impact on all our lives, as well as on charities like BirdWatch

Ireland. The public response has been amazing. In 2020, BirdWatch Ireland saw a large increase in its membership, so thank you! Please continue to help. If you are not a member of BirdWatch Ireland, please consider it. If you are, then please tell your family and friends. You can also help by buying things like bird feeders and high quality bird food from the BirdWatch Ireland shop birdwatchireland.ie/shop.

Thanks, enjoy the Bird Race, and let us know how you get on with learning birdsong.



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



Female Stonechat, one of the species that you may encounter
Pic: Nicholas Mitchell

people Environment : Making a difference

'Good News' in journey to rid world of nuclear

Anti-nuclear activist, MEP Grace O'Sullivan welcomes breakthrough, saying 'there's still a long way to go though'



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.

It's over 75 years since the appalling news broke that the heavily-populated Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been the victims of nuclear attack. These were the dramatic actions that earmarked the closing days of our second World War. The impacts

of the bombs, so sickeningly dubbed Little Boy and Fat Man, were ferocious.

The playful name tags belied the cruel efficiency with which those man-made harbingers of death undertook their assigned duty. In the immediate wake of the explosions over 200,000 people perished. Many others were left with horrific, life-changing injuries. Pictures of the gnarled flesh of people who suffered severe thermal burns are as disturbing today as they were then.

But that wasn't the end of the horror and while current survivors of the attacks dwindle, as old-age takes its toll, the long-term damage has been multi-faceted and deep. Nuclear fallout, leukemia and other radiation-linked cancers, anaemia and ulcers have been rife. And that's saying nothing of the ongoing psychological impacts on a society, and of course, on the world. The earth most surely shifted on its axis on those bleak August days in 1945.

While Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain the only nuclear explosions unleashed in conflict, atmospheric and underground nuclear testing have had a massive impact on people's lives and the environment in the intervening years. Nuclear weapons have been responsible for too many lives and too much long-term, irreparable ecological destruction.

And so it is that I welcome news on this most disturbing of topics in recent days.

The announcement on January 27 that US Presi-



Grace and Luka Bloom protest at the French Embassy.

dent Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed to extend what's known as the New START nuclear nonproliferation treaty, is good news following on from news released just days earlier, on January 22, that another international nuclear treaty, the 'Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons' (TPNW) had entered into force.

I joined Greenpeace over 30 years ago and spent 20 years there as an activist working on environment and peace campaigns. Over my time with Greenpeace and ever since, I have campaigned against nuclear weapons. So (on that front at least) last week was a good news week for me.

TPNW is particularly significant, as it prohibits the possession, development, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. It's the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty in more than two decades, and has been hailed as, in the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres 'an important step towards a world free of nuclear weapons.'

It was initially approved by 122 nations at the 2017 UN General Assembly. By the end of October last year, thanks largely to massive efforts by civil society, NGOs such as Greenpeace and, in particular, the work of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the treaty received the 50 ratifications it needed to enter into force.

As an Irish woman, I'm proud to say that Ireland played its part in the process that has led to the adoption of TPNW. It was no accident, and fittingly symbolic, that Ireland chose to deposit its ratification of the TPNW on August 6, 2020, a date that also marks the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

The Department of Foreign Affairs stands over its commitments to achieving a world 'free from the threat of nuclear weapons.' It is, the Department clearly states in publications on this topic 'an historic, long-standing priority for Ireland (that is) motivated by the immense human suffering which would arise from the detonation of a nuclear



weapon, whether by miscalculation or design or accident.'

Having seen firsthand some of the impacts on the ground in areas of the world where nuclear testing has taken place over the years I can attest to the suffering. Nowhere today is it more visible than in the Marshall Islands, where to this day the now-precarious Runit Dome, a massive concrete enclosure locals nickname 'The Tomb' contains the equivalent of 35 olympic sized swimming pools of radioactive debris. It's a disturbing sight to see and a sloppy attempt at containment, supposedly dealing with life-threatening waste from the 67 nuclear bombs the United States unleashed on the islands from 1946 to 58.

While recent developments are good news, there is a long way to go. Disarmament of nuclear weapons remains a high priority for the United Nations and in order to increase international security and safety on this issue it is vital that work

continues.

Many countries with nuclear capacity have signed other key treaties, however the precarity around possession of weapons that have the potential to obliterate, means that entire cooperation is vital.

One such key treaty, The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a significant agreement, whose origins are closely connected to Ireland (in 1958 Minister Frank Aiken introduced the 'Irish Resolutions' at the UN, which eventually led to NPT). The NPT came into force in 1970, and while the United States is a signatory, four of the nine 'Nuclear Weapons States' are not (Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea).

At the risk of overloading this column with acronyms, the other main treaty in this area is the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which bans all nuclear explosions/ tests on Earth. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1996. To date, 184 states have signed and 168 states have ratified the CTBT. In order for it to enter force, however, 44 specified 'nuclear-capable states' must ratify. Of these 44, India, Pakistan and North Korea have not signed, and only 36 countries have ratified.

We have a long way to go, but in recent days there have been enough positive breakthroughs to give me a renewed sense of hope.

Ireland shuts the door on new gas and oil

Campaigners welcome the Government's proposal for a national ban on all future oil and gas exploration and extraction in Ireland.

Ireland will now become the second country in Europe and only the fourth in the world to introduce a definitive national ban through legislation on all fossil fuel exploration.

In 2017 Ireland took the first steps to legally prohibiting gas extraction with a legal ban on fracking onshore. This next step will extend that ban to any new oil or gas exploration in our offshore waters.

Kate Ruddock, Deputy Director of Friends of the Earth commented, "The campaign to keep fossil fuels in the ground is strong and sustained here in Ireland. Credit is

due to the many grassroots groups and activists who have contacted their TDs, signed petitions and took to the streets on this issue for many years.

"We now need to see a legally robust ban in legislation that prevents any loopholes or legal challenges from the offshore oil and gas industry, especially in the context of existing fossil fuel entitlements and leases. We will be calling for the ending of all oil and gas exploration with a specific date for the termination of existing licenses.

"We may only be a small country, but we have a huge opportunity for greater global leadership, particularly during our time on the UN security council. Globally we need to leave over 80% of known reserves of fossil fuels in

the ground to prevent runaway climate change."

The ban is included in the revised Climate Action Bill which was due to go before the Cabinet on February 2. The revisions to the Bill have come as recommendations from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, following significant debate and a series of expert witnesses who came before the Committee late last year. The Bill still needs to pass through a number of additional legislative stages within the Houses of the Oireachtas before becoming law. This is a priority piece of legislation for the Government and was a key item agreed under the Programme for Government.

O'Sullivan calls on Council to overturn unfair recycling centre price-hike policy

A recent decision by Cork County Council to hike the price for recycling for owners of commercial vehicles is both counter-productive and unfair, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan said.

For many small business owners their work and private vehicle is the same. Deputy O'Sullivan is calling on the Council to overturn a decision that raised the price of recycling from a commercial vehicle to €10, as well as

doubling the price of bringing timber to the centres.

"You run down to the recycling centre after a long day at work, throw your bag of household recycling into your van and you're suddenly faced with a €10 instead of the standard €3," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"This sort of thing will lead to more fly-tipping and dumping. In this day-and-age we're supposed to be incentivising people to recycle. This disincentivizes as far as I'm concerned."

The hikes also put recycling centre staff in an awkward position, as they may have built up friendships with regular users but are now being asked to triple their prices, deputy O'Sullivan said.

"I've asked Council to review this decision," he said.

"As it stands, right now, the price hikes are too extreme and will drive people away from recycling. That is the exact opposite of what we want."

people Environment : Making a difference

West Cork bites into the 'doughnut'

Everyone knows what a doughnut looks like. But what on Earth is 'doughnut economics' (as recommended by President Higgins, David Attenborough, and the Pope)? **Moze Jacobs** and **Alice Glendinning** shed some light on the subject.

English economist Kate Raworth decided in 2012 that this is exactly how growth should unfold — circular, instead of a single straight line going up and up at a slant like an airplane that has taken off but can never land. This old (and increasingly obsolete) economic model has had many 'unfortunate' side effects: Huge inequality and the systemic destruction of biodiversity.

Traditional economics pretends that natural resources are 'free' and external: Even if life on the planet totally depends on it. The norm was, and often still is, to produce, use, and throw away. Never mind the Great Pacific Garbage Patch with its 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic. Never mind people doing meaningless jobs for low pay. And never mind the ridiculous debt burdens that can never be repaid.

Raworth's alternative economics offers a different approach. Her idea is to design healthy economies, where people can survive, thrive, and feel safe in the knowledge that they will continue to have food on the table and a roof over their head and work that is fulfilling and not demeaning. How that food is packaged and grown is an unresolved global issue. We cannot keep plundering nature and exhausting our resources. It is completely illogical. It makes no sense.

The ring of Kate's doughnut is green. It indicates 'the safe

and just space for humanity'.

The hole in the middle is exactly that — a shortfall. Coloured red (a warning signal) are all the areas of lack that too many people still face (or fear that they might tumble into). Such as housing, peace and justice, (clean) water and energy, good health, (nutritious and affordable) food. But these worldwide deficiencies can only be remedied, in the long term, and for the benefit of future generations, if we respect what Raworth calls the 'ecological ceiling'. Otherwise known as the nine limits of earth's life-supporting systems that we cannot afford to overshoot if our species wants to continue to exist at all.

Kate Raworth's doughnut is a system-in-progress that is being trialled in the US and also in Europe. Last April, Amsterdam officially announced that it is 'going doughnut' (spearheaded by the deputy mayor) and in September, the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) was launched, which serves as a testing ground and think-tank. Meanwhile, hundreds of cities, villages, and groups with an appetite for a changed and more responsible and social economic system are flocking to www.doughnuteconomics.org.

Does Raworth provide ready-to-eat recipes?

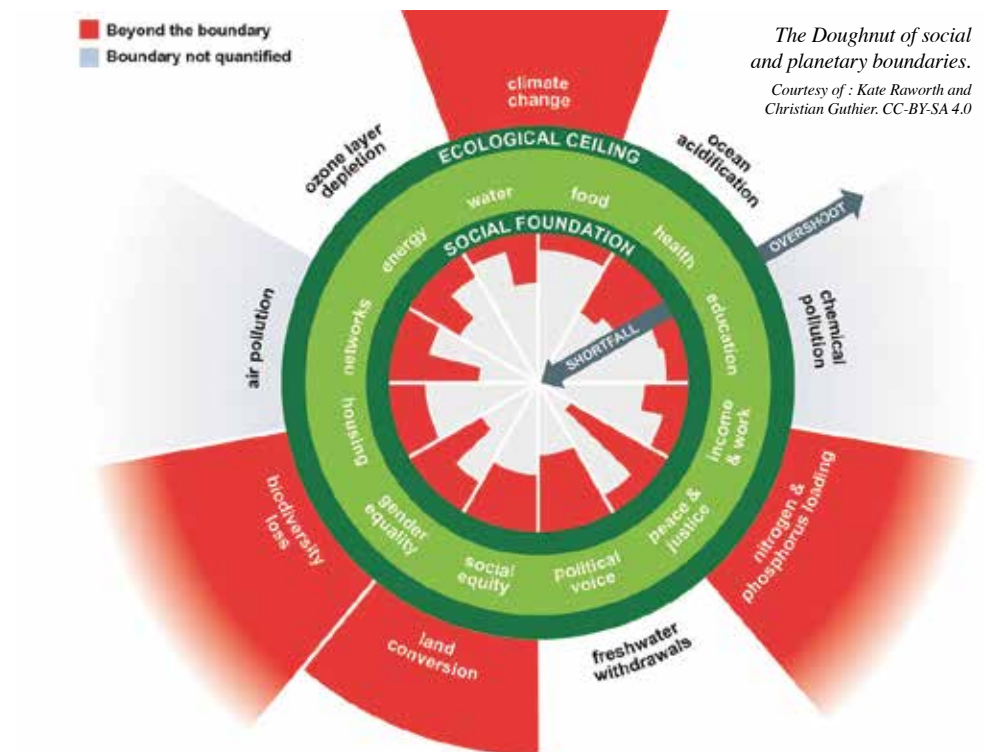
No. Local ingredients differ; no community or situation is alike. Each solution is place-based.

So what about Ireland?

President Michael D. Higgins, the first head of state who publicly praised the method, referred to "living in the Doughnut" as "humanity's overriding goal". There is a national Irish doughnut network, IDEN, which meets regularly. And a local group, the West Cork Doughnut Economy Network, is also swinging into action. It intends to connect communities, groups, individuals and businesses that want to implement the 'doughnut ideas'.

Absolutely essential is the aim to meet people's basic needs, as defined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals such as 'no poverty', 'full and productive... work for all', 'clean water', and 'halt biodiversity loss'. Owing to the urgency of the latter and the gravity of the current economic situation change may no longer be an impossible pipe dream. If we're lucky!

There examples of people and businesses in West Cork, and elsewhere in Ireland, that already go out of their way to do things differently. Take Exploding Tree (formerly Clonakilty chocolate), founded and run by Allison Roberts. As avid readers of West Cork People will know, she abhors waste (and loves bicycles, which is a different story, although sustainable transport matters in a doughnut context). "In my dream world, I'd be able to sell all my chocolate bars unwrapped," says



The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries.

Courtesy of : Kate Raworth and Christian Guthrie. CC-BY-SA 4.0

Allison. "That is already happening more and more via my website." She is very passionate about eco-packaging, is keen to share her knowledge, and lets other people benefit from her research. "I am taking it step by step and advising them to not see change as this massive beast. Add one thing at the time to your list. Start with your tape supplier, then pay attention to labels and so on." On her website www.explodingtree.com she lists her suppliers (e.g. for biodegradable, compostable sleeves and vegetable-based ink). Equally important to how she runs her business is the origin of ingredients. Everything is Fairtrade. This worldwide

agricultural standard is certified by Fairtrade International and the Rainforest Alliance. Both are 'committed to tackling unsustainable production and market practices'. No child labour or slavery. Guaranteed minimum prices. In other words — less poverty. Allison explains that she buys all her cocoa beans from a Fairtrade co-operative in Ghana. "There are systems of abuse in commodities that I absolutely want to avoid," she says. "But I am also consciously part of the local 'ecosystem'. To me, that means a focus on community-minded small business-

es. If we had more of them, our towns would thrive. Small and walkable centres. That should be the future!"

The West Cork Doughnut Economy Network will be setting up meetings for businesses and communities and individuals. If you'd like to know more, please send an email to westcorkdoughnuteconomynetwork@gmail.com and/or read next month's West Cork People.

Irish Doughnut network:
www.doughnuteconomics.org/events/56

Short-term emissions reductions due to the Covid-19 pandemic do not negate the need for targeted and sustained action across all sectors

The (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) have jointly released an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2020. The estimates show a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of almost six per cent in 2020 compared to 2019. The estimates are based on monthly indicator data, allowing for earlier estimation — compared to the more comprehensive annual data used by the EPA to produce Ireland's GHG Inventory.

There were significant changes in energy-related emissions, particularly transport and residential sector emissions, as a result of new living and work practices brought about by Covid-19. The overall reduction is comparable

to that seen following the global financial crisis. However, the economic rebound from the Covid-19 crisis is estimated to bring emissions back to previous levels, unless additional action is taken.

Commenting on the figures Laura Burke, Director General, EPA said: "We are at a pivotal point for our economy, and the recovery steps we take now will shape Ireland for the next decade. While these early estimates show a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for 2020 as a result of Covid restrictions, this level of emission reductions, at a minimum, will be required annually.

Ireland needs a 'green recovery' to rebuild our economy, generate new jobs and respond to climate change. As we emerge

from the global pandemic, a 'green' stimulus and implementation of ambitious policies and measures can deliver Ireland's current and future commitments to a climate-neutral economy and climate-resilient society by 2050.

The emissions reductions in 2020 must be built on to achieve continual, substantial, year-on-year reductions, making the 2020's the decade of climate action."

Commenting, William Walsh, CEO, SEAI said: "The Programme for Government and the Climate Action Plan are very clear on the scale of ambition necessary to achieve Ireland's clean energy transition. This will require a national conversation to find solutions and innovate, changing way we live, work and rebuild our economy to give us a

chance of achieving our collective mission.

The investment needed in all sectors to address the climate crisis provides tremendous opportunities for warmer and cheaper to run homes and businesses, a growth in green jobs in Ireland, cleaner air in our towns and cities and more open spaces for us all to enjoy.

Climate action has to be a national priority at all levels of society, led by Government, and supported by businesses, communities and individuals all working together. The public health emergency has made us all think about what's important. I hope that, in time, people can find that same connection and resolve when it comes to taking climate action."

Inchydoney walkway project elects Chair

The Inchydoney Walkway Project (IWP) has elected Eoin Hurley as chair at its inaugural meeting. Inchydoney resident Jerome Lynch was elected as vice chair.

The group met in January to appoint officers with a range of expertise in fields such as engineering, environmental protection and council liaison, with the express goal of building a safe, sustainable walkway between Clonakilty and Inchydoney Island.

Eoin Hurley, who has more than 30 experience managing major international engineering and construction projects, said he was excited to be part of the project. "For too long the only safe way to get to Inchydoney has been by car," he said. "As someone who lives on the main route to Inchydoney I've seen the huge volume of car traffic, and I've seen many close calls with pedestrians who have no safe walking route to get to the island.

"This is a huge opportunity for us to do something brilliant for residents of Inchydoney, Clonakilty and visitors to the area."

No single route has yet been agreed on; the IWP will explore all avenues and engage in consultation with residents, landowners and stakeholders while also facilitating feasibility studies into the best options for the walkway.

"It's an exciting time for Clonakilty," Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan added. "There have been efforts to do this before, but now we have a dedicated and committed group with a range of expertise who want to see this through.

"The benefits to the community from this project will last long into the future."

For updates please visit Facebook and Instagram pages: The Inchydoney Walkway Project

people Environment : Making a difference

When zero waste is far from zero – it can be a plus



ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

I live on the edge of the River Llen where the river is still tidal. Every so often I walk along the river's edge collecting waste plastic, glass bottles and tins or aluminium cans that have washed up along the shore line.

I put it in plastic bags and phone the council who send someone to come and collect it and take it to a municipal site. I go home, have a cup of tea and feel a mix of righteousness, sadness and frustration, because I know that on the next high tide more rubbish will get dumped on the edge of the river and more rubbish from the edge of the river will re-enter the waterways.

Sadly, research shows that most of what I pick up will either go to landfill or end up back in the water on some far-flung shore.

Tins, bottles and plastic need to be clean if they are to be recycled. If the plastic I pick up is not clean, it will contaminate the recycling stream. If I mix recyclable plastic with non-recyclable plastic, I will contaminate the recycling stream.

According to figures from Repak: In Ireland, 100,000 tonnes of contaminated recyclable material is sent to landfill each year, causing considerable damage to the environment. Repak estimates that each person in Ireland generates 61 kg of plastic packaging waste per year. Too much of that ends up in the ocean.

Government policy to improve the environment has consistently encouraged recycling, however the material that is sent for recycling is mostly shipped to Asia. Indeed, waste plastic has become an important mainstream trade. Global annual imports and exports of plastic waste have been rapidly increasing since 1993. In 2016 alone, about half of all plastic waste intended for recycling was exported, with China taking most of it.

Collectively, China and Hong Kong have imported 72.4 per cent of all plastic waste. Hong Kong acts as an entry port into China, with most of the plastic waste that has been imported to Hong Kong (63pc) also going directly to China as an export. Out of all plastic waste imported into Asia, only about 20 per cent is recyclable. This 20 per cent is removed and traded whilst the other 80 per cent is dumped into landfill or the riverbanks and finishes up in the ocean.

Most of the plastic that I pick up from the banks of the river, in an effort to stop it entering the oceans, makes an expensive journey across the world and ends up in the ocean; because we simply give our waste problem to other countries; who just like us, do not really have the resources to deal effectively with it.

In 2013, the Chinese Green Fence campaign saw intensive inspections by China of incoming loads of waste material, in an effort to enforce import regulations.

This resulted in a reduction of plastic waste accepted at the Chinese border, with some shipments being turned away and sent back to the source countries.

As China tightened up its laws and refused to accept much of the West's plastic waste, other countries followed with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam bringing in restrictions in 2018.

January 1, 2021 saw the new

legislation making shipping of mixed plastics from Europe to underdeveloped countries illegal.

Data from Eurostat shows that Ireland produces the highest volume of plastic waste per person in the EU. This leaves us with a significant problem.

Nik Spencer of Mission Resources states: "The issue of protecting our environment from our own 'waste' is critical. The continuing action of discarding material with no further purpose, to the well evidenced and documented broken 'waste' system in the blind faith it is not causing harm to the environment, must be significantly reduced with haste, to avoid untold environmental and human health issues. This requires a Paradigm Shift in our way of thinking, driven by Life Cycle Assessment."

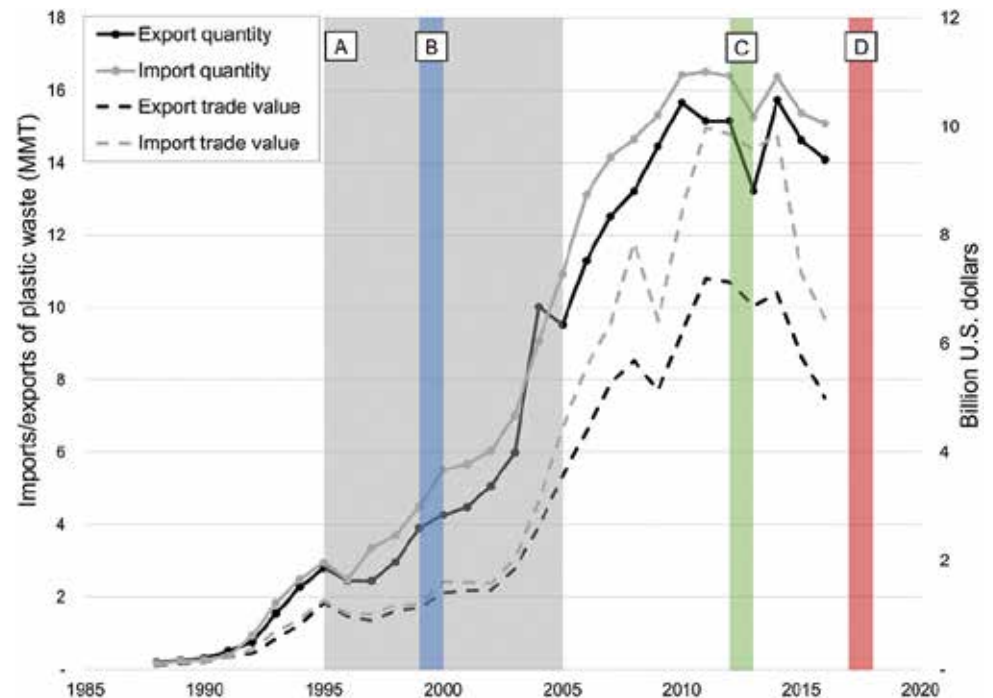
The paradigm shift Nik is talking about is to stop thinking of 'waste' and instead call it 'resource'.

His view is that every home and every business should manage this valuable resource at source, cutting out the need for expensive transport to central collection areas and redistribution.

Nik's solution is slow pyrolysis, using the resource in individual waste-to-energy plants connected to a boiler, hot water tank and your drain. You open the device's lid, put in your rubbish, which can be anything from spoiled food to grass cuttings to used nappies and plastic packaging. Close the lid. Press the start button. Walk away.

His company has created My HERU (home energy recycling unit), a heat pump run on the very materials that we no longer want and have such a problem getting rid of.

Nik says all materials' lifecycles should be examined so that at the end of their lifecycle there should be nothing that could damage the environment. He describes pyrolysis as the speeding up of a natural process. "Bury a dinosaur or a tree in the earth



in a lack of oxygen" he told me "and wait for millions of years whilst the heat from the earth transforms it into hydrocarbons. HERU does exactly that process but speeds it up."

"Bury a dinosaur or a tree in the earth in a lack of oxygen" he told me "and wait for millions of years whilst the heat from the earth transforms it into hydrocarbons. HERU does exactly that process but speeds it up."

Using HERU produces a very small amount of oily vapour that passes over the heat exchangers and condenses. The oil content is washed off the heat exchangers and along with any chlorine flushed down the drain. Removing the chlorine before the combustion stage avoids dangerous dioxins being produced. The combustion stage produces syngas which is

scrubbed through a water screen filter, passes through a cyclone to spin off the moisture, through a compressor, and thence directed to a storage tank until it's needed by your boiler.

All that is left is ash containing a gritty substance called lye. The final stage involves the HERU pressure-washing its own innards to flush the ash down the drain. Lye helps clean the sewers and because it is alkaline it helps neutralise the sulphuric acid drained to sewers by modern boilers. This sulphuric acid inhibits the bacteria used in water treatment plants, so neutralising it is helpful to the water companies.

We urgently need to find

elegant solutions to our environmental problems.

However, we not only need technological solutions and community efforts but we also need the political will to respond to those technological solutions, creating policy that supports them and puts them within reach by using subsidies and grants. We need policy that allows communities to choose a regenerative future and works on clearing up our unsustainable past.

Stop thinking 'waste' start thinking 'resource'.

Find more about HERU at www.myheru.com.

Cork South West Greens query dumping of new recycling charges on the public

New increased charges for Civic Amenity Centres announced by Cork County Council took effect from February 1.

"It seems the council have failed to recognise that by increasing charges they will ultimately cause more rubbish to be dumped illegally. Yet again, we are seeing charges being levied on the public when the source of the problem is with manufacturers and producers. We need to continue to encourage people to recycle and look after their household rubbish responsibly – it is not an effective policy to put barriers in their way" said Rory Jackson, Green Party Rep for Skibbereen.

"Cork County Council needs to explain the reasons for these increased charges and why they are not pursuing manufacturers and suppliers for compensation directly. The United Nations Secretariat adopted a new 10-year Climate Action Plan in 2019 that specifically

places the emphasis on industries to pay the cost of recycling, not the public. These measures will just add to the illegal dumping problem."

"We need more civic amenity centres, not more costs. Residents and businesses in Kinsale have to travel 20km to the nearest centre in Bandon to avail of full their full recycling and waste facilities. Kinsale is going to see significant growth in the coming years and it now that we need increased investment in providing a full and comprehensive waste and recycling service there," commented Marc O'Riain, Green Party Kinsale Rep.

Let's stop the dumping of charges on the public. The time for Cork County Council to review these charges and the provision of services to the public is now. We have no more time to waste!

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Home design trends for 2021



INTERIORS

Maura Mackey

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

We're into 2021 and still spending most of our time at home. Transformed into multi-functional spaces, be it for education, entertainment, or hospitality, I think it is fair to say that our living room or open plan living spaces is where most families are spending most of their time together, especially at the end of a day.

There are a few design developments in this area that we will see this year:

Neutral colour schemes, splashes of bold colours, relaxed seating areas, entertainment space and large dining areas are just a few trends to emerge.

Consider the below when planning your living space.

RELAXED AND COZY VIBE – Cozy isn't a style but a feeling; the homey ambience of a room that makes us want to curl up, relax and cocoon ourselves from the world. Furnish your room with plenty of comfortable seating, adding extra comfy chairs if needed and decorate with warm colours, layered with fluffy or velvet cushions and soft throws. Add a wool or synthetic rug on your floor and fill the room with books and personal objects. Introduce mood lighting – lamps on tables, floor lamps, a few candles and a signature scent will always make a room feel cosy.



MORE SEATING AREAS – People want living rooms or spaces that are more functional, comfortable and usable in these times – add a few accent chairs around the room or consider adding an extra couch to the space by changing the layout of the room. If possible, think about creating a window seat with cushions in your living area. By creating extra seating options, families can be together, no matter what activities they are pursuing.

USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS – Natural materials for your home are always a good choice; they are durable, environmentally-friendly, improve the microclimate of indoor spaces and look stylish, regardless of changing styles and trends. Using natural materials like marble, wood and cane in your living room can create

a sense of calmness. Choose natural elements that incorporate your style and connect with your overall interior.

STRONG COLOURS MIXED WITH NEUTRALS – Neutral tones are always a popular choice and this year is no different. Saying that there is also a big move to the use of stronger and bolder colours and patterns. Green is a very popular choice: Sage is calming and positive, reminding us of freedom and the outdoors and in these strange times people need this sense of freedom. Wallpapers are a big hit and will continue into this year: Cole & Sons and Graham & Brown are very popular ranges. Beautiful rich browns are going to be everywhere in furniture and décor; even wicker and rattan are making a comeback.

The use of neutral colours, natural feel materials and plenty of comfortable seating makes the room above on trend for 2021. Meanwhile vibrant wallpaper in rich colours is also being seen. Use it in just one area to make a big impact.

HIGH STYLE ACCESSORIES

– This year accessories will be bolder in colour, more artful and personal. For living spaces, we are seeing plush, comfortable seating, rich tones and layered styling.

ENTERTAINMENT SPACES – Everyone loves a good entertainment area in their home, be it for family dinners or social gatherings. Did we ever think 'staying in would be the new going out.' I can see more attention being paid to TV's, sound systems and comfortable seating areas. Seating will become a priority in order to enjoy 'family movie' time or headlining concerts. Dining in will also change; people will want more beautifully designed kitchens, comfortable table and chairs, while also paying attention to serving dishes and ware. It's amazing how all these home comforts give us that feeling of contentment.

For the past 10 months or more, people have tried to strive for and will continue to strive for, the atmosphere they've missed at their favourite restaurant, theatre or gastro pub, from furniture to lighting to a great sound system. From an interiors point of view surround yourself with what makes you happy in your home and colours that give you a spring in your step.

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Munster property prices set to increase in 2021



Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, Southern region Vice Chairperson, **Majella Galvin** shares key findings from their annual residential property review and outlook for 2021.

While the property market was dominated by Covid-19 in 2020, residential property prices proved surprisingly resilient throughout the year and are set to increase by an average of 5 per cent in Munster in 2021 according to the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI). The shift towards demand for rural properties was evident in the reports findings and is a trend that is set to continue. The transition to working from home has led to a reordering of people's priorities and is driving interest in larger properties in regional locations with good broadband and lots of amenities as well as holiday homes in secondary locations.

The prospect of buying your own home, especially for first time buyers become more attainable. For many, their income remained the same but their spending decreased, which led to higher savings. October saw the highest number of mortgage approvals. Majella Galvin of DNG Galvin said, "Home buyers could increase savings as their disposable expenditure had decreased. I've met couples who moved home,

continued to work from home to save up enough money to fund a deposit for their first home."

83 per cent of agents report having low levels of stock available in Q4 as sellers were reluctant to put property on the market, which led to a shortage of second-hand homes. Several agents said the slowdown in instructions was ultimately due to lack of supply with potential vendors deferring selling due to the lack of alternative options. New homes construction was down as a result of closure in first lockdown and increased restrictions slowing down construction. With the construction sector projected not to return to 2019 levels of new completions until 2024 (Ernst & Young Report) the SCSI says housing supply and demand equilibrium may not be achieved until 2031. By that stage it's predicted the sector will need to be building in excess of 60,000 units per annum, over three times the current output.

The society of chartered surveyors Ireland annual report also showed high levels of interest from UK buyers who wish to relocate to Ireland in order to stay in the EU with country homes and coastal property continuing to be popular sellers. "We notice people looking to buy holiday homes in West Cork and many looking for a project to refurbish a property" said Majella.

In a market where there is increased demand and reduced supply this will lead to increased property prices, however it must be noted, central bank rules limiting the majority of borrowers to 3.5 times salary along with loan-to-value restrictions, have kept prices in the residential market relatively stable and look to be preventing the double-digit price growth of the Celtic Tiger.

"In my opinion, country and coastal properties could see higher growth rates than the average estimated for Munster. I would envisage price increases of up to 10 per cent in West Cork." Concluded Majella.

people Home & Garden



A COTTAGE GARDEN PROJECT

Jean Perry

Jean Perry of Glebe Gardens will share the ongoing successes and failures of growing a small cottage garden using no-dig and organic principles to see just how much food she can get out of such a plot. Join her on this journey...

A good time for a project

We are starting to see a few brave spring flowers popping up and on sunny days and it would be easy to persuade ourselves that spring is just around the corner. I am usually the first person to rush into sowing seeds very early but it is rarely worth it. Once the evenings stretch out and the temperature rises, later sowings catch up and often overtake earlier seedlings that have struggled with cold spells and lack of light. Meanwhile there is still plenty to be getting on with, apart from planning, sorting seeds and buying the extra that you need. Now is a good time for a project, and over the last few months, while gardening has been really restricted by sometimes dramatic winter weather, my sanity has been

saved by my project to clear the small but significant area of woodland we planted as a shelter belt along our border. I started clearing an area just to plant spring bulbs, pulling up ivy and brambles only to realise that under all the debris were hundreds of bluebells just coming through the ground. I knew there were bluebells and other bulbs among the trees but over the last few years of neglect there were fewer flowers and in some cases just leaves. Now that I have started clearing I can't stop, so every opportunity I have, every reasonably dry few hours I haul away barrow-loads of brambles, ivy, nettles and scrub.

Apart from the hundreds of bulbs I've uncovered, there is much more space. I have already planted a few shrubs and trees and hundreds more bulbs. Clumps of giant snowflakes, newly uncovered, are already flowering and a mixture of small narcissus, woodland tulips, *Tulipa sylvestris*, erythroniums and scillas will follow crocuses. I've tried to choose varieties that will be useful for early emerging bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies. I love working among the trees, clearing, pruning and making a dead hedge with the thinnings

and trimmings. It gives me time to think and plan and has undoubtedly made this winter with all its stress and restrictions much easier to cope with.

I will run out of time of course, there is lots of clearing still to do, but I am determined to get as far as a tree that I planted a couple of years ago. *Prunus serrulata* Tai-haku, the Great White Cherry. In my mind's eye I can imagine it in flower with the uncovered bluebells all around.

Keeping up the theme of white blossom, I have planted a group of *Amelanchier lamarckii* in one of the gaps. These are small beautiful trees that have delicate white flowers followed by edible berries that birds like too. This is obviously a long term project but that will give me time to choose trees and plants carefully.

Now more than ever I feel it is so important to make careful choices taking on our responsibility for the health and biodiversity of the environment. We as gardeners can do so much, the way we grow things, what we grow, composting our waste, trying to use less plastic, and where possible growing some of our own food. If you haven't already got a vegetable

patch, then maybe this could be a good project for you. Even one or two beds. The best way to start is with the 'no dig' method. The finest proponent of this method is Charles Dowding who has been practising and researching this for over 35 years with wonderful

results. He has a great Youtube channel with everything you need to know and more. I was lucky enough to meet him in 1985 at the beginning of his journey and continue to learn from him. As I say, it's a good time for a project.



Clonakilty Garden Centre
at Lisavaird Main Branch, Clonakilty. Ph: 023 8836917
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Seed potatoes and onion sets have arrived.
Just arrived - beautiful new ornate pots, Camellias & Azaleas (large & small), Viburnum & much more

February is the perfect time to plant bare-root trees, shrubs and hedging - great selection in stock.
Great range of compost

Bed preparation

Mags Riordan of Bumblebee Farm continues 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.

This month it's all about bed preparation. This is the foundation for your cut flower patch and will reward you with beautiful pollinator friendly flowers for months over the summer. If you're new to this, do some warm up exercises and stretching first; you don't want to injure yourself before you ever get started. At this stage all you'll need is a mattock (It's like a pickaxe with a wider flat

end) garden fork and rake. A good digging fork will be important, and I find one that has a handle is easier on my back.

Having decided where you're putting the bed, we do recommend an out of view spot in full sun because this is a utilitarian bed, which you'll be cutting from, not creating to admire in all its glory. It's best to measure the plot and mark it out with stakes and string. Don't be tempted to make it any wider than 4ft/120cm, as you won't be able to reach the flowers in the middle to harvest them. Cut into the grass, outlining the edge and then cut across in squares. Using the mattock blade makes it easier to lift the sods and these can then be placed in an out of the way place, grass-to-grass and earth-to-earth – it will break down into beautiful loam in about a year. Next, with a fork dig down about the fork depth if you can and break up the clods; you can use the back

of the fork to help, removing all roots, especially perennial ones, as these will regenerate otherwise.

Next add two decent barrow-loads of well-rotted manure. If you have access to farm-yard-manure so much the better (make sure it's at least a year old or it will rob nitrogen from the soil while decomposing) but if not, then Gee-up is a fantastic organic horse manure, all rotted down and ready to use and available in most garden centres. Also add a slow-release fertiliser like chicken pellet, mixing in well. When you feel it's evenly distributed, level it and cover the area with black mypex or some dark covering, but not opaque, as this will let the light in and weed seeds can germinate.

It's best to leave the bed settle for a month before planting. The bed can be prepared anytime, as long as you allow settling in time. If you're not planning on planting the bed



until May, then it's perfectly fine to wait until April to prepare.

If you're using an old bed, then just clear it and lightly dig over and follow the above steps.

The plan is available in our blog post 'Ollie's Garden' on our website, or we can email it to you.

If you'd like to join us on Instagram on February 14 at 4pm, we will be preparing our

plot and will have a live Q&A afterwards.

Here's to growing cut flowers, community and helping our pollinators.

Bee Kind
Mags

Bare Root plants



THE NATURAL GARDENER

Noah Chase

Noah studied horticulture at the Eden Project in Cornwall, England. He now co-manages a family run nursery, Deelish Garden Centre in Skibbereen, specialising in rare, unusual and edible plants. His passion is sustainable gardening, useful plants and care of the environment.

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."
Chinese proverb

What does the term 'Bare root' mean? Put simply, it means plants that have been grown in open ground, then dug up for despatch and planting during the dormant season. They are called 'bare-root' plants, as they are supplied with no soil around their roots. November to March is the ideal time to plant bare-root plants. If your land is sheltered, I recommend planting as early in the season as possible to allow the roots time to establish over the winter months. Having strong roots will allow the plants to take up more water and nutrients as well as supporting new growth. In exposed or particularly wet sites, it is best to wait until February or, at the latest, March to plant. In doing so, this will avoid most storms, which can cause plants to become loose in the soil, and water logging around the roots, which can cause root rot or soil compaction during planting. As well as saving money, you will often find a much wider selection of varieties and sizes available as bare-rooted trees and shrubs.

Once you have decided on a suitable location to plant, the next step is to decide what varieties to plant. For many gardeners, this is the most difficult part of the process. Here at Deelish Garden Centre during the bare root season we have thousands of bare root plants to

choose from. As many of the plants are dormant and do not have any leaves to distinguish them from each other, it can look a bit overwhelming having to choose between them. To help our customers (and staff) to find the right plant for the right spot, we have divided them into a few groups; Trees, Hedging, Conifers, Fruit trees and Fruit bushes.

How do you picture the planting site in five, 10 and 50 years time? Do you plan to grow wood for burning, fruit trees and bushes for eating, a hedge for shelter and privacy or just want to provide habitat for wild life? Choosing a mix of fast growing trees to be gradually thinned over the years with slower growing hardwoods planted between them is a great option if you are unsure exactly what to choose but just want to start planting. Many gardeners are very keen to plant native trees and shrubs in hedgerows or mass plantings to encourage various wildlife and pollinators

to choose from including edible wildlife hedges, native hedges, costal hedges, formal hedges, shady hedges, windy hedges to name just a few. We can also offer farmers and gardeners Irish grown native plants that qualify for government planting grants. We can help with this from start to finish and supply all the paperwork needed to receive the grant.

The next step is to examine the site and ground where you plan to plant. Is it windy? If so which direction does the wind usually come from? Have a look at any other trees in the area to see if they have been blown in any particular direction. Is the ground wet? Dig a few testing holes before planting, if these fill with water and do not drain away, there may be drainage issues. Is the soil deep and fertile, heavy clay or perhaps only a thin layer of good topsoil. Digging a few test holes before choosing your plants will show you a lot about your own soil conditions.

make living structures such as domes and tunnels. Hawthorn will also take windy conditions and, as well as being our most popular native hedging choice, will grow into a beautiful small tree producing masses of small white flowers in late spring. Rugosa roses (pink, white and red) and Blackthorn are good choices for a windy site, producing flowers and fruit. Be aware that they will send up suckering shoots in following years after planting and need plenty of space to do this, as they can quickly overgrow other plants in a mixed hedge. In my opinion, Green Beech makes one of the nicest formal hedges but is also one of my favourite hardwood trees. We also supply Copper Beech, which is slower growing but in time also makes one of the nicest formal hedges. If you are worried your soil may be too wet for a Beech hedge then Hornbeam makes a great alternative choice for heavy soils.



Copper Beech is slower growing but in time makes one of the nicest formal hedges. If you are worried your soil may be too wet for a Beech hedge then Hornbeam makes a great alternative choice for heavy soils.

Listed below are a few of my favourite choices for various situations. Visit us at Deelish Garden Centre to hear about other options and the best choices for your own situation.

Many of our customers from Cape Clear Island swear by the Italian Alder (*Alnus Cordata*) for windy conditions. It grows quickly into an attractive upright tree suitable along drive-ways. It can be coppiced (cut to ground level) like the native common Alder and also grows well in heavy wet soil while fixing nitrogen in the soil, improving the soil quality and drainage over the years. If drainage is an issue, there are many types of Willow that do not mind wet conditions and can quickly supply useful material for basket weaving or be planted to

Mountain Ash (not related to common ash) has to be one of the best choices for windy sites and shallow soil. It produces large, flat heads of numerous creamy-white five-petalled flowers in May and June and these heads become the familiar clusters of red berries in autumn when on a good year, it also has amazing leaf colour. What woodland planting would be complete without some plantings of Oak? There are two native Oak species in Ireland, *Quercus petraea* or Sessile Oak will grow in thin acidic soil, often found in mountains and sometimes right to the edge of the sea in sheltered spots. Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) is the less common of the two native Irish oak species. You can distinguish

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it from Sessile oak by looking at its acorns – pedunculate oak produces acorns on stalks. This type of Oak grows into the huge specimens, often found on estates and woodlands. We also supply Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) and Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) both trees noted for their shape and brilliant autumn colour, which would make an excellent addition to any garden or forest.

For flowering trees and hedging, we recommend various options including Flowering currants, Bird cherry, June berry, Tulip tree, Elder and wild Roses to name a small selection. The bare root season is also the best time to plant some of the more common conifers, which can provide foliage and shelter in the winter when most other trees have lost their leaves. Yew and Scots Pine are two of the three Irish native conifers (the third is Juniper) and well worth considering while planning any native plantings. Yew can also be used for formal evergreen hedging, as well as planted as specimen trees, in fact, the oldest living trees in Ireland are Yew. Although Sitka spruce has gotten a lot of bad attention over recent years due to its overuse in forestry plantations (nearly half of all forestry in Ireland and over 300,000 hectares), it is able to grow in exposed sites with heavy acidic soils where other trees will not be able to grow and gives very fast returns of timber from the time of planting. Larch is also a wise choice for its fast return of

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The list above is only a small selection of what is currently available during the bare root season at Deelish, and we are currently getting fresh deliveries every few weeks to keep up to demand. Another huge group of plants available during the bare root season are fruit trees and soft fruit. I plan to write another article for this group, as there are so many options to choose from! Feel free to visit us at Deelish Garden Centre and we will help you choose that tree you should have planted 20 years ago! In the meantime, remember gardening doesn't have to cost the earth, especially in the bare root season.

people Home & Garden**Gardening in February**

As we welcome February, we also embrace the arrival of spring and the emergence of new growth and early blossom.

Early Daffodils, dwarf Iris, Crocus and Snowdrops will be in flower. You can plant potted bulbs to provide instant colour or alternatively you can plant dormant bulbs from August to December. Emerging bulbs should be protected against slugs, as they can ravage young, tender growth at a rapid pace overnight. So the advice is be on guard!

Protect newly emerging perennials against slug damage especially early emerging plants such as Delphiniums and Lupins. Be particularly careful of slugs in mild, damp weather when they are most active.

Ornamental grasses can be tidied up this month. Cut back deciduous grasses left uncut

during the winter and remove dead grass from evergreen grasses.

Early flowering Camellias, Rhododendrons and Magnolias should be protected against frost overnight. Use old blankets, heavy grade frost protection fleece, sacking or jute bags.

Divide Snowdrops and plant out in the green. This is a very successful method of multiplying these wonderful early flowers.

Seed potatoes should be purchased now. Put in a frost-free store to sprout.

Don't delay in securing your seed potatoes this year. They are very likely to be scarce, as the traditional Scottish seed potatoes are not allowed entry into the EU post Brexit.

Seed potatoes can be planted under protection or in frost-free coastal areas this month. You can use polythene tunnels, cloches, cold frames or a glasshouse for early crops. Frost protection fleece will also give some protection but if you get an option, do choose the heavier grade. Remember to plant potatoes in new ground avoiding where they have been grown with past two or three years. Avoid shaded aspects.

Vegetable Garden

This is a good time to sow some early vegetables for planting out under cloches or cold frames

next month. Lettuce, radish, beetroot, salad onions, peas and broad beans: These seeds don't need heat but they do need the lightest spot you can find for them. Sow the seeds in plastic modules or cell trays or choose biodegradable containers. Once you have sown seeds inside cover the piece of ground outdoors where the young vegetable plants are to be planted out, using a cloche, or a sheet of polythene, old windows to protect the soil from further rain and snow and to warm it up. Then you will be well on your way to the most delicious, fresh vegetables around!

An ideal way of sowing peas is to sow them in a piece of plastic guttering choosing an early variety. You will have to drill drainage holes in the bottom of the guttering, then fill with a clean, fresh seed compost. Sow the seeds in two rows 2.5-5cm apart and about 2.5cm deep.

Water thoroughly. Keep them on a windowsill or greenhouse, it does not need to be heated although some bottom heat will speed up germination.

When the seedlings have developed they can be carefully slid out of the guttering into a prepared trench under a cloche. Take precautions against slugs.

Shallots: Now is the time to plant shallots. Incorporate plenty of organic material, as you prepare the soil. Add an organic fertiliser and rake the soil to a fine tilth. Plant the shallots 15-18cm. apart in rows the same distance apart. Don't

**GARDENING**

John Hosford
The Weekend Garden Centre

just push them into the soil, or the new roots as they form will push the bulbs up and out again. Birds love to pull them out again if they see them. The best way to plant the shallots is with a trowel, with the bulb tips just beneath the surface of the soil.

Preparing a Runner Bean Trench: Even though runner beans are not planted until all risk of frost is over, it is a good time to prepare a trench. They are notoriously hungry plants. A specially dug bean trench filled with compost, manure or 'Gee-up' is the traditional way to create a super-rich bed to supply all the nutrients they need. Mark out the position of your row about 60cm wide, loosening the soil in the base with a fork. Tip manure into the trench-scatter organic fertiliser. The Runner Bean plants may be planted out when all risk of frost is over at the latter half of May/early

June. They can be sown under cover in a glasshouse/polytunnel/window sill about four to six weeks before they are planted into their final position.

Parsley: Cover parsley and other overwintering herbs with horticultural fleece to bring them into growth earlier. You can also pot up some herbs and bring into the greenhouse for an early start.

Fruit Garden

Feed all fruit unless you did so towards the end of last month. Spread it below the trees or bushes in an area equal to the spread of the branches.

Mulch all currants, gooseberries and cane fruit with well-rotted manure or garden compost. This is well worth doing after pruning and feeding has been completed. A mulch will keep down weeds and retain moisture during the warm summer months and will give you better quality fruit.

Continue to protect fruit trees and bushes from birds using netting or mesh.

Bullfinches in particular are especially fond of gooseberry buds. Make sure coverings are supported off the plants, yet taut, and held down firmly on the ground or birds may get caught up and be injured.

If you have a lot of gooseberries and other fruit it may be worth considering investing in a proper fruit cage.

Summer-fruiting Raspberry Canes: Summer fruiting raspberry canes that have grown taller than their support frame

can have the tips of the canes pruned back to one or two buds from the top wire. Alternatively they can be arched over and tied down to the top wire. Both options encourage the formation of side shoots along the length of the cane, which means you will be rewarded with a heavier crop of fruit.

Strawberries: Cover strawberries with cloches for an early crop. As well as forcing strawberries in pots in the greenhouse, a succession of fruits can be obtained by covering some plants outside with cloches. Any cloche will do but once the strawberries are in flower, open the sides during the day to allow pollinating insects access. Keep an eye out for pests, especially greenfly.

Lawn care

If you plan to sow seed, begin soil preparation at the end of the month if weather and soil conditions permit.

Bare Root Trees and Hedging

Continue planting of bare root trees, hedging, fruit trees, shelter trees where both soil and weather conditions permit. If you can't plant immediately due to adverse weather or soil conditions, do ensure roots aren't exposed to cold winds or frost. Check that existing or recently planted trees are adequately staked. Ensure stakes are sound and ties securely fastened. Protect against rabbits damaging the bark by putting on tree guards.

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Primary school teachers in Cork called to sign up for free food growing classroom kits

Schools may be closed, but innocent and GIY are calling on teachers to sign up for free food growing classroom kits to welcome them back when the doors are open again.

January kicked off the tenth year of The Big Grow, a campaign started by innocent and GIY to get kids growing their own veg at school, helping thousands of schools to get free growing resources. Schools all over the country are again invited to apply to The Big Grow for a food growing kit which comes with five packs of different seeds and enough compost, growing cups, instructions, and fun lesson plans for the entire class. Although schools are closed at the moment, they'll be sent once everyone's back in class just in time to start the growing season. The growing cups are easy for kids to take home and do the activities from the comfort of their kitchen too.

The Big Grow has so far helped 1.5 million kids to start growing their own veg, and this year over

200,000 more children in Ireland the UK will be getting stuck in to learn something new. Speaking of the 10 year anniversary and the launch of the 2021 initiative, founder of GIY Michael Kelly said: "We are so proud to have reached a 10-year milestone of helping children to grow food at school with innocent through The Big Grow. When we began this initiative a decade ago it was a novel concept and some might have thought it wouldn't catch on. But the feedback we get from the schools, teachers and most importantly the children who take part every year re-affirms that this initiative works, be that in urban, rural or city centre schools."

Each school taking part in The Big Grow will be encouraged to share their growing experiences online in order to be in with a chance of being crowned The Big Grow Champs 2021 and be awarded a school garden revamp.

The winners of the 2020 Big Grow were St. Patrick's Boys and

Girls Primary School in Lombard Street in Galway City. The school own a small concrete yard and used the space to create an incredible 'Vertical Garden' using every inch of space and even placing pallets on walls to grow peas, lettuce, spinach, potatoes and lots more.

As schools across Ireland continue to adapt to Covid restrictions, The Big Grow offers the excitement of watching seeds turn into healthy food and a welcome chance to take their learning outdoors."

Encouraging all schools to get involved in The Big Grow this year, the students of St. Pat's offered their five top tips for school growing success:

1. Start a 'Gardening Club' and make gardening and growing food accessible to everyone in the school. Many hands make light work!

2. Look at everything that you have in a new way – all containers can become pots for growing. Find, forage and re-use.

3. Prepare your soil. Gather all of the leaves from the playground and create a compost heap for mulch to 'feed' your garden soil nutrients. And if your school is by the sea collect some seaweed on your next nature walk for fertilizer!

4. Create a rain catcher. We love to collect as much rainwater as we can to water our garden and keep our garden and the environment green.

5. Make a sensory map of your garden so that visitors can follow it, learn about all the plants that we grow and how they appeal to our five senses. This also makes gardening and visiting a garden lots more fun for those with additional needs.

Teachers can sign up for a free food growing kit at www.innocent-biggrow.com. Registration is still open while stocks last, and kits will be sent once schools doors are open again based on government guidelines.

#TheBigGrow



A SPORTING LIFE

Pat Culhane

Alan Foley, Principal of St. Patrick's Boys National School (BNS) in Skibbereen, is passionate that there is a sport for everyone. His humble pursuit in achieving this, as a teacher's coach, administrator and player in the community, is infectious.

Although brought up in the city, Alan's roots are firmly in West Cork. His mother, Breda (née O'Shea) hails from Skibbereen and his father, Chris Foley, from Newcestown. With Chris working in this Verome Shipyard, building ships, Alan spent his first five years in Gurrabraher before moving to Ballincollig. It is here that his earliest sporting memories from there emerge.

"We loved growing up there in the 80s. There were lots of new estates and it was rapidly becoming one of the biggest suburbs in Ireland. There must have been around 30 of us about the same age living within a stones throw of each other, so we were often out playing soccer, rounders, bulldog, tip-the-can or whatever on the street. It was heaven really, when I look back on it. We had the freedom to wander around the place, although not too far. We climbed anything we could and made lots of things, like out of sticks. We just had so much fun."

"When it came to organised sport, Gaelic games was what we played mostly growing up. There was a parish league, where each estate would play against each other, which was great. A man called Pat Halpin used to look after us. He was a real gentleman and put a load of time into getting us playing for



Taken in Pairc Ui Chaoimh when O'Donovan Rossa beat Lismire in the County B county hurling final in 2004.

a team."

In national school (Scoil Eoin) we played hurling and (Gaelic) football in Sciath na Scol competitions. There were around 90 pupils in my year and around six were chosen to represent the school at Cork City Sports athletics competitions each year. I never quite made it there."

Alan also played for Ballincollig GAA all the way up from the Under-10 to the Under-16 age grade. "There was a team on the year, every year. But with the jump straight from Under-16 to minor (Under-18)

"When I was around 13 or 14, my parents bought me and my brothers pitch and putt clubs for Christmas and I took to it instantly. We became a bit obsessed with it; it was like a drug."

there was fierce competition for places, and so I stopped playing for the club at that time."

But it wasn't just Gaelic games that Alan participated in. He played various sports for his post-primary school, Coláiste Choilm too. "When I was around 13 or 14, my parents bought me and my brothers pitch and putt clubs for Christmas and I took to it instantly. We became a bit obsessed with it; it was like a drug." What helped was that Lakewood Pitch and Putt Club was located nearby – a facility founded in 1973 for the employees of

Johnny Woods Sand and Gravel and is still in existence today.

"Every morning during the summer, we would hop on our bikes at about 10, play three or four rounds and cycle home for dinner. And then go back in the evening to play another couple of rounds. Lakewood is and was a great club. A load of us juveniles started there around the same time, thanks to local couple, Jim and Rene O'Shea. We became quite competitive as the years went on, playing in a number of county competitions and then, in my later teens in provincial and national competitions."

A modest man, Alan was eventually persuaded to share some of his pitch and putt successes. "I represented Cork at juvenile level and adult level. A team of five of us, including three from Lakewood, won the All-Ireland in Carlow in my last year at juvenile level when I was 16. Me and my brother Tom, the Deputy Principal in Skibbereen Community School, played off scratch (a 0 handicap) at juvenile and straight through to senior."

Having just turned 17 when he sat his leaving Cert., Alan spent three years at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, completing a B.Ed. in Primary Teaching. It was during this period that he had most success at the senior pitch and putt level. Also, it was during this time that he started playing hurling again with the college teams. One of the people who convinced Alan to come out of retirement was fellow student and housemate at the time, Pat Ahern – the current Principal of Gaelscoil Mhichíl Uí Choileáin, Clonakilty.

"Eamonn Cregan, the Limerick hurling legend, was training us and we had some inter county players like Brian Cuthbert from Cork and Fergal Hegarty from Clare. I played in goals and Pat (Ahern) played wingback. Current Principal of Carriboy National School in Durrus, Mike Cronin, was cornerback. We won the Division 3 league and championship and lost in the semi-final of the Ryan Cup in '95."

Alan's return to his mother's homeplace was, as he put it, "a pure fluke". After a brief stint as a primary teacher on Coachford, in 1996 Alan's relations spotted a teaching post



Scoil Eoin 7-a-side Gaelic football team in the primary schools' county final in 1987.



Taken in 1998 in Tramore after winning the Pitch and Putt Senior Mens Munster Strokeplay title.

advertised in Skibbereen BNS and encouraged him to go for it. "I had a motorbike at the time."

"Sport plays an important role in our schools, including for pupils with autism. We play a wide variety games, through PE and other individual and teams sports. Having access to Skibbereen Sports Centre nearly is a great advantage. The Parents' Association also fundraise, and we bring all classes, except the infant classes, to Dunmanway swimming pool by bus for six weeks every year."

So, I came down the road for the interview. As I was taking off my leggings off back home, I got a phone call from the chairperson offering me the job. I was only 20 at the time and have been here since."

"I lived with my Aunt, Kay Murphy, when I moved down, and apart from a few relations, I didn't really know anybody. So, that's when I decided to join O'Donovan Rossa GAA club. I played Under-21 football and hurling in 1997. I continued practicing my pitch and putt and travelling to the city at weekends for a couple of years, but I was really enjoying

hurling with the club, so that became my main sport since then. We trained twice a week and went to the pub after. It was great way of fitting into the community, particularly with people around my own age. I had never played outfield 'til I played for O'Donovan Rossa. I started coaching underage teams there around that time too."

Alan has been teaching in St. Patrick's BNS for the past 24 years and become Principal in more recent years. "In 2015 the junior and senior schools amalgamated. At present there are 213 pupils registered in the school. We have eight mainstream classes from junior infants to sixth class. In 2001, we opened our first class for children with autism. We now have three ASD classes – an Early Intervention Class, a Junior ASD Class and a Senior ASD class. The children attending these classes come from the West Cork area."

"Sport plays an important role in our schools, including for pupils with autism. We play a wide variety games, through PE and other individual and teams sports. Having access to Skibbereen Sports Centre nearly is a great advantage. The Parents' Association also fundraise, and we bring all classes, except the infant classes, to Dunmanway swimming pool by bus for six weeks every year."

"For a rural town, Skibbereen has so many sports for young people – watersports, swimming, rugby, Gaelic games, soccer, kickboxing, basketball, road bowling, badminton, athletics, gymnastics, rowing

Continued on next page...

people Sport & Fitness

Sporting life...Cont'd from previous page

and more. There are strong links between local clubs and the school, such as coaching being provided by the local GAA, rugby and rowing clubs. I really believe that there is a sport for every child, even for those that aren't as interested in or skillful at the mainstream sports. However, it is worrying the number of children – there are a few in every class – that don't play any sport and aren't physically active. Computer games and instant TV pose a particular challenge in this regard."

And it's not just in school that Alan promotes sport and physical activity. Alan has been volunteering as a coach in O'Donovan Rossa for a long number of years. This includes running a nursery to introduce children to hurling. "I have nev-

er coached beyond Under-12. I see myself as a big fishing net, as most people know me through the school. We get children subsidised hurleys and helmets and teach them the fundamental skills, especially the grip. We try to keep it fun and non-competitive. We pull from three neighbouring clubs and have camogie going as well now." With two boys of his own, Alan has also dabbled in some coaching and administration in Skibbreen Rugby club and the local golf club in recent years.

And on top of this busy coaching schedule, Alan still finds time for playing. "I'm gone back into goals with the O'Donovan Rossa Junior B team. I love taking the frees and penalties. For our first league match last year, I was only the

fourth oldest on the team in my mid-forties. Age is not our friend but is great craic. It's a bit like the soccer gang of us play on Friday nights."

Alan also went back playing more golf last year, now as a full member of the local club. Given his pitch and putt prowess, his handicap was sure to be impressive. He eventually disclosed that he is playing off 5. "I love playing the odd game, even though I struggle with my putting."

Alan has a particularly strong lifelong participation in sport; after a busy week in school dealing with children and parents, he still continues to give so much of himself to the community.

"Well, firstly I like to challenge myself," he shares. "The thing I love about golf is

"When it comes to coaching hurling, I want to make sure that every child has a positive introduction and feel it's important that every child had the right size hurley and has the basic skills. I can be coaching for two and a half hours on an evening and sometimes don't have the energy for it. But when I'm doing it, I love it."

that it's me against me. I'm not trying to compete with anyone else. It's good to clear my head and socially too. Although, I'm just as happy to go and play on my own. I get a buzz out of a good shot."

"The fun with the group in hurling down the pitch is great and I love a tight, competitive game. And maybe taking an important free – I just love it."

"When it comes to coaching hurling, I want to make sure that every child has a positive introduction and feel it's important that every child had the right size hurley and has the basic skills. I can be coaching for two and a half hours on an evening and sometimes don't have the energy for it. But when I'm doing it, I love it."

"I also feel obliged to play sport and give back to the com-

munity. Loyalty is important to me. I hate leaving people down and so I'll turn up even when I don't feel like it. As well as children having fun and being active, I want to ensure that children and respecting the game and each other. I feel very strongly about children getting the right start in life and a positive experience in sport can help this.

"I think it all goes back to my childhood in the sense of fairness shown to us by my parents. I hold empathy as the highest value of them all, trying to put yourself in other people's shoes. If you've empathy, then you'll have loyalty and honesty. Sport, as well as the education, can help instill these values and set children up for the challenges they will face in the future."

people Motoring

An old favourite



CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

In recent weeks, I had an opportunity to reacquire myself with the Opel Corsa. I had driven the car when it was launched in Ireland back in February 2020 in the 'good old days' when we had press launches!

The car was a favourite in Ireland back in the eighties and nineties when we often heard former MD Arnold O'Byrne on radio and television talk about the company's range of cars. Around that time Opel sponsored the Irish soccer team and Arnold was nearly as popular in Ireland as former manager Jack Charlton.

The Corsa was launched in 1982 and I bought a skinny looking version around 1988. Now the designers have managed to make this new model look bigger, despite the dimensions being much the same as



the previous version.

Built in Zaragoza, Spain, the first Corsas were three-door hatchback and two-door saloon models, with four-door and five-door versions arriving in 1984. This latest version is only available as a four-door as Opel simplify their product range.

The sixth generation of the nameplate is longer, lower, and has a longer wheelbase than its predecessor and is 108kg lighter than the previous version. This is the first new Opel produced since the marque was taken over by the PSA Group and Opel are now based in Gowan House in Bluebell, Dublin.

The Corsa is built on the same platform as the DS3 Crossback and the new Peugeot



208. Since my initial drive almost 12 months ago now, the Corsa has been voted Auto-best Best Buy Car of Europe 2020 and also won the Golden Steering Wheel Award for best small car.

I found the car very sturdy and there was very little road noise. The digital instrument

cluster is well placed to ensure that you only have to take your eyes off the road ahead for a second or two to check your speed.

There is room in the back for back seat for three people, but leg room is a bit tight. The boot is average, but the good news is that you get a proper spare

wheel. It's neat, easy to handle and comfortable to travel in.

Back in February my test car was white with a black roof and looking at the exterior it certainly is very attractive. Inside there was a nice touch of red and white stitching on the seats and the dash had a touch of red and grey, which looked very tasty. This time round it was a white again, but no black roof and the interior seats were black and grey.

There is also an electric Corsa-e available; it has range of around 330km. Also last year, Opel launched a new Grandland X hybrid and a facelifted Crossland. So it's certainly all systems go for Opel right now.

For the new Corsa there are three trims SC, SRi and Elite with entry prices starting at €17,975 for the 1.2-litre petrol; also available in 1.5-litre diesel. All come with LED headlights and auto-dip as standard. And 'start' is the important word when checking out prices of new cars. Road tax is €180.

Recently Opel teamed up with Energia, Ireland's independent energy provider, to offer a free home charger to new Opel electric vehicle customers. The offer invites customers to register a new, all-electric Opel Corsa-e and if they are not happy after six months of emissions-free driving, Opel will exchange it for an equivalent priced petrol or diesel model.

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