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# westcorkpeople

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ENTERTAINMENT**  
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For International Women's Day 2021, Dunmanway based photographer Patricia Andrade decided to take portraits of women she admired in her community, including Mairéad Mawé, new PRO of the West Cork Ladies Gaelic Football association, who is pictured with her daughters. Pic: Flash Photography Studio

## Kinsale College's Green Campus initiative shortlisted in Aontas STAR awards

Kinsale College's Green Campus initiative has been shortlisted in the Sustainable Development Through Education category of the prestigious 2021 Aontas Adult Education Awards.

Cork ETB's North Cork Upholstery and Textile Design Classes were announced the winners in the category.

The winners were announced this week during the Adult Learners' Festival 2021, which is taking place until March 5. Run by Aontas, the voice of adult learning in Ireland, the STAR Awards stand for Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition and their aim is to recognise and celebrate the work of adult-learning initiatives throughout Ireland.

Kinsale College's Green Campus initiative made waves as the latest in the school's continuing bid to promote the importance of sustainability, biodiversity, and environmental awareness. Their most recent nomination has followed swiftly on from another significant achievement – scooping the An Taisce Green Campus award. The College has been at the cutting edge of environmental education for many years since they began hosting the world's first full-time course in Permaculture back in 2001.

The Green Campus designation recognises the years of work carried out by staff and learners of all ages at the college, so their placement within the award category of Sustainable Development through

Education is more than fitting.

"Environmental awareness permeates into every corner of our college, every course we run and every move we make; it is what we've been focusing on for the last 20 years," said College Director Liz Moynihan. "It's not just our Permaculture and Sustainable Horticulture students who learn about the environment – it's everyone on campus; our students, our teachers and our admin staff. Even the exercise of preparing for our pitch to the judges has been a valuable learning experience for us. It has given us even greater awareness of the progress we have made and the possibilities that the future holds for an initiative as powerful as the Green Campus."

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## O'Sullivan receives clarification on Fáilte Ireland strategy

Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan has welcomed the clarification from Fáilte Ireland this week in relation to the Destination and Experience Development plan for Killarney and in response to newspaper articles and radio segments where Killarney was described as the "gateway" to the Wild Atlantic Way.

In correspondence received this week by O'Sullivan from Miriam Kennedy, the Head of Business Tourism and Events at Fáilte Ireland, she stated:

"One of the agreed priority actions in the Killarney Destination and Experience Development Plan (devised by a collaborative working group, which is made up of key stakeholders, agencies and industry in Killarney) to create a new destination positioning piece and refreshed brand for

Killarney, which aligns to the Wild Atlantic Way and recognises its potential as a great base to explore the region. It has been referenced in a number of news articles that Killarney would be rebranded as "gateway", which is not the case. Kinsale is very much on the Wild Atlantic Way route, which continues to be heavily promoted by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland and will continue to benefit from this. Kinsale is also the start or end point of the Wild Atlantic Way so has its own unique selling points as part of the route. We are currently developing a Destination and Experience Development plan for West Cork and this plan will also have a number of agreed priority actions for the destination, which will build on its strengths."

## West Cork historian appointed Director of Research at MIC

Urban and social historian, Dr Richard Butler, has been appointed as the new Director of Research at Mary Immaculate College (MIC). The West Cork native joins MIC's Research and Graduate School following his tenure as Associate Professor of Urban History at the University of Leicester where he served as the principal investigator for several research projects, including those funded by the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Dr Butler has also published widely on modern Irish history, and his research has focused on power and governance in cities, religious history, crime and punishment, and histories of engineering and technology.

Hailing from Bantry, Dr Butler is a past student of Ardscoil Phobal Bheanntaí. He later went on to study engineering and history of art at St John's College in Cambridge where he also completed his MPhil in British colonial architecture in India. Having worked as a journalist in Kathmandu and




as a book editor in Ireland, Dr Butler returned to Cambridge as a Gates Scholar for his doctoral studies where he examined the architectural, social and political history of Irish courthouses and prisons in the 18th and 19th centuries, published by Cork University Press in 2020 as 'Building the Irish Courthouse and Prison: A Political History,

1750-1850'. During his PhD studies, Dr Butler also held a Fulbright Scholarship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and was awarded the Hawksmoor Medal in 2014 from the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain. Now residing in his native Bantry, Dr Butler is an active member of the local community

and volunteers with Bantry Tidy Towns, as well as with the Bantry Inshore Search and Rescue Association (BISRA) lifeboat.

Further information on MIC's Research & Graduate School is available at [www.mic.ul.ie](http://www.mic.ul.ie).



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# A welcome escape: From Tasmania to West Cork



Author Esther Campion

A skilled storyteller, Esther Campion's writing style has been compared to that of the late Maeve Binchy. The Cork native now living in Tasmania, writes stories about people you'd meet every day with secrets and challenges to face, back stories to resolve and futures to find hope in. Three of her books are partly set in West Cork: Her latest release 'A Week to Remember' is a warmly captivating tale spanning Tasmania and Crookhaven. Esther chats to West Cork People about her love of West Cork and how she came to writing later in life.

"When my publisher read an early draft of 'A Week to Remember', she said she wanted to book herself in to Lizzie O's (my fictional guest house) and escape to Crookhaven post haste," says Esther laughing. In the book Lily Fitz comes from Cork to the beautiful North West of Tasmania to mind her grandchildren while her son Mick and his wife Aisling go off to Ireland. In West Cork, the newly renovated guest-house welcomes its first guests for a week in the Irish winter that none of them will forget.

In the mid 80s, a good friend of Esther's invited her to stay with her family in their big 10-berth caravan in Crookhaven. "I'd never been there and remember thinking at the time how far away it felt from my home on the Northside of Cork City," says Esther. "Some years later, when our eldest was born, the O'Flynn's, who hail from Bishopstown, gave us the caravan for our first family holiday." By the time she came to writing 'Leaving Ocean Road', her first published novel, Esther was in her forties, living in South Australia, a very long way from West Cork, but Crookhaven had stayed with her. "On trips home,

I have introduced my other children and extended family to the area and they all love it too," she says.

Before becoming a writer, Esther worked in adult education and she has studied environmental science and zoology.

How does she feel about her books being compared to the late, great Maeve Binchy. "It both thrills and terrifies me," she says. "I grew up seeing my mother read her books and came to love them myself in my thirties. I could never have imagined then that I would become a writer not to mind be compared to Maeve."

Esther only came to writing in her forties after moving to Australia. "I'd wanted to do a creative writing course but there wasn't one in the town," she explains. "When I phoned up a local writing group they asked me to join. To be honest, surrounded by award winning short story writers and published poets, I thought I'd be making the tea, but the women in that group became my friends and mentors. I just kept showing up, attempting every challenge they set. Writing always reminds me of study; you have to actually get down and do it to have anything to show for yourself."

Her first novel received a few rejections, but she wrote an-

other one, which got a bite that landed her a two book deal with Hachette Australia. 'Leaving Ocean Road' and 'The House of Second Chances' are both partly set in West Cork, as is her latest release, 'A Week to Remember'.

Esther came to live in Tasmania via a fairly circuitous route, taking in spells in Dublin, Fort William in Scotland, Hjelmeland in Norway and Port Lincoln in South Australia. For the past eight years, she has been living with her family in a seaside spot on the North West Coast of the island state where the people are friendly, the weather is fairly good and there is a lovely sense of community.

Although she misses home and admits to fear of missing out (FOMO) on the many milestones in her family that she can't be there for, life in Tasmania is good. After an early lockdown, strict border control and hotel quarantine, there is no community transmission where Esther lives. "We are grateful that people by and large did the right thing and there was strong leadership from the beginning," says Esther. "All we need now is the vaccine and hopefully we can book the flights home."

For all of us struggling with travel restrictions during this pandemic, Esther's latest novel offers a welcome escape.



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## New disabled parking spaces welcomed in Clonakilty town

Clonakilty Access Group, a local voluntary community organisation which advocates for better physical public access for people with disabilities in Clonakilty, has welcomed the recent allocation of an extra disabled persons parking space in the town and complimented the local council engineer for his support.

The Kent St. car park, (behind the Old Mill Library), and adjoining Credit Union car parks were resurfaced and lined out recently by Cork County Council.

Before the works, the Clonakilty Access Group had been in contact with local council engineer Michael Tobin, and requested the extra space in the Credit Union car park, adjacent to the access point to the popular Spiller's Lane pedestrian link to Bridge St. (There had not been a disabled persons car parking space in this car park previously).

There were already two spaces in the adjacent Kent St. car park and these were also retained,

which the Access Group had sought.

In discussions with Mr. Tobin before the resurfacing, Elizabeth Walsh, Chairperson of Clonakilty Access Group, also requested that when the spaces were being painted, that the most up to date design standards, as advocated by the Irish Wheelchair Association and the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland, would be used.

This included the spaces themselves to be painted blue and yellow hatching be painted on the long sides (to allow for full car door openings).

While it is common to see such car parking spaces in supermarket car parks, (they being a condition of planning usually), the three public spaces now in the two public car parks in Clonakilty, are now the first spaces in the public areas of Clonakilty that have been painted to the highest standards as recommended by the IWA and DDA.

Elizabeth Walsh, Chairperson



of the Access Group praised Mr. Tobin and all who made the best decision and ensured it was implemented. She thanked him for taking on board the Access Groups requests for the location of the three spaces and their design layout.

She has also contacted him and requested the council to erect vertical signage also to make the spaces more visible and has received positive reply.

Elizabeth Walsh stated: "The Access Group and our members and all people with physical

disabilities are delighted with the new improvements and the extra space. We thank Michael Tobin, the council engineer who always listens to our issues and does his best to make Clonakilty a more accessible-friendly town.

"We hope that all the other disabled persons car spaces in the streets and public car parks will be upgraded sooner rather than later by the council, so that they too meet the highest standards as recommended by disability organisations and users."

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## Write for Rights – Solidarity in 2021

By Clonakilty  
Amnesty Group

Amnesty International's  
'Write for Rights'  
campaign takes place

annually around December 10,  
which is Human Rights Day.  
Write for Rights aims to bring

about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organising protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure. A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As in past years, you can be a part of West Cork's contribution to the international Write for Rights campaign.

Please take action on the case below. Inform yourself of the issue from the case card and write a message of support and solidarity to the individuals involved – three teenagers who need to know that they are not alone in their difficult situation.

### Case Card

In March 2019, three African teenagers boarded a crowded rubber boat, fleeing Libya. Along with 108 people, they were rescued by a cargo ship, El Hiblu 1. Ship captains have a legal duty to rescue those in danger at sea and take them to a safe destination. Libya is not a safe destination. The rescued people were promised they would be taken to safety

in Europe, but as time passed, they realised they were being taken back to Libya. They began to panic; horrified at the prospect of returning to the torture they had escaped.

"People started crying and shouting: 'We don't want to go to Libya!', 'We prefer to die!'"

Knowing he spoke English, the chief officer of the ship asked the 15-year-old boy "What can I do to get them to calm down?" The boy replied: "Don't take us back to Libya". The ship turned around and set off for Malta. The three youths helped the chief officer by interpreting his words to the rest of the rescued people, calming the panicked passengers. Later, the Maltese armed forces stormed the ship and the three boys were subsequently accused of 'hijacking' the vessel. The youths were disembarked in Malta in handcuffs, despite the police testifying that the crew were in control, no one was hurt, and nothing was damaged. Five people were arrested and the three teenagers (aged 15, 16 and 19; names withheld by court order) were charged with crimes amounting to terrorist activity. They have pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial. The case is at a standstill, awaiting the outcome of a magisterial inquiry.

You can read more about the case in The Times of Malta, 11Dec2020, (timesofmalta.com) and on Amnesty International's website (www.amnesty.eu)

### Solidarity Letter or email

Given the traumatic experience of the three youths, letters and other ways to express solidarity directly to the youths involved are hugely important. The youths love football, so any solidarity ideas linked to football are very welcome. Let them know that the demand for 'Justice for El Hiblu 3' is alive and that they are not alone. They can be reached under the following postal address:

El Hiblu 3, P.O. Box 39,  
Hamrun, Malta.

You can also email Dr. Victoria Buttigieg, the attorney general of Malta, with the request to 'drop all charges against The El Hiblu 3 and close the case before trial'. (ag@attorneygeneral.mt)

Dear WCP Reader: Clonakilty Amnesty Group is grateful for your action on this case. 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 until further notice due to Covid).

### Good news

Khaled Drareni – the subject of our West Cork People article of January, in this theme of Write for Rights – was a journalist imprisoned in Algeria for reporting on protests. Amnesty International has just now learned that he has been released, and says 'Your petitions, signatures and donations made Khaled's release possible'.

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# OPW Flood Relief Schemes a success during significant weather event in February

The severity of the weather event late last month has, in some areas, been described as more significant than that which caused the flooding in 2009 and 2015, with close to 100mm, or four inches, of rain falling in a 24-hour period at some locations during a status orange rainfall weather warning.

The OPW flood relief schemes operated successfully and prevented a substantial amount of damage to property in Clonakilty, Skibbereen, Bandon, Douglas, Mallow, Fermoy and Clonmel during the period of extremely heavy rainfall and subsequent increases in river water levels at these locations.

In Mallow, a flood relief scheme costing €39.5m is in place protecting some 230 properties, while in Fermoy a scheme costing €37.5m protects 264 properties. In Bandon, a €31.4m scheme protects 392 properties, while in Clonakilty, a €29.8m scheme protects 296 properties.

High flow events occurred in Mallow and Fermoy, which had an estimated return period in excess of 'one in ten' years (on average), and were it not for the schemes being in place in those towns, it is estimated that some 140 properties, including about 50 homes, would have been flooded.

While this weather event was relatively extreme, the schemes in all of the locations mentioned above are designed to provide protection for much bigger flood events than occurred, namely a flood with an average return period of 'one in one

hundred years'.

However, the events have again shown that Cork City is at significant risk of flooding, not just from the tide, but also from the River Lee to the west of the City in conjunction with the tributaries, the western River Bride and the Shournagh. Over 70mm of rain was recorded on average in the Lee Catchment in a 24-hour period, an amount of rainfall that could be expected to occur in the same period about once every 5 years, roughly speaking.

Collaboration which took place between the ESB, who are in control of the reservoirs and dams on the Lee, Cork City Council, and the OPW, who have prepared the Lower Lee Flood Relief Scheme with a view to protecting the City of Cork from flooding from the Lee and its tributaries, as well as from the tide, mitigated the worst impacts of the event.

However, the events have again shown that Cork City is at significant risk of flooding, not just from the tide, but also from the River Lee to the west of the City in conjunction with the tributaries, the western River Bride and the Shournagh.

OPW collaborated with the ESB in ensuring that the OPW's flood forecasting system (a key part of the proposed flood relief scheme, which is currently operating on a trial and development basis) was available to them in addition to their own system. Information on the levels of dam releases that might cause risk to property, was

made available to the ESB (by the OPW and the City Council, in addition to any information the ESB had already in this respect), to support them in making appropriate decisions on discharges.

As a result, serious flooding of property was avoided on this occasion, albeit that fields and roads were flooded. While there has been considerable debate recently about the merits of a tidal barrier at the mouth of the River Lee, such measures would have had no impact on the events of the past two days.

The proposed Lower Lee Flood Relief scheme is intended to protect the City from flood with an average return period of 'one in one hundred years', which are substantially larger flood events than that which occurred last month.

After the time Minister O'Donovan said, "It's very important that people are aware of the enormous benefits of flood protection schemes for communities and the damage that is prevented to so many homes and businesses. Often we only hear the very difficult stories after flood events, but today we can point to the major investment by Government over the last number of years and see the real benefits. A very substantial number of properties have been saved from flooding on this occasion, and a substantial amount of damage has been prevented throughout Munster and elsewhere, and I am committed to continue to progress schemes as quickly as possible in other at-risk locations so that similar protection can be provided. In particular, I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those staff and emergency services, who have worked tirelessly and diligently in dealing with the evolving flooding issues over the last few days."

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Remember, nothing will change until September. We'll be in touch with all customers in advance of these changes.

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## Fairtrade Fortnight 2021

Usually in Clonakilty, which is Ireland's first Fairtrade Town, the annual Fairtrade Fortnight would see a number of activities organised by the local committee – particularly in the schools, to raise awareness of Fairtrade and what it means to growers and producers in the Third World.

Because of the COVID restrictions, there will be no local activities for FT Fortnight 2021, which takes place from February 22 to March 7. However, the local group encourages people to think about FT and to make a real effort to support FT items when shopping.

The National Fairtrade Office in Dublin has organised a series of virtual events during the two weeks. All are listed on [www.fairtrade.ie/lineups](http://www.fairtrade.ie/lineups).



## A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

It was a fitting end to winter. After freezing temperatures and a dusting of snow, the gales came in. We hunkered down as the wind screamed, the rain pummelled, and the darkness descended. We had the lights on and the fire lit all day. I have to admit that I did not venture out of my dressing gown, much less the house for several days. I worked, I cooked, I ate, I watched the telly, and the screens of multiple devices. In other words, I didn't move much. To lift my spirit, I played a disco compilation while I worked, which got me moving, though I'm not sure if chair dancing counts as exercise.

I have to admit that February was tough. Everyone was feeling the weight of lockdown one way or another. Fed up and sick to the back teeth of it. For some it was home-schooling. For others it was waving at loved ones through the window. For many it was the insecurity, the loneliness, and the grief of it all. Sometimes it is the little things

# Spring at last

that get you down in lockdown. Pandemic Problems, like their sibling, First World Problems, can be petty. For example, I would very much like hair-dressers and swimming pools to open. I am also annoyed that I can't get takeaway from my favourite restaurant, as it is a 42km round trip to Rosscarbery from my house. Remembering the lads that got done for driving 80km to get a burger, I calculated the chances of making it there and back undetected. What if they sent me home and my order went to waste? I decided not to chance it. In fact, I haven't chanced anything, not

"...I feel my heart lift. I can see what this place will look like in June, and I know that the months between then and now will be filled with primroses, bluebells, wild garlic and the first of the salads and radishes."

even a single trip to the beach. I've been as close as you can get to cocooning without wrapping myself in a chrysalis.

And then I woke up late last Thursday and the sun was shining. The rest of the household was milling around the kitchen. The door was open. The dogs were running in and out, delight-

ed with themselves. Venturing outside I discovered snowdrops, daffodils and sorrel. A vague memory of wearing shorts and working in the garden drifted on the southwest breeze. The sky was blue. The clouds were white and puffy. The birds were having a rave in the treetops and my daughter saw a bumblebee. Could it be Spring at last?

It certainly looks like it. In just a few days, the landscape has started buzzing again. Buds are budding. Ferns are unfurling. Flowers are shyly opening the show. Driving back from Lidl, which is normally the most exciting thing in my day, I saw several crows on Convent Road carrying sticks in their beaks. I literally shrieked with joy. If the crows are getting their DIY groove on, then it must be Spring.

One of the best things about West Cork is that Spring comes so early and so undeniably. It could snow tomorrow. It's still Spring. Once the land starts waking up, there is no going back. It's ready, steady, grow!

Though somewhat depressed, we were not idle in February. We got the potatoes chitting. I sowed seeds and put them in the porch, and the tunnel got a makeover. I am grateful to the habits of gardening, which force you to think ahead to a future of bounty. A gardener believes in tomorrow, even when tomorrow looks pretty glum.

I must admit that when I sowed the seed trays on a bleak Sunday, I did so with little joie de vivre. Being stuck in Ireland for another summer was getting me down. Each week seemed to push getting the vaccine further away, and more months of restrictions closer. I was not a happy camper. I felt no joy in planning the garden, but I did it anyway. It's what gardeners do. And it sure pays off.

This is the time when tasks start lining up: cut the raspberry canes, prune the trees, check the strawberries in the bathtubs, transplant those seedlings and sow some more. As I sketch out what to grow where, calculating if I could squeeze in a few rows of broad beans in the potato patch, I feel my heart lift. I can see what this place will look like in June, and I know that the months between then and now will be filled with primroses, bluebells, wild garlic and the first of the salads and radishes. It suddenly does not seem that bad to be stuck here for the summer.

Hang in there. Soon we will have a fine stretch in the evenings. The beauty of Spring isn't in lockdown. Enjoy every extra ray of sunshine, every flower in the hedgerow. No matter what lies ahead, it will be better than the last four months.

## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the March edition of West Cork People,

With the vaccination rollout finally underway and gathering momentum and our children returning to school, let's hope there is more good news on the horizon, rather than the constant barrage of negative reports that have been hammering us since the start of the year.

With our movements still heavily restricted, we find solace where we can...books, Netflix, the outdoors – there are still ways to lift the spirits. I happily lost an hour this week in the 2020 adaptation of the classic television series 'All Creatures Great and Small', based on the 1970s book series of a young veterinarian in 1930s Yorkshire. I grew up with the older series and the mix of nostalgia, innocent sweetness and good humour it offers is the perfect pandemic escape!

On that note, you'll find plenty of interesting articles inside this issue to escape in. Author Esther Campion joins us all the way from Tasmania to share news about her latest book, partly set in West Cork. Ballinascorthy farmer Vivian Buttimer recounts some of the steps he has taken on his farm to protect the environment, Dr Jeff gives us a humorous insight into his daily interactions, Paul Lordan shares why West Cork is the home of Cork football and Shane brings us back in time to the Wild West and explains why the Comanche Indians garnered a reputation for being the single most terrifying group of people in American history. If you're into gardening, as usual we have lots of great advice and tips and make sure to read Nicholas Mitchell's article on behalf of Birdwatch Ireland West Cork branch – he gives an informative account of the behaviour of buzzards.

Small businesses have been hard hit in the past 11 months but are preserving despite adversity. Inside this issue you will find interviews with some of West Cork's inspiring entrepreneurs, of which there are many, who are turning challenges into opportunities.

For this and lots more, see inside.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Until next month,

Mary



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Editor



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West Cork People

## 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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**FIANNA FAÍL**  
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

## Minister Heather Humphreys extends closing date for Tidy Towns funding of €1 million

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, has announced an extension to the closing date for applications under the €1 million top-up fund for Tidy Towns groups.

The closing date has been extended until Friday, March 19, to enable as many Tidy Towns groups as possible to apply for this funding.

The Minister allocated €1 million in funding last December to support Tidy Towns group across the country, with €1,000 available to every eligible group. In total, there are 987 eligible groups registered across the country. The funding is a top-up to the €1.4 million allocated to Tidy Towns groups towards the end of 2019.

While the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition could not take place in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister Humphreys has confirmed that the 2021 competition will

go ahead, with adaptations as necessary to meet public health guidelines. The launch date will be announced in the coming months.

Encouraging groups to apply for the funding available, Minister Humphreys said: "Last December, I gave a commitment that the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition would proceed in 2021, albeit in a slightly different format due to the COVID-19 restrictions. I also made additional funding of €1 million available to the Tidy Towns groups to assist them in their preparations for the competition. I have written to every registered group, through Pobal, advising them how to apply for this funding.

"I want to encourage all groups to avail of this funding. The closing date for receipt of applications was originally the start of March, but in the current circumstances, I am extending this deadline to Friday, March 19."



# €10.5 million state-of-the-art extension unveiled at Clonakilty Community College



Students of Clonakilty Community College in West Cork are in for a big surprise when they return to school after months of lockdown. Governed by the Cork Education and Training Board (Cork ETB), the West Cork school has recently undergone a state-of-the-art extension, made possible by a significant investment of €10.5 million.

The extensive works, designed by KOBW Architects and carried out by general building contractors Cahalane Brothers Ltd, involved the demolition of part of the existing single story and temporary buildings, followed by the construction of a new two-storey extension, spanning 3,195m<sup>2</sup>.

One of the main features of the new building is a special educational needs base, which can facilitate two classes while also incorporating a central activities space; a practical activities room that assists with the development of daily living skills; a para educational room; a multi-sensory room; and a secure outdoor play area.

The extension also provides 10 additional classrooms, as well as a variety of multidisciplinary rooms.

The new building has also created space for guidance, pastoral and administrative offices, as well as areas specifically designated for first aid and storage. Physical education will be further supported within the extension with the addition of three ball courts.

Based around the Department of Education and Skills' 'Schools of the Future' room layouts, the design allows a



greater external wall area for daylight and ventilation, while their regular sizes allow for efficient structural design. The extension is arranged around a courtyard, linked to the existing – now central – general purpose room, which generates greater connectivity throughout the school. Maintaining a streamlined flow between the new extension and the existing school, the development has succeeded in presenting a strong civic building to the town.

Commenting on the significant expansion of the school, Anne Dunne, Principal of Clonakilty Community College, said: "We are beyond delighted to be the first in the country to unveil the 'Schools of the Future' design concept. Our beautiful new building was made possible through a collective effort between KOBW Architects and local contractors Cahalane Brothers Ltd, who took a huge personal interest in this West Cork-based project. We cannot wait to share this beautiful, bright, spacious, vibrant new home with our full college community and look forward to the reopening of the schools, so that our students can begin to benefit from this amazing facility."

In order to facilitate the continued operation of the school, construction work was carried

out in phases since the building was handed over in December 2020. With the contractor currently on-site completing outside works, the overall project is due for completion next month; just in time for the students to make a welcome return.

Speaking in relation to the €10m extension, Cork ETB Chief Executive Denis Leamy said: "Cork ETB is hugely proud of this state-of-the-art development and we're extremely pleased that it will be ready for students and staff to utilise once they are permitted to return to school and we are confident that these significant upgrades will prove invaluable to both students and teachers at Clonakilty Community College."

"We will continue to strive to improve educational resources and facilities for our primary schools, post primary schools and our Further Education colleges across the city and county. This investment reaffirms our commitment to providing staff, students and teachers with the best environment possible for continued educational development and support and we look forward to receiving their feedback upon their return to their classrooms."

www.clonakiltycc.ie

## O'Sullivan clinches €10m Stability Fund for voluntary organisations

A €10 million stability fund for community and voluntary organisations will make up part of the government's 'Covid-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 – The Path Ahead' plan, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan confirmed last month.

The fund was added after Deputy O'Sullivan voiced the need to support community groups at Fianna Fáil's parliamentary meeting in February.

"I'm thrilled with this response from minister Michael McGrath to my request last week for extra

funding for community organisations," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"So many have been in touch with my team because they are unable to raise funds for the day to day running of their community halls and sports halls.

"This funding of €10 million will help."

In a letter to Fianna Fáil TDs on Wednesday, Minister McGrath wrote:

"Colleagues,

At last week's PP meeting, the need for additional support for local community and voluntary

organisations was raised by Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan and supported by many colleagues.

As part of the new 'Covid-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 – The Path Ahead' announced yesterday, I am pleased to confirm we have provided €10m as a Stability Fund for community and voluntary organisations.

I will be liaising with Minister Heather Humphreys over the period ahead on the best and most effective way of distributing these funds, and will keep you informed."

## Spring gardening course

This Spring Cork County Council is offering an online gardening course open to all residents of Cork County and will be of particular interest to representatives of Tidy Towns groups, resident's associations, Green School's co-ordinators and community groups.

The practical 'hands-on' gardening course led by horticulturist Aoife Munn will cover topics such as reducing your waste, growing your own vegetables, planting for pollinators, alternatives to chemicals and much

more. Each week participants will sow seeds, prick them out and look at planting techniques, as well as learning about organic growing.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Mary Linehan Foley, commending the initiative said "Many studies have shown the benefits of gardening for both physical and mental wellbeing, positively impacting mood and helping with anxiety and depression. The great thing about growing food is that, with a little help, we can all do it and that

is empowering. This gardening course organised by Cork County Council's Heritage Unit is that helping hand to get us started..."

The five-week course will be held on Thursday afternoons at 2.30pm, beginning on March 18 and applicants must be able to attend all dates to secure a place on the course.

Please note spaces are limited. To secure a FREE place, email [cork.heritage@corkcoco.ie](mailto:cork.heritage@corkcoco.ie) with your name, general location (nearest town) and your associated group (if any).

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# Everyone needs to play a part in recovery

By Holly Cairns TD

It's been a very challenging start to 2021 and so hard for so many people. But now that winter is behind us and the evenings are getting longer, there are shoots of hope springing up everywhere.

It's projected that the mass vaccination programme will

reach 100,000 people every week soon, and from April we are due to receive one million vaccines per month.

We have all sacrificed so much over the past year. It's vital that the government matches the efforts of the public. The issues I wrote about in January are still outstanding: we need

mandatory quarantining, proper testing and tracing systems, and fully resourced public health teams.

Instead of a strategy of rolling lockdowns, we need effective measures to support families, communities, and businesses. There are several things we can all do to help get us to the

summer.

Staying active and connected is so important. Walking my dog and talking with family are two of my favourite things to do. Many people are doing the 100 Days of Walking or Couch to 5k challenges, others are swimming or running for charity. We live in the most beautiful constituency in Ireland, and although we have to stay close to home there still are many opportunities for exercise. The pandemic has reminded us of the significance of connections with others. Now might be a good time to reach out to people, ring neighbours or even write a letter or postcard to someone you haven't seen in a while. I miss handwritten letters and there's every chance you'll brighten someone's day by sending them one.

I know that homeschooling is a major challenge for families at the moment. My team and I have put together an Activity Pack with a West Cork focus for three different age groups (ages 4-6, 7-9 and 10-13). Most of the

activities can be carried out at home or in the garden. You can download it from my website [hollycairns.ie](http://hollycairns.ie).

Supporting local businesses is essential. While many shops and services have had to shut their doors, their operating costs remain. If you are lucky enough to be able to, please buy local. Many retail and hospitality businesses still offer online options. Our farmers' markets are a vital source of income for small producers and platforms such as NeighbourFood do a great job of connecting consumers and producers. Local grocery shops are going above and beyond by delivering to vulnerable people and donating food to charities. Also, many musicians and artists, whose work opportunities have been decimated, are selling their art online. To help our towns and villages survive, we all need to make a conscious effort to support local.

Finally, we need the local and national government to double their focus on reopening society and the economy. They need

to lay the groundwork now for the summer and beyond. The recent episode of RTE's EcoEye highlighted Clonakilty as an example of facilitating outdoor and people-centred living.

We need to put similar plans for all towns and villages in West Cork to support tourism, businesses and community events. Hospitality needs grants to convert more outdoor spaces, and community groups need investment to restart their vital work. My colleague Councillor Ross O'Connell is pushing for the Council to improve our beach infrastructure. This will be another summer of domestic tourism and we need to learn from last year by investing in parking, waste infrastructure, and toilet facilities.

Coronavirus has been with us for over a year now and it has taken an incredible toll. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. We all need to play our part and we desperately need the government to rise to meet the commitment of the general public.



**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**

## Returning to Ireland: Covid-19 and Brexit

### Advice from Citizens Information

Within the space of a year the circumstances surrounding entering and leaving Ireland have changed drastically. The impact of COVID-19 as well as the UK's departure from the European Union is having major implications for both Irish and UK citizens departing and returning home.

Regarding Covid-19, there are now new safety procedures in place relating to Covid-19, that passengers should be aware of before and after arriving into Ireland:

- All passengers arriving into Ireland must have a negative test result no more than 72 hours before arrival
- Anyone arriving in Ireland from another country is required by law to fill in a Covid-19 passenger locator form
- From midnight on February 3, 2021 a system was introduced for mandatory quarantine at home for arrivals into Ireland. Passengers who arrive from any destination must quarantine for 14 days at the address specified on their Passenger Locator Form, with penalties

for non-compliance. These penalties are a fine of up to €2,500 or six months in prison, or both.

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, said: "The clear Government and public health advice is that everybody should avoid non-essential travel completely. Last night (3rd Feb), I signed additional regulations that puts mandatory quarantine at home on a statutory footing. All travellers into the country must now adhere to staying at home and enforcement will be a matter for An Garda Síochána".

Regarding Brexit and the movement of people, there are some things that Irish and UK citizens should also be familiar with. For British citizens living in Ireland, they continue to have the right to work, study and vote here and under the Common Travel Area Agreement they also have the right to receive their UK pension and maintain their medical card and other Social Welfare payments, if eligible.

For Irish citizens wishing to continue to live, work and study in the UK, their rights are protected under the Common Travel Area arrangement and they do not need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Speaking about the effects

of people returning to Ireland during COVID-19 and Brexit, Anne O'Donovan, West Cork Citizens Information Manager said, "There are new procedures in place affecting people returning to Ireland due to the ongoing pandemic. Please contact us if you need clarification on anything. We are also receiving a lot of queries from UK Citizens concerned about their pensions or medical card entitlement. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your local Citizens Information Centre, we remain open and are happy to answer any questions you may have"

In-depth information surrounding these topics can be found on our website [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie).

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](mailto:bantry@citinfo.ie) or log on to [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) for further information and contact details.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

### Help when bereaved

**I'm looking for some simple information on first steps after a bereavement for my sister who has been widowed. Can you recommend an appropriate resource?**

Bereavement can be overwhelming and your sister may be going through many different emotions. The Citizens Information Board (CIB) has published a booklet that may be of help to your sister at this difficult time.

Bereavement – A practical guide (pdf) answers questions she may have about accessing money, getting help with funeral expenses, dealing with her loved one's estate, and other practical issues she may be worried about. It has information on dealing with the loss of a loved one during COVID-19, as well as contact details for a range of support services available to those who have been bereaved.

You can get the guide online at [citizensinformationboard.ie](http://citizensinformationboard.ie). You can also get a printed copy from your local Citizens Information Centre.

You can get more information about any of the topics covered in the booklet on [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie). The website has detailed information on practical arrangements after a death, and all of the latest information on death and bereavement during COVID-19.

### Disabled Person's Parking Permit

**Can my daughter use my Disabled Person's Parking Permit if she is going to the shops for me?**

A Disabled Person's Parking Permit (also called EU Parking Card) is only issued to a person with a disability. The permit shows the name and photograph of the person it has been issued to. Your daughter cannot use your Disabled Person's Parking Permit unless you are with her.

Only you can use it. However, you can use your permit for any vehicle you are travelling in, either as a driver or as a passenger. This means that if you are being driven at different times by different people you can bring the parking permit and display it in whichever vehicle you are using. So, if your daughter is driving you, she can use it to park her car in a disabled person's parking space.

The permit allows you to use the public parking spaces assigned for vehicles being used by a person with a disability. These spaces or parking bays have the wheelchair symbol painted on the ground or have a sign with the wheelchair symbol displayed. Most accessible parking bays are located near amenities such as shops, post offices and schools.

Car parking spaces with the wheelchair symbol are usually

wider than most other car parking spaces to allow drivers or passengers with a disability to get from their car seat to their wheelchair. If you travel to any EU country with your parking permit you can park in a disabled person's parking space or bay.

The Disabled Person's Parking Permit is administered by the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA). Both organisations provide detailed information on how to use and apply for the Disabled Person's Parking Permit. In Ireland, an EU parking permit is issued for two years.

*During COVID-19, you can find comprehensive integrated information online at [citizensinformation.ie/covid19/](http://citizensinformation.ie/covid19/) and you can get daily updates on what's changed on Twitter at @citizensinfo. You can also get information and advice from:*

*\*The Citizens Information Phone Service: Call 0761 07 4000, Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm*

*\*Our national call back service: Visit [citizensinformation.ie/callback](http://citizensinformation.ie/callback) to request a phone call from an information officer.*

*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*



# Casualties of Crossbarry

As the main base for the famed West Cork Flying Column, the area around Crossbarry was a hotbed of Republican activity in 1921. To deal with this, the British decided to converge on this small village near Innishannon and wipe out the Column. They hadn't bargained on meeting with the might of General Tom Barry and over 100 Volunteer fighters. **Pauline Murphy** tells us how a planned IRA ambush turned into a decisive battle in the War of Independence.

British military vehicles frequently travelled the back road from Bandon to Cork and on March 19, 1921 IRA General Tom Barry had a plan to ambush a number of them at Crossbarry. However, the plan changed quickly when it became apparent that the British knew of the Flying Column's presence in the area.

The Crown forces had beaten this intelligence out of an IRA prisoner captured at the Upton Ambush weeks earlier, and on that Saturday morning in March over 1,000 soldiers from the Essex Regiment encircled the area, intent on smashing the Republican resistance there.

Shortly after dawn on March 19, the first shots rang out at Forde's farmhouse in Ballymurphy, near Crossbarry village, where Commandant Charlie Hurley was recovering from wounds received at Upton; he would be the first casualty of that fateful day.

Hurley, 28, a keen GAA lad and Gaelic League activist from Baurleigh, Kilbrittain, had worked as a clerk at Haulbowline Royal Navy Yard before he rejected a promotion to England and headed back to West Cork, where he joined the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin. He had become Commandant of the West Cork Brigade in August 1920 but was injured during the ill-fated Upton Ambush when a bullet entered his skull behind his right ear and exited through the left side of his face. It was a miracle he survived such an horrific injury but, with the aid of comrades, he was carried to the safehouse at Ballymurphy to recover.

When British lorries approached the farm Hurley rose from his sickbed and dashed downstairs, firing his revolver at the enemy as they burst through the door. He hit a Major Hallinan in the chest but the soldier was wearing steel body armour and survived.

As Hurley ran out the backdoor, soldiers entering the rear of the farmyard spotted him, took aim and fired. A bullet struck Hurley in the head, killing him instantly.

The sound of gunfire at Forde's farm alerted the Flying Column that something was happening; then came waves of British soldiers across the fields whilst army lorries sped along the roads – the Battle of Crossbarry had begun.

As a lorry rattled towards the bridge near the crossroads in

Crossbarry, a lucky shot from the gun of a Volunteer hit the machine gun atop it, rendering the weapon useless.

IRA Volunteer Edward White was in one of the lorries coming from the Bandon side of Crossbarry. White was being taken to Cork as a prisoner following his capture in Kilpatrick the previous day. As a hail of bullets rained down on the vehicle, White was able to escape while his captors were otherwise occupied returning fire. He scrambled up the hillside to join his comrades.

A soldier spotted sharp-shooting Beara native Patrick O'Sullivan behind a ditch overlooking the road and flung a bomb in his direction. The bomb landed next to O'Sullivan who calmly picked it up and flung it back! It landed on the roof of a lorry and exploded.

The air was not only full of the sound of bombs and gunfire but also the strains of warpipes, which drifted across the Crossbarry battlefield. Flor Begley was an IRA Volunteer and an accomplished pipe player who was asked by General Barry to bring his instrument to Crossbarry and position himself in Harold's farmyard, adjacent to where the action would play out.

As the battle raged Begley played martial airs on his warpipes to give the IRA a morale boost...and give the enemy the impression they were battling a large army battalion rather than just 100 volunteers!

General Barry had split his men into seven sections, labeled Sections A to G. Section E, commanded by Denis Lordan of Kinsale, covered the area where the monument now stands at Crossbarry and was the most exposed to enemy fire, resulting in many injuries, some fatal. Dan Corcoran and Jim Crowley were two Section E members who were seriously injured. Crowley had his kneecap smashed by a bullet, an injury that left him crippled for the rest of his life.

Apart from Charlie Hurley, there were three more IRA fatalities at the Battle of Crossbarry.

Jeremiah O'Leary from Leap was a young Volunteer with the Corran Company. He was struck down by machine gunfire while fighting on the exposed hillside of section E.

Peter 'Scottie' Monahan was laying landmines at Crossbarry when he was shot whilst tending to one that had failed to explode near the bridge at the crossroads. As Monahan fell another bullet

found its target, which made him roll into the wires of the bomb and become entangled. As more bullets hit, Monahan's last act was to detonate his bomb.

Monahan had joined the Kilbrittain Company in November 1920 after deserting the British Army where he had been a Sergeant with the Cameron Highlanders stationed in Cobh. At first he was viewed with suspicion and held prisoner by the Ballinadee Company but, when they realised he was genuine and had engineering skills, they made him chief bomb-maker of the West Cork Brigade.

Cornelius Daly was 22-years-old and from Carrig, Ballinascarthy. He was a member of the Clogagh Company and the third IRA Volunteer to fall in action on the Crossbarry battlefield.

The bodies of the fallen IRA Volunteers were taken to Bandon by the military, where they were later claimed by members of Cumann na mBan, who took care of funerals. Under the cover of darkness Charlie Hurley was buried with military honours at Clogagh Graveyard, with General Tom Barry delivering an oration.

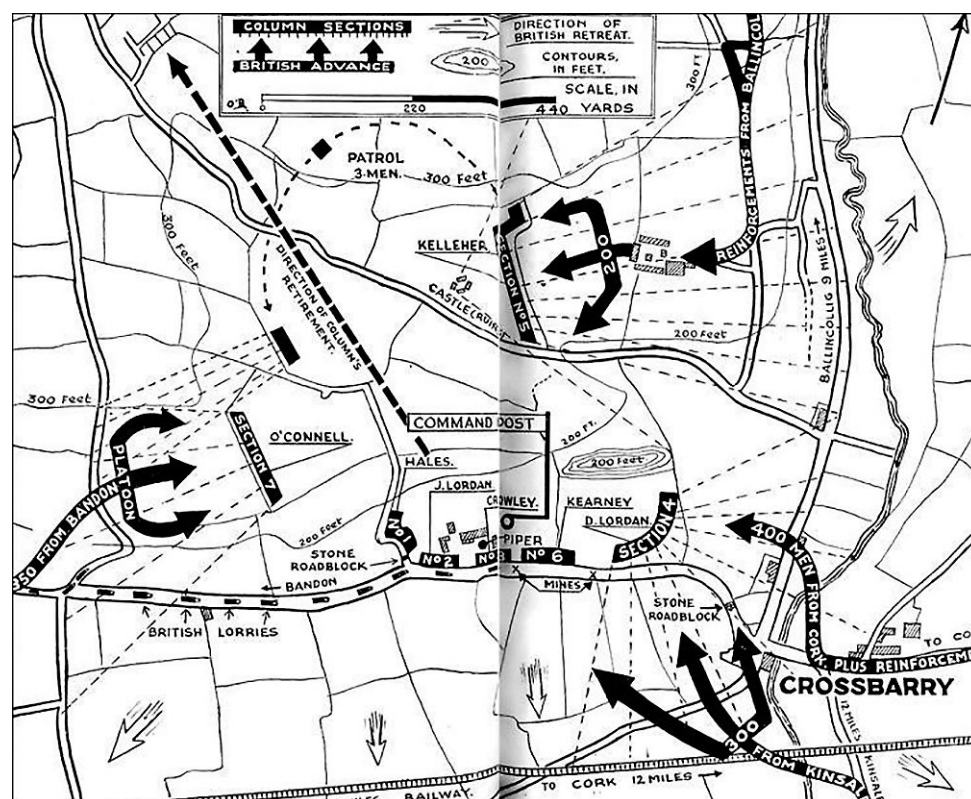
Peter Monahan, Cornelius Daly and Jeremiah O'Leary were buried in the Republican Plot in Bandon. During their funerals the Crown forces harassed mourners and arrested all males who attended.

The casualty list on the other side however was much larger.

Lieutenant Geoffrey Hotblack was a well-known (and well-hated) figure in West Cork where his ruthless streak did not endear him to the people. Hotblack was shot at Crossbarry and died two days later.

The other British fatalities were: Sergeant Edward Watts from London. He was a WWI veteran and his body was not found until two days after the battle; Private Joseph Crafer from London and Private Harold Baker from Liverpool; Private William Grey and driver Cyril Martin, who were both part of the Royal Army Service Corps attached to the Essex Regiment; Private Sidney Cawley, who died the day after the Battle from gunshot wounds; Private William Wilkins from Salford was a WWI veteran, so too was Private Stanley Steward; Lieutenant Alfred Tower was wounded and died days later.

The only RIC casualty was Constable Arthur Kenwood from London. He joined the RIC Auxiliary Division in 1920 and was



driving one of the lorries when he was killed.

In the days after the Battle of Crossbarry, Crown forces flooded into the area to carry out brutal reprisals. They raided homes, burned sheds, destroyed crops and farm equipment. Among those targeted were the O'Mahoney's in Belrose, O'Leary's in Ballyhandle, Hartnells in Killeens and Kellehers at

Crow Hill, just to name a few.

Many of those fighting in British uniform at Crossbarry were hardened veterans of WWI; they were experienced and had far more firepower than the IRA. The IRA Volunteers had neither battlefield experience nor equipment; they were labourers, farmer's sons, clerks and shopkeepers yet they overcame the might of the British forces.

After the Kilmichael Ambush in November 1920, the Battle of Crossbarry four months later proved decisive in the fight for independence. Those two West Cork engagements undoubtedly cracked the hardened British response to Ireland's will. You could say, 'the Boys of Kilmichael bruised them but the Boys of Crossbarry broke them'.





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## HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

*'The great appear great, because we are on our knees: Let us rise.'*

– Jim Larkin, Union leader, and Founder of the Irish Labour Party.

When any union goes on strike, be they nurses, rail workers, teachers, retail employees, the media usually likes to take to the streets to get a vox pop of public opinion. A typical response usually comes in the form of, 'well, what about all the upheaval and inconvenience the strike will cause?' It seems to me, some people are happy to support strikers, as long as they are not inconvenienced. But what would be the point of a strike if it didn't upset the apple cart? I always thought that was the intention. One must remember – strikes usually are the product of a breakdown in dialogue or a failure of compromise between both sides. We live in a society where there is a malaise against unions as some sort of regressive anachronistic institution that holds our economy back. What so many of us take for granted is that our rights as workers have been hard won, not simply handed over. Part of the problem lies in the public versus private pitched battle that raises its head when industrial action is mentioned. The private sector can feel that unions hold the country to ransom, leaving them to hold the can. This divide and conquer

is one of the oldest tricks in the book and has been used by the unscrupulous elite and powerful since the Industrial Revolution. The alienation between fellow workers, from different industries, is mainly fostered by the lack of a company's willingness to recognise unions; or worse still, not allowing unionisation of a work force. Forty per cent of multinational companies, using an Irish workforce, do not allow their employees to unionise. That rises to 60 per cent if you work for an American company. Do not be surprised – the 'land of the free and home of the brave' has always fought hard against the unions throughout its history. So too did Churchill when he had to deal with millions of workers who found their voice after getting the right to vote at the end of World War One. By disbaring workers from unions, it weakens the supportive fabric of a unified workforce, thereby creating the conditions where unions are despised, rather than seen as beneficial organisations.

While all Irish employees have a constitutional right to join a trade union, there is, however, no legal obligation on an employer to either recognise or negotiate with that union. Worse still, is that the right to strike is not recognised by Irish law (thankfully, it is under EU law). Even then, a union has to meet strict conditions before they can strike, which means any union would have had to undertake a process before taking on industrial action. It's not as 'knee jerk' as many of us believe. When we think of great Irish socialists like Jim Larkin, James Connolly, Countess Markievicz and Thomas Johnson, one would expect unions and Labour to have had more historical influence in Irish society. So why not?

Kevin O'Higgins, who was in the Irish Volunteers and a member of Sinn Féin in the first



Delia Larkin (front, centre) with workers of the Irish Worker on December 6, 1913.

Pic: National Library of Ireland on The Commons

Dáil, went on to have a prominent position in the Irish Free State. Famously he remarked: "We were probably the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a revolution." Despite the massive slums in Dublin, often cited as the worst in Europe, a socialist revolution never happened in Ireland. TB was rampant in the tightly packed tenements and laneways of the city, with a death rate 50 per cent higher than other British cities. Yet, being chiefly an agrarian society, factories and slums may not have been as high on the agenda as one thinks. The Land Acts that were introduced in the 1870s evolved and made purchase a more affordable right into the early twentieth century. This largely enabled Irish people to purchase fairly their own land, thus ending landlordism and the dominant aristocracy. The War of Independence was never about land, because the land question had been largely

solved before a bullet was fired. It was about political power and nationhood. The Proclamation advocated many fine ideals of this nationhood, and Padraig Pearse is credited with its creation. It also espoused some progressive socialist ideals, framed by James Connolly, a socialist republican. He was more aligned with the French revolutionary republicanism of 'liberty, equality, fraternity' and his fingerprints can be seen on the Proclamation where it states, 'Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally.'

Connolly didn't create this in a vacuum; himself and Jim Larkin had literally fought for the workers in the 1913 Dublin Lockout.

William Martin Murphy, originally from Bantry, was one of Ireland's most successful and influential businessmen. He was chairman of the Dublin United Tramway Company and ran the Irish Independent, amongst other enterprises. Not unlike some of the big companies today, he did pay his workers a fair wage but worked them hard in tough conditions. And in parallel with some companies today, he refused to recognise the biggest union founded by Jim Larkin, the ITGWU (Irish Transport and General Workers Union) and also refused to hire anyone who was a member of this union. It was this stance that was the catalyst for him firing hundreds of tram workers simply because they joined the ITGWU.

Larkin and Connolly encouraged union workers across the

board to come out as sympathetic strikers, which they did in their thousands. What transpired was an example of the mighty few crushing the will of the majority. The employers, under the influence of Martin Murphy, struck back and locked their workers out of work without pay. The Catholic Church, then the epiphany of conservatism, sided with the employers instead of the aggrieved, downtrodden and hungry masses.

What happened next showed what workers could do if united. Nationality and religion should not, and did not, matter when the British Trade Union Congress sent over £150,000 to the ITGWU, to feed the starving families on the strikes. They even went further when they tried to initiate a scheme to foster the striker's children in their homes in England, so there would be less mouths to feed. This spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood was broken when the Catholic hierarchy once again intervened, using their influence to claim that Catholic children would end up in Protestant homes.

If that wasn't enough, another pillar of the Establishment physically crushed them. The DMP (Dublin Metropolitan Police) baton charged workers to break up strikes on August 13, 1913, resulting in two dead and hundreds injured. Connolly vowed that this would never happen again and set up the Irish Citizens Army to protest the worker. Significantly, men and women could join, unlike the Volunteers, and they took part in the 1916 Rising. (In contrast De Valera, who fought in Boland Mills in the 1916 Rising, was asked would he like assistance from Cumann na mBan, in the mill during Easter week. He turned them down, saying it was

no place for women).

And so it came to pass, that the 1913 Dublin Lockout was defeated by the triple alliance of the elite business class, the church and the Establishment police force. A year later, many of these men would join the British army, out of economic necessity to elevate the poverty their families continued to endure. They would ironically be fighting so the elites of society could keep their colonies and possessions, and the yet majority of the soldiers, still could not even vote until 1919. A few short years after the Great War, many Irishmen fighting for the IRA found themselves pitted against ordinary 'Tommys', the same 'Tommys', who had donated money to their fellow Irish workers in 1913. Religion and nationally didn't matter before, only empathy for a fellow worker. Now they were thrust into a cauldron where it was made to matter once more. Once again, it was a case of divide and conquer; when the common ground uniting them should have been their working-class grievances.

During this turmoil when Ireland was trying to assert its independence, the Labour Party chose not to contest the 1918 election in the interests of a united front based on self-determination. Would it have mattered? Arthur Mitchell, Labour historian, claimed that the party had not sufficiently appealed to small farmers or labourers, but overall lacked a large enough industrial base for support, in what was still a dominant agrarian and rural society. Some commentators believe that had they stood, it would have eaten significantly into Sinn Féin's numbers. Either way, Labour left the other parties get a head start in the political race, which proved costly. Thomas Johnson, the Labour leader wrote the first draft of the 1919 Democratic Programme for the first Dail, though Sean T. O'Kelly watered down some of the left leaning policies, because he perceived it as 'quite radical and left-wing in its ideology'. 'Conservative revolutionaries', indeed Mr O'Higgins.

I leave the last words to one of Ireland's greatest playwrights – George Bernard Shaw. He was a philanthropist, socialist, and was one of the founder members of the British Labour Party. He wrote, 'The first duty of every citizen is to insist on having money on reasonable terms and this demand is not complied with, by giving men and women three shillings each, for ten or twelve hours of drudgery, and one man a thousand pounds for nothing.' Little has changed.



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# Enable Ireland is offering you the chance to win a 3-bedroom house in Carrigaline

How would you like to win a fully-furnished, three-bedroom house? Enable Ireland is offering one lucky person the chance to win a beautiful home valued at €330,000 and tickets cost just €100!

The house is situated in Janeville, a new development of luxury 'A' rated homes located in Carrigaline. It is furnished to show house standard with stylish finishes throughout. The home also comes with beautiful landscaped green areas.

However, the house isn't the only prize up for grabs. Second prize in this raffle is a Honda Civic Smart 1.0 litre petrol car kindly sponsored by Astra Construction. Third prize is an impressive €5,000 in cash sponsored by Right Price Tiles and Wood Flooring.

The proceeds from the raffle will go towards a very special Cork project that will benefit children with disabilities for generations to come. Over 860 children and their families attend Enable Ireland's new Lavanagh Centre, where children's services are provided including physiotherapy and hydrotherapy, speech and language, social work, psychology, early years education and occupational therapy. The charity still needs to raise €1million to fund this important new facility and continue to provide their



The kitchen in the beautifully finished showhouse.



Miriam and TJ Lotty

vital therapy and rehabilitative services.

By supporting Enable Ireland through this amazing competition you are helping them to continue to support families like Miriam Lotty and her son TJ. TJ is a sports mad 11-year-old from Cork who uses Enable Ireland

Children's Services.

"When TJ was 14-months-old he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy," Miriam explains. "He had started to miss important milestones, not sitting up or crawling and we were referred to Enable Ireland Children's Services in Cork.

"In those early days Enable Ireland was there for us at every step. Particularly to support with physiotherapy for TJ which was critical to build his muscle strength. Then when he was four, he went to the pre-school in their centre which ensured he was ready and able to join his local primary school. Enable Ireland is there to support TJ's

siblings as well," Miriam states. "It was very difficult explaining to TJ's older sister that he would not be able to walk. That he would need to use a wheelchair to get around. Just knowing that the Enable Ireland team is there for us is great peace of mind. If you have a concern about anything, you know you can call and get support."

To help Enable Ireland to continue this vital work, buy a raffle ticket today. Tickets cost €100 and can be purchased at [www.winahousecork.ie](http://www.winahousecork.ie) or by calling the fundraising team on 087 6868333 or 087 7905029 or emailing [hello@winahousecork.ie](mailto:hello@winahousecork.ie)

## West Cork burial records now available to view for free online

Over 17,000 additional previously unavailable genealogy records relating to the greater West Cork area are now online to view free of charge.

Skibbereen Heritage Centre has been digitising burial registers for West Cork graveyards for some time, making some 15,000 records available to the general public last year. This latest addition brings the number of burial records on its West Cork Graveyards database to over 32,000.

"We're delighted to bring these records into the public domain," said Skibbereen Heritage Centre manager Terri Kearney, "and we are very grateful to Cork County Council for its

support of this project".

The previously-unavailable burial records are for graveyards all over the greater West Cork area, covering an area stretching from Timoleague in the east all the way to the tip of the Beara peninsula and as far north as Kilmichael.

A map showing all the graveyards is with the database itself on the Skibbereen Heritage Centre website [www.skibberienheritage.com](http://www.skibberienheritage.com) alongside a brief video tutorial on how to access these records.

The website also features the many graveyard video tours made by the staff at Skibbereen Heritage Centre. These video tours give a brief history of each graveyard alongside some of

the stories of those buried there as well as a 'virtual tour' of the monuments. The tours to date cover Caheragh, Drimoleague, Aughadown, Abbeystowry and Abbeymahon in Skibbereen, cillíní (children's burial grounds) in West Cork as well as one on the burial grounds at Schull and Skibbereen Workhouses.

While Skibbereen Heritage Centre is currently closed to the public, its staff are working hard to digitise even more burial records which will be added to its website over time, with new video tours of Chapel Lane and Creagh graveyards also in production.



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Drimoleague old graveyard



# More than one side to the Comanches



## 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.

*"No tribe in the history of the Spanish, French, Mexican, Texan, and American occupations of this land had ever caused so much havoc and death. None was even a close second."* – S.C Gwynne

The Comanche Indians are a tribe of Native Americans with a reputation for being not only the most violent Indian tribe ever known but also of being one of the most violent groups of people in history. They were more specifically a North American Indian tribe of equestrian nomads whose 18th and 19th century territory comprised the southern Great Plains including modern day Texas. Almost without question the first thought that comes to your mind's eye when you read the name Comanche or indeed Indian is that of a ruthless, uncivilised, lawless subset of people. Usually our depictions of Indians are garnered from what we have seen on television, a generic spaghetti western of possibly a memory of watching the 'Lone Ranger' or 'The last of the Mohicans' from childhood.

As with anything else, there are many aspects to the Comanche background. Are the depictions of them as savages wrong? In short, no. Have they been unjustly portrayed as barbaric killers? Also, no. In fact, the depictions of the Comanche that we are most familiar with have, in truth, been softened up extensively. The true brutality and the lengths they went to in order to torture and kill their enemy, other Indian tribes, or more specifically the white settlers, is almost indescribably horrific. In this article, I will touch on some of those aspects with discretion. However, what is not portrayed is that they were also a gentle, respectful and unquestionably loyal people. Admittedly that



sounds paradoxical. But, let me explain.

The Comanche were a hunter gatherer people, even though they were at the peak of their strength and power as late as the late 1800s, they hunted buffalo and ate berries from bushes. In essence their life was as simple as that. There was no outside influences or complications. They hunted, gathered and ate. Their life source was the buffalo, it provided them with everything, food, drink (blood) clothing, and they made tools from the buffalo's bones. They repeated this for hundreds of years. Until, the white settlers began to roam out west onto the Great Plains in order to claim land. The American government had approved this and essentially, if you could make it far enough West, you could claim a piece of land as your own, for free. This became known as the 'The Great Frontier' and in its most basic form is how the fighting began. This resulted in the Comanche Indians garnering a reputation for being the single most terrifying group of people in American history and here is why.

The Comanche were kind of like the Spartans. Because of their incredible military mastery, which derived from the horse. They were the prototype horse tribe; the tribe that could do more with the horse than any other tribe could. Because of that, it was a military community, and their old way of life was supplanted by the new way of life, which mainly had to do with war. So they pretty much hunted buffalo and started war. They were amazingly stripped down, in that they didn't have social organisation or religious organisation. They didn't weave baskets. They had a very stripped-down culture. So within that culture, the boys learned to hunt and ride at a very early age and they would become a warrior by the time they were teenagers. However,

it's important to note that the Comanche killed other Indian tribes, not just the white settler. There is a common misconception that they only attacked the 'outsider' – this is untrue.

Like most other tribes of Plains Indians, the Comanche were organised into autonomous bands, local groups formed on the basis of kinship and other social relationships. Buffalo products formed the core of the Comanche economy and included robes, tepee covers, sinew thread, water carriers made of the animal's stomach, and a wide variety of other goods. The Comanche were one of the first tribes to acquire horses from the Spanish and one of the few to breed them to any extent. They were the first tribe to master them and this is what gave them their edge against all tribes and enemies. They also fought battles on horseback, a skill unknown among other Indian peoples. Highly skilled Comanche horsemen set the pattern of nomadic equestrian life that became characteristic of the Plains tribes in the 18th and 19th centuries. Comanche raids for material goods, horses, and captives carried them as far south as Durango in present-day Mexico.

The Comanche had no written history, therefore the accounts that we have of their ability on horseback come from what was written down by the settlers or other invaders; every single account without any discrepancy highlights the magnitude of their ability on a horse. All the accounts mention being blown away entirely by their ability to hang from the side of the horse at full gallop and shoot arrows from underneath the animal's neck: Something that no one had ever seen before in history. When it came to riding a horse and using a horse as a weapon, no one was equal to them.

Their mastery of the horse, coupled with the fact they could

now travel huge distances on horseback to attack or simply trade or travel, became a remarkable milestone in the development of the Comanche and allowed them to grow into what they would eventually become. As a rule, when the Comanche attacked, they did so without mercy, it was their belief that no mercy would be shown to them if the attack were reciprocated. Therefore, the violence they unleashed on an enemy is, in some cases, almost unreadable.

The first task in an attack on a village or in a battle was that all the adult males would be killed. That was automatic. That was one of the reasons that Indians fought to the death. The white men were astonished by it but they assumed that they would be killed. Small children were killed, as the Comanche had no time to raise a baby. They were invariably fleeing from someone or fleeing their previous attack and a baby would have been a burden. A lot of the children, in say the three to 10-year-old range, were often taken as captives. The reason for this was that the Comanche often had problems keeping their numbers up due to losing members in battle. They would then take this age group as a captive to replace a brother or a sister that had been lost, and teach this child the Comanche ways, therefore indoctrinating them into their system and way of life. Which encompassed everything – hunting, killing, cooking and speaking their language. The women were often raped and often killed. All of the people in those settlements back in those years knew what a Comanche raid was and they knew what a Comanche raid meant. One of the Comanche signature torture techniques was to take a prisoner captive and tie him or her to a pole facing the sun. The would then remove the prisoner's eyelids with a blade and allow the sun's rays to burn them to blindness before leaving them for dead. As a historian and reading about the Plains Indians you have to come to terms with this, with torture, which they practiced all across the West and these kind of grisly practices that scared white people to death.

So, where is the gentle, respectful and honourable side? Cynthia Ann Parker was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl abducted by the Comanche when she was 10-years-old in 1836; her story explains this in detail. Learn more about her story and this relatively unknown side to the Comanche in next month's column.

# The legend of Clíona



## 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.

Clíona is a supernatural lady in literary and oral tradition. Her name probably meant 'the territorial one' and represented a function of the patron goddess. She is associated mostly with Glandore Harbour, but also Rosscarbery Bay and with Mallow.

According to legend, she was the daughter of Mannánán Mac Lir, the predominant Irish sea god. One account of her story states she eloped from 'Tír Tairngire' (the land of Promise) with a handsome young warrior named 'Ciabhán' of the Curling Locks. They landed at Trá Théite, the strand at Glandore and 'Ciabhán' left her in his boat. A mighty wave came and she drowned. This was 'Tonn Chlíona' (Clíona's Wave), the best known of the magic waves of Ireland. The deep roar of the sea as it enters the cliff caves in Glandore harbour was said to foretell the death of the king of Munster. She was the 'bean sí' (banshee, fairy woman) of the Fitzgerald's of Desmond and later the McCarthy clan. The wave that killed her now lives on an eerie thunderous roar that bellows out from the cliffs in Glandore in stormy weather. Manchán Magan writes: 'it's as much a sound wave as a sea wave now – a loud and sudden call that for some family foretells the death of someone significant'.

In the Middle Ages, Clíona was regarded as one of the principal otherworld women of Munster. She was said to reside in a palace near 'Carraig Chlíona', a conspicuous large rock in a lonely part of the parish of Kilshannig, near Mallow. To the 'fil' (poets), she was an inspirer of their art,

and she had the reputation of being a seducer, as evidenced by a poem of that era. In this text, she comes to the celebrated poet, 'Cearball Ó Dálaigh', inflicts a terrible thirst on him, and then promises to relieve him of it if he will live with her.

As a femme fatale, Clíona enticed men to the seashore, and had a series of mortal lovers. Among them were 'Caomh', the progenitor of the O'Keefe family, and Seán Mac Shemais Mac Gearailt (John Fitz James Gearailt – Fitzgerald) King of Desmond. According to this story, Fitzgerald was betrothed to a lady and a great dance was held to celebrate the engagement. Seán, who was a very handsome fellow, was dancing splendidly, when he suddenly dropped dead, and it was believed that he had been 'carried away' by the fairies led by Clíona. A young girl 'Caitlín Óg Ceitinn' (Keating) went to 'Carraig Chlíona' and demanded that he be returned. She spoke in verse outside the rock and Clíona answered her in the same metre. A long contest in poetry ensued, with Clíona insisting on holding on to the young man, but when 'Caitlín' demanded a massive dowry for Seán, she released him back into the world.

In other stories, Clíona was considered the noblest and most desirable woman in Ireland. She kept three brightly coloured birds that ate apples from an otherworldly tree and sang so sweetly that they could cure all illness. It is said that one man learned her spells and plotted to kill her, but she changed into a wren and disappeared.

The other magic waves of Ireland are 'Tonn Scéine' in Kenmare Bay, 'Tonn Ruairí' in Dundrum Bay, Co. Down and 'Tonn Tuaithe', the mouth of the River Bann.

'Tír Tairngire' is one of many otherworldly paradises in early Irish tradition, much associated with 'Mannánán'. They include 'Tír na nÓg' (Land of Youth), 'Magh Mell' (The Pleasant Plain). In those lands, there is everlasting youth, where there is no sorrow or despair, no ageing, no dying.

Between Rosscarbery and the Galley Head is a strand called Clíona's Strand, off which is a rock known as 'Carraig Clíona', around which the sea breaks, creating huge waves in stormy weather and was said to utter a plaintive wail when the king of Munster died. The wave at Glandore is still audible. That you still hear a 'tonn' that was sent out from the otherworld is stirring.

Tonn Clíona is infused with the sadness of the unfortunate bird-loving fairy goddess that, 'Manannán', as god of the sea, condemned to death. Sadly we have lost the multi-layered significance of Tonn Clíona since we no longer use the language in which it was first spoken. It is now just another wave.



# Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK : FARMING

## Looking to the past for the sake of the future

With Ireland's nitrates derogation giving farmers the opportunity to farm at higher stocking rates (above 170 kg livestock manure nitrogen/ha up to 250 nitrogen/ha) once they take extra steps to protect the environment, it's all about improving environmental imprint for farmers such as Ballinascorthy's Vivian Buttimer. With 'nitrates' the key word in achieving this aim, farmers like Vivian are doing everything in their power to farm sustainably in order to meet nitrates derogation requirements. He chats to **Mary O'Brien**.

The Buttimer family dairy farm is located on the historic Ford homestead at Crohane in Ballinascorthy where the land has been farmed for over 300 hundred years. It's officially known as the 'Ford Farm'. Henry Ford's father William and his great great grandfather were all born there. "My father married into the last generation of Fords," explains Vivian, who is married to Jocelyn and has three children, Lisa, Evan and Kelsie. Evan studied Agriculture at UCD and is now running the farm with his father and Kelsie is currently studying at Darrara Agricultural College.

With 170 high-yielding dairy cows on the 200-acre farm and a second farm with cattle being raised for beef located in Carrigaline, Vivian and his son Evan have little time for anything else other than farming, especially since calving started in January.

It's this love of the land however that makes farming a lifestyle choice and not just a job, something that's very evident when Vivian speaks about his animals. The pet Collie follows him protectively around the yard, cats appear at his legs as he chats, cattle are housed with rubber mats instead of concrete protecting them from cold and lameness and even the visiting yellowhammer birds have been allocated a safe roosting place in one of the sheds. He shares his fondness for a 14-year-old cow, the oldest resident on the farm.

Vivian is also very aware of the importance of vaccination and limiting antibiotic use in his cattle, particularly for pneumonia, which after scour, continues to be the second biggest cause of calf mortality on Irish farms. All calves on the Ford Farm have been vaccinated against pneumonia.

Housing and ventilation also have an important role to play in disease prevention so Vivian is adding on additional housing to ensure all his animals are adequately sheltered and have the comfort and space needed to help them thrive.

While no corners are cut

on this farm, with 170 calves reared each year needing to be fed little and often, sometimes up to four times a day, systems such as the automated calf feeder do help reduce some of the workload.


And of course protecting the environment is top of the list. "My father and his generation were very aware of the impact of farming on the environment and much more conscious of doing things to alleviate this impact like planting trees and native hedgerows and using lime on the land." Lime neutralises the effects of acids from nitrogen fertiliser, slurry and farmyard manure and can improve the overall structure

of the soil. "Now we find ourselves in a situation where if we don't all return to these more traditional methods, our soil and our water quality will be at risk," says Vivian.

In looking to the past for the good of the future, Vivian also talks about simple measures farmers can take like keeping and protecting bees on farms. "We had bee hives on our farm for years and I'd love to have them back," he says even though he has developed a life-threatening bee allergy. "All of these native hedgerows we need to plant on our farmland will encourage bees and pollination and help the survival of our plant species," he emphasises.

Spreading slurry and fertiliser with a dribble bar and having GPS in the tractor has made spreading a lot more efficient. "We're saving 10-15 per cent of fertiliser by reducing overlapping with the GPS system," explains Vivian.

"Nutrient management and keeping up production using less chemical fertiliser is a challenge but we're determined," he says. "We're making better use of our livestock manure by




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spreading it on grassland and we haven't used phosphorous for the last 20 years. It's down to mindset. If your ground doesn't need phosphorous then why would you spread it, especially when you can save money and help protect our environment by not using it." Solid manures are less of a pollution risk than slurry. While an essential element for animal and plant growth, too much phosphorus contributes to algae blooming in our rivers, lakes and streams through agricultural runoff.

"Working with the environment or for the good of it is an ongoing process and you can't turn your back on it," emphasises Vivian, who says he would also love to see the return of barn owls on his land. "The last time I saw one here was 20 years ago and what an impressive creature he was," he recalls.

Thankfully Ireland's barn owl population is on the rise after decades of decline so this may be a sight that Vivian will get to see again in years to come.

So many of our farmers, like Vivian, have taken the bull by the horns and are working to solve agri-environmental problems and, as more and more wildlife-friendly habitats are



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protection and human food security can co-exist in a critical balance.





# Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK : FARMING

## Covid-19 has exacerbated social isolation in farming



### FARMING IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

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That blast of sunshine over the last few days of February would make you forget the soaking that 2021 has delivered thus far. Usually the second month of the year sees fields in West Cork spring

into life but there was a stronger chance of them developing springs instead of being grazed this year.

If there's a positive to getting all this bad weather so far, it's that it's still early in the year and there's no harm in getting it out of the way. We might get a run of better weather in March.

#### Calving

My own leisurely farm life crashed to a halt in the middle of the month, as calving got under way. It began a week ahead of schedule and early arrivals seem to be the order of the day in the calving shed. There was only meant to be four due to calf in February but by the month's end, there could well be a baker's dozen calved.

It began with a pair of heifers calving around Valentine's; with them out of the way, I was expecting calm to be restored. I was wrong. The following Thursday was almost a 16-hour working day. One cow calved over two weeks early and another threw out a calf over a month ahead of time. Those events were sandwiched in between a pair of heifers that calved with the opposite extremes that can be happen when heifers calf. The morning began with what I thought was a heifer beginning calving. On closer inspection, I

found her calf had just wandered off a bit. Another was off form that afternoon and I left her progress as much as she could herself while I was around the yard. With no progress, I stalled and handled her to discover something wasn't right. She had a twisted womb, which resulted in a C-section. In terms of temperament, they were also two opposites, so I was lucky it was the quieter one that required the assistance.

I left them in the calving area for the week and, in an effort to win over the flightier one, they get a handful of ration twice a day when I'm passing. Treats are a useful tool!

There's a trio of heifers left to calf now with two of them not due until April. They are the ones you would be that little bit more concerned about. It's only occasionally that the cows need intervention especially those on their third calf or older.

They've gone to grass now; most are out full time, while there are a few younger ones that get out for a few hours and then come back into their calf.

I also managed to start letting some of the younger stock out. The shed work should ease from here on.

#### Prices

Prices for farmer products rarely



Calves have arrived earlier than expected on Tommy Moyles farm at Ardfield, Clonakilty.

fluctuate too much but the same can't be said of inputs. Fertiliser prices have been on the rise for the last number of years and there is talk of another lift coming shortly. This will result in farmers either paying out more or thinking a bit differently.

On the farm here, our solution to the proposed rise in fertiliser prices will be to try and further reduce our use of it. The soil sample results look pretty good, so slurry should take care of most of the P and K requirements. Slurry has been our go-to fertiliser in the first half of the year and bagged fertiliser is aimed more at silage production. Over the last three years we have held off spreading urea until the end of March or early April. Weather conditions have either

been too cold or too wet to go out any earlier and to date that system has worked out.

With Covid restrictions staying in place, mart ringsides will remain empty for the next while. The evolution of online mart sales has resulted in a lift in prices. What may be of concern is that there doesn't seem to be a corresponding rise in beef price.

#### Social isolation

I'll admit that when compared to other sectors, farming hasn't had to deal with the more difficult economic challenges posed by Covid-19, but socially it stands to be affected more.

Social isolation has been an issue long before Covid-19 but I fear it's been exacerbated. On New Year's Day 2020, if

you had predicated that people wouldn't be allowed to go to mass, marts or matches, you would have been told to sober up before attempting fortune telling.

Trading is the core business of marts but there is a large social element at play too. For many it was the chance to get out and meet people. Bandon, Macroom and Skibbereen marts form a large part of the fabric of rural West Cork and provided a service without knowing it by allowing the bit of a chat and dinner.

That social interaction is valuable in a job that is isolating in most cases. Let's hope society can be opened up before the year is out.

## A West Cork Farming Life: Mags Riordan, Bumblebee Flower farm, Castledonovan, Drimoleague

### Tell us about the farm and what you do?

It's a two-acre farm where I have nine tunnels for growing a mix of annual and perennial flowers. We're Ireland's first dedicated edible flower farm. Our edible flowers are available from March to October each year. While our cut flower bouquets are available 52 weeks of the year. We only use organic gardening practices and are committed to biodiversity and protecting our ecological environment. There's very little waste; we make a lot of our own food on the farm. I have access to animal manure from horses or chickens.

When planting, I do disturb soil in the tunnels but amend regularly to maintain a living soil. Where I can, I try to use a no-dig method or have minimal disturbance outside. Soil integrity is very important to us.

I'm 600 feet above sea level so that's challenging. The property can be suspended in clouds so, because of the moisture, some heat-loving plants don't do well in that atmosphere; these

are planted in tunnels

Everything is learned by doing and a lot of trial and error.

### What types of flowers do you grow?

We grow roses, dahlias, sweet Williams, mint, lilies, rudbeckias, sedums, astilbes, scented narcissus, hyacinth, tulips and iris plus a large selection of annuals.

I have three main criteria and each of my flowers has to meet at least two of them.

Every flower we grow has to be pollinator-friendly, that's non-negotiable for everything on the farm. They also have to be a good cut flower and, if possible, edible; I don't always get three, but I have to have at least two.

I try to get two crops from some tunnels, for example my spring narcissus. When the foliage has died back, after about six weeks or so, I can plant another crop over them. Our annual plantings have to be rotated every year just like vegetables.

### How did you get started?

I'm a professional florist for over 20 years and I used imported flowers initially. A year or two into it, I developed a rash on my hands that I just couldn't shift. So that got me researching and what I learned, saddened me. In the meantime, I was supplementing with my own garden flowers in summer; I had no issues with those and that planted a seed. Then I saw a programme by Monty Don on TV about starting a flower farm; I said, I can do that, so I just started.

In 2010, I started growing all my own flowers. In 2013, a bride asked me to create a posy for her flower girl who had a habit of putting things in her mouth, so I suggested that I only use edible flowers for her. I began researching then and discovered about 60 per cent of what I grew was edible. It all blossomed from there and in 2015 we launched our edible flowers as a commercial crop.

### Has Covid-19 changed your business?

The last year was a learning curve. Having to deal with not having help, doing everything myself, and suddenly having a busy online service, which brought a whole new way of doing business: Dealing with couriers, different packaging, learning how to package even because the bouquets could be in the system a few days. As a result, bouquet design and construction had to change in order to protect delicate blooms like dahlias, which are the stars of our summer and autumn bouquets.

As we sorted one problem, another arose.

### Online selling has become a major part of your business since. How did that come about?

I've just had my first anniversary of having an online store. Coming up to Valentine's last year, it was reported that there were no Irish grown flowers available, so I took to twitter and put up a picture of the two types of bouquet



I had an offer – it went viral. It took two of us to answer all the comments and questions; it was fantastic to see the support. I rang my son that night and asked him could he build me an online store. We had a basic one to get us over the line for Valentine's last year and now, thanks to the Cork South West LEO, we're revamping the website.

### You're well prepared for this year so, does a flower farmer get any downtime?

I tend to take that month after Christmas off. When we opened back in late January there was pre-orders already waiting for us and we've had four sell-out weeks so far. This year, we were sold out a week before Valentine's.



## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# TravelMaster drives forward with innovative online booking platform

Skibbereen-based business TravelMaster was one of 29 impressive business finalists at the National Enterprise Awards 2021 competition. The go-getting event transport company is well on its way to launching the first online platform of its kind that will allow passengers to book a seat at the click of a button on a mobile device, sharing transport to gigs and events all over Ireland, with the aim of future expansion to the UK and Europe once the technology has been successfully tested here.

**D**amien Long and Jennifer Allan are the siblings behind this innovative concept that provides a dedicated same-day service from local pick-up points, providing a technologically-advanced, cost-effective, safe and environmentally-friendly transport option to and from events.

The company, which sold over €1million worth of seats in 2019, has been massively affected by the pandemic, but has used the downtime to work on creating this online platform that will allow the expansion of their business in the future.

Damien and Jennifer grew up in the family coach hire business (Dave Long Coach Travel) in Skibbereen. Damien went on to become the youngest coach operator in Ireland at the age of 21; while Jennifer settled down to raise her family. She joined Damien in TravelMaster, helping him put his ideas into practise. "Like any sibling

partnership, we have our ups and downs of course," she says "but it's a very Yin and Yang relationship. "Damien comes up with the good ideas and, as a very logical person with decent organisational skills, I help him execute them," explains Jennifer. "I'm a great believer in there being a solution for every problem and get great satisfaction out of teasing these solutions out."

Incongruously one of the biggest challenges the company faced starting out was convincing people that the service wasn't a hoax. "People actually thought it was too good to be true," says Jennifer laughing.

Their excellent customer service soon removed any doubt of this, with the business really taking off in 2019. As well as a finalist in the National Enterprise Awards in 2021, Travelmaster has been a finalist in The Southern Star Business and Tourism Awards and The Cork



Business Awards in 2019 while winning The Event Industry Awards and The Southern Star Business and Tourism Awards for the technology currently used. Then the pandemic hit.

"The past year has been very tough," says Jennifer "...overwhelming at times in fact, but I do feel there is light at the end of the tunnel now.

"Running a business is difficult enough anyway, with all the extra hours you have to put in, especially when you're juggling everything around your family, but if anything, this pandemic has taught me to make the most of any free time."

Jennifer says her mum, Patricia Long, in particular has

been an inspiration to her in business. "I really admire her... she and my dad started the coach business in 1969 when there weren't a lot of buses on the road. They managed to build a very successful business while also raising us. When mum was driving the bus she would have had to take me with her in a carrycot."

TravelMaster has had excellent support from the Local Enterprise Office and Jennifer would encourage anyone in business to ask for help. "Whether you're unsure of how to move to the next step or feeling overwhelmed on a personal level, no man or woman is an island and from my experience

other entrepreneurs are always willing to offer support and advice when asked".

The fire that brother and sister have for their business is what will continue to drive TravelMaster forward through good times and bad. Right now with all events and gigs on hold due to the pandemic, Travelmaster has limited staff working behind the scenes. However once restrictions start lifting and society resumes to some degree of normalcy, Jennifer is certain that TravelMaster will be in a position to hire more staff and expand operations.

[www.travelmaster.ie](http://www.travelmaster.ie)

**€48 million invested in start-ups by Enterprise Ireland in 2020**

**T**ánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar TD announced last month that Enterprise Ireland, the government agency responsible for the development and growth of Irish companies in global markets, invested more than €48 million in Irish start-ups in 2020 and supported a total of 125 new start-up companies.

Investment was provided through Enterprise Ireland's High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) and Competitive Start Fund (CSF) programmes.

While the total number of start-ups supported last year almost matched 2019 figures (127 in 2019), the 2020 levels of investment in innovative High Potential Start-Ups was boosted by the Covid-19 Sustaining Enterprise Fund and an increase in follow-on investments to help HPSUs scale internationally.

The investment of more than €48 million is the highest level of funding that Enterprise Ireland has awarded to early stage companies.

Key sectors that Enterprise Ireland invested in in 2020 included fintech, cybersecurity, digital health and agri-tech, with half of the start-ups based outside Dublin. In addition, 38 women-led start-up companies were funded – a key focus of Enterprise Ireland's Women in Business Action Plan.

**Whether you are a start-up or an established business, we are here to support and assist you throughout 2021:**

## Business Advice Appointments:

1 hour appointments with our Business Adviser - Ideal for someone at idea generation stage, plus start-ups or growing established businesses.

## Brexit Support Clinics:

1 hour appointments with our Brexit Consultant - Get your business Brexit ready.

## Start Your Own Business Programme:

Ideal for someone with a business idea who wants to research their idea further.

## Online Training Webinars:

We have a range of training webinars running monthly including web related webinars and social media webinars.

## LEO Funding Supports Available:

Find out about the LEO Grant supports available to start up & expanding businesses.

## Trading Online Voucher Webinar:

Under the scheme an eligible small business may apply for funding up to a maximum value of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure.

**With all of our events free of charge and online, our supports are nearer than ever to you and your business.**

**Please check our website for an update schedule of events and supports: [www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest](http://www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest)**

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## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# West Cork marketing business not afraid to take chances

Growing up in one of West Cork's most well-known and loved hotels meant that Sandra Maybury was never a stranger to hard work and dedication; attributes inspired by her parents, who bought The Parkway Hotel in Dunmanway the year she was born. Today Sandra is the woman behind Maybury Mar-

keting, a business, which started out offering online marketing consultancy for hoteliers and evolved to include revenue management, marketing, event management and PR.

Growing up in a family business provided a great foundation for the West Cork entrepreneur. "I worked from a young age," says Sandra "and I

may not have realised or appreciated it at the time, but looking back now, I picked up much of my business acumen then; for example, if you want something then you need to work for it and not be afraid to take chances."

Sandra worked with the Choice Hotel group for seven years before leaving to set up her own business in 2005.

Like so many self-employed, she didn't set out to be her own boss. "As the saying goes, 'What is for you – won't pass you', " she says laughing.

While it hasn't all been plain sailing, Sandra has taken any challenges in her stride, adapting her business model in order to survive and thrive.

"I've been self-employed for 15 years and I am proud that I steered my business through the last recession and now a global pandemic," says Sandra.

"You have to be prepared; do your research, understand your customers and what their needs are and how you can meet those needs with your product or service. I set myself a goal for 2021 to make the most of every opportunity that comes my way and this is something I would encourage others to do," she continues passionately.

Sandra has worked from home for a number of years but recently, with the shift to video conferencing, her home office in Dunmanway has become even more important to her business. From here, Maybury Marketing offers different



services to different sectors, helping other businesses realise their true potential and market themselves to reflect this.

"Work is never boring," she says. "But the best part is the positive feedback we get from customers who we work with. Positive feedback and referral business are proof of a job well done."

Another important part of being self-employed is knowing when to close the door on work and, as a wife and mother to three, when she's not in her home office, Sandra enjoys spending time with her family.

Family and business are closely linked for Sandra, who looks to her parents as her biggest inspiration in business. "They've been in business for as long as I can remember. The longer I'm in business the more I appreciate what they achieved but also how incredibly hard they worked."

"I admire entrepreneurs in general, it takes courage to set up a business, no matter what size business that is."

In 10 years time, Sandra hopes to be able to say she has had a successful career. "I'd like to have made a difference to the businesses of my customers and built up a great network of colleagues and friends."

"I doubt I'll be after winding down much anyway," she laughs.

Sandra is a member of Network Ireland West Cork.

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## Finding flexibility and strength in movement

Having deep roots in West Cork will always draw a person back, regardless of how far they have travelled. Áine O'Driscoll spent her earliest years on Whiddy Island before leaving the area with her family when her father passed away in 1982. In 2018 she finally had the opportunity to return, with South African husband JP and baby daughter Annamarie in tow. Áine now runs a yoga business, Craic 'n Yoga, which offers teacher training as well as all inclusive 'Re-Treats' in beautiful Bantry House. She speaks to **West Cork People** about her journeys, both geographically and careerwise, and how she has adapted her business during Covid.

Áine turns 40 this year and has packed life experiences into those years. After leaving Whiddy, she grew up mostly in Birr, Co. Offaly before moving to Dublin with her family at age 17. Inspired by her stepfather, a property consultant, Áine studied and worked professionally in the property industry for many years, a career that took her to the United Arab Emirates, where she was at one time the manager of the ruler of Ras Al Khaimah's property sales and leasing company.

It was in Ras Al Khaimah that Áine met her husband, JP, and the couple moved to JP's family farm in South Africa at the beginning of 2017. That busy year also included a visit to Gougane Barra to get married!

"It was on returning to South Africa after our wedding that I decided to train as a yoga

teacher," Áine explains. "I had always practiced yoga, both in classes and with my own home practice, but I decided it was the perfect time to start a teacher training course."

Áine is now a 500 RYT (Registered Yoga Teacher) with Yoga Alliance. For this qualification, she completed 200 hours training with Wellness Connection South Africa in 2017 and another 300 hours with that same organisation this year (online). She also trained for another 300 hours with Golden Glow Yoga College in 2019.

Having worked in the corporate world for so many years, teaching was a complete lifestyle change but "one of the most personally fulfilling things I have ever done," she says.

After her initial training, Áine immediately began hosting retreats at her farm in South Africa, where she also provided food and accommodation. "Our

farm is extremely remote – 40 minutes from the closest shop!"

The couple's daughter Annamarie arrived in April 2018 and the decision was made to move back to Ireland, where only one place would do...

"Being from such a remote farm in South Africa, there was no way JP was going to settle in a city!" Áine says. "We came to Bantry because of my connection and family history with the area, and I adore being beside the water...although I'm still trying to build up the courage to go sea swimming!"

After spending some time settling into their new home and surroundings, Áine started to build up her business and a following in West Cork.

"I teach vinyasa style yoga, with an emphasis on peak pose sequencing. This means that each class I teach has a focus on a particular pose, with all poses during the class leading

to the peak pose – poses that resemble the peak pose in shape and feeling.

"I am extremely interested in the anatomy and science of movement, and each peak pose class is sequenced with the specific muscle and joint movements required for the final peak pose. There are also modifications and progressions of the poses, making them

accessible for every level."

Like everyone else, she has had to adapt both personally and professionally to the challenging events of the last year but has found many positives in that. "Covid has changed my business in terms of how I offer classes. I have actually found the online approach so much more accessible."

"I really admire and take in-

spiration from my own teacher, Catherine Wilkinson in South Africa. Thanks to online teacher training I was able to complete my own 300 hours training with her recently."

Áine now offers 200-hour teacher training online. The course is suitable for all levels; there is no requirement to be an advanced practitioner, just to have a keen interest and commitment. "I really feel that now is the perfect time for people to make use of this lockdown by doing this course. Everything is so much more accessible now and can be done from the comfort of your home."

Of course, there are some frustrations too: "I booked my first Re-Treat in Bantry House in January, and have had to change the date every month!" However, Áine is determined to match her physical flexibility with flexible plans, "The next date is March 12-14, and if that can't go ahead I also have April 16-18 booked. I'm also working with Bantry House at the moment to offer monthly Re-Treats."

To enquire about Re-Treats and/or teacher training email [info@craicnyoga.com](mailto:info@craicnyoga.com) or follow Áine on facebook and instagram: @craicnyoga for regular updates.





## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

## How to train your start-up during a pandemic?

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

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

**R**unning an incubator in normal times provides lots of opportunities to meet talented people who are based either within the Cork region or thinking of making their home here. Since March 2020, the Rubicon team have continued to work with start-ups and scale-ups across the South West region.

I recognise that starting or scaling a business during a pandemic is no easy task. There are the additional challenges of not being able to sit in front of potential customers wherever they may be. Instead, one is left engaging with customers through a zoom call. It's not the same thing that's for sure. I can remember how it used to be done; the friendly chats, coffee, going to networking events and entrepreneurs of all ages working together providing solutions to problems of today and the future.

The pandemic has brought lots of opportunities, as well as some challenges we thought we'd never have to face. On a positive note, many first-time entrepreneurs, and those who had been in business for many years have faced the opportunity to change or adjust to this new environment. From this, new business opportunities to scale have come to the fore. Many of which would never have seen the light of day if we weren't sitting here today in the midst of a pandemic.

What's different this time compared to 1918 Spanish Flu is that there is a wealth of support for those who want to start or scale up their business. In addition, new talent has arrived in our region from the four corners of the world who want to build something here for the long-term future. So, what's the opportunity

and what should you do as an entrepreneur, no matter what stage of business you're you find yourself at?

The Rubicon Centre established in 2006 has had to change its delivery method to clients across the region. Sound familiar?

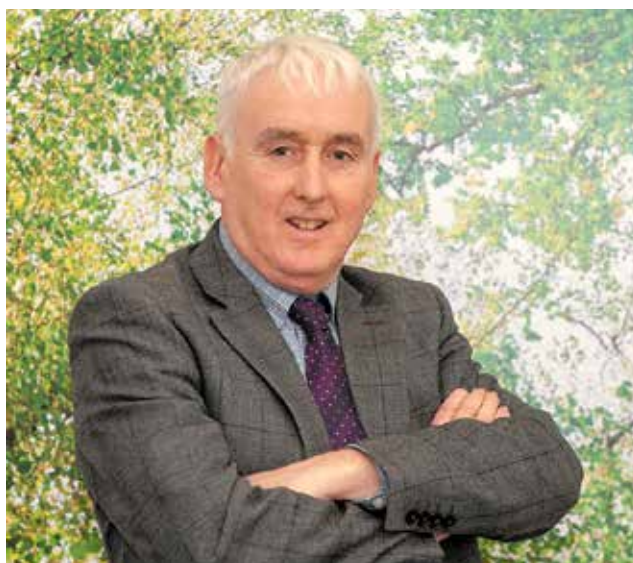
The Rubicon Centre works across the South West region offering a number of pillars of support, depending on the stage of development of the business. The following are some of the supports available to start-ups and to scale ups that have a common theme; the ability to support the creation and sustainment of employment and deploy some form of technology as part of their customer offering.

#### Investigation of new ideas

There are a number of ways to do this, on your own, or with others in a similar boat. Alison Walsh who leads a team providing New Frontiers support (An Enterprise Ireland funded programme) encourages entrepreneurs to join with their peers in participating in New Frontiers. The programme has a number of stages, with the first stage open to applicants starting in mid-April. If your idea has the potential to create more than one job, with some technology deployment but you haven't explored whether its feasible (makes money for you and the investor if required) then this might be an option for you. The programme deploys a mixture of 1:1 mentoring and training part-time over three weeks part-time.

#### Scaling up your business

If you are in business since before the pandemic and now facing new challenges, which you need to address, then may-



be you need to scale. Scaling a business requires planning, execution and implementation. Before you go on that journey the Rubicon can work closely with your business to see if scaling is feasible and what areas of your business supports you might need help with. Details of Scale Cork supported by Cork County Council's Local Economic development group can be found on [www.rubiconcentre.ie](http://www.rubiconcentre.ie).

#### Female entrepreneurs

For more than a decade the Rubicon has provided specific support to female entrepreneurs with scalable technology lead businesses. Currently 10 females from across the region supported by Enterprise Ireland are completing the Excel program. They've decided to take six months out to address their new opportunities by joining others who have started their businesses through the Excel program. A dedicated Female Entrepreneurship Manager, Lucy O'Donoghue can discuss if your opportunity can be supported.

#### Investment

The lifeblood of a business is cash and customers. The Rubicon Centre has its own independent Angel group, which provide investments for start-ups or scale-ups. Investment by Angels brings not only cash but also access to expertise. The Angels have a wide breath of experience across all business functions and sectors. Angel investors look for a strong business case, which will ensure a good return on their investment. Projects suitable for investment must demonstrate a revenue model

following the Covid-19 HSE guidelines. Others work virtually from their own remote locations across the region.

To help clients to work better, from April clients will be able to access state-of-the-art broadcast quality video conferencing facilities helping them to present better to their customers. This addition is to help overcome many of the difficulties entrepreneurs have pitching to customers and investors remotely.

#### Access Product Development Supports

The Rubicon provides a connection point for many regional supports no matter what stage the business is in its development. An example of this connection, is the easy access to the Research and Development facilities of the Munster Technology University (MTU) gateways and clusters who are based on campus. It's now possible to develop your start


up commercially and at the same time partner with the resources of MTU's Gateways and Research Clusters.

The Rubicon Centre helped over 400 entrepreneurs last year to raise finance, gain skills, or simply get plugged in to other entrepreneurs. Hopefully in the next few months you will get an opportunity to meet fellow entrepreneurs face to face, do business over coffee, and I look forward to extending a welcome to you. In the meantime the Rubicon team are available talk to you either by phone or Zoom to discuss opportunities whether they be challenges at present or opportunities scale and grow your business. For more information go to [www.rubiconcentre.ie](http://www.rubiconcentre.ie) or drop us an email on [info@rubiconcentre.ie](mailto:info@rubiconcentre.ie).

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## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# Giving new life to old furniture

After working in banking in the UK for a number of years, Rita Holding moved with her family back to her native West Cork, which is where she turned her lifelong passion for vintage and antiques into a business. She now runs RH Vintage Interiors from a purpose-built workshop in the

garden of her home in Rosscarbery.

Today Rita Holding of RH Interiors is doing what she loves; sourcing one-of-a-kind pieces of vintage and antique furniture in Ireland, the UK and France and bringing them back home where she revitalises and restores pieces that are afford-

able, impactful, and transformative. "I love varying designs and the use of colour and have a huge commitment to sustainability," she explains. "My aim is to make each client happy and fulfilled by creating pieces that fit with their personality and lifestyle."

Rita's working life started off in a very different direction. The outgoing country girl was recruited into a bank in London at the age of 17; suddenly transferring from a simple life on a farm in Durrus to living in Russell Square in Central London. "It was a bit of a culture shock to say the least," says Rita. She left the bank when she was 23, going on to complete an honours degree in Business Administration at the University of Greenwich. Even then most of her spare time was spent scouting around garage sales, second-hand shops, and vintage markets, looking for something unique, eclectic, and special that caught her eye.

In 2008, Rita and her family relocated from Surrey to West Cork and Rita worked for a number of years in PGI in the Clonakilty Technology Park, managing the company's corporate expenditure budget. She took the plunge in 2017, deciding to pursue her passion for breathing new life into old furniture, and set up her own business.

Outgoing and creative, Rita loves nothing better than finding special pieces of furniture

at auctions and sharing this passion with her customers. Although the pandemic has posed challenging in this regard, she has managed to continue working behind the scenes. Now instead of people visiting her workshop, she takes photographs of each finished piece and posts them on her website, which she built last year with the help of the online Trading Voucher from the Local Enterprise Board.

Rita's advice to anyone starting out in business is to take advantage of every course available. She attended a 'Women in Business' course in 2019, subsidised by LEO, which she found gave her excellent advice and training. She also joined Network Ireland West Cork, which has offered immeasurable support in her business.

"Keep an eye on what the Local Enterprise Board are offering, attend a 'Start Your Own Business' course and finally, join amazing organisations like 'Network Ireland West Cork' to ensure you meet likeminded people that you can reach out to for support and also return the support," she says.

Despite the challenges of the past 11 months, Rita is moving forward with plans to expand her business and is currently looking for the right roadside premises.

[www.rhvintageinteriors.com](http://www.rhvintageinteriors.com)



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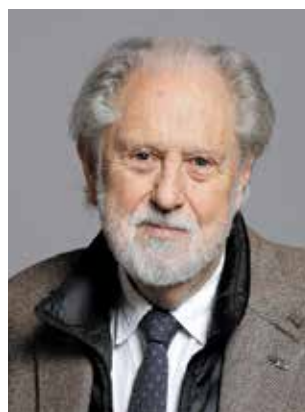
## West Cork Businesswoman of the year awards launched

Network Ireland West Cork launched their Businesswoman of the year awards 2021 with an inspiring line up of speakers. The theme for the evening was Awarding Change and how nothing captures the spirit of Embracing Change more than involving yourself in an awards process. It was hosted by Marie Wiseman, Vice President and Awards Officer at Network Ireland West Cork.

The evening commenced with a panel discussion, comprised of Vicki Crean - AIB's Manager of Service and Sales, Claire Lehané - HR Consultant and John O'Connell - Director of West Cork Distillers. The panel encouraged anyone who is considering entering awards to go for it.

Keynote speaker Lord Puttnam, is a person who has embraced enormous change in his career and has witnessed the collective euphoria winning an award spreads not just to the individual winner but also the team and support network around them. He also referred to the key role entrepreneurs play, saying "Developing entrepreneurs like yourselves, will help balance the long term needs of West Cork with sustainable business."

Katherine O'Sullivan, Network Ireland West Cork branch president commented afterwards "I was so inspired by all the speakers at the launch of our Businesswoman of the year awards. A theme that was echoed throughout the evening was that, even by going through



*Lord Puttnam was the keynote speaker at the event*

the process of entering awards, regardless of the result, you have nothing to lose yet so much to gain. By entering awards, it is an experience you can grow from, learn from, net-

work and grow your business. I was especially inspired by Lord David Puttnam's emphasises on the importance of awards and also the key role entrepreneurship holds throughout the world and indeed here in West Cork."

Network Ireland is a progressive, dynamic organisation supporting the professional and personal development of women, their Businesswoman of the Year awards are open to all members. Mentors and committee members are available to help you with your application.

The West Cork branch's next event entitled 'Living on Purpose' takes place online Tuesday, March 23, 8pm, tickets on Eventbrite.

## 'Living On Purpose' event will help you get career focused

In an invigorating event with Network Ireland West Cork, life coach Jeanne Sullivan Billeci will help you sit up, step back and look at how you are getting on in your career. While the focus is on career, this event will give tools that people can use in any area of their life. Jeanne who recently appeared on the Elaine Show on Virgin TV and also featured on the Ryan Turbidity Show, said "The extended COVID-19 lockdowns have inspired many clients to each confront their feelings of restlessness over the state of their career, relationships and life in general."

Jeanne Sullivan Billeci, also known as The Soul Mate Coach, is a fun and vivacious coach who helps people achieve great success with their life, career and dating. "In this

event, I will invite participants to give themselves permission to dream the life they want, and start taking action so they can live with more purpose and happiness," Jeanne added.

Network Ireland West Cork President Katherine O'Sullivan said "It's very exciting to have someone of Jeanne's caliber speak at our event. Many of our members and the general public, are struggling right now with feelings of uncertainty around their work and home lives. This is the perfect opportunity to take stock and look at what the future could hold".

This Network Ireland West Cork event entitled 'Living On Purpose' takes place online on Tuesday, March 23 at 8pm, tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite.



## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# New COVID Business Aid Scheme (CBAS) will provide welcome boost for struggling businesses

It is hoped a new nationwide €60 million COVID Business Aid Scheme (CBAS) will be a support for struggling businesses. Cork County Council will be responsible for administering the scheme.

Senator Tim Lombard explained: "The scheme will support rateable businesses that were not eligible for the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) payment nor the recently announced Fáilte Ireland scheme, 'Survive to Thrive'.

"It will be a €60m fund offering a payment of €8,000

for eligible businesses, in two installments of €4,000 for January to March and April to June.

"Wholesalers, suppliers, caterers and events companies down 75 per cent or more in turnover – and which have a rateable premises – will benefit. Not everyone will be eligible, but it will provide a boost to 7,500 small and medium sized businesses who were not eligible for CRSS or the Fáilte Ireland scheme.

"Businesses should be able to apply by the end of February through Cork County Council. The Scheme will be backdated

to the start of this year, to ensure businesses are able to get help in covering the fixed costs they have incurred since then.

This new scheme is in addition to existing Government schemes such as wage subsidies, the PUP, and commercial rates waivers.

The proposed eligibility criteria for the Covid-19 Business Aid Scheme are:

1. The scheme will be available to companies, self-employed, sole traders or partnerships;
2. Minimum turnover of €50,000;

3. Are not owned and operated by a public body;

4. The business is not eligible for CRSS or Fáilte Ireland Business Continuity Scheme;

5. They are in receipt of a rates bill from their local authority for business which operates from a building, or similar fixed physical structure on which business rates are payable (mobile premises, or premises which are not permanently fixed in place, do not meet the definition of business premises nor do premises on which no rates are payable);

6. The business must have a

current eTax Clearance Certificate from the Revenue Commissioners;

7. The turnover of the business over the claim period is estimated to be no more than 25 per cent of the: average weekly turnover of the business in 2019; or the projected average weekly turnover of the business for January

1 to June 30, 2021 for businesses that commenced after November 1, 2019; and

8. The business intends to resume trading in full once Government restrictions are eased.

# Local employer GP Wood is hiring

Established West Cork employer GP Wood is hiring. In a welcome jobs boost for the local area, the company has on-going vacancies for general operators, forklift drivers and mechanical fitters. The group currently employs approximately 150 staff with a further 250 indirect employees in their forestry operations.

GP Wood operates two of Ireland's largest and most technologically advanced sawmills. Both mills are located in West Cork – one in Lissarda and the other in Enniskeane. Both of GP Wood's facilities utilise some of the most modern wood processing techniques found in Europe today and the company prides itself on being almost completely carbon neutral.

The majority of the timber used by GP Wood comes from Coillte but GP Wood also purchases a significant volume of thinnings and mature plantations directly from private growers and offer very competitive prices.

GP Wood's products include structural timber; timber for pallets and packaging; timber for fencing post and rail; timber for decking; co-products including woodchips.

Committed to excellence in environmental management and consistently at the forefront



them elsewhere, GP Wood has substantially reduced its carbon footprint.

In addition to producing its own sawn products, the company also imports part-processed timber from Scandinavia, Russia, the Baltic States and mainland Europe. The company has diversified into added value markets through their joint venture investment in Eirebloc, manufacturers of pallet blocks from recycled timber.

GP Wood was formed in April 2013, as a result of the merger of two of Ireland's most successful and long-established timber processing companies; the Grainger Group originally founded by William Grainger, based in Enniskeane, County Cork and the Palfab Group of Lissarda, founded by the O'Callaghan family also based in County Cork. GP Wood is one of Ireland's largest and most diversified timber processing operations. Both original companies were established in the mid 1970s.

of technology, GP Wood built Ireland's first bio-fuelled combined heat and power plant at its Enniskeane facility. The forward-thinking company is committed to sustainable development using only raw materials from sustainably managed forests.

A constant supply of sawdust and bark fuels the plant and produces the necessary heat for the kilns to dry timber while also generating a surplus of green electricity, which is fed into the National Grid. By consuming these co-products on site rather than transporting

### Growing sustainably

"We at GP Wood, take our environmental responsibility seriously and are fully committed to sustainability in our technologically advanced production facilities. We are proud of our role in the cycle of renewal and actively participating in timber sustainability for future generations. Our environmental and social responsibilities are the guiding philosophy in our day-to-day operations. Of equal importance is our commitment to supplying our customers with world-class products at competitive prices. Our

relationship with our customers is based on shared values of professionalism and a commitment to quality service," said Conor McSwiney Compliance Manager of GP Wood.

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West Cork  
Supported Employment Agency

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You may be eligible for this service.

Please contact your local office for more information

**Bantry (Head Office)**  
086 8126324 and 086 8079953

**Skibbereen** 086 8158786

**Bandon** 086 8101795

**Kinsale** 086 6007964

**Clonakilty** 086 8395058 and 086 6031335



## Providing local jobs to support our local economy

GP Wood is one of Ireland's leading timber processing companies, located in two West Cork sites.

The Group manufactures softwood products for the construction, fencing and pallet industries in both home and export markets.

## General Operatives Required

Candidates will be required to work individually and as part of a team within our production department.

Positions available on day, evening and weekend shifts. Full training provided. Experience is desirable but not essential.

Please forward CV to the HR Department,  
GP Wood, Enniskeane, Co. Cork  
or email to [jobs@gpwood.ie](mailto:jobs@gpwood.ie)



## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# Rising to the challenge

As one door closes another often opens. Just 12 months after returning from Australia to work in her family business, as it adjusted to trading in a pandemic, Niamh Scally has taken a small inhouse brand and grown it into a fully fledged independent business – Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen. Some might have thought it a half-baked idea to start up a business in such a challenging year but the bakery's rapid growth has proven otherwise. Niamh speaks to **West Cork People** about her challenges and successes so far.

For many years a hallmark of Scally's SuperValu in Clonakilty has been its huge selection of breads and confectionary, produced in its bakery in-store. However, with approximately 50,000 people living with Coeliac Disease in Ireland, and another 500,000 with a mild to moderate gluten intolerance, a number of customers could only look longingly at the shelves as they moved on to the small selection of packaged gluten free goods available.

Niamh, who has studied food psychology, is emphatic that: "Coeliacs need choice and to be included, just like everyone else. Sitting down to eat with the family is such an important ritual and nobody, child or adult, wants to feel excluded."

Six years ago, a decision was made to invest in a specialised gluten free bakery at Scally's – Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen. A conversation with the mother of a Coeliac child who wanted a novelty, gluten free birthday cake just like the others, inspired Eugene Scally to offer much more to Coeliacs than just one or two varieties of bread.

"From day one the Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen brand focused on variety and taste so that the whole family could enjoy our products... especially at big occasions," explains Niamh. "At that time, my mother Catriona did a huge amount of developmental and research work to develop the range as a brand."

That ethos stood to the brand and before long loyal customers were travelling quite a distance to buy the products in the Clonakilty store. Seeing this gave Niamh the confidence to grow it as an independent brand; "instead of bringing them to us, why not bring our product to them?"

Last autumn Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen relocated to a Cork County Council food

production unit in Bandon. "Coeliac Disease is a serious condition and producing gluten free products is a huge responsibility. If you have a gluten intolerance you might feel a little uncomfortable but just one stray crumb could make a Coeliac seriously ill. The regulations and food safety requirements that we must follow are very strict – from ingredients specification to product testing."

Whilst safety is at the top of the list at all times, flavour and the providence of ingredients do not suffer for it. "We work extremely hard on our recipes to ensure that we can achieve the great taste that we are known for, whilst using local suppliers that are certified as gluten free – for example using West Cork's Irish Yogurts in our oat and yogurt loaf. If producers can be certified, it gives us more opportunities to develop our lines whilst maintaining our local produce values."

"I like to say 'our bread is here for a good time not a long time' – no nasties are included just to prolong shelf life and there is a genuine appreciation from customers for having 'real' bread."

It has been a hectic six months since the production move. "When I started, the brand was only stocked in our family stores in Clonakilty and Blackrock. Today we are stocking 11 stores, a mix of Centras and SuperValus. As of last week, our range is now available to shop online, or click and collect, from those stores that we stock that offer that service."

Having added so many stores in such a short time, Niamh's plan is to let those settle, "and continue getting to know our customers and them us! It's been challenging to build a relationship during the current pandemic and from a supplier perspective, having that relationship with customers is key.



(l-r) Gillian Moore and Aisling Scally at the Clonakilty Kitchen truck in Scally's SuperValu.



Baker Jacek Chromik.

As a marketer, it's important to me for customers to get to know the people behind the brand.

"In my new shops I only stock our four most popular breads. As people become more familiar with the range, my plan is to start adding new lines. We have recently been trialing a new Corn Bread and Brioche in Clonakilty and the response from Coeliacs has been wonderful! I'm so proud to be able to offer unique products and choice to Coeliacs."

Niamh's path to running her own business has been on the horizon since she was a child: "If asked what career I was interested in I would always say 'I want to be a business-

woman'. Since coming out of college I have been laying the foundations."

A degree in Food Marketing and Entrepreneurship from UCC was followed by the Musgrave Graduate Programme, after which Niamh continued working in business development for Musgraves for a number of years before a desire to get international retail marketing experience took her to Melbourne, where she worked with the famous Coles retail group, before the pandemic brought her back to the family business.

"Whilst some would think this was a bizarre time to start a new business, it has brought me so much joy and given me a

"Whilst some would think this was a bizarre time to start a new business, it has brought me so much joy and given me a focus. The business takes up so much of my everyday thoughts that I don't have a chance to get bogged down worrying about Covid all the time." – Niamh Scally

focus." Niamh says. "The business takes up so much of my everyday thoughts that I don't have a chance to get bogged down worrying about Covid all the time."

"Of course it has been challenging with not having the usual opportunities to taste our products in-store or meet customers, or of course having customers actually in-store to shop, especially when the product wasn't available online; at the same time people are extra conscious now of going out of their way to support small local brands and support from retailers has been overwhelming."

Like many local producers, it is a small team of just three for the moment at Clonakilty Kitchen. Niamh would describe herself as wearing many hats: Managing the overall business "delivery driver, sales person, marketer, bakery technologist – some would describe me as 'the gal in the van' but my job description is expanding by the day!" Baker Jacek Chromik has been working within the Scally

family business for 10 years but has a lifetime of baking experience and is a real expert, "He turns out the entire range by hand and I'm so grateful to him", whilst Gillian Moore from Clonakilty, who has just completed her masters in Food Business & Innovation in UCC, is responsible for the production side of the operation, managing vital aspects of the company like food safety and supplier management. "We work together on developmental plans to grow the brand. Over the years, Scally's has had so many young talented people start their working lives in the store before moving on in their careers. I was delighted to be able to bring one such talent, Gillian, with me and she has been a real asset."

Niamh values the experience and advice of seasoned businesspeople: "My dad Eugene is definitely one of my number one supporters and motivators, along with my mother Catriona. They have been through it all, the highs and lows of business, and I am so grateful to them both for, most of all, their encouragement, cause God knows sometimes you need it! They just get it. My fiancé James is always there for me too at the end of the difficult evenings and has been a rock and a wonderful support."

She also works closely with her brother Eoghan and Michael Walsh, both of whom manage Scally's supermarket: "They have different strengths to me and have been invaluable in helping me start the business and are still there to advise me."

She is also not afraid to pick up the phone to bounce ideas off other local producers, "we are so fortunate to be in a wonderful hub of food suppliers in West Cork! It's a lovely support network and I am delighted to be able to contribute to this sector for Clonakilty too."

"It's a challenge and very busy but we have a lot of fun too. We have a lovely team with good energy, positive vibes and a hopefully bright future."

Clonakilty Gluten Free Kitchen is included in the Coeliac Society of Ireland Food List for 2021. The full range is available in SuperValu in Clonakilty and Blackrock. Other West Cork stockists are: Caulfields SuperValu Bandon, O'Leary's Centra New Road Bandon, Centra Inishannon and Centra Aherla.



## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# O'Sullivan's Pharmacy celebrates its first birthday operating out of Clonakilty

The family-owned and run O'Sullivan's Pharmacy is celebrating its first year operating from the Primary Care Centre at the Waterfront in Clonakilty. The Pharmacy, which opened last March, at the beginning of the pandemic, has put down a challenging year but has also seen huge support from the people of Clonakilty and surrounding areas.

While new to Clonakilty, O'Sullivan's roots are well-established and go back many

years; the pharmacy on O'Connell Avenue in Limerick has been serving customers since 1926. The business has seen substantial expansion since then with 12 stores now operating throughout Munster.

The goal of the highly skilled team behind O'Sullivan's is to offer a reliable, confidential and personalised service as standard, throughout all of its stores. Each pharmacy in the group strives to ensure that the customer is always at the centre



The team at O'Sullivan's Pharmacy celebrate one year operating from the Primary Care Centre at the Waterfront in Clonakilty

of its team's attention.

"We'd like to thank the people of Clonakilty and surrounding areas for supporting us in our first year in such difficult times; without the people and staff, our pharmacy would not be the success it is today," says pharmacy manager Danielle O Driscoll.

The team at O'Sullivan's Pharmacy in Clonakilty includes pharmacists Lorna English, Barbara Harte and Julianne Hayes, pharmacy technician Helen Harrington and pharmacy manager Danielle O Driscoll.

"Our plan for the future is to serve the people of Clonakilty

and surrounding areas to the highest standard and to do all we can to help make each individual customer's experience with us as comfortable as possible," says Danielle.

"We would also like to thank our neighbours and friends here at the Primary Care Centre for welcoming us and making our

working day bright. So from all here at O Sullivan's Pharmacy, we would like to thank everyone who made our first birthday possible and we look forward to seeing you all for many years to come."

## Clonakilty gluten free kitchen

Bringing gluten free options and range to communities across West Cork

Now available at Scally's SuperValu Clonakilty, Caulfield's SuperValu Bandon, O'Leary's Centra New Road Bandon, Centra Aherla & Centra Innishannon.

Available to shop online at participating SuperValu's also.



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## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

# Barnett's of Schull embraces change

Since 1948 Barnett's of Schull – stocking clothing, footwear and accessories for all the family – has been a shop at the heart of the local community. Four years ago, Miriam Pyburn and her husband Eddie bought the family-run shop on the Main Street, giving it a complete makeover. Since then not only have they modernised the interior – completely gutting and stripping it back, changing the layout and putting in new fittings and fixtures – they also fast-tracked the shop into the future by building up an impressive online presence.

At the beginning, with the support of their bank AIB, and along the way with the help of the Local Enterprise Board, availing of its courses, webinars, mentoring and Trading Online Voucher; the Pyburns – while keeping the charm of Barnett's, which boasts a little bit of everything – have put their own stamp on it. "We stock some lovely brands, as well as school uniforms, but are basically expected to have everything, like a mini department store!" says Miriam laughing.

The challenge currently facing the business is the implementation a new EPOS system, a huge task but one that should make a considerable difference to the running of the business going forward. With

the lockdown for retail set to continue for many more weeks yet, Miriam is also faced with the task of adding the bulk of her Spring/Summer stock to the online shop and marketing it. She is also really missing "having the chats" with her customers on the shop floor.

Describing herself as a team player and hard worker with a creative streak, Miriam says it was a combination of stubbornness and vision, as well as the support of family and friends, that got her where she is today.

The successful retailer has three daughters, who all help out in the business, and Miriam feels lucky to have such a great team behind her in the business. Most of the time, she manages to maintain a good work/life balance, except

in July and August when the village is at its busiest in the tourist season. "You have to schedule time off and actually stick to it!" advises Miriam "If possible avoid bringing work home with you, but that's proving difficult at the moment with lack of routine and so on."

Over the years, one of the biggest lessons in business she has learned is not to be afraid to ask for help and advice. She adds, "Learn to delegate and outsource if necessary and stay on top of your paperwork."

Once lockdown lifts Miriam is looking forward to returning to the shop floor and is ready for whatever challenges life decides to throw at her in the future!

[www.barnettssofschull.ie](http://www.barnettssofschull.ie)



# The shame of 'Secret Parenting'

**Karen O'Reilly of Employflex** says that the corporate world is falling over themselves in 2021 to portray themselves as female-friendly in the run up to International Women's day. At the same time many mothers in the workplace feel forced to 'Secret Parent'.



There will be events up and down the country, talking about equality, diversity and inclusion, empowering women in the workplace and levelling the playing field for all. The theme this year for International Women's Day is #ChoosetoChallenge and we will hear a lot of talk about challenging the status quo, particularly in male dominated industries where women struggle to gain an equal footing and Mothers feel forced to 'Secret Parent'.

Secret Parenting, is a phrase

coined by economist Emily Oster, in an article she wrote for the Atlantic – she exposes the fact that women actually start to 'Secret Parent' even when they are pregnant – hiding their pregnancy as much as possible and then not mentioning their children on return to the workplace.

Our experience here at Employum/Employflex, in conversations with candidates who contact us, is similar. 'Secret Parenting' starts even before women commence in an organisation and is all too common when women are seeking

employment. Women tell us they hide the fact that they have children or are planning to have children from recruiters. One of our candidates notes 'I kept the fact that I was a single parent a secret when I was going for my current role, as I felt it had gone against me in previous job interviews'. 'I feel I can speak openly with you here and tell you why I need flexibility in my position – normally I hide the fact that I have three children in my current job hunt' says another candidate recently registered with us.

We know of women who hide the fact that they are pregnant and the trauma and stress around announcing a pregnancy in the corporate world is very real. 'I was asked after having my son, was I planning on having another and that mothers would never succeed in this company' another candidate tells us.

Women feel like they need to go the extra mile to prove that they are still available, still as ambitious and as motivated as their male counterparts.

These women will often put themselves at risk of burnout and undue stress, as they attempt to have it all and do it all. Increasingly, we hear from women who, feel that the situation they are in is unsustainable – they want to take a step back, have less responsibility and/or leave the workplace for a period. Much has been written about the 'Motherhood penalty' and it is true that the gender pay gap widens significantly when women have babies and increases for each child a woman has. There is indeed warranted motivation to 'Secret Parent' from an ambitious working mother's perspective.

Covid-19 has, of course, exposed 'secret parenting' and with many working from home, children are more visible in calls and meetings. As one female worker says 'When a man's child appears in a meeting, people think it is cute and adorable and isn't he a great Daddy, not so when it happens to the Mum'

It is very often the case, when there are two parents working from home, that the

Mum takes the lion's share of the parenting, again, putting additional pressure on an already stressed out parent. Mums are at breaking point and this is in evidence globally where working Mums have left their jobs or reduced working hours in much larger numbers than Dads. There are justifiable worries that the female equality journey will be adversely effected as women, once again are being squeezed out.

Kamala Harris has called it a 'National Emergency', the fact that over 2.5 million have left the workforce in the US since the beginning of the pandemic, and women in Ireland are not faring too well either.

So what can companies do to put an end to women feeling like they have to 'Secret Parent'

### Our top tips:

1. Start at the top and lead by example with empathy
2. Address unconscious bias
3. Develop internal mentoring programmes

4. Champion women and mothers in the workplace
5. Trailblaze role models
6. Facilitate returnships
7. Allow real flexible work in the workplace
8. Have a robust maternity charter which supports women
9. Encourage community and family days
10. Be kind

For this International Women's Day, let's Choose to Challenge male parent privilege – aim to be a better workplace where Mums and Dads never feel like they have to be a Secret Parent.

*Employum/Employflex offers consultancy services to help companies become more inclusive and female friendly.*

*For any further details or information call founder of Employum/Employflex Karen O'Reilly on 087 9722498.*



## Special Feature ENTERPRISING WEST CORK

## Clonakilty Minke Sloe Gin named Best in Class at World Gin Awards

Clonakilty Distillery has won Best Irish Sloe Gin at the World Gin Awards in London.

Following a blind tasting by a panel of expert judges, Minke Sloe Gin beat out stiff competition to take the prestigious award home to West Cork.

Helen Scully, who co-created the distillery's Minke Gin recipe, expressed her delight in being recognised at an internationally acclaimed standard.

She said: "This is a wonderful achievement for the entire team here at Clonakilty. We are extremely proud of everyone involved and it is a testament to our commitment of ensuring the highest standard when producing this gin".

And the celebrations don't end there – in what is a

tremendous personal achievement, Ewan Paterson, Visitor Experience Manager at the distillery, received the 'Highly Commended' award in the 'Visitor Attraction Manager of the Year', category.

"This has been an extremely challenging year for the drinks and tourism industry and to be recognised in such a competitive global category is a real honour," Ewan stated. "Credit is due to the entire visitor experience team here at the distillery without whom this would not be possible."

In February, Clonakilty Distillery also received not one but two Highly Commended Awards at the prestigious Icons of Whisky Awards 2021.

For the second year running, the distillery received the 'High-



ly Commended', in the Irish 'Craft Producer of the Year', category. Paul Corbett, Head Distiller at Clonakilty, also

received the 'Highly Commended' award in the 'Master Distiller/Master Blender', category.



(Ewan Paterson, Visitor Experience Manager at Clonakilty Distillery)

## Glengarriff Pharmacy reaches out to its customers during pandemic

Nuala Carey has aspired to a career in the medical field since she was a young girl with a passion for chemistry. After completing her studies in Pharmacy in Scotland, the Drimoleague native returned to Cork where she gained experience working as a pharmacist before opening up her own pharmacy in Glengarriff in 2010 in the middle of a recession. Since then, she has expanded the business to include a beauty salon (Beauty Lounge), an online store (glengarriffpharmacy.ie) and in July 2020, mid-pandemic, she moved the business into larger premises. Glengarriff Pharmacy now employs eight staff, full and part-time.

As a large portion of Nuala's business is HSE based this has proved an ongoing challenge for the pharmacy. "The HSE introduced FEMPI in 2010 and made significant and severe cuts to pharmacy remuneration and this has been a huge challenge for the lifetime of my business," explains Nuala.

As for so many other small



businesses, the Covid-19 pandemic has also presented challenges. "When the pandemic hit in March 2020, we recognised the need to reach our customers who could no longer visit us in person," says Nuala. "We started, and continue to provide, daily deliveries, as well as putting our store online."

Located in a small rural village, the pharmacy is a sociable spot by nature. "We love to help people in our community in any way we can," says Nuala, who enjoys meeting and chatting with her customers.

Aside from completing her Masters degree and thesis in Aberdeen, Nuala considers holding successful vaccine clinics in her pharmacy to be one of her most significant career accomplishments.

Like so many West Cork entrepreneurs, she has found that not being afraid of hard work or feeling able ask for help when you need it are important attributes in developing a successful business.

When the busy pharmacist who loves her job with a passion does have time off, she enjoys spending time with her husband and five children at home in Adrigole, and running.

She is looking forward to continue developing her pharmacy in Glengarriff while also enjoying her family, as they grow older.

Glengarriff Pharmacy received support from its Local Enterprise Office in the form of a Trading Online voucher and a Business Continuity Voucher.

glengarriffpharmacy.ie

## Oysterhaven Centre recognised at Irish Sailing Awards for its commitment to sustainability



Oysterhaven Centre based in Oysterhaven, near Kinsale received a big boost last month at the 2020 Irish Sailing Awards by winning the prestigious Irish Sailing Sustainability Award.

The Irish Sailing Awards is an annual event celebrating the achievements of some inspirational people in the sailing community. This year, the awards presented the perfect opportunity to show that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to return to the water in a variety of different ways, and marked the end of a strange and difficult year with an optimistic eye on the future.

Sinead Hurley and Sophie Crumplin of the Oysterhaven Centre accepted the Irish Sailing Sustainability Award, which they won by placing an environmental ethos at the heart of what they do – from the centre's infrastructure right through to the education programmes.

"We were delighted to be

recognised by Irish Sailing for our Sustainability efforts over the last number of years," says Sophie. "We launched our plastic free policy in 2017 and since then have been making changes to make our centre completely single-use plastic free."

"Alongside this we have also built on our everyday ethos of sustainability and environmental awareness throughout the Centre and within our team of instructors."

The Oysterhaven Centre's commitment to sustainability includes environmental education programmes within its youth training courses and poster competitions during our school tours to raise awareness with children coming to the centre.

The infrastructure of the centre includes water fountains registered with refill.ie, water collection butts, recycling systems and sustainability considerations with all purchasing.

In 2019, Oysterhaven launched its new reusable water

bottles, and in 2020, its glass coffee cups.

"We believe along with making these changes on site, we need to raise awareness among our clients and participants to help make a difference," says Sophie passionately. "We share our message with everyone who comes on-site and incorporate environmental awareness and beach cleanups in our sessions."

"Our mission statement is 'We are committed to reducing our plastic footprint and to raising awareness about plastic pollution and plastic solutions with our clients' and our vision is that 'Oysterhaven Bay provides a pristine natural environment for clients of the centre and the cottages to enjoy, learn from and be inspired by during their stay and beyond. Our leadership and care for the natural environment empowers our clients to take positive steps to reduce plastic pollution during their stay and in their own lives.'"

## €3.9m UCC project will empower businesses to meet sustainability challenges

Business owners must prepare for the new regulations that will follow the passing of the forthcoming Climate Action Bill, according to the project leads behind a new €3.9m University College Cork initiative that aims to help industry make the most of the green transition.

The Sustainable Futures project will empower businesses

to not only meet its new legal requirements in transitioning to a low-carbon future, but to see new opportunities while meeting Ireland's climate challenges.

A growing number of businesses require a skilled workforce who are knowledgeable in sustainability and decarbonisation, and who can place climate concerns at the heart of strategy, operations, and decision-making while at the same time maximis-

ing employment provision and profitability.

Sustainable Futures is a cross-university initiative that will bring together science and enterprise, academia and industry, to drive sustainability and decarbonisation by developing new qualifications and Continuing Professional Development courses that will draw upon UCC's renowned expertise in the environmental field.



## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

## Understanding food sensitivity and intolerance testing



Eoin Roe  
Chiropractic

It seems that food sensitivities are on the rise. Many people are opting to go gluten free or dairy free in order to improve their health. Additionally there is often a lot of confusion about the difference between a food allergy, sensitivity or intolerance.

Medically, an allergic reaction is defined as an IgE-mediated response to an allergen, usually a food, but could also be dust, mould or animal hair. This strict definition separates food allergy from food intolerance and hypersensitivity. IgE allergy requires testing under strict supervision and is not covered

in this article.

There are other possible reactions to foods that can happen with different immune responses namely those to IgG and IgA antibodies. These sorts of food sensitivities can be hard to notice or pinpoint to one particular kind of food and tend not to cause the same sort of immediate reaction that an IgE food allergy can cause. IgG and IgA reactions can result in gastrointestinal symptoms, energy issues, skin problems, foggy thinking and joint pain, which can happen many days after the food has been ingested. Interestingly coeliac disease is an

IgG or IgA-mediated response and those who are coeliac must avoid gluten altogether; there is also emerging evidence that NCGS (Non Coeliac Gluten Sensitivity) is a real issue causing both gastrointestinal and other symptoms.

Your immune system is complex and develops in childhood to produce a level of immune tolerance. Immune tolerance is your body's immune system's ability to recognise foreign invaders, such as bacteria and viruses, and get rid of them whilst at the same time not attacking your own body tissue or foods you are digesting.

In order to assess whether foods are affecting you or not, an elimination and reintroduction protocol is considered the gold standard. You remove certain foods for a period of time and then reintroduce them, these protocols can be difficult to do and require a high level of commitment from the person undertaking them. As an alternative there are blood tests available.

When it comes to blood testing for food intolerances they look for IgG and IgA reaction to foods. There are a number of blood tests available but there is only one form of testing that should be used and that is using a methodology called ELISA (Enzyme linked immunosorbent

assay), which has proved consistent and reliable. If you are using other test methods, even if they are blood tests assessing immune reactions, such as cell size testing or cytotoxic testing, the results you get are completely unreliable.

Getting unreliable test results is a real problem, as you can end up restricting your diet, unnecessarily removing foods that are perfectly healthy for you.

Restricting your diet too much might not seem to be such a big deal, and initially when people do this, they may remove a food they are reactive to, and therefore feel better; but in the long run it can have unintended consequences. As foods are restricted, a person loses oral tolerance and therefore can start to react to more foods. This can result in a return to the symptoms previously eliminated and the potential for developing further food sensitivities and reactions.

Unfortunately this becomes a vicious cycle and leads to some difficult health issues that are hard to identify and the food elimination protocols needed to address them become more restrictive and harder to do. You can break this cycle but it does require guidance and time.

Another important area in food sensitivity testing is what sort of food the lab is testing

against: The most important factor is the purity of the antigen (food) that is being tested and the next is if they are testing cooked and raw foods. This is important because food structures change when they are cooked and some people can react to a cooked food but not raw or visa versa.

If you do feel that you have unresolved food sensitivities, getting help to find them can make a big difference for your health. Whether you choose to do an elimination protocol or use testing to find them is up to you but understanding which test you are basing your actions on is of critical importance. Even if you have a positive ELISA test for a food sensitivity you should still challenge this result using a food elimination reintroduction protocol before permanently removing the food from your diet.

This process may seem overwhelming but is worthwhile, as improved health will give you the opportunity to reduce pain, increase energy and get back doing the things you enjoy.

*Eoin Roe is a Chiropractor and Functional medicine specialist based in Skibbereen Co Cork. If you would like an appointment please call 087 9582362.*

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## MENTAL HEALTH & MINDFULNESS

Susan O'Regan

Susan O'Regan teaches mindfulness and self-compassion courses and workshops throughout West Cork.

For more information contact: [susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com](mailto:susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com) Mob: 087 2700572.

In 2019, back in those wonderful times when we could travel freely, I attended The Mindful Living Show in London, mainly because my mindfulness teacher-training organisation, The Mindfulness Association, was represented there. There was a whole other event running alongside

## Mindful steps towards improved sleep

it, called 'The Sleep Show', dedicated to exploring tips and expert talks on how to improve sleep patterns, and the link between mindfulness and better sleep. Poor sleep is a familiar issue for a lot of people these days and, while I am not professing to be any kind of an expert on sleep, I wanted to share some tips that I have learned from the sleep experts at this event, and from my own research over the years.

Research shows that as adults we need between seven to nine hours of sleep per night. Many of us are sleep deprived, which can lead on to a host of other problems. There are many reasons why we can't sleep, which might include being overtired, having a busy mind, dwelling on problems or worries, ruminating or making 'to-do' lists. And most of us know that any problems or issues we may face during daytime hours can certainly come more fully alive at night! I am sure that many of us here have experienced more than a sleepless night or two since Covid-19 arrived almost a year ago now. Perhaps for more

of us, lack of sleep is a more serious problem and impacts on our quality of life, becoming physically and mentally debilitating, if experienced over a long period of time. We really cannot underestimate the importance of a good night's sleep and it is an essential component of our self-care.

There are many small practical adjustments we can make towards improving our sleep. I came across a phrase called 'sleep hygiene', which, according to the Sleep Foundation, includes a variety of different practices and habits that are necessary to have good night-time sleep quality and full daytime alertness. We need to prepare for sleep and give ourselves a chance to wind down after the day. A good starting point might be to notice some of the habits that could be keeping us awake, like watching a screen late into the night, eating and drinking too late in the evening or not getting enough exercise earlier in the day. Perhaps lifestyle changes over the past year have impacted on our sleep habits; maybe we're staying up late

at night or sleeping long in the morning.

Mindfulness helps us to step out of autopilot and notice our habits. This is the first step towards changing our habitual patterns. Once we become aware of these habits, we can gently begin to make small steps towards a winding down routine. See if, over time, you can develop the habit of going to bed and getting up at the same time every day. The arrival of Spring may help with this, as the birdsong starts early these mornings. Can you avoid taking your phone to bed? Aim to limit or avoid screen-time before bedtime. Ideally, turn off all screens at least an hour before bedtime. Why not try developing a relaxing pre-sleep ritual before you go to bed. This might include putting the phone away, turning off the TV or the laptop, reading a nice book, making a favourite hot drink, maybe reflecting on or journaling some of the things you are grateful for in the day.

How else can mindfulness help with sleep? Research published a few years ago indicates

that mindfulness meditation can help improve sleep. A study was conducted with two groups of middle-aged adults, whereby one group trained for six weeks in mindfulness skills and techniques and the other in a sleep specific training programme. On completion of the research project, findings suggested that those who trained in mindfulness skills, such as present moment awareness of thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations were sleeping better.

Research has also shown that mindfulness meditation can help with winding down before going to bed by practicing at least a ten-minute meditation 'before' bedtime, perhaps during the day or in the evening, to settle the mind and body. Other recommended meditation practices to help with sleep include the body scan or loving kindness.

Finally, if you cannot get to sleep or wake during the night, instead of fighting with it or allowing thoughts to spiral out of control, we can use the time to simply rest. Mindful breathing techniques can also help here.

Placing your hands on your tummy and simply feeling the breath moving in the body can help us tune in to the soothing rhythm of our breath. Gently bringing our focus away from our thoughts and thinking, and dropping our attention into the body and towards the breath can be a very soothing and grounding experience that can help ease us into a restful sleep.

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](mailto:susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com)





## A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

In between storms and torrential rain the green things are struggling to come back, valiantly pushing ahead anytime there's a ray of sunshine. Spinach, chard, rocket, nettles and wild garlic are all growing again. Most of our spinach and chard have weathered the winter outside. At one point, when it froze for a week it looked like they might lose the will to live, their leaves were sad and frost-burnt but somehow they rallied on and now look like they're good to go. The nettles and wild garlic are just emerging and the rocket is, as always, surging ahead; as it's in the tunnel, the rocket does have an advantage.

We have learnt from previous winters that it's always good to have a stash of green things in the tunnel, so late each August we plant up little beds of spin-

ach, rocket and kale just to make sure we have a supply of these useful greens.

The new glasshouse is slowly filling up with seedlings; by Easter it will be bursting at the seams and we'll be off again. Another year in the garden!

I wanted to make a recipe with wild garlic for this edition but, as I write this, there are very slim pickings out there, so I've modified my plan. What was going to be ricotta gnocchi with wild garlic pesto has morphed into ricotta gnocchi with rocket pesto. It could just as easily have been kale pesto or nettle pesto, however, as I have a choice, and I particularly enjoy the fresh pepperiness of rocket, rocket it is. Classic pesto is made with basil but it can in fact be made with a huge variety of tasty leaves.

The recipe for pesto is pretty fluid – olive oil, nuts or seeds, cheese, garlic and herb/leaves of your choice. I often put in a little lemon juice, which prevents the pesto from going Gollum green if it's not used quickly – it also brightens up the flavours.

Ricotta gnocchi are very easy to make unlike potato gnocchi, which take a little more effort. They are often called malfatti (badly made), as they don't have a uniform shape – all part of their inner beauty! Just get yourself some of our wonderful



local ricotta and a clean bowl and you're nearly there!

### Ricotta Gnocchi

Serves 2-3

#### Ingredients:

250g ricotta  
1 egg  
nutmeg  
50g semolina  
75g grated Parmesan cheese  
salt and black pepper

#### Method:

Put the ricotta into a bowl and beat together with the egg. Season with a little grated nutmeg

and salt and pepper.

Stir in the semolina, this will give you a soft mass that should hold together.

Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil then turn down to simmer. It's important the water is a quiet simmer as a rolling boil will cause too much agitation and the gnocchi will break apart.

Wet your hands to prevent the mix from sticking to them, then form small balls with the mixture and gently slip them into the water. Leave the gnocchi to cook

for a few minutes and when the gnocchi rise back to the surface they are ready. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain any excess water before plating or putting in a serving bowl.

Drizzle the pesto over the gnocchi and serve immediately.

### Rocket and Pumpkin Seed Pesto

#### Ingredients:

15g pumpkin seeds  
50g rocket  
25g Parmesan cheese  
1-2 cloves garlic  
100ml olive oil  
juice of 1/2 lemon  
salt

#### Method:

Heat a dry pan and gently toast the pumpkin seeds.

Roughly chop the garlic and rocket.

Place the pumpkin seeds, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, rocket,

Parmesan and salt into a jug and using a hand held blender blitz to a smooth sauce.

Check the seasoning and the pesto is ready. Use what you need then put the remainder into a small pot and pour a little olive oil over the top. This will stop the pesto from oxidising. Store in the fridge and use within the week. Delicious with pasta, grilled vegetables, meat, fish... Perks up everything.

Happy Easter everyone. The spring is well and truly here. We're ready and eager to open the shop; we're going to have a pile of spinach! We're aiming for Tuesday, April 6, and unless the virus does a back flip, we'll be there!

Hoping to see you all soon.

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## Artisan fare available once again at Bandon Country Market

Bandon Country Market reopens its doors on Friday, March 5. The market's range of artisan produce is all grown, made or baked within a five mile radius by skilled bakers, gardeners and small holders, including its velvety direct-from-farm milk and cream.

This heritage market is a great place to shop for foodie gifts, with a wide variety of breads, biscuits and jams, scones and tarts, local honey, preserves and pickles, cakes and cordials, quiches and quality veg all waiting for you; and for coeliacs

there are several great bakers who offer a range of gluten free cakes and tarts.

"While it is still too cold to open the hive," says local beekeeper Anne Desmond,

"the Queen is starting to lay her eggs, and the worker bees are beginning to emerge to look for nectar. It is a lovely the start to the season for us."

The market's Craft Corner offers beautifully hand knitted baby cardigans, tea cosies and blankets, as well as handmade greeting cards. Don't forget you can order in advance by calling 087 900 9494.

Bandon Country Market is open on Friday and Saturday mornings from 8.30-1.30pm.



## Cork Arc Cancer Support House hosting live diet in cancer webinar

Cork ARC Cancer Support House has announced a 'Diet in Cancer' Webinar that will take place on Wednesday, March 10 at 7pm.

The dietary requirements for cancer patients are very often misunderstood, from the amount of calories to the nutrient balance to ensure patients have the correct fuel for their journey. Cork ARC Cancer Support House understands that it can be difficult for patients and their loved ones to find the correct information, leaving them feeling confused and overwhelmed. This webinar will provide patients and families with highly specialised, cancer-specific dietary information based on the most up to date research.

Co-Chairperson and leading Consultant Medical Oncologist, Professor Seamus O'Reilly, will introduce the webinar, speaking on the importance of diet and nutrition in cancer.

Registered dietitian Diarmuid Duggan will lead the webinar, sharing his extensive experience of working with cancer patients to provide accessible, simple and achievable tips and swaps to ensure cancer patients are getting the nutrients they really need.

"You don't need to undertake a drastic diet makeover. Just a few simple changes can make a difference, and this webinar will help patients and their families to understand the foods that are easy to access, nourishing, and are suitable if you are struggling with your appetite".

Cork ARC's virtual Diet in Cancer evening is kindly sponsored by Novartis and will give expert advice and guidance to cancer patients and their families.

Register online now: [www.corkcancersupport.ie](http://www.corkcancersupport.ie)

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## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

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Eloise Schwerdt,  
Nutritional Therapy  
Graduate and Natural  
Chef Lecturer, College  
of Naturopathic  
Medicine

I was working as a Private Chef in restaurants around London and further afield but I wanted to learn more about food, how it can affect our health and wellbeing and the right way to look after

## CNM opened a whole new world to me

It has been a really incredible journey developing my knowledge in an area which I am passionate about.

myself and the people closest to me. At first, what really motivated me was gaining more knowledge, however, I didn't know where to start, or why. I was attracted to CNM by the course content. It covers a wide range of topics within the area on Nutritional Therapy. Over the course of the three years I gained a real understanding for the subject, as well as clinical practice which gave me the confidence to apply the knowledge in as similar a setting as to what I now have with my clients.

Now I feel confident not only making the right choices for me and my family, but also helping others. It has been a really incredible journey developing my expertise in an area which I am passionate about. CNM opened a whole new world up to me and I love learning something new every day.

Aside from the knowledge, the relationships I have formed

with my fellow students and CNM tutors have been invaluable. CNM has brought me together with many like-minded and passionate people, something I am very grateful for. I met so many wonderful people throughout the course and feel honoured to be part of a group of fellow graduates and to have formed the Naturopathic Nutrition Collective (NNC) with them. We continue to meet monthly, the NNC being a group where we discuss relevant topics and case studies and invite a range of specialist speakers to broaden our knowledge and continue our development.

Practicing now as a Nutritional Therapist and using the knowledge I have from the course, I understand food in a completely different way and feel confident in providing my clients with nutritional information, food and recipes which not only taste amazing but are

actually nourishing and good for them! For me, the two careers I now have go hand in hand and it has been a natural progression to fuse the new information I have gained with cooking food in a holistic way, whilst knowing why it is beneficial to do so.

I would say that my experience at CNM was an awakening, insightful and pioneering journey.

I am now so much more aware of the many choices I can make which will either affect my life in a positive or negative way. I feel geared up with a tool kit, which I can use to make informed decisions and choices, not only about the way I want to live my own life but to also enable me support others to change their lives, too.

I am continuing to work as a private chef alongside building my business in Nutritional Therapy. I encourage people towards a more holistic and naturopathic

lifestyle offering cookery lessons and store cupboard makeovers. Alongside this, I also teach at Demuths cookery school in Bath and more recently, at the CNM Natural Chef Diploma Course.

I love the ability to make a difference to people's quality of life by empowering them with knowledge. Often the changes are simple but effective; we can support the body through a whole range of different chronic diseases with diet and lifestyle. I like having the opportunity to meet different people on a daily basis and to really get to understand the full picture of what brought them to their current state of health. It is so incredibly rewarding, getting to delve deep into a client's history in order to pinpoint root causes, drivers or mediators and enable them to make the necessary changes, so they improve their overall wellbeing, restore balance and reach optimum health.

CNM was the start of a journey for me into moving towards a better quality of life and helping others to improve theirs.



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Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist  
& Mind coach

## The power of your breath

Breathing is often something we take for granted – it's easy, right? Just breathe in, out, and repeat. On one level this is true, but on another level something as simple as breathing can indicate that your health is on the decline or provide you with significant health benefits.

For centuries ancient cultures have recognised the importance of your breath and developed breathing exercises to enhance health.

Traditional Chinese medicine teaches that the nutritive prop-

erties from the food we eat and air we breathe are combined to create Qi – our life energy. How we breathe influences the quality of our Qi and therefore the quality of our health.

Qigong has been practiced in China and across Asia for more than 4000 years. It co-ordinates slow-flowing movement with deep rhythmic breathing and visualisation and is used to calm the mind, meditate, improve health and martial arts training.

In India where yoga has been practiced for more than 5000 years, Pranayama breathing and

yoga nidra are yoga practices that have significant emotional and physical health benefits.

In Tibet, the monks developed Tummo (Inner Fire) a breathing exercise combined with a visualisation to generate body heat in the icy caves of Tibet. You can see demonstrations today where Yogi's, who have mastered Tummo, are capable of immersing themselves in icy lakes and 15 minutes later visible steam is seen rising from their robes.

In 1957, Ukrainian Dr Konstantin Buteyko, observed and documented in hospital that there was a correlation between a patient's respiration rate and their overall health. Dr Buteyko noticed that the breathing of unhealthy patients is often through the mouth using the upper chest and causes a respiratory rate and volume greater than normal.

Healthy people have regular, effortless and quiet breathing during rest. Their breathing is through the nose, driven by the diaphragm and with a normal respiratory rate and volume. More importantly, Dr Buteyko found that when a patient changed their chest breathing to belly breathing, their health improved.

Your breath has the power to: Reduce stress; manage pain, particularly during childbirth;



unblock the sinus; relieve asthma; lower blood pressure; relieve depression and improve how you feel; improve sleep; reduce incontinence; lift prolapsed organs i.e. anus, cervix, uterus or bladder; improve sleep; improve circulation and warm the body; improve oxygen levels in the blood.

Changing how you breathe may have significant health benefits for you.

Here is a simple exercise that will help you to notice how you breathe and, if necessary, change it to a healthy breathing habit

1. Sit quietly with one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. 2. Breathe normally for a few minutes. 3. As you are breathing normally notice the movement in your belly and in your chest. 4. If you notice that you are breathing more into your chest than your belly then use the following steps to change this to belly breathing.

5. Close your mouth and breathe in and out through your nose. 6. Close your eyes and imagine your belly is a balloon; as you breathe in through your nose, imagine the balloon inflating; as you breathe out through your nose, imagine the balloon deflating. 6. Continue with the visualisation until you notice your breath moving into your belly area.

By bringing your awareness to your breath a few times a day and simply breathing in and out through your nose all the time, you should start to notice some health improvements.

I would love to hear what benefits you experience so do send me an email to amanda@marketstclinic.com.

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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# Lifestyle changes to help with the menopause



## HEALTH

Hannah Dare  
Organico Bantry

What a relief that spring is finally in the air! It's wonderful to go for a walk in the woods and see so many other people out enjoying themselves as well. Though I have to admit, due to having joined the sea swimming tribe this winter (plus having become a dog owner), I have been outside much much more than normal, which has been good for me on many levels. But the extra stretch in the evenings recently, the slight rise in air temperature (and water temperature!) and

the few glimpses of sunshine we've had is making all the difference to how hopeful I am feeling.

Our focus this month in Organico is the Menopause – we have a webinar booked for the end of the month with Marilyn Glenville on the Menopause – and I think when you are struggling with your hormones, hope that something will change is so important. I have to say, when I started getting hot flushes and irregular (to non-existent) periods last summer, I was struggling to find hope that things would ever improve. It's not that I'm concerned about starting the menopause, but I felt that 44 was a little on the young side and also, the daily anxiety and out of control temperature variations made life very challenging. It felt like my body was not my own.

So I made some pretty big changes to my lifestyle and diet, and thankfully, that situation has improved dramatically. I thought I would briefly share some of the things I have found particularly beneficial, just in case it might help someone else. Don't forget though, our bodies are all different, and what is

good for me might not be good for you – so even if you are in a similar situation, you will need to do some research to find out what will help you.

Firstly, late last summer I did the Five Day Fasting Mimicking Diet, similar to the one we were discussing recently on our webinar with Patrick Holford. During those five days, I went cold turkey on caffeine, which was such a nasty experience that I haven't really taken it up again (for reference, I used to have one 'real' coffee a day but anything from four to eight cups of tea). Since I stopped, I have drunk limited amounts of green tea, but nothing like the amount of black tea I used to drink. I think drinking coffee and tea on a daily basis really had a negative effect on my energy levels, on my hormones, and on my sleep.

I now enjoy a decaf Flat White every day (the secret here is to get a really high quality decaf, so you still have the delicious coffee experience, so I drink Red Strand decaf), and I find that because I'm not so exhausted, I don't need that turbo boost that proper coffee would give me. And instead I

am really enjoying the taste of herbal tea.

Secondly I went back to my medical Herbalist and started really paying attention to taking the (admittedly pretty horrid) herbal brews she prescribes, which have completely balanced out my hormones – no more flushes, no more anxiety or sleep disturbances and regular periods once more. I am so grateful to herbal medicines for these huge improvements. There are many fully trained medical herbalists in West Cork in case you need some support that way.

I am also taking some carefully chosen food supplements – an omega oil, a multi, magnesium, some mushroom extracts and vitamin D as well as CBD – on a daily basis, and have been for the last year. Right now, things are going so well it feels completely worth the investment. The mushrooms I am taking are organic extracts of Reishi, which is an adaptogenic (something that helps us to adapt to stressful situations) and Lions Mane, which is good for the nervous system and the brain. I find both excellent – and would really recommend them.

And then I've been swimming, in the sea, for about 10 minutes every day since September. This has been such an incredible habit to form. I've missed the odd day, but few, and I get such a buzz from it every time. Every day I feel like I renew my hope and gratitude for life when I plunge into the sea. And every day I come out feeling better than when I went in.

So that's an overview of my recent diet and lifestyle changes – I'd love to hear about yours, please email me and let me know what's been working for you recently!

As I said above, this month we are continuing our Free Webinars with one focusing on the Menopause on March 25, with the wonderful Marilyn Glenville. Marilyn will be cov-

ering diet and lifestyle changes that can make the menopause an easier time, so come along with all your menopause-questions. All you have to do to know about our webinars is to be on our Newsletter List (sign up on the bottom of every page on our website).

We are also hoping to get people together sometime this month to do Patrick Holford's

Five Day Diet online, using a FaceBook group to connect with each other and provide group support. If you are interested in joining in, let us know on [info@organico.ie](mailto:info@organico.ie) and if there's enough interest we will set it up – look out for the details on our newsletters.

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## Big attendance at Darrara Community Centre's first webinar

Darrara Community Centre committee was delighted with the response to its first-ever public webinar entitled, 'Wellness in Lockdown', which was held recently. Over 90 people 'attended' on the night and heard guest speaker Nicola Hogg, psychotherapist share practical tips to support optimal wellbeing during the pandemic, including tips for better sleep, importance of good nutrition and reducing anxiety. There was a very engaging Q and A session after the talk also. The webinar is available to view free of charge for a couple of weeks. Full details on the 'Darrara CC' Facebook page.

On Thursday, March 11, there will be another webinar on Zoom, with guest speaker, Community Garda, based in Bandon, Damien White, a native of Clonakilty and resident of the Darrara area.

He will address topics such as 'Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying', 'Crime Prevention and Farm Safety', 'Road Safety during COVID-19' and will also speak about 'Health and Adversity' based on how he dealt with a cancer diagnosis.

The event will start at 8pm and further details will be posted on the 'Darrara CC' Facebook page.

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## people Health & Lifestyle

# Five reasons why you should learn to play the ukulele

Claire Marie Barton  
CONNECTING THROUGH SOUND

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The ukulele is rising in popularity all the time particularly with those who may not have played an instrument before. Now that everyone is at home it's the perfect time to learn!

Here are five compelling reasons why you should learn to play the ukulele:

1. It's easy: Compared to other instruments there is almost instant gratification. There are only four strings and so it's much easier to play than a guitar. You don't need any musical background and it's an ideal instrument for busy people to learn because you don't have to practise that much.

2. It's fun: They say that ukulele players are the happiest people in the world! A lot of people think ukuleles are toy guitars. It's hard to take yourself too seriously when you are playing ukulele and it really is a lot of fun.

3. It's social: Playing ukulele is a great way of making new friends. During the summer I was out for a cycle with my



ukulele and I met a lovely young french couple who were hitching a lift with a pink ukulele. I stopped and we had fun chatting and jamming at the side of the road.

4. It's affordable: You can buy a ukulele from around €20 which is grand for learning on. For less than €100 you can get one that sounds really nice too!

5. It's small and light: It fits in your handbag (or your manbag) so you can take it anywhere. Handy for a quick practise outside the school while you're waiting to collect the kids, to play at work on your lunchbreak, perfect for beach parties, on your bike, no bother in your handbag when you're

flying or if you are getting a lift somewhere great to play in the car. Endless possibilities...

So what's stopping you? Learn ukulele and amaze your friends and family with your new skills!

Claire runs online ukulele courses for adults for both absolute beginners and intermediate players. The emphasis is on having fun while learning the basics on ukulele. A mix of video tutorials and live zoom classes make sure you get the support you need to succeed.

Classes begin on March 15. Please visit [www.clairemariebarton.com](http://www.clairemariebarton.com) for more information and to book your place.

*"Claire many thanks for helping me reach this stage. I am delighted to be able to pick up my ukulele and feel confident to play the songs I've learned. It's a great feeling. I was very happy with your classes. You were always there for us if we needed you. You gave us personal tuition. Claire to be at this stage is brilliant and was always my ambition. I am looking forward to continuing with the classes". Marie Walsh, West Cork, February 2021.*

# Walking your dog: Part 1



## 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. Contact Liz at [corkdogtrainingclasses.com](http://corkdogtrainingclasses.com)

It's incredible the number of people who contact me about their dog pulling on lead. When your dog pulls, it's generally because he's paying you no attention and is in his own zone. You can pull, yank, shout or throw a tantrum – all to no avail. He's not listening and

you're wasting your time and energy.

The first thing you teach your dog is to focus upon you, no matter what. Trying to do this when you're on your walk is impossible. There are far too many distractions and you are way down his list of interesting things!

I may lose some readers here because I advocate that you go back home to do your homework and what I recommend isn't a 'quick fix'. In fact, all your basic obedience training begins on lead in the home, and then you add distractions gradually until your dog becomes 'bomb proof' anywhere.

So first of all you need your dog to make eye contact, the same way you do when you're engaging with someone. It's polite, respectful, and means you're listening. You obviously use treats to encourage him to focus on you. After a while, it should become automatic for him to look at you immediately when you call his name. If not, then you have to question your relationship with him.

Then, you get him to focus

anywhere in your house. Once he's happily looking at you anywhere on command, then you progress out to your back garden. There are more distractions outside: noises, barking dogs, birds flying, etc. You want your dog to be able to focus on you despite those things. If he can't, then go back inside and keep practicing indoors until he seems to be fully concentrating.

When you think he's coping with distractions in your back garden, you bring him out to the front. There are many more things there that merit his attention: cars passing, people walking by, children shouting and playing, other dogs. Let him have a look and then ask him to focus on you. (And remember, he's on lead so he can't take off!) If he manages to meet your eyes and maintain that focus, then I reckon he deserves a Jackpot! A Jackpot is when you tell him how good he is while delivering about four or five treats in quick succession to really mark his behaviour.

When you actually take him for a walk outside your garden, try to understand how exciting,

fearful or even overwhelming it can be. There's so much to see, hear, smell, take in all at once. Few dogs are so laid back that all of these things just wash over them. Most dogs are so excited – or stimulated, they can hardly contain themselves.

I would recommend that the first time after you've taught him to focus, you walk in a place or at a time when you know you're unlikely to encounter anybody. The reason for this is that the smells, sights and noise are still there stimulating him, but, hopefully, no people. While you walk, you'll occasionally stop and get your dog to sit, make and maintain eye contact, reward, and then walk on. You're setting the basic rules of how you want him to interact with you despite outside influences. If you do this consistently, your dog learns to automatically check in with you.

The second most important thing after teaching your dog to focus is what gear you use to walk your dog. If you walk your dog in just a collar and lead and he pulls like a train, you are



in danger of doing permanent damage to his throat. Plus the fact, there's such pressure on his neck and throat that it's possible he's being deprived of oxygen to his brain. That will surely have long-term consequences.

When I was learning how to be a dog trainer, our tutor suggested we put some rope around our own necks and then have someone yank it. Take it from me; even a small, constant pressure is uncomfortable! However, a properly fitted harness may be all that's needed to stop a dog pulling. Not only that, if your dog is leaning and pulling

on the collar, it's detrimental to his skeletal health.

There are so many types of harnesses on the market; it's hard to know which one to choose. In my experience the best harness is one that fits snugly, doesn't sit too low across your dog's chest and interfere with his gait, doesn't pinch him when he pulls but has a ring on his chest and on his back so that you can use a double-ended lead.

Next month, I'll explain how the harness works when your dog tries to pull you all over the place.



# Walking in shoes that shine

## 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!*

From the early 1990s, I was a committee member of The West Cork Peto Fund, Bandon, whose aim was to provide Conductive Education, through bringing conductors from Budapest, to work with children and adults with motor disabilities in West Cork. Conductive Education (CE) was developed and researched by András Peto, at the world-renowned, Peto Institute in Budapest. CE teaches through a programme of exercises – adapted for each individual – the motor function, which he or she either finds challenged, or in some instances is losing. CE teaches a philosophy for life, which shapes a positive attitude, which seeks to enhance the individual's skills and mobility; reaching their potential and enabling that individual to function within their own and the greater environment – safely, productively, positively, naturally and to lead a happy and fulfilled life.

There were many children who availed of the programme offered in Bandon. I remember all of the children who I met, for different reasons, and have followed their achievements, as they have progressed through life. I will share the narrative of two of their amazing lives, which have gone full circle.

Julie O'Leary was a bright-eyed, smiling little girl. Pleasant and helpful to others in her group, she worked well and was quick to make friends. David Helen was a tough little boy, determined and pleasant, smiling, eager to work. Both children shared one important factor in common; they had parents who had made a clear decision to support them, to achieve their full potential in life, to be the best that they could be, to have every opportunity possible to flourish and to shine. Both children had diagnoses of different levels of cerebral palsy – a diagnosis, which differs as much in presentation, as the faces of many thousands of people. Julie's parents had been informed when she was 18-months-old by a consultant that "they should



Julie and David on their wedding day in 2016.

have more children, and not to invest too much in her, as she would never amount to much".

David Helen grew into an admirable young man, respected within and beyond his community, known as a hard worker, committed, self-employed outside the field of disability, competing within the commercial sector. Julie O'Leary grew from a pretty little girl into a stunningly beautiful young woman. She was awarded a Degree in Psychology from UCC and an MA in Journalism from NUI, Galway. She is a recognised public speaker, as an advocate for People with Disabilities and has been interviewed on many national and local radio prime time shows and features regularly in newspaper reports, both national and local. She is, and has been, employed full-time by Inclusion Ireland.



The couple's son Ricky.

In 2012, it was as though a script from Disneyland was written, awaiting the angel dust to bring it to life. David and Julie's paths crossed once more. They shared so many interests, both coming from farming backgrounds, loving socialising, meeting friends, good conversation, holidays and travel. However, most exciting of all was that their meeting became something more from the start. There was that incredible magic that people feel and recognise when they have met their soul mate...and David and Julie were falling in love. It was to be the beginning of their remarkable journey together.

Having both experienced similar childhoods in rural Ireland and similar opportunities with CE, both David and Julie believe that expectations need to be raised with regard to what people with disabilities can achieve. "People with disabilities need to raise their own expectations, and not be limited by the perceptions, beliefs and views of others. People with disabilities, are limited only through lack of supports such as independent living supports, lack of access in the external built environment and attitude."

On New Year's Day in 2016, David and Julie were married.

The couple continued to live in West Cork where the sense of community and belonging had welcomed and engulfed Julie, almost greedily, wanting to hold onto this beautiful and talented young woman. Julie laughingly admits to her lack of a sense of direction, which must have been

enormously helpful driving around, when she first moved to West Cork. She had attributed this to her diagnosis of CP until she met David, who has no trouble recalling any location or how to get there again. Some of us just lack a sense of direction! However, the independence which driving has given to Julie over the years cannot be over-estimated.

Then in 2019, a new rainbow appeared on the horizon for this charismatic couple, as they announced the impending arrival of an addition to their family. As support services can be unreliable, David and Julie decided to move where they would have the support of Julie's family on hand for a while. With the help and unwavering support of both families, the journey has been a good one.

Ricky was born in December 2019. Julie expressed her joy in

being a mum, explaining how it raised once more her expectation of what she could achieve: The wonderful experience of carrying their baby, of giving birth, and of being parents to their tiny dependent son. Julie told me a story of how early one morning, her mum, (very experienced baby-minding person) was minding Ricky while she took a shower. While in the shower, she could hear Ricky howl and wail, as though he was being tortured. As she exited from the shower, her mum came in and placed the small baby in her arms and her tiny son snuggled in and ceased crying. He wanted his mum. She was his mum.

David and Julie will be moving back to West Cork with their son, which will be welcomed by the communities in West Cork. These are the calibre of person, which West Cork needs to at-

tract – hard-working, fair-minded, coming with life experience, lots to chat about, quick to laughter, easy to love. When I think of David and Julie, the years fall away, I can see them, laughing, as children, just as if it were yesterday. I, and others, really believed that by the time that they reached young adulthood, many issues surrounding access, attitude, independent living supports, to name a few, would be addressed. We are still working towards equality for everybody within our society.

David and Julie are simply two young adults with their beautiful baby, working and being the best that they can be, achieving their potential, and yes, they also both have a diagnosis of CP, which does not define them.

You could not walk in their shoes...the shine dazzles and the shoes will not fit.

See pull-out flyer for full menu

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## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

## Fun and learning for preschoolers in the great outdoors

**Fidelma Ní hUallacháin** is the owner of Naíscóil Chloch na gCoillte, a preschool run through the medium of Irish. Fidelma tells us it would be understandable if parents noticed changes in their children's behaviour and stress responses, as a result of being out of school, because children thrive on routine. Fidelma's advice for families with young children is to spend good quality family time together, with the more time spent outdoors the better. Research has shown that children who play outdoors regularly are happier, healthier, fitter and stronger.



and schools are closed, we are faced with uncertainty on a daily basis. Our normal life as we know it is a longed-for reappearance. We yearn for the life we all once knew. For me personally, I miss elements of my job and what they add to my life – my staff, meeting and greeting parents, and especially being surrounded by my loveable 'Scallywags'; listening to their conversations, their reasonings, their take on things, watching their trust and friendships grow, seeing growth and advancement in their holistic development and simply enjoying the fun they bring. Being with groups of children aged between ap-

proximately three and five years of age on a daily basis, anything can be said by them, but fun is guaranteed.

I feel for the children missing out on pre-school. It would be lovely to think that all are all fully content and not giving pre-school a second thought, but unfortunately parents have been telling me how much their children miss their friends, us the staff and pre-school life. Young children thrive on predictable routines and these routines provide a sense of security that supports their emotional wellbeing. Pre-school provides structure, routine, learning and fun. I am conscious that some parents may be finding it difficult to juggle their job, caring for their family and home while their pre-schooler is looking for attention, to be entertained and needing their assistance in so many ways. It is very understandable that some may be finding it difficult to 'preschool at home' and are feeling under pressure.

As a practitioner, I feel strongly in offering any support I can to our families during these surreal times. Every week I send an abundance of ideas for the children to engage in and

help them to develop and learn through creativities and activities, focusing on a theme for the week. I also send some helpful resources for the parents. My staff jump on board and send on ideas for the children also. The objective is that choice is provided for the children. I encourage parents to show what is sent and encourage the children to choose what they would like to do, thus giving the children a say in their own learning. When the children's work is shared, plenty of praise is shared for them too, and it helps our group stay connected.

Though I feel it is beneficial for the children to engage in our activities, no pressure is on parents to do so. I have mentioned to parents that spending good quality family time together, getting plenty exercise, getting plenty fresh air and learning life skills will go a long way during this lockdown. I am an outdoor girl and have a great understanding of the benefits of being outdoors. According to Helen Bilton, Professor of Outdoor Learning, University of Reading's Institute of Education, "children don't necessarily learn easily within the confines of four walls, especially if they

are young and yet there is still an assumption that learning can only happen at desks and in a classroom, this is worrying as outdoor learning is most closely related to meeting the needs and development of young children".

I feel it is so beneficial to encourage parents to take their children out too and engage with nature. During this lockdown, I have taken to going to the beach and drawing on the sand. When our theme was dinosaurs, I drew dinosaurs on the sand. Last week, our theme was dogs and so I drew dogs on the sand. I share these drawings with our families and encourage them to bring their children to the beach and find them. The children are welcome to add to them and are encouraged to draw their own. Their ability in drawing does not matter one bit, their markings is what is important. It is the process not the product that is important here. What a simple lovely task this is. No harm to nature is being done. No expensive equipment is required all that is needed is a stick or stone and some imagination. When the tide comes in, the art is cleared away but makes way for a new

canvas the next day.

I draw for my Scallywags but I have to admit, I really enjoy it myself. I like to draw, but it is something I had not done in a while. While I was sketching the images in the sand, I found that people were passing, taking a peek and it was bringing smiles to their faces. Strangers were coming up to me, and while respecting social distancing, conversations were being had. All this gave me the feel-good factor.

So now I would encourage you to get yourselves off (if it is within your 5k) and pick up a stick or stone and get creative, let your imagination flow. If you cannot get to the beach encourage your child to make chalk drawings on the cement, create 3D pictures with sticks and stones, draw in the sand pit, use any surface to be creative. Get outside and embrace what nature has to offer. Shut the screens down, the ironing can wait, make special, fun, simple moments like these happen for you or you and your child. Enjoy the beauty around you and get drawing even if it is circles in the sand.

## Cork Mental Health geared up to support Primary school children and schools with new toolkit

Cork Mental Health Foundation has developed a free toolkit aimed at supporting children's mental health within their schools, as they deal with the transition from Primary school to post primary school, which will be all the more difficult with the Covid-19 restrictions.

The Toolkit Project is an evolution of the presentations given in

schools by Cork Mental Health, over the past six years. It will support fifth and sixth class

children by providing information to staff about the range of tools and services that are available within their community and on-line to help discuss mental wellbeing amongst their students, as well as allowing the subject of Mental Health to be discussed openly in the classroom. This Mental Health Toolkit facilitates discussion in and around taking care of, and identifying needs, around the mental health supports needed for children transitioning into second level education, in a safe and comfortable environment, facilitated by their school.

Martina Ryan, Education Officer at Cork Mental Health Foundation is available to support the toolkit by attending schools and giving presentations on the information contained in the toolkit to get the conversation started.

Topics covered include: What is mental health?; Who are your supports?; Food and Mood; Sleep; Social media; Coping skills.

"It consists of activity based tools that teachers can use to engage in conversation with



children around different aspects of mental health," she explains. "One of the activities for example is to create a coping skill toolbox and talk to the children about what they would put in it and why, another is a good friendship recipe, another is creating an anti-bullying strategy for the class.

"Back in September when the schools reopened, many teachers were relating to me that anxiety levels were quite high in some children: They weren't coping well after being out of their routine for so long, separated from their friends, of-

ten being exposed to anxiety in the adults around them, family bereavements, news reports and constant negativity.

"With children returning to school again after a long lockdown, it's important that they can express their feelings in school and get help if needed," says Martina.

For parents, Martina's advice is to try to maintain as much of a routine as possible in the household: Things like keeping a set bedtime, having meals together, and getting outside in the fresh air for exercise are all very important. "Sleep is a really big

one, as most kids aren't getting enough of it," says Martina.

She mentions that parents may need to be more lenient on their rules around screen-time, as it's the only opportunity children get to spend time with their peers in this pandemic.

"Parents need to look after their own mental health first and get support if needed," she emphasises. "Then opening an avenue for conversation with your kids is really important. Very often children will respond to being asked directly to a question like 'how are you?'"

She advises that breathing exercises like the 7-11 can also help children with anxiety. "Breathe in for a count of seven. Breathe out for a count of 11."

Brendan McCarthy, CEO Cork Mental Health said, "COVID-19, unexpected 12 months ago, is only going to add further pressure on many young children, and the importance of our programme cannot be underestimated."

## Scoil Naomh Bhríde Union Hall

## Enrolment of new pupils for September 2021

Enrolment is now open for pupils. Please contact the school by email or by phone to receive our enrolment pack.

Phone: 028-33717

Email: unionhallns@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.

Once children go to school and begin to count and grasp the names and meanings of numbers, they often look forward eagerly to the time when they will be 10-years-old – double figures!

This article is intended to focus on the outlook of children who are no longer little, having instead to acquire skills and a perspective that are not-so-distant from the views they will hold as an adult later. This is the world of the child who is leaving behind the early years' experience, greatly coloured by home and family, and beginning to move onto a more independent self-aware perspective and to tackle a wider, deeper challenge than before. Although this is not yet the era of the adolescent, perhaps the most noticeable characteristic of children in this group is their commitment to a bigger group and becoming a member of a group, while simultaneously striving to make sense of their growing awareness of an identity and ultimately an independent life. When faced with a challenge, 10- and 11-year-olds may not display signs of vulnerability or



anxiety the way a younger child would do, because they already had to construct ways of managing a whole range of feelings in order to flourish in groups away from their families.

### Family relationships

The relationships with the children's families will begin to change. Suddenly it is not Mum and Dad who are the most desirable companions with whom all pleasure and pains are shared. If parents are surprised by this development, it might be easy to miss the more subtle request for love and support. The significant point of this age is a deep connection between a pre-pubescent child and their mother. By this age, children will have started to make comparisons

between the relative assets and qualities of one mother and another, but also they will be forming their identity in relation to the picture they have of their mother.

### Friendships and social life

Friendships also have a significant contribution to the development of the 10- and 11-year-olds; they are essential stepping stones in their emotional and social growth. Girls are often steeped in the culture of best friends. The best friend represents a vital transition between the emotional world of the child, and that of the later adult. Before the dawn of adolescence and a more overt preoccupation with romantic attachments, and sexual relation-

ships, girl will begin to explore the nature of relationships through their close friendships. Unlike the games and occupations of slightly younger girls, at 11, girls will want friendships that are governed by a kind of exclusivity, or even secrecy. Best friends are tightly bound together, sometimes against the world outside. Sometimes the closeness can be detrimental to others.

Without resorting to bullying or overtly unkind behaviour, many girls lean towards complicated comments and arrangements that establish the bond with a close friend while excluding others. This behaviour can also be seen among boys, who often channel these feelings into behaviour that is

governed by formal rules, such as the rules of a club or sport activity. However, for most children, this aspect is an ordinary part of developing a sense of belonging. That is to say, under pressure, they create a closed relationship, which cheers and supports them, leaving another child to cope with the discomfort of the loneliness.

### The onward journey

In this era, children are at a crossroads. The evidence of growth, and of time passing, highlighted by the arrival of that second digit to their age underlies an awareness of themselves as separate individuals. Whatever their circumstances, or whatever the characteristics of their personalities, they know that their days as helpless, dependent and inexperienced beginners are now numbered. Their response to this realisation and their feelings about themselves and the world they inhabit may be infinitely varied. Inevitably our children's point of view of the world they inhabit will be influenced by their experience of ourselves as parents. Our continued interest, understanding and curiosity about our child, and our greater experience that can reassure and support them in their times of difficulty, is one of the most valuable assets they have in their growth toward adulthood.

## Why do we sometimes find it hard to understand children?

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

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

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

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Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist  
Over 15 years of experience. ICP Registered, MACP  
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**is now enrolling for 2021/2022**

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- Just complete the short form and click submit.
- An Admission Form will be posted to you, which you then complete and return to the school.
- 7 days after we receive the Admission Form, places will be offered to the parents who have applied – until the class is full.

If you need to contact the school you can do so by ringing **023 8834487** or email **info@snbclonakilty.com**



## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

## Connecting online



## LGBTI+ MATTERS

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



Abi O'Callaghan-Platt is one of the core members of BROD. She is an environmental scientist who was raised in West Cork and returned five years ago to raise her two children here.

While lockdown prevents many of us from connecting with our community it can also offer new opportunities to people living in remote areas. Those of us living in the wilds of West Cork can struggle to access activities offered by city-based lgbt+ groups in normal times, and so the move to online activities forced by the pandemic is a positive for many!

Whatever your age, gender or sexual orientation there are online events to suit. They are all open to newcomers and are used to people coming along for the first time.

## LINC

Linc provides support services for lesbian and bisexual women. They have a range of meet ups, with one on almost every evening, as well as offering support services.

**Yoga** – This beginner friendly yoga class is on Monday evenings at 7pm.

**Drama** – LINC drama is on Tuesdays from 7pm-9pm. This is the perfect group to join if you want good craic and to make new friends! Open to all, even those who don't want to perform! You can choose to take part in the annual sold-out play or to just enjoy being there for the writing and the laughs during the year.

**German classes** – German classes are on Wednesdays from 6-7pm. Get in touch to find out the next start date for beginners!

**Book club** – The book club is on the first Friday of every month at 7pm. Join the facebook page to find out what the next book is and get the zoom links for the meet-ups. The book for March is 'Black Wave' by Michelle Tea, and the book for April is 'Are You My Mother?' by Alison Bechdel!

**LINC In** – Linc has drop-in zoom calls on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons from 1.30 to 2.30pm, Thursday evening from 7-8pm and on Saturday afternoons from 2.30-3.30pm. Join for a chat and to get to know others in the community!

See: [www.facebook.com/LINCcork](https://www.facebook.com/LINCcork) for more details and zoom links

## Gay Project

The Gay Project supports gay, bi+, trans and queer men and offers a massive variety of groups to join!

**Yoga** – Yoga for men is held on Mondays at 7.30pm. All variations of poses are offered for all levels.

**'Out of Your Mind' Meditation Club** – Meditation is held on Tuesday mornings.

**Queer Vibes Café** – Queer Vibes is a Social Space, which

meets every Wednesday at 7pm on zoom. This is a friendly group who are always up for a laugh and very welcoming to new people.

**Gold** – GOLD coffee morning is an opportunity for older gay men (55+) to meet, socialise and chat with other guys of a similar age. It is held at 12 on Fridays on zoom.

**OUT-LIT LGBT Book Club** – An LGBT+ book club that usually meets monthly, on the third Saturday of the month at 3.30pm, to discuss our chosen book for the month. New members are always welcome.

**Black Rainbow LGBT Writers Club** – We would like aspiring gay authors to join the Black Rainbow Group, where we aim to put together a single book of gay-themed short stories, set in Ireland, each no longer than 3000 words.

See: [gayproject.ie](https://gayproject.ie) for more details.

## Youghal LGBT+ Network

**Teatime Sessions** – Join the Teatime Sessions for a cuppa and a chat every Friday at 4pm! This group is hosted by Youghal LGBT+ Network and Seeding the County 2021, which aims to build LGBT+ networks across Cork County.

Email [seedingthecounty@gmail.com](mailto:seedingthecounty@gmail.com) for your zoom link.

## Bi+ Ireland

Bi+ Ireland aims to create a space where bi+ people can make friends, access peer support and reduce any isolation they may experience. They have a couple of events coming up in March.

**Bi conversations** – This event is on Saturday 13th March at 5pm and invites people to join them for an open discussion of bi+ topics such as Bi+ representation in the media and bi+ erasure.

**Bi+ Ireland Book Club** – This non-traditional book club has its next meets on the first Saturday of each month at 8pm. Each month members talk about the



LINC drama group performing prior to COVID 19

various things they have read that month and discuss whatever their reading habits happen to be: non-fiction, fiction, YA, Autistic books, fanfics, etc. Bi+ Ireland says "We all get to widen our literary knowledge by hearing what others are reading".

See [facebook.com/biireland-network](https://facebook.com/biireland-network)

## Gender Rebels Cork

The Gender Rebels peer support group is on the third Wednesday of every month at 7pm. It is open to anyone over 18 of a gender minority. They will never ask what gender you are, so even if you are still questioning who you are, you are welcome to join.

Gender Rebels say, "We open with a round of introductions. With people giving their names and pronouns. This is a great way to try out a name or pronoun in a safe and understanding environment. The host will ask people how they have been since last we met. Topics discussed can be about our gender identity or whatever is on your mind. What topics we cover are based on what people want to talk about. Sometimes all we talk about is films and TV shows we like. Other times someone might ask about

transition like how to legally change their name and people reply with how they did it. We end with what everyone got from the meeting and say our goodbyes until the next time."

See [facebook.com/genderrebelscork](https://facebook.com/genderrebelscork)

## TENI - Transgender Equality Network Ireland

TransParenCI is a free support group for parents and family members of transgender children and adults. The group is facilitated by experienced parents of transgender children and meets monthly for two hours. The group is currently meeting online via zoom. For more information or to join the group please contact TENI by email: [transparencigroup@gmail.com](mailto:transparencigroup@gmail.com)

## Meetups for young people:

## BeLonG To

BeLonG To is the national organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people. Their online youth group is open to any LGBTI+ young person between 14-23 years.

They say 'This group is a safe space where you can get

the chance to meet people, chat, have fun, and learn a little about gender and sexuality. You don't have to label yourself when you come to our groups, so if you are questioning your sexuality or gender identity, you can come along and just be yourself, without any pressure'.

See: [belongto.org](https://belongto.org)

## UP Cork LGBT+ Youth Group

UP Cork is an LGBT+ Youth Group is organised in partnership with Youth Work Ireland Cork. The group welcomes members aged 15-24 and is on Tuesday evenings at 6pm.

See: [facebook.com/upcork-lgbtyouth/](https://facebook.com/upcork-lgbtyouth/)

## TENI - Transgender Equality Network Ireland

Transformers is a free peer support group for transgender young people whose parents attend TransParenCI. The group is facilitated by a professional counsellor and meets monthly for two hours. The group is currently meeting online via zoom. For more information or to join the group please contact TENI by email: [transparencigroup@gmail.com](mailto:transparencigroup@gmail.com)

## Natural protection and care for lips with Dr. Hauschka's lip care range

With the weather so changeable heading into March, Dr. Hauschka's lip care range, the Dr. Hauschka Lip Balm and Dr. Hauschka Lip Care Stick are handbag or pocket must haves that will provide your lips with some much-needed natural care and protection.

Dr. Hauschka's Lip Balm Jar,

€12.99, offers intensive, soothing care for lips. The rich balm promotes skin renewal and smoothes fine lines and wrinkles while moisturising, softening and providing a translucent shine. Made with pure silk powder, extracts of carrot, Anthyllis, calendula and St. John's wort, Dr. Hauschka's Lip Balm will soothe and fortify sore and chapped lips. Repair and

renew the lips with nurturing jojoba and apricot kernel oils while beeswax and cocoa butter will help protect and soothe too.

Another handy option that will provide protection and care for your lips while you are on the go is the Dr. Hauschka Lip Care Stick, €9.95. Moisturising and protective, the Lip Care Stick, nurtures dry, chapped lips, sooth-

ing, softening and nourishing them. Unlike conventional lip care products, the Dr. Hauschka Lip Stick formation promotes healthy lips without causing dependency. Containing candellila and carnauba waxes and sweet almond and apricot kernel oils, it will seal in moisture to soften and smooth dry lips.

For further details on the full

Dr. Hauschka range, your local stockists or to shop online log onto Dr. Hauschka's website: [www.drh.ie](https://www.drh.ie)

Dr. Hauschka also has a great offer running from February 22 until April 4, where you will receive a free Rose Day Cream when you spend over €60 on the brand.





## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

# 3 top tips for new mums

from Regency Ireland

Your duty to your husband is to produce an heir. Once pregnant, you maintain your body as a safe physical environment, conducive to the health and development of your unborn child. Of most importance is the quality of the pervading air.

Keep your windows open.

Avoid swamps, marshes and stagnant pools. Avoid also large, crowded, evening assemblies. Women, particularly those of a weak or relaxed habit, should avoid great quantities of tea. You should rise early, shun damp houses and never go abroad in foggy weather. Keep cheerful and easy in your mind. Avoid foods which heat the body.

## pregnancy

Ensure that your birthing chamber is airy without being breezy and dark without being stifling. If you are in good health and refrained from lacing your stays tightly, then apart from some discomfort on your part, delivery will be achieved with minimum perturbation.

## lying-in

Immediately on the birth, you must confine yourself to a horizontal posture for at least four or five days. After a week you may leave your bed for a sofa, but take care to remain in a reclined attitude for the next fortnight. Never sit upright, till the womb resumes its natural state, an action which will take no less than two or three weeks. After about a month you may consider going downstairs. Do not contemplate leaving the house.

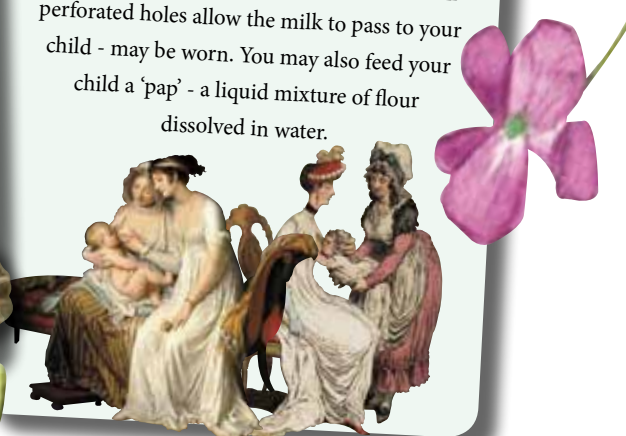
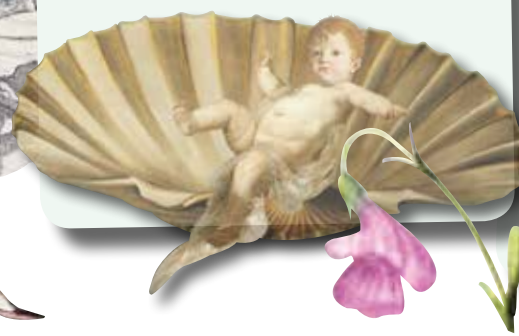
If you have delivered a daughter, your husband may suggest the services of a wet nurse to hasten your readiness to breed again. Be sure to examine the character of the woman closely. Do not choose a slovenly, or drunken wet nurse, as aspects of this personality will be passed to your child through the milk. You may visit your child daily, taking them back to the family fold when they are 18 months old.

## feeding

Current fashion holds with nursing your child yourself. There will be some who find the practice painful. Nipple shields - where small perforated holes allow the milk to pass to your child - may be worn. You may also feed your child a 'pap' - a liquid mixture of flour dissolved in water.



taken from  
www.prettyinterestinghistory.com



## From traditional letters to online Zoom calls – LINC has something for all lesbian and bisexual women

Imagine the solace of a good book, as you take a break from the rush of every day life on a comfortable couch with a freshly brewed coffee. If you aren't in the mood for reading, imagine a raucous game of table tennis; a tense game of cards; laughing heartily over lunch, or the comfort of an understanding smile. If your imaginings take you to the warmer months, picture yourself out in a back garden, catching up with friends or savouring the smell of a smoky barbecue.

LINC is an NGO in Cork for lesbian and bisexual women, and their families, and what you've just read is the beating heart of the services they provide – a drop in centre.

Though based in the city, LINC's community members come from all around the country to meet, make friends and enjoy some of the many workshops, activities and events held at its White Street premises.

Health and wellbeing is a huge part of what they do at LINC; as well as hosting a number of physical wellbeing

groups, such as soccer and hill walking, they also provide low-cost counselling and one-to-one peer support that is aimed at assisting women with various challenges, including coming out of a heterosexual relationship.

LINC also delivers LGBT+ awareness training to companies and organisations looking to improve and grow their diversity and inclusion practices and it works closely with other NGOs and policymakers. When Covid-19 restrictions threatened to keep the community apart, LINC moved most of its services online and worked hard to keep people connected.

LINC currently takes place on Zoom, so while women bring their own coffee and reach the organisation from the couch at home, it is still there; still laughing and talking and taking care of each another.

Social media however isn't ideal for many women in the community. Zoom or Facebook don't work for everyone and older LGBT+ people are at risk of feeling lonely or isolated.

LINC wants to improve the experience of older lesbian and bisexual women and its plan is to connect people through letter writing.

Silver Scribblers is a community project that will connect older lesbian and bisexual women with LINC community members; the participants will be matched with a pen-pal and write and receive a monthly letter. LINC welcomes all older community members and your information will be treated with respect and privacy.

If receiving and writing letters and building friendships sounds like it might be for you, someone you know or if any of the information above appeals to you please don't hesitate to get in touch with LINC. You can reach them by email, post, phone or social media and they'd love to hear from you.

LINC, 11a White Street, Cork, T12 D36W  
Phone: 021 – 480 8600  
Email: info@linc.ie  
Facebook: LINCcork  
Website: www.linc.ie



## Silver Scribblers

### Are you an older lesbian or bisexual woman?

### Would you like to receive a letter in the post from a LINC volunteer?

Join our pen pal service and we will connect you with another community member who will send you a letter each month.

If you, or someone you know, would like to receive a letter please get in touch at 021 4808600 or email [ciara@linc.ie](mailto:ciara@linc.ie) or by post to LINC 11a White St. Cork

LINC is a community organisation for Lesbian and Bisexual Women  
[www.linc.ie](http://www.linc.ie)





## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

## New beauty launches for Spring 2021

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.

Spring has officially sprung! I don't know about you but discovering new beauty products can really put a smile on your face and right now, I think we all need that little spark of joy. Whether you're in the market for some new skincare must-haves, self-tan for the ultimate glow or a few makeup essentials, revamp your beauty shelf with this lovely selection of spring launches.

## Citrine Healthcare Acne Treatments

Citrine Healthcare is a 100 per cent Irish owned company who has launched three new products into Irish pharmacies for the treatment and management

of acne. There are several ways of classifying acne, in broad terms, acne can be defined as being inflammatory or non-inflammatory, but mainly most patients have a combination of both. Acne affects people of all ages but is most commonly seen in teenagers, in fact, 90 per cent of teenagers will experience acne and it can have a huge impact on self-confidence. Adult hormonal acne is also very common and the new emergence of 'maskne' has shown a greater incidence due to prolonged and repeated wearing of masks. Choosing the most appropriate remedy along with good compliance (use of product over a minimum of three months) and additional lifestyle changes can see a marked improvement in a patient's symptoms. Citrine's three products to tackle acne are: Benoxer, for mild to moderate inflammatory acne; Triacine, for treating non-inflammatory with comedones (that's blackheads and whiteheads); and Ceboderm, an excellent maintenance therapy for all types of acne to help regulate sebum, keep skin moisturised and to help prevent reoccurrence. Available in selected pharmacies nationwide with prices starting at €13.95, for more information check out [citrinehealthcare.com](http://citrinehealthcare.com)

## Nima Brushes

When it comes to the technology behind cosmetic brush design, it's not always so black and white – sometimes there is GREY! Nima Brush are delighted to share their NimaFil

Smart Fibre Technology, identified by its grey hair; this exclusive technology, introduced by Nima Brush back in 2018, has now grown and developed within the brand and is now offered across a wide range of both sets and individual brushes. Niamh Martin, CEO and Founder of Nima Brush says "With the NimaFil technology the brush strands mimic the scientific structure of a natural hair fibre, meaning the synthetic brush now acts identically to that of a natural (animal hair) brush! You get the softness, the ease of application, as well as the product pick up and pay off of a professional tool". The brushes are soft and non-abrasive to the skin, but still sturdy and precise to tackle all areas of the makeup and suitable for professionals. The NimaFil smart fibre technology brushes can be used for a whole range of textures - cream, gel, powder products - where conventionally you could not mix and match. Check out The Eye Spy Detail Set (seven brushes, €45) or A Taste of Nima Discovery Set (five brushes, €29.99) Available from [nimabrush.com](http://nimabrush.com) and selected stockists nationwide.

## St Tropez Ashley Graham Limited Edition Ultimate Glow Kit

Enviably honey-hued no matter what the season, model Ashley Graham keeps her body glowing top-to-toe with St. Tropez's Luxe Whipped Crème Mousse (with help from her limited-edition Applicator Mitt). A first-of-its-kind hybrid tan from the

masters of tanning, Whipped Crème Mousse has the ease of a mousse with the care of a cream to condition your skin while bestowing a natural glow. Using 10 per cent natural tanning actives, the formula is enriched with a hyaluronic acid complex for instantly hydrated skin, whilst pro-vitamin B5 and glycerine keeps skin supple and improves skin texture. An infusion of rosehip and vitamin E oils, detoxify and combat free radicals while nourishing skin with vitamin rich fatty acids, leaving skin revitalised and radiant.

The innovative easy-to-use formula is feather-light and the tinted whipped crème texture of the self-tan helps guide application for no missed patches, with the applicator mitt providing streak-free results. The mousse is touch dry in seconds and develops over time and adapts to skin tone; simply apply, wear confidently all day, or wash off after four to eight hours for results that can last all week and evenly fade over time. When a subtle fine fragrance inspired by Ashley's favourite scents, if self-tanning is your thing, you're definitely going to want to try this, €45 available in selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

## YonKa Glyconight 10% Mask

New Glyconight 10% mask by YonKa Paris is a smoothing peel mask that gives skin renewal and radiance. With 10 per cent glycolic acid, this product buffs away dead skin cells and fades dark spots, but

without any drying or peeling. It is one of the rare chemical exfoliators that is both advanced strength and gentle enough for every other day use. Inspired by the chemical peel, this night mask is formulated so you can perform a noticeably effective and excellently tolerated peel at home.

The mask sloughs away dead skin cells, improving the skin's quality and texture. Pores are tighter and the depth of the wrinkles and fine lines is visibly reduced. The morning after you apply the mask, your complexion looks more radiant and skin is left feeling smoother, softer, and more revitalised, €61.50 available from professional salons nationwide. For local stockist information visit [yonka.ie](http://yonka.ie).

## Patchology Little Helper Sleep

Are you struggling with sleep at the moment? A good night's sleep is not only important for functioning well in our day to day lives but it's also important for optimum skin health. Deep, restful sleep has many health benefits that impact your well-being way beyond the next day. To help reduce the amount of time it takes you to fall asleep, Patchology have developed sleep strips. Honey-flavoured and formulated with powerful, non-habit-forming melatonin, along with tryptophan and theanine, you can drift away to dreamland and catch that all-important zzzz's. And if lack of energy is something you're experiencing, then their Little Helper

Energy Supplement Strips will help skip the daily slump and boost your energy levels. There are six strips in each box, €11 from selected pharmacies nationwide and online.

## AYU Blushed Berry Lip Kit

Brand new to AYU, the exclusive Blushed Berry Lip Kit contains three individual products; Blushed Berry Lip Liner to add shape and volume to your lips with a smooth finish formula that will define and create a fuller lip. Blushed Berry Lipstick, the perfect, pink-based berry shade with a subtle hint of warmth. Its creamy application ensures lips stay hydrated with a flawless coverage. Blushed Berry Lip Gloss, a high shine smooth gloss will give you full coverage colour with a creamy rich finish. It can be worn alone or paired with your Blushed Berry Lipstick, €32.50 available from [ayu.ie](http://ayu.ie). It is also available in a limited-edition gift set (€75) with the addition of the AYU Glamour Eye Shadow Palette and a stylish, yet practical Ayu signature cosmetic bag.

## Bloom Apple Genius Moisturiser and Serum

Irish business Bloom has launched two new products to the ever-expanding range of results-driven skincare. Their Apple Stem Cell and Hyaluronic Acid Face Moisturiser is an anti-ageing and regenerating face moisturiser formulated with apple stem cells, promoting both the vitality and longevity of skin's own stem cells. Infused with various anti-wrinkle and hydrating agents, plant extracts and essential oils, this revolutionary formula boosts skin collagen production and renewal process, leaving you with a younger, smooth, and more radiant complexion €38. The Apple Stem Cell and Retinol Face Serum, harnesses the power of apple stem cells, retinol, and hyaluronic acid to rejuvenate your complexion all while protecting against UV damage, reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, and offering intensive hydration. Both are formulated with organic ingredients, suitable for all skin types and ideal for those experiencing first signs of skin ageing, available online from [bloombb.ie](http://bloombb.ie)

For more beauty and skincare news follow me on Instagram and Facebook @ [shernamalone.ie](http://shernamalone.ie) [www.shernamalone.ie](http://www.shernamalone.ie)







## IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer  
Image Consultant

## Are we there yet?

the radio, saying something so stupid that it makes everyone around you laugh (which I do regularly and not on purpose), watching your garden start to come back to life and having a wonderful and full nights sleep. There is a growing body of research, which shows that there are many psychological benefits to being grateful, including feeling happier and lowering stress and anxiety. There is now scientific evidence that expressing genuine gratitude on a daily basis can improve physical health, as well by improving quality of sleep, cardiovascular health and immune function. So perhaps we should be looking at this as an essential skill? We need to encourage 'everyone', young and old to develop and master this skill so that we all learn to pause and reflect on what we have in our lives – instead of continually striving for more. And we have so much in our lives to sing and dance about... So before you even read on another sentence,

remind yourself about the value of smiling at people and helping others to feel valued and important. Show people how much you appreciate them and be grateful for what they do and for the contributions they make.

I'm going to kick-start this off by saying that I will be forever grateful to one of my boy's English teachers. The uncertainty has been trying; it is their Leaving Cert year but almost every day that this particular English class is on online, I can hear my son roaring laughing from the office. It isn't just a giggle – it's a hearty laugh. Any parents of 17 or 18 year-old boys will know that they are a tough audience to crack at that age! This is the part of his school day that I am so grateful for. It makes me smile and I stay smiling for a long time after. So thank you Mr English Teacher, for caring enough to know that the happier your students are, the more that they will learn. Can you imagine if there was a segment at the beginning of the news

every night reading excerpts from Dr. John Demartini's book *The Gratitude Effect*? Or if our children had a Gratitude class in school, where they were taught to find a blessing or something to be grateful for in every crisis from a young age?

I'll bet that a huge section of the population is ever so grateful for Lycra in clothes because no matter how much we are walking or running, the takeout's and glasses of beer or vino are taking their toll! Is it any wonder that oversized shoulder pad boyfriend jackets are totally on trend? The addition of shoulder pads cinches your waist and elongates your legs so you can see why there will be many happy customers.

Head scarfs must be the 'must-have' for the season. With hairdressers still shut, we have had to become creative with our crowning glory so we are taking inspiration from the 50s and 60s. Not alone do they protect your hair, they also add a finishing touch to your outfit, without overdoing it. Choose a silky design with bold colours, block letters or intricate patterns. You can wrap the scarf around your head and tie it at the back, leave the excess material to hang down at the back of your head. Get cracking at channelling your inner Grace Kelly.

Knee high white boots may not be everyone's cup of tea but designers decided that we needed some 60s go-go dancer-inspired footwear. This Nancy Sinatra-inspired look is a great way to elevate any outfit. Of course, if there are knee high white boots, then there will be patterned mini dresses and miniskirts. Austin Powers eat your heart out!

The mix of camel colour and yellow in the 70s has been given

a serious facelift. Keeping it neutral, mixing and matching these shades adds dimension and depth to your outfit. Add in a little brown and hey presto – you have the hottest look to try this season. Yellow or mustard bags took over the runways and so now they are in all of the high street shops. They look incredible matched up with vibrant hues or a monochrome outfit. Find your favourite shade and snap it up.

Labelled 'sweet cropped cardigans', this vintage inspired trend has swept the world off its feet. They look so lovely with a patterned skirt, high-waisted jeans or even leggings. You can choose to wear one buttoned up on its own or with a matching cami underneath. They hit big last year but they are still a firm favourite this year.

Candy coloured sweatpants make sure that 'couch clothing' looks terrific. While our commitment to comfort hasn't wavered, we are all looking for a bit more fun in our clothes, so sweatpants in juicy bolds and pastels are making a big appearance.

Do you know what a 'Shacket' is? It's a hybrid of a shirt and a jacket that can be worn anywhere, anytime. They are a bit heavier than a flannel shirt but not quite as bulky as a full-on coat, so a great option for the run-around. You can wear them with anything – in fact they look quite cute with a turtleneck underneath. Shackets are a great way to stay warm because we are still a long way from balmy summer days. They hit the high street last year but never really got an opportunity to 'get out there' so don't worry, they are still on-trend.

Puff Sleeves might seem a bit stuffy with our limited

or non-existent social life at the moment but they can look amazing over Zoom. A simple sweater with a puff sleeve over jeans can add a little fun for your next food shopping trip!

Fantastic florals are everywhere and I can see why; flowers signify new beginnings. Floral print dresses are everywhere, so no matter how tall, short, skinny or beauty-size you are – you will find one that is absolutely perfect for you. They are dreamy dresses, some skimming the knee, some midi length and some full length. Tights and boots and maybe even a little turtleneck underneath for right now but these dresses will carry right through the summer too. Oh, what a thought... flip flops and summer dresses! Designers have also given us a new 'little black summer dress'. Midi in style and slinky (a little) in attitude, this dress will become a constant companion. Have a look online in your local shops for one because it will carry you through the summer and you can dress up or down as needed.

Keep smiling, keep moving, keep trying and always keep looking up. Find something to laugh out loud at every day, you might not have an English teacher who makes that effort for you so find it in yourself or surround yourself with people who make you laugh – they are the true treasures in life.

'May your coming year be filled with magic and dreams and good madness. I hope you read some fine books and kiss someone who thinks you're wonderful, and don't forget to make some art – write or draw or build or sing or live as only you can. And I hope, somewhere in the next year, you surprise yourself.'

– Neil Gaiman



## Irish Cancer Society appeals for the people of West Cork to support the most important Daffodil Day ever

The Irish Cancer Society is urging people in West Cork to get behind a very different Daffodil Day this year, with street sales and events not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Due to the current public health restrictions the flagship fundraiser is unable to go ahead in its traditional way with street sales of fresh daffodils or daffodil pins, and community events.

However, there are still many ways for people in West Cork to get involved with this year's Daffodil Day which is taking

place on Friday, March 26, proudly supported by Boots Ireland.

Around 4,000 people in Cork will receive a cancer diagnosis each year and this Daffodil Day is an important chance not only to raise vital funds for services and research but also to send people affected by cancer a message of support in these challenging times.

There are many ways for communities across the country to get involved with Daffodil Day, by hosting virtual fundraisers and collections, purchasing

items from the Daffodil Day online shop, or making a donation. Go to [cancer.ie/daffodil](http://cancer.ie/daffodil) day to find out more.

Throughout the pandemic, the Irish Cancer Society has continued to provide vital services and support to cancer patients and their families across Cork. Services like Night Nursing, the Freephone Support Line: 1800 200 700 and Volunteer Driver service are available because of the vital funds raised on Daffodil Day.

Rosemary Simmons, Fundraising Lead at the Irish Cancer

Society said, "The people of Cork have always been incredibly generous in their support of Daffodil Day, but this year more than ever, we need your help. Although we cannot take to the streets to sell Daffodils, or host coffee mornings with friends, there are still so many meaningful ways for communities to raise vital funds this year. Because of the additional anxieties a cancer diagnosis during Covid-19 brings, cancer patients need your support more than ever before. Please get involved with Daffodil Day, to

ensure nobody in Cork has to go through cancer alone".

This year marks Boots Ireland's fourth year of sponsoring Daffodil Day, which is an extension of a well-established partnership with the Irish Cancer Society that began back in 2012. Through the partnership, Boots Ireland is committed to increasing awareness, helping support people affected by cancer and promoting cancer prevention.

Boots' 89 stores located nationwide, will be raising vital funds by selling Daffodil pins

in store and hosting virtual fundraisers across the country. To find your nearest store or to learn more about the support of Daffodil Day, visit [www.boots.ie](http://www.boots.ie).

If you have concerns or questions about cancer, or to learn more about support services available in your area, contact the Irish Cancer Society Support Line on Freephone: 1800 200 700.

For more information visit [www.cancer.ie/daffodil](http://www.cancer.ie/daffodil)





## 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

# March Sun Signs

There is a welcome stretch in the evening and a waft of spring in the air and the astrology of the month also brings us some lighter relief. It's not a time of dramatic major planet activity. We had plenty of that in the last months. There still is the divisive and polarising Saturn Uranus theme running in the background and that challenging aspect isn't going away but March has a more gentle touch. This month we are out of the tense Mars Saturn square and into a more stabilising and helpful trine aspect between these two difficult planets.

Although it's very much the Pisces season for the first half of the month there is a strong Mercury theme too. Mercury is now making good forward progress in Aquarius, the sign of idealism and vision, and finally comes out of the retrograde shadow on March 13 to coincide with the New Moon in Pisces. On March

4, Mars, the action planet moves into Gemini, a Mercury-ruled sign adding to the rapid flow of ideas and new concepts. This fast pace brings us lots of activity, information or connection but Mercury can be a bit of a trickster too. One important thing about the Mercurial planet is that he, or she, will lean towards whatever other planet or influence it joins with. It will turn two ways and then back again depending on the company it keeps or the direction of current trends.

Pisces is all about a flowing and unfettered experience so the imagination and dreamtime are enhanced this month. Pisces is traditionally ruled by Jupiter the big planet also known as the greater benefic. As the name suggests this is the heavenly body that brings the feel-good vibe. Jupiter, currently in Aquarius urges us to expand our understanding and reach greater heights of awareness. It is looking for

justice, righteousness and new opportunities. When Mercury joins with Jupiter on March 5, it picks up themes from January 11 and February 14, when these two allies met previously this year. There may be a more acceptable or positive solution to any issues that arose then. Also, we can expect any news stories or information that was current back then, will be enlarged upon or shown to have greater relevance than when it was first seen.

The month will be a busy one in terms of unfolding events and constant updates. Whilst not providing any real revelations it brings an enlarged version of the overall picture. With Neptune joined to first the Sun and then Venus from March 11-14, it's likely to add more confusion and uncertainty than clarity. Compassionate and forgiving gestures are likely, but Neptune can also bring a time of denial or escapism. Be aware of lies and

illusions around this time, as the misty veils are creating shadows and smokescreens. The New Moon in Pisces on the 13th has mystical and romantic energy. It's the perfect time for any inner vision work or poetic artistry as long as you can keep a firm grip on reality too.

Mercury moves into Pisces on March 15 so this week until the Equinox on the 20th could be very fluid indeed. This is not a time to force practical arrangements into place but more a time of light-hearted fun or mental meandering. The Sun's ingress into Aries marks a new cycle in the solar year. It has a potency and vibrancy that brings a boost to the winter-weary and gives us a positive launch into the next few months.

The Sun and Venus are drawing closer to their conjunction during the final week of March. This occurs on March 26 in early degrees of feisty

Aries. This gives an assertive and determined force to Venus and all she rules, as she now becomes the evening star once more. Over the next weeks, she slowly becomes more visible again following Sunset. Venus tells us about what we love and want to include in our life, who and what we want to make our own. She unites and bonds us together and inclines us to share and gather together. This sets the trend for the following months of 2021. We end the month with a Full Moon in Libra on March 28. The Sun – Moon, Aries – Libra polarity is all about balancing relationship and connection whilst also enjoying a sense of autonomy and self-direction. The month of March ends and the new astrological year starts with a very Venusian vibe.

**March has a New Moon at 24 degrees Pisces on March 13 at 10.21am and a Full Moon at nine degrees Libra on March 28 at 7.48pm.**



**Aries:** During the next weeks, you'll focus your attention on the practical demands of life. Feeling you must do more than you really need to can create some stress but any self-improvement pays rewards. Invest in yourself now so you can put your best foot forward with confidence later in the month. Regardless of how extrovert and outgoing, you might usually feel, the New Moon on March 13 is a time to pull back and spend some time alone. You will benefit by taking a few days to rest and recuperate, mentally, emotionally and physically as you regenerate your spirit.



**Taurus:** Your creative powers are strong. Even you may be surprised at what you come up with by just playing around with ideas or projects. Your romantic feelings are more intense now so try to wear your heart on your sleeve without worrying about the outcome. Don't take yourself too seriously and you will reap the rewards. It can be worth taking a risk to get at what you really feel. Share your insights with those that matter the most later this month. You instinctively relate to your friends and very much want them to accept you as you are.



**Gemini:** Home and family issues take up your time during the next two weeks. Concentrate your energy on projects that give you a sense of security and wellbeing. Sticking with familiar surroundings and intimate company gives the freedom to nurture what's really important to you. Expect a phase of improvement in career or work situations. A welcome reward with a sense of satisfaction could emerge by mid-month. The pressure to produce can be a bit intense but take time to plan ahead before you take on any new commitments.



**Cancer:** You may find yourself getting more involved with neighbours or community projects now. Feeling restless is possible so be sure to find activities that stimulate your mind. Seek out new alternatives and explore a change of habit. There are more opportunities available during the next few weeks so be prepared to make the most of them. Try to keep both feet on the ground around mid-month as heightened emotions may run away with you. The impulse for new experiences is very strong but avoid hasty commitments. It's a great time for planning or rearranging the way you look at things.



**Leo:** March finds you concerned with the basics. Your material and financial security are on your mind. It's time to consider if you are making the best of your natural skills and abilities. Unused talents are can be put to good use. You'll want to expand your horizons very soon so set your aim high. The New Moon phase on the 13th is a good time to re-evaluate your goals. Reconsider what you aspire to or find meaningful. It may turn out that you've changed since you last checked. If what you're doing now is simply just the familiar routine, it may prove extremely dissatisfying in a very short time.



**Virgo:** Your need for unique self-expression is the priority this month. Communicating your personal vitality and enthusiasm is important to you. Your current mood makes it harder to be comfortable in company, so you may find a flood of emotional intensity directed your way during the next few weeks. How you respond could largely shape the direction of an important connection. Relationships are meant to be a two-way flow but now you want to take the lead again. You may achieve a new level with someone but it's hard to keep that intensity going all month. The true feelings underneath are sincere so must be taken seriously.



**Libra:** You can be very productive this month by just quietly working away in the background. Reconnecting with your inner world is important for your sense of equilibrium. Valuable insights and breakthroughs are possible. Enjoy the quiet 'alone time' whilst you can, as the demands of your outer world will encroach again soon enough. It can be easy to get worried about health matters or everyday responsibilities, especially during the New Moon phase mid-month. Moderation is the key. Make sure you're not expecting too much of yourself. You don't want to run out of steam because you can't keep up with yourself.



**Scorpio:** Your position within your community is highlighted this month. What you have to offer is appreciated and you can reap the rewards of your past contributions. Give your social network some focus and you will meet the right people; benefits will soon follow. The phrase "what you put in is what you get out" is the key. The astral weather is perfect for creativity and you'll find that your imagination flows faster and easier than usual after the 13th. In fact, anything you do for enjoyment will seem twice as good right now. Break out the inner child, drop your self-consciousness and just have some much-needed fun.



**Sagittarius:** Getting the credit for what you do well takes on extra significance during March. Self-recognition only takes you so far and now you need some approval from those you respect. It may seem like constant hard work recently but the New Moon phase mid-month will bring a much-needed chance to relax with loved ones. If things on the home front aren't quite to your liking you will have a tendency to fight for your right to peace and harmony. It's a good time to start new domestic projects as a way to use any extra energy constructively.

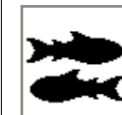


**Capricorn:** Travel, higher learning, study and spiritual matters are on your mind during early March. You've had enough of the 'every day' in life and you want the freedom to explore or invite new experiences into your life. Be prepared to open your mind to new ideas and lifestyles. You'll likely find your attention and energy go into taking care of details and side issues later in the month. Whatever happens, you will be busy by mid-month with plenty of options. Don't be too

impulsive but just be sure you get your ideas out there in some form whatever it takes.



**Aquarius:** Your attention is taken up by life's ups and downs but you may just be focused on the negative side of a cycle at the expense of the positive. Pause to evaluate what is worth the effort and what you can dispense with. Smooth out what doesn't flow well in your life in preparation for a more constructive phase after the New Moon on March 13. Take time to consider how you're shaping up financially. This is a slow-growth month and maybe not as productive as you hoped. Don't worry yourself into a fury about things that only time can remedy.



**Pisces:** With the Sun in your sign take this favourable opportunity to deal with any relationship issues. You're aware of how much you have to give, but you can also enjoy more freedom when you get the 'give and take' into a healthy balance. Interesting and stimulating people may come into your life so find time for intimate encounters or shared experiences. It's a time of personal beginnings. You may find yourself in the spotlight when all eyes turn to see what you're going to do next. This may be somewhat surprising, but it's the boost you need right now. Just enjoy the generosity of others.

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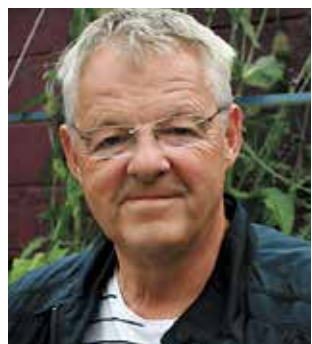
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# There is a grand stretch to the evening



## 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.

I had a bad day. My back was aching but I dared not put the telly on; Covid ad nauseam, daily death tolls, more variants than you can shake a stick at. Storm alphabet coming!

David Attenborough is on the other channel treating a polar bear in the sun-drenched Arctic for sunburn and he has just spotted the last remaining iceberg. Yes, it's all my fault, as I have not bought an electric car yet! To top it off, I can't even have a drink, as I'm off that for Lent.

Mind you, life is always much worse on the other channel – the death rate is astronomical on Eastenders. I love it when Phil says 'let's all celebrate down the Vic' – cue a fight, murder, or general mayhem. To quote Barbara Windsor "Get off my telly".

On my way to work last week, I listened to Clare Byrne; a phone in, to an expert and a GP, to discuss infertility. This sounded interesting. Not my strong suit at all. It was interesting, but I had to laugh; what could make a patient ring up a radio station listened to by millions to discuss her husband's sperm count? Are we doctors that unapproachable? Because Mrs Coyle from Co Meath, there is absolutely nothing you could ask me or any other doctor that we not would deal with sensitively. I have heard it all! It felt like a radio version of Jeremy Kyle, a little bit too intrusive for my taste.

In the old days news was balanced. Finish on a good news story, cheer everyone up a bit. There is no chance of that today. Let's wallow in abject misery. Give me a break!

Fully up to date on what to do for Mr Coyle's low sperm count, I arrived at the Mercy for my shift. Found a parking space, deep joy. Brian on security, a nice guy, bid me a cheery Good Morning! Walk over the River Lee, it is running high

but soon there will be salmon leaping.

Into the changing rooms and great craic with the porters. Yes Liverpool won last night and about time too. The day got steadily better.

A patient, a rather frightening-looking Hells Angel biker-type, actually thanked me, twice, which does not happen too often. He even offered me a go on his Harley.

The nurses are fantastic, the doctors work as a great multi-national team and probably the highlight of the day was meeting the hospital priest who was in tears after consoling a bereaved parent. That did more for my faith in human goodness and religion than a thousand masses.

I suppose my moral this month is look for the good in the world. The restaurant that gives out meals to the elderly, the cheery Deliveroo lad who delivers your takeaway. The local garage that fixed my tyre and would not take a payment, the couple picking up rubbish in Ring... there is still a lot to be happy about.

This will end and, my God, then will we have a party... All round to my house!

The most beautiful Irish expression ever is 'There is a grand stretch to the evening' and there is! Just enjoy it and smile.

muscle mass. Not only that, evidence shows that vitamin D also supports the normal functioning of our immune system.

A lack of vitamin D can increase the risk of osteoporosis over time, causing our bones to weaken and become brittle and increasing the risk of fractures and breakages.

Vitamin D deficiency has also been linked to various health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some inflammatory disorders, certain cancers, and higher mortality.

For adults aged 65 and older, the recommended daily intake of vitamin D is 15 micrograms (15µg).

This can be taken as: A multi-vitamin supplement that contains 15 microgram (15µg) of vitamin D; A calcium and vitamin D supplement that contains 15 microgram (15µg) of vitamin D

# Vitamin D for older adults

You might have heard lately about Vitamin D and why it's important for some of us to take it. But did you know why? Joana Da Silva, Chief Specialist in Nutrition with safefood has all the answers:

Did you know that Vitamin D (also known as the 'sunshine vitamin') is one of the few vitamins our bodies can produce itself? From the months of April to October, our bodies make vitamin D through direct sunlight on our skin. However, many factors will impact our body's ability to create vitamin D, such as the use of sunscreen (which reduces the risk of skin cancer), our clothing choices and the amount of time we spend indoors.

As Irish winters are not very sunny, our skin cannot produce enough vitamin D and so we must get the sunshine vitamin

from elsewhere. Some foods are rich in Vitamin D, including: Oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, and herring; Red meat and organ meats such as liver; egg yolks; Fortified foods such as some fat spreads, milk, and breakfast cereals.

Certain groups in society are at higher risk of not getting enough Vitamin D. A recent report from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland found that Irish adults aged 65 years and older do not get sufficient vitamin D from direct sunlight on their skin or from their diet and for this reason, need to take a vitamin D supplement. Similarly, people with darker skin have a lower ability to make vitamin D and are at a higher risk of deficiency.

Vitamin D helps us to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in our bodies, which are needed for strong healthy bones and to maintain healthy



## HERBAL HEALING

Dr. Rosari Kingston

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

[www.rosarikingstonphd.com](http://www.rosarikingstonphd.com)

In the final article in her series on fertility Dr Rosari Kingston talks about implantation and how issues relating to this may be resolved.

The final stage of the journey for the fertilised egg is to implant itself in the lining of the womb, the endometrium. This is the layer of the uterus that thickens in preparation for the implantation of the fertilised egg and it is also the layer that is shed, as a bleed, during menstruation. The endometrium needs to be blood rich and at least 8mm thick for successful implantation. Oestrogen is responsible for creating this optimum lining.

There are a few reasons why the endometrium may be too thin for implantation. These include low oestrogen, poor blood flow to the region, and damage to the endometrium.

The food, herbs and supplements that are needed to create a rich endometrium should, promote blood circulation to

A vitamin D only supplement that contains 15 microgram (15µg) of vitamin D

If you have been prescribed a vitamin D supplement at a dose higher than 15 micrograms from a healthcare professional, you should continue to take the supplement at the prescribed dose. Talk to your healthcare professional if you are unsure.

# Implantation



the area, increase oestrogen levels, and be high in iron for healthy blood.

Among the best herbs for building a healthy endometrium are:

Trifolium pratense or red clover. This herb increases circulation to the organs of reproduction and is also high in vitamins and minerals. It is also high in isoflavones, which protects the body from xenohormones, as well as supporting liver and kidney function. Asparagus racemose (Shatavari) comes to us from Ayurvedic medicine and it is very helpful in regulating oestrogen levels. It also increases the immune response and reduces stress. This plant is considered a phytoestrogen and, like red clover, protects the body from xenohormones. The latter are known to lead to hormone imbalance and are found in plastics, packaged food, drink trays and containers. Low oestrogen levels and a thin endometrium may also be helped by royal jelly according to some recent research. Ground flax seeds is available in every grocery store and is not an expensive purchase. It is also a phytoestrogen and is high in fibre. It protects the body from xenoestrogens but also removes EXCESS oestrogen. Maca root (Lepidium meyenii) also helps in building up the uterine lining and of course wild yam (Dioscorea villosa) will balance hormone levels.

To improve the quality of one's blood it is necessary to eat foods rich in iron. This list is familiar and includes spinach, beets, grass fed beef,

beans, asparagus and of course nettles. Traditionally, young nettles were eaten in the month of May and three meals of same were recommended. One way of cooking them was to mix them with cabbage, half and half, but whether there is a symbiotic relationship between the two, I don't know. Nettle soup is another way to include them in the diet, as is champ.

Turning to herbs, Angelica sinensis (Dong Quai) is a blood tonic as is raspberry leaf (Rubus idaeus). The latter is readily available as a herbal tea in most health food stores. Raspberry is an excellent uterine tonic and is a pleasant tasting tea. Needless to say, don't forget to take vitamin C to help absorb the iron and Hibiscus flower (Hibiscus sabdariffa or rosehips (R. rubiginosa, R. canina) fill this role as well as supporting the endocrine system.

To increase circulation in the uterus, and the pelvic region generally, Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) is a favourite of mine, but vitamin E and L-Arginine will also help. Vitamin E will also increase the endometrial lining but at a high dose, so it is better to take this under the supervision of your health care professional. Evening Primrose oil (capsules) helps to tone the uterine muscle and motherwort (Leonorus cardiaca) also has a role in achieving optimum uterine tone so that the fertilised egg may be safely implanted.

Needless to say, acupuncture, moxibustion, fertility massage and castor oil packs all have a role in helping resolve any issues relating to implantation.

the recommended daily intake of vitamin D.

Is it true Vitamin D protects against Covid-19? At present there is insufficient high-quality evidence to support claims that vitamin D supplementation is beneficial in preventing or treating Covid-19.

It is possible to have too much of the sunshine vitamin. Excessive intakes are usually due to consuming large doses of vitamin D supplements. Taking too much over a long period of time can weaken the bones, kidney, and heart due to a build-up of calcium in the body. Unless advised by your healthcare professional, you should not exceed



## people Health &amp; Lifestyle

## Supporting St. Joseph's Young Priest's Society

St Joseph's is a nationwide charity, with 334 branches throughout Ireland. One main aim of the charity is to raise funds for the support of seminarians to the priesthood. This support covers thirty countries. Skibbereen native **John Deasy**, 72, has been a supporter of St. Joseph's Young Priest's Society since 1993. The current president of St Joseph's Young Priest's Society – Skibbereen Branch tells us more about the organisation, his commitment to it as a volunteer and his experience of the generosity of the people of Skibbereen.

Over the years Irish people earned the slogan of *céad míle fáilte* (a thousand welcomes) and always charitable to the people with less.

During the 1900s several charities were established and deservedly so. Some rich families from time to time would give some of their wealth to these charities. One such family was the Taaffe's from Smarmore Castle, Co. Louth. Olivia Taaffe travelled extensively in Europe. They were also devout Catholics.

On one journey while staying in Maronville in France, Olivia came across a publication called *La Gerbe* (The Sheaf). This publication showed how a group of people prepared young men to be seminarians and also got contributors to finance their education. Back in Ireland Olivia lost her only son at a young age. Her husband John Taaffe also pre-deceased her. As a widow she devoted more of her time to the Church. In 1895 she founded the Irish version of 'The Sheaf'. At that time also, Olivia knew a young man that had been an altar boy in Dun Laoghaire and wished to become a priest, but from a poor family. With the help of Olivia and the readers of 'The Sheaf' enough was contributed to send the first of many students to study in Mungret, Co. Limerick. After two years

Olivia and her friends had sent ten students to be enrolled at Mungret. That was the start of St Joseph Young Priest's Society, as we know it today. These were the first students of the Society, the funds of which were at that time devoted to the education of Irish men in Irish colleges for work on overseas missions.

First Constitution: In 1916 the Irish Bishops approved a formal constitution for the Society and Pope Benedict XV sent his apostolic Blessing.

Second Constitution: This expansion needed a revision of the Society's constitution and in October 1947, a revised constitution was approved and adopted. Chaplains were appointed to the Branches, a Board of Priests was established to select the students for the Society and a greater emphasis placed on the spiritual aspect of members involved.

Third Constitution: In agreement with the thinking of the Second Vatican Council the 1947 constitution was replaced by a new constitution, which was approved and adopted in June 1973. One of the proposals was the setting up of Diocesan Committees to administer the affairs of the society in each diocese. This catered for the rapid growth of the Society in the years thereafter. The Society was in existence in the Skibbereen area for a brief number of years in the 1960s. In 1974, Michael

Waugh and the late Barney O'Connor, together with Mary McCarthy, decided to re-launch the Society in Skibbereen. In the intervening years, Mary McCarthy has served as president, secretary and treasurer. Her voluntary work is ongoing. The mid 1990s were the golden years. Michael Waugh, our president during those years, sent on average 4000 Irish Punt to Head Office in Dublin. During 1995 the media reported that 96 per cent of Irish people attended Mass on Sundays. Then fifteen years later, attendance was near 20 per cent.

The contributions to St Joseph Young Priest's Society began to fall from the turn of the century. By 2010, donations were only a trickle. We in the Skibbereen branch decided we would have to make a huge effort to make the branch viable. We started by having an annual Church gate collection. These collections were our mainstay for a number of years until permits for same were cancelled. We then held an annual coffee morning to raise funds. The financial year for all St Joseph's branches ends on June 30 each year. For year ending 2017/18, the Skibbereen branch sent €900 to Head Office in Dublin. During 2018, we decided to have a Christmas Appeal at local level. We got forty new subscribers from our appeal. For year ending 2018/19,



(l-r) Mary McCarthy being presented with a plaque for forty-five years service to the Skibbereen branch of St. Joseph's Young Priests Society by John Deasy - current President, Michael Waugh. All four have been Presidents of the society.

we sent to Dublin €1,100. Over the two years a small percentage of people contacted did not subscribe to our charity. We listened to their views and agree that everyone is welcome to their opinion.

The turning point for our Society in Skibbereen was the year 2019. During July of that year we held a Flag Day which yielded €1651. We then got a permit to hold a Christmas Appeal to raise further funds. We discussed at one of our monthly meetings the best way to 'run' the door-to-door collection. I volunteered to give it a try. At the end of November, I delivered the appeal letters by hand to homes around Skibbereen. About a week later, I called back for a reply. I got a fantastic reception when I called. Most contributors would ask me into their home for a chat. When the small chat

was over, talking turned to religion in the Church of today, and priests in general – including our Fr. Chris and Fr. Michael. The consensus on them was that we are very lucky in this town to have two priests who are so well-liked in the community. The people I spoke to were speaking from the heart. I was so pleased to hear so much positive thinking.

I must relate one story I heard. A lady contributor told me she was talking to a priest from a large parish the previous week. He told her he found the "going tough" at the moment. I enquired as to whether he was re-thinking his calling or getting pressure from his superiors? The reply I got really surprised me. She said: "John, most of us will have to endure two or three close family obituaries in our lifetime. The priest in the story

was having to attend two, three and sometimes four obituaries a week." That was a lot of sadness and grief that priest had to endure, trying to comfort the families involved. This story was so enlightening for me.

After the turn of the century contributions from some of the branches in West Cork including Skibbereen saw a decline in funds. We were lucky to have our Christmas Appeal before Covid-19 became widespread. Volunteers in the Skibbereen Branch had to cease voluntary work at the end of February 2020, four months earlier than normal, but we still sent €3,650 to our office in Dublin. We now have 130 paid-up members in Skibbereen. It's a hard-working, positive thinking, helpful and very charitable town, a great place for anyone to live in.

## Viruses: The fightback and the future

On its latest Research Insights Webinar, Teagasc scientists from the Irish Coronavirus Sequencing Consortium discussed sequencing of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the identification of viral variants during the first and second waves of the pandemic. Looking to the future, Dr Olivia McAuliffe discussed the potential of bacterial viruses to improve food safety and quality.

It is a year now since the first case of Covid-19 was reported in Ireland. Since then, thousands of people have fallen ill and died, while empty parks and streets reflect the nationwide lockdowns put in place to slow the spread of the virus. As more

infections take place around the world, the likelihood increases of variants emerging that are more transmissible in humans.

The Irish Coronavirus Sequencing Consortium is an SFI-funded collaboration between Teagasc and a number of other research institutions nationwide. Led by Prof Paul Cotter, Head of the Food Biosciences Department in Teagasc, the Consortium is tracking the genetic make-up of the SARS-CoV-2 variants that are circulating within Ireland.

Speaking on the Teagasc Research Insights Webinar last month, Dr John Kenny explained how sequencing of the SARS-CoV-2 virus presents scientists with valuable insights into routes of entry of the virus into Ireland as well as its subsequent spread throughout the country. One of the key findings of the Consor-

tium so far is the difference in variants between the first and second waves of the pandemic.

Dr John Kenny explains: "In conjunction with the All Ireland Infectious Disease study, sequencing data generated by the consortium allowed us to look at sequencing information of variants from hospitalised patients during the first and second wave of the pandemic. We were able to show that common variants differ between the two waves, and suggests multiple introductions of wave two variants from outside Ireland."

Key to the work of the consortium is the availability of world-leading DNA sequencing facilities. During the webinar, Dr Fiona Crispie explained the science behind DNA sequencing and why Teagasc was ideally placed to support the national effort with its expertise and equip-

ment at the DNA Sequencing Facility at Teagasc Moorepark.

Dr Fiona Crispie said: "DNA sequencing can be used for many applications in food and agricultural research, including using DNA sequencing to identify the good bacteria and viruses in our foods and living in our bodies. Our experience and expertise meant we could easily undertake the new methodologies involved in sequencing Sars-CoV-2 and led to Teagasc leading the Irish Coronavirus Sequencing Consortium, a group of scientists throughout the country involved in sequencing Sars-CoV2 variants."

Looking beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, Teagasc scientists are researching the use of bacterial viruses to secure the future of food production in Ireland, in terms of both food quality and safety.

During this Research Insights Webinar, Dr Olivia McAuliffe explained how bacterial viruses, called bacteriophages, can improve the safety of food by preventing the growth of pathogenic bacteria such as *E. coli* 0157 and *Listeria*. Although phage therapy predates antibiotics, it has come to the fore again as the world contends with the threat of antibiotic resistance. While positive results have been observed using bacteriophages in food production systems, regulators in the agri-food sector have not yet come to agreement on their use in consumer food products.

Dr Olivia McAuliffe explains: "Bacteriophages have a long history of use as antibacterial agents, but as a relatively new biocontrol technology in the modern era, education is vitally important for acceptance. Research into the efficacy and safe-

ty of these agents must continue if they are to be more broadly accepted for use in the food and agriculture sectors. Progress is most likely to be dictated by public health needs associated with antimicrobial resistance in the bacterial population, and researchers and regulators alike must be primed to address the issue."

Teagasc Research Insights is a series of webinars focused on addressing the challenges and opportunities in the agri-food sector and showcasing the latest in Teagasc's research in these areas. These one-hour webinars are held fortnightly and are aimed at professionals in the agriculture and food industry, other researchers, media, farmers, policy makers, EU and other international researchers and professionals.



## people Arts &amp; Entertainment

# New release and album announcement from West Cork-based artist K3:lu

Released in February, the AA-side 'Luciferin / Ridgewood' is the first digital single from K3:lu – the solo project of West Cork-based musician and composer Patrick Hatchett – ahead of the self-titled album 'K3:lu' which follows on March 26, on vinyl and digital.

In Hatchett's words, this solo work "brings together the sonic flavours, human influences and cultural experiences gathered over my many musical years. Reflective tales from late night afrobeat jams, to early Sunday Gospel duties. Exhaustive travel and touring with legendary Jamaican artists, to intimate jazz

gigs in a cosy south London pub. The exquisite feeling of solitude and reflection in nature against the energy and kinship of a frenetic dance floor with a stacked sound system... A globally inspired search for a connection and commonality: Wild nights dancing, the wild characters amongst us, the innate wildness of my surroundings".

The project is phonetically named after the curlew, Hatchett's favourite bird to be seen around West Cork where he now lives, having moved from London in recent years.

The album includes collaborations with UK Bengali

musician Idris Rahman on flute (Soothsayers, Anoushka Shankar, Wildflower, Zoe Rahman), and Irish musicians Seán Mac Erlaine on Bass Clarinet (Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, The Gloaming, Underground Resistance) and Justin Grounds on Violin (The Vespertine Quintet, Fir Beag).

The slowly building, beautifully explosive 'Luciferin' was inspired by "A night swim in Lough Hyne, Skibbereen, with my young family in search of the 'sparkles' (bioluminescence). Wide-eyed, cheesy exhilaration, childlike elation. Bit like a rave, part '80s soul, part psychedelic wig-out. Part



post-sea warming glow."

'Ridgewood', a rolling, meditative jam, started life as a solo guitar piece. Says Hatchett: "I would play on a shabby old nylon string guitar over a cup of coffee on those early mornings when the rest of the world was still enviably sleeping. It's an (un)easy listening track, a sort

of wonky Sunday afternoon piece with a feel-good end or happy departure. Features Seán Mac Erlaine on Bass Clarinet."

An established guitarist, remixer and producer, Patrick Hatchett divides his time between composing for screen, producing, and live performance. As a musician he has

performed extensively around Europe and the UK including London Jazz Festival, Bestival, Alexandra Palace, O2 Arena, Sunsplash, Womad, Ronnie Scotts, main stages at Glastonbury Festival, Latitude and many more.

Listen on Spotify.

## TG4 documentary on a rebranding mission to give Peig the mother of all makeovers

"Seánabhean is ea mise anois go bhfuil cos léi insan uaigh is an chos eile ar a bruach" a quote that fills many with fear. Peig Sayers – widely considered to be the most hated woman in Irish history has tormented young students across Ireland for decades with her memoir 'Peig'. Described as boring, unrelenting, and unintelligible, Peig's autobiography was part of the compulsory Leaving Certificate Irish syllabus until 1995. This new documentary from TG4 will revisit Peig, her personality and her art as a storyteller, reclaiming her and portraying her as she has never been before.

Broadcaster Sinéad Ní Uallacháin is on a rebranding mission, to give Peig the mother of all makeovers – one that will change her memory in our minds forever. She will take the viewer on a fascinating journey to find out about the real Peig, listening to recordings of her, dipping into some comedy sketches about Peig, meeting those who love and loathe her, debunking myths and finally uncovering who the real Peig is.

"I wonder what Peig would have said if she knew that we'd still be talking about her, at length, in the year 2021? This woman generously shared not only her life story but many other stories that she had collected over the years – I don't believe the abuse she continuously receives is warranted. There are many layers to Peig, as I found out whilst making this pro-



gramme."

"I would love to speak Irish but I don't like Irish because of that book" – a common complaint from those who were forced to read Peig at school. Sinéad on her journey reveals that it wasn't Peig's intention to be the subject such vitriol amongst Irish teenagers. Peig was in fact one of the greatest Irish storytellers, a born performer and entertainer. Máire Ní Dhálaigh, of the OPW's Blasket Centre said, "Peig was the Netflix of the time". She was a woman full of fun and craic who loved to entertain and drew people to her. Archive recordings revealed in the programme from the National Folklore Collection in UCD reveal a theatrical performer. "She took her brief well," Sinéad reacts on hearing

the recordings.

Some say she is associated with the old world of piety and sainthood, an image which was inflicted upon her by the newly formed Irish state of the 20s and 30s and that the book was carefully edited to reflect one version of Peig's life. Áine Ní Bheisleáin, broadcaster and podcaster of Beo ar Éigean said, "Peig didn't know that she would go viral; for many, the quote from the book 'cos léi san uaigh is an chos eile ar a bruach' is a metaphor for the Gaeltacht and reflects how people perceive Irish as a dead language."

Sinéad will meet others who want to reclaim Peig as an icon and hero such as Sharon Granahan, who has a tattoo of Peig. Renowned poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill features, reading a



newly composed poem for her Peig.

On a more serious note the documentary will question how our relationship with Peig reflects our complex relationship with our heritage, our language and who we are.

PEIG March 10, 9:30pm TG4 or on the TG4 player.

## From the Well 2021 Short Story Competition open for submissions

Cork County Council Library and Arts Service has launched its annual 'From the Well' short story competition for 2021. The highly regarded literary competition is now in its 17th year and is open to registered library members who are over 18.

Twenty stories will be selected for inclusion in the 17th edition of the From the Well short story anthology, while the winning story and two others will feature in the 2021 West Cork Literary Festival.

Mayor of the County of Cork welcomed the opening of submissions saying, "We are a community of storytellers and wordsmiths, and the richness of life in County Cork is a great source of pride, solidarity and inspiration. The 'From the Well' anthology is one way that we recognise and respect the great writers among us. I wish all entrants the best of luck in the competition and every success in their future creative endeavours."

Applications should be submitted online through YourCouncil.ie before the closing date of Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 4pm.

For further information about the competition, contact Cork County Council's Arts Office at arts@corkcoco.ie

## Fastnet Film Festival to go online in May

Organisers of the Fastnet Film Festival in Schull have confirmed that their 2021 festival will go online from May 26-30. The future is unclear as to when live events may return but technology is providing an excellent alternative. Being online this year brings the festival to a worldwide discerning audience and most importantly all events will be free of charge.

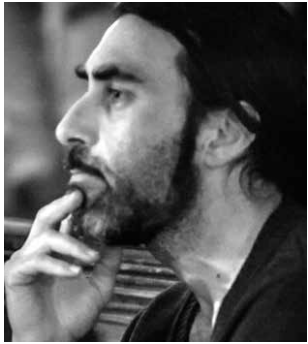
A whopping 300 short films will be available to view from the comfort of your home, some shot during lockdown and in isolation. The line-up will also include pitches for the Putnam Award, screenings of the shortlisted films, and winners who will share in the total prize fund of €45,000 will be announced among other events.

Further details to be announced: [www.fastnetfilmfestival.com](http://www.fastnetfilmfestival.com)



## people Arts &amp; Entertainment

## Songs of Stone: The Direct Carvings of Michael Quane



## 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.

It is difficult for us to imagine how shocked – even scandalised – people were at the turn of the 20th century by the work of the so-called avant-garde of artists emerging in France at the time. Painters such as Picasso and Matisse and Cezanne and Gauguin before them impressed a new vision upon the age – one that placed subjective feeling above objective observation. Amongst sculptors Rodin and Claudel introduced a torrent of subjective feeling, whilst Brancusi sought subjective essence in abstraction, and Maillol and Marini a simplified monumentality in figuration. Modernism broke all the codes of the academy. Representational sculpture subjectively morphed, blooming into the monumental figures of Henry Moore and crumbling into the shadowy figures of Alberto Giacometti.

*Strange Beasts, 2020*

The work of contemporary Irish sculptor Michael Quane is born of the monumental tradition of modernist sculpture, in the line of Marini and Moore; for although relatively small in scale his sculptures exhibit a similar dedication to mass and proportional distortion (in Quane's case oversized hands and feet), 'formed through feeling' rather than observation.

Quane's career, like his modernist antecedent, Marino Marini, has almost been entirely devoted to the horse and rider motif, the horse in recent years morphing into unidentifiable "strange beasts". His figures – again like Marini's – are anti-classical, non-heroic, ordinary, even squat, an obvious distinction from classical equestrian sculpture (think of Michaelangelo and DaVinci). Where, however, Marini morphed his figures more and more into 'primitive' lines of energy, Quane's figures have maintained their voluptuous curves and spherical mass,

often entwining with and morphing into the beasts they ride.

Quane's principle medium is stone, and his method, direct carving. He has often, in interviews and talks, remarked with genuine awe on the sheer age of the stone he works with (for example 350-million-year-old Kilkenny limestone) and feels a deep connection with the geological life of the earth. Concurrent with this awe of age and history is a reverence for the force of gravity, which he describes as "the God force, the organiser", that which holds the universe together. It is a sculptor's reverence for every consideration of mass, he explains, is contingent on gravity's force. But it is also a source, for Quane, of light-hearted levity, particularly in relation to his 'Buoyed' series of swimming figures, where he plays upon the dichotomy of weight and weightlessness, of body and spirit.

I have discussed in previous

articles, the importance of the spiral in two-dimensional composition, but it is of course also instrumental in sculpture. In so saying, circularity is a key aspect of Quane's 'beast and rider' forms, perhaps best demonstrated by his work titled 'Aqualung Buoyancy', from 2003-2020.

In this work an aquatic rider sits atop a dugong-like creature, the rider's oxygen tank seeming to morph with the creature's tail, whilst the rider's breathing apparatus seems to morph into the creature's head. The connectedness of all life is given tactile expression in the circular essence of the form, whilst concerns of 'natural' and 'man-made' are leveled by the material of the stone. It is a wonderful image – playful and soft, heavy yet buoyant, two yet one.

We see this circularity born out in a different way in the work 'Strange Beasts' (2020), the title piece of Quane's show, held in the Lavitt Gallery, Cork, last year. In this piece, carved

*Aqualung Buoyancy, 2003-2020*

from limestone, the right foot of the rider forms the fulcrum of an invisible spiral which leads up and around his body, arcs down, around the head of the beast, circling back through the opposing thrust of the beast's legs and body. The rear thrust of the beast strikes a wonderful tension with the forward-tilt of the rider, underscoring the precarious position of the latter, and yielding a sensation of unlikely balance, a feeling of imminent collapse countered by remarkable stability. The art of pushing such tensions to their limits is the very essence and language of sculpture, a language of which

Quane is clearly a master.

Speaking of the beast and rider aspect of his work, Quane explains that "it is like a palette for me, I keep coming back to it. It's a barometer, it tells me how I am, both in life and in work." Within the limits of this theme Quane has, like Marini before him, found a universe of expression, one that, happily for us, keeps on giving.

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

## March at DeBarra's Spoken Word

by Nick Smith, PRO

2021 continues with a flourish following on from a superb Found-Poetry Workshop in February, presented by our own Found Poet, Lauren O'Donovan. Together with readings from John Bevis and a free-for-all writing-exercise, it was evident from the open mic that followed, that the inspiration for 'Found' poetry can be 'found' wherever there are words.

On Wednesday, March 10, at 8.30 pm, DeBarra's Spoken Word will go from the sublime to the surreal. March being the month of the Mad March Hare, Alice peering through

the Looking-glass at the Mad Hatter's Tea party is an open invite to everyone to go down the rabbit-warren of imaginative writing. The guest speaker will be well-known poet, Matthew Geden.

Matthew was born and brought up in the English Midlands, moving to Kinsale in 1990. Since then his poems have been published in numerous magazines and journals throughout Ireland and abroad. His collections include Kinsale Poems (Lapwing, 2001), Swimming to Albania (Bradshaw Books, 2009), The Place Inside (Dedalus Press, 2012) and Fruit (SurVision Books, 2020). He was Writer in Residence in

Nanjing Literature Centre, China for the month of November 2019 and is currently Writer in Residence for Cork County



Library and Arts Service.

Matthew will read from a selection of his own work and facilitate a surreal-writing workshop. This will be followed by an open mic dedicated to responses from the workshop which, in its turn will be followed, as usual, by the more general open mic.

A Zoom link will be sent to all on the mailing list and be noted on the DeBarra's Spoken Word Facebook page on the day. If you wish to be added to the mailing list, email [debarra-spokenword@gmail.com](mailto:debarra-spokenword@gmail.com)

left: Matthre Geden

## New online art appreciation course at National Gallery of Ireland

Join the National Gallery of Ireland on an online journey through the centuries at 'Cities and Suburbs: Life, Leisure and Landscape', a new art appreciation course beginning on March 30, 2021.

This eight-week online course with art historian Dr Kathryn Milligan takes a broad view of artists' depictions of 'city and suburb' via paintings, drawings, prints and archival collections at the National Gallery of Ireland. Incorporating Dutch, French, Italian and Irish art, the course covers the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. Walking in the footsteps of the urban observer, participants will follow the expansion of the city into its hinterlands, taking time to relax at suburban beauty spots.

Taking place on Tuesday evenings, each week's session will cover something different: from panoramas and maps to hawkers and street markets, urban calamities to the social city. Participants will receive a recording of each week's session, allowing flexibility in these extraordinary times. The course is suitable for beginners and experts alike.

Limited tickets go on sale on February 23, 2021 at [www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie).



# Alchemy in Skibbereen

Experience the transformative power of art as six students from the West Cork Campus display their work in the Skibbereen college's first ever virtual exhibition. The exhibition, featuring the work of QQI Level 6 Professional Arts Practice students, is now live and continues until April 30.

Against the backdrop of fear and uncertainty that we are living in, 'Alchemy' offers a moment of respite; a place of sanctuary in which to explore the endless possibilities of art, without leaving the security of your own home.

Each artist has submitted pieces to be placed in the online gallery, and the exhibition hosts a diverse range of media, styles, and artistic perspectives. The team behind 'Alchemy' hope to combine all these different elements into one harmonious exhibition and provide a safe but immersive escape from the worries of these times.

With a display of drawing, painting, ceramic and mixed media artwork, you get to witness the journey of each student exploring different materials and observe how each medium takes on different aspects of their creative expression. Furthermore, the range of styles – from abstract to figurative and observational – means that there is something to interest those who love traditional and contemporary art alike.

As the name suggests, this exhibition aims to portray the conversion of the mundane and difficult aspects of everyday life into something truly precious – art. The art students at the West Cork Campus hope that you can experience this transformation too.

The exhibition is designed by James Joy and curated by Aisling Roche and Paula Marten.

View it at [www.corkcollegeofcommerce.ie/alchemy](http://www.corkcollegeofcommerce.ie/alchemy)



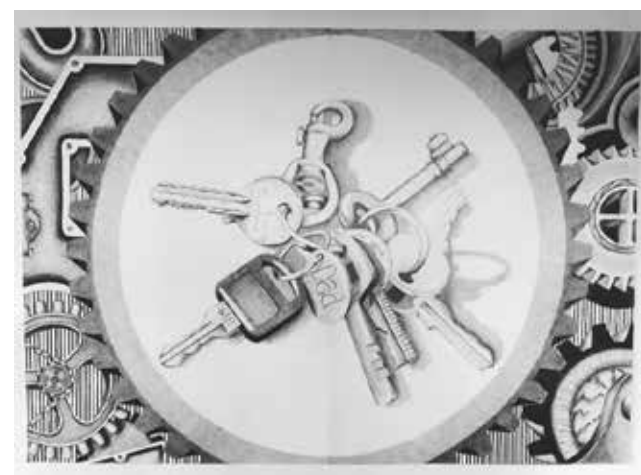
Saskia Von Michnewitsch



James Joy



Corina Thornton



Alvin Sexton

## Music video filmed at Mercy Heights Secondary School in Skibbereen



Kildare artist Enda Gallery (FKA delush) has unveiled a haunting new video that was filmed at the former Mercy Heights Secondary School in Skibbereen. The inaugural release is a music video for the single 'Guess We Got A Problem' originally found on his debut album 'The Journey to Zero'.

Producer/Production designer Grainne Dwyer and costume design Alice Halliday from Skibbereen both attended the Mercy Heights Secondary School.

Berlin-based Enda Gallery has reached a pivotal point in his career. The singer-songwriter released his acclaimed debut album in 'The Journey to Zero' in April 2020 under the name

'delush', a pseudonym which allowed him to continue working under his own name as a writer, producer and co-manager for fellow Irish artists; Tóliú Makay, Willzee and Strange Boy, as well as collaborating with other international electronic producers like Kid Simius, Dead Rabbit, and Nobody's Face.

For a time, he sought out the alias to create a new space in which to craft fresh beauty and depth, now that approach penetrates all of what he does. "At some point we all long for unity of self", Enda acknowledges that it no longer seems necessary to have different aliases, the essential parts have become embodied in the new whole.

His birth name comes from

the Irish word, Éanna, meaning bird. Finally, free to soar above he has gained perspective from on high. "I am not a name or a brand or a series of projects, I am an artist".

And so, Enda Gallery's inaugural release is a music video for the single 'Guess We Got A Problem' originally found on his debut album. Directed by the Lithuanian-born Iggy Laugalis featuring dancer Taylor Graham, originally from New York, both of whom are serendipitously now Irish residents.

"Every moment of the making of this project seemed to be guided by faith. From making contact with Enda to finding the location for the shoot" says Laugalis.

For Enda, changing his name only twelve months after releasing his debut album takes a lot of trust. Trust in himself and trust in his audience. "I think we underestimate people's ability to understand complexity, a few have told me this approach is naive. The community who truly resonate with and appreciate my music are very well capable of enjoying such a symphony and if someone else can't fathom this complexity in a human being or an artist, maybe they are the naive one".

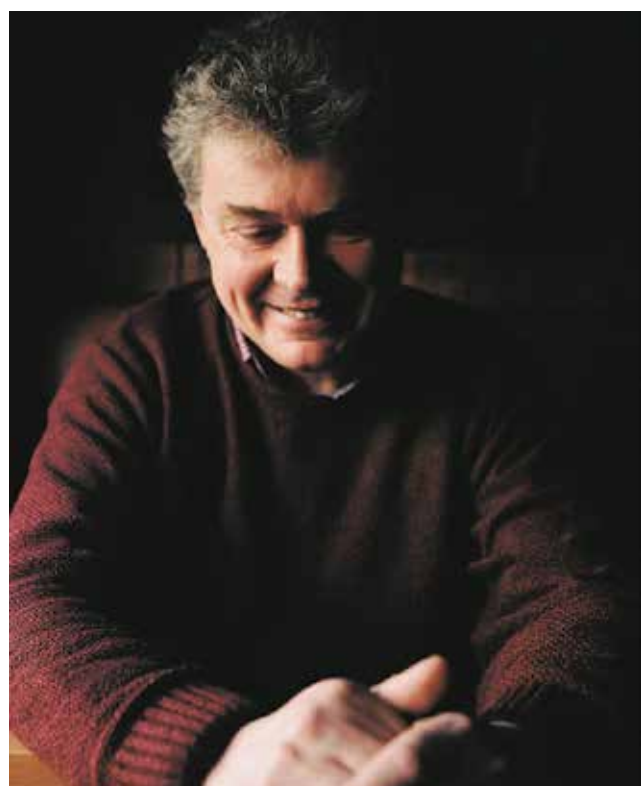
## John Spillane releases new single and video

Acclaimed Cork singer and musician John Spillane released his new single 'We Come In The Wind' on February 19. This is the first single to be taken from his forthcoming album '100 Snow White Horses', which is set for release on April 2, 2021.

'We Come In The Wind' is based on the three Imramma (Wonder Voyages) of Irish literature; The Voyage of Bran, The Voyage of Maeldun and The Voyage of St. Brendan. It's a fairy tale dream journey inspired by some of John's favourite old Irish stories. The track features the ethereal vocals of Pauline Scanlon and is produced by John Reynolds, both of whom John has collaborated with many times.

John wrote the songs on '100 Snow White Horses' in the Irish bardic tradition, in gratitude for patronage by various communities, festivals, and artistic events that he has been privileged to be part of in the last four years as a travelling songwriter and composer. A strong theme of Irish mythology runs through the album with 'We Come In The Wind' being a prime example.

John spent a whole summer writing the verses for this song



and it all came together in one serendipitous night. He explains, "It was the night I played in Abbeyfeale and I was waiting to go on in the Glorach Theatre. I was sitting in a theatre set with a bookshelf and I said I'd pick a random book and blindly pick a line and try to incorporate it into

the song. I did and it said 'Go tell my lady' and I put that in the song. Driving home that evening after the gig, I came out with the chorus 'we come in the wind, we leave in the wind'. I love musical moments like this because these are the best moments of life."



## people Arts &amp; Entertainment

## Niamh Regan 2021 tour to take in West Cork

**R**TÉ Choice Music Prize 'Album of the Year' nominee Niamh Regan has announced a nine-venue national tour for November 2021: restrictions permitting, she will perform at the Róisín Dubh Galway, DeBarra's Folk Club, Levis' Corner House, Coughlan's Live Cork, Dolan's Limerick (presented by Seoda Shows), Whelan's Dublin (presented by Singular Artists), The Duncairn Belfast, Spirit Store Dundalk, and the Set Theatre Kilkenny and with more to be announced.

Tickets are on sale now.

Niamh Regan released her critically acclaimed album 'Hemet' via Black Gate Records in September 2020. Comparisons with contemporary artists such as Laura Marling, Lisa Hannigan, This Is the Kit and Sarah Jarosz have appeared regularly in the UK and Irish press, while discerning critics detect the influence of Nick Drake, Bert Jansch, Richard Thompson, Tom Waits, Paul Brady, and Karen Dalton. One thing is for sure: with the release

'Hemet', Niamh has carved out her own niche in the world of contemporary folk music. 'Hemet' is an album full of musical accomplishment, emotional maturity, and subtle craft. It is the long-awaited arrival of a truly immense talent.

Niamh says: "I have been completely blown away by the support for the album since its release. Thankfully, with kind support from the Live Venue Collective last December, my band and I were lucky enough to perform songs from it in some

of these excellent venues around the country for a series of live-streamed gigs. Now I'm itching to get out there and play in front of real audiences again. It is such joy to have the shows to look forward to later in the year. Hopefully see you then."

Tickets for Niamh Regan's tour are on sale now. Visit the venue websites for details.

West Cork Dates: DeBarra's, Clonakilty – Sunday, November 14; Levis' Corner House, Ballydehob – Monday, November 15.



Pic: Bríd O'Donovan

## COMPETITION

## Win a digital ticket to Made In Cork: Play It By Ear Rehearsed Readings



Made in Cork: Play It by Ear Rehearsed Readings offers access to the full audio streamed collection of nine rehearsed readings for the month of March – over 11hrs of pure theatre!

Each rehearsed reading has been chosen for its distinctly Cork flavour, acknowledging and celebrating the wealth of creative talent Cork is privileged to hold.

Written by Cork writers (Cónal Creedon, Ger FitzGibbon, Liam Heylin, Katie Holly, Irene Kelleher, John McCarthy, James McKeon, Patrick Talbot), performed by Cork actors, and of Cork; these rehearsed readings were originally streamed live and recorded from The Everyman stage in Cork in 2020.

The Everyman is bringing the very best of Cork to your homes – whether in Ireland or abroad – until it's safe for you to come back to theirs.

Ticket: €18 | 021 450 1673 | [www.everymancork.com](http://www.everymancork.com)

Be in with a chance of winning a ticket send your name and phone number with 'Everyman' in the subject line to [info@westcorkpeople.ie](mailto:info@westcorkpeople.ie) before March 12.

## Inland Fisheries Ireland fishing for young poets

**I**nland Fisheries Ireland and the Blackrock Education Centre are running the national 'Something Fishy' poetry competition aimed at fifth and sixth class primary school students nationwide. It is an opportunity for students to get creative at home, learn about fish and win some great prizes.

The competition is to write an acrostic poem; in which the first letter of each line spells out a word. Each student is to spell out the word 'STREAM' to write their own acrostic poem. Students are also encouraged to illustrate their poems with their own artwork.

The closing date for entries is Friday, May 28, 2021. Email your entry to [outreach@fisheriesireland.ie](mailto:outreach@fisheriesireland.ie) and to include the student's name, class (fifth or sixth) and school name and address.

There are lots of fun and interactive resources available on [www.somethingfishy.ie](http://www.somethingfishy.ie), to help inspire budding poets.

## New service launching to connect older people interested in arts and culture

**O**lder people in West Cork are being encouraged to engage with the vibrant local arts and cultural scene when events return, and virtually for now, with the official launch of Cork Cultural Companions, next week, on March 9.

Anyone over 55 can sign up to be part of this local network of people with shared interests in arts, heritage and culture who want to attend events with like-minded new friends.

An initiative of Age and Opportunity, Cork Cultural Companions particularly aims to address the issue of social isolation amongst older people by also providing volunteer companions for encouragement and support at live events.

Original plans to launch in April 2020 had to be postponed and revised in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Cork Cultural Companions will now launch virtually on March 9 with the rollout of a varied series of its own online events and activities run in conjunction with cultural venues and organisations, until live events return.

Speaking ahead of the launch, Cork Cultural Companions co-ordinator Barbara Quinn, said, "Many of us would probably go to a lot more plays, films, shows, concerts, exhibitions, or other events if we had someone to go with. There is a thriving social and arts scene out there to be enjoyed if only we had someone with the know-how or simply the shared interest to get us going. That is where Cultural Companions comes in. The project will set up local networks of people interested in arts and culture that will accompany each other to events when they are permitted and encourage each other to connect with and engage in online cultural events and activities for now.

"Unfortunately, we can't



Anyone for Tea & Ballet? Sisters Pam Byrne and Carmel Sullivan, and ballerina Lydia Punch, announce the launch of Cork Cultural Companions. Pic: Miki Barlok

currently meet in person, so we have adapted our approach this year to ensure we still provide opportunities for older people to connect with arts, culture and friends virtually. It has never been more important to have these connections with the outside world and to have something to look forward to.

"Our varied series of online cultural events will be announced at our launch next week. I would encourage anyone interested in reigniting their love of arts and culture, or those who just want to enjoy new experiences and make new friends, to register to hear more about becoming a member."

Cork Cultural Companions not only connects you with others interested in arts and culture, but it also keeps you up to date on what's happening in your area. Once you become a member, which is free and no obligation, you will receive regular updates regarding various websites, podcasts and social media links to theatre performances, music, literature, poetry, dance, and local interest

items. And when live events begin to happen again, you will have the opportunity to attend them with new friends in the network.

The not-for-profit organisation is also looking for members who would like to act as 'Meet and Greeters' for when Cork's real cultural scene gets going again.

First up in the online events series, which Cork Cultural Companions is currently seeking participants for, is 'Tea and Ballet' run in association with the Firkin Crane and delivered by Patricia Crosbie. Over a six-week series of one hour meetings, participants will get together to explore some world famous classical ballets, the first series will focus on the ballet 'Giselle'. The aim of the series is to help retain and increase mobility in older participants and to break down any perceived barrier to understanding or appreciating ballet and therefore increase numbers attending ballet and dance performances in-house in venues in future.

Another event being planned

as part of the series is 'Theatre in the Community', which will see a one-person theatre show being brought to five Cultural Companion hubs in the county. The performance will be staged outdoors and will see social distancing guidelines adhered to.

Other activities being launched next week include Mobile Movie Screenings, a Clay Modelling Workshop and Exhibition, and 'Culture on Call'.

Anyone interested in getting involved is invited to join the virtual launch of Cork Cultural Companions on March 9 to hear more. To register for this event, or for further information on membership, contact Barbara Quinn on 085-1300335 or [Culture@muintircork.com](mailto:Culture@muintircork.com), or see the Cork Cultural Connections page on [muintircork.com](http://muintircork.com)

Cork Cultural Companions is an initiative of Age and Opportunity, and is supported by The Cork County Federation of Muintir na Tíre, the HSE, the Community Work Department Cork North, Cork County Council and Cork City Council, Healthy Ireland and Creative Ireland.



## people Environment : Making a difference

## Listen for the call of the common buzzard



At this time of year buzzards are ready to set up their nesting territories. Listen out for their cat-like mewling call says **Nicholas Mitchell** Birdwatch Ireland West Cork. You may see a pair circle and soar over a suitable patch of woodland, or male buzzards putting on an aerobatic display to impress females, flying up and the plummeting down again.

The story of the buzzard is one of the few ecological success stories that we can point to in an otherwise declining trend for a lot of our other species. Numbers of this magnificent bird of prey have increased in Ireland and it is now breeding across the east side of the country and increasingly spreading westwards. The

sight and sound of a buzzard is almost becoming an everyday occurrence in West Cork. Often, the first indication that a buzzard is nearby is their call, and scanning the sky will reveal a large, broad-winged bird, with feathery fingers, soaring over the countryside. Buzzards have a wingspan of over one metre, bigger than a hooded crow, but considerably smaller than either of the two eagles present in Ireland. The white-tailed eagle has a wingspan of over two metres.

Buzzards are native to Ireland, but they went extinct as a breeding species over 100 years ago. With intensive persecution of birds of prey, our other birds of prey, the golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and red kite populations also suffered serious declines to the point of extinction at that time. Buzzards started to re-colonise Northern Ireland in the 1950s and then expanded to Donegal. This first re-colonisation attempt failed when Myxomatosis dramatically reduced rabbit numbers and deprived buzzards of their main prey. The Irish population

became extinct again by the mid-1960s. Another re-colonisation ensued in the 1970s and 1980s but its rate of progression was slow. It is thought that this partly due to the use of poison strychnine for controlling foxes and corvids (members of the crow family). A ban on strychnine in 1991 undoubtedly had a positive effect on the buzzard population and facilitated their return to areas in Ireland where they had not been present for over 100 years. Buzzards started to be seen more regularly in County Cork in the early 2000s, although breeding wasn't confirmed until 2004. Since then, birds have continued spreading across the county.

So what other factors have caused this recent increase in buzzards? When they first colonised the county, they were associated with tillage areas. This is not surprising given that three of the four most common prey items are rook, woodpigeon and brown rat, all commonly found on arable land. A County Cork study over 2011/12 found that their most

common food prey (nearly 40 per cent) was rabbit. Buzzards, particularly young birds, will also take a lot of invertebrates like large beetles and earthworms. It is not uncommon to see numbers of buzzards in a recently ploughed or reseeded field as they hop around the field, almost vulture-like, to grab any worms available. This wide-ranging diet is a factor in their recent success.

As top predators, buzzards are an excellent indicator of the wellbeing of the environment. Their presence should be viewed as a positive indication of a healthy countryside, as well as a benefit to local agriculture. Their re-colonisation has restored a natural balance, filling a vital ecological niche, which has been empty for decades. By feeding on carrion, and through direct predation, buzzards help to keep numbers of corvids in check. It seems strange therefore that the buzzard is sometimes seen as a problem species whereas it is in fact a welcome addition to our skies, with a role in maintaining a healthy

and functioning ecosystem. It is likely that these glorious birds will continue to colonise further west and become an everyday sight across the whole of West Cork.

In recent times, we have heard a lot about the biodiversity crisis and the loss of some of our wildlife. We were confronted with this very issue in December 2019 with the appalling discovery of 23 buzzards poisoned right here in West Cork. This is despite the fact that, since 2010, legislation has prohibited the use of poison to kill birds or animals with the exception of rats and mice. This incident made headlines in the national newspapers, it prompted a question to the Minister in the Dáil and has rightly been condemned across all sectors, from politicians to farmers and members of the public.

How can you help? Members of the public can become citizen scientists and help monitor the distribution and range increase of the buzzard by reporting sightings to the National Biodiversity Data Centre at [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie), or recording sightings on the BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch via our Facebook page. The public can also help in monitoring the impacts of illegal poisoning by reporting any raptor carcasses found, or any suspicious incidents regarding the misuse of poisons, to their local Wildlife Ranger in the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) via 1890 383 000 or email [nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie).



For more information about the Branch contact Nicholas Mitchell at [secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie) or join our mailing list by sending an email to [mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie).

## New book gives fascinating insight into the miniature world of mosses and liverworts

Mosses and liverworts – bryophytes – offer a wonderful miniature world to be discovered on the doorstep. West Cork is one of the best places in the world to see them, and the only kit needed is a mobile phone camera or a hand lens. A well-written book can provide a great introduction, and one is newly available from the Ellen Hutchins Festival team, suited for self-guided explorations into this intriguing world of micro-nature.

The new book, 'Mosses and Liverworts: an introductory guide to the Bantry Bay area' by Rory Hodd is a delight. Rory is one of the leading Irish bryologists, and writes clear descriptions and provides helpful diagrams. His photographs are stunning.

You will wonder why you have not looked closely at this world before now.

It's not all fuzzy green lumps – there are golden stars and purple worms, silvery cushions and woolly fringes. Learn about their life cycle, structures, and important place in the plant

world.

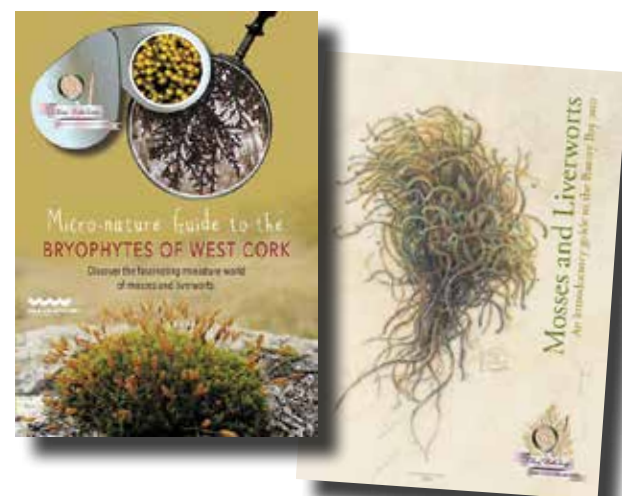
There is also a free leaflet, 'Bryophytes of West Cork', suitable for all ages, developed alongside the book as a lovely first step into bryophytes. This can be downloaded from the website or you get a printed copy when you order the book. It works well for children and families. It includes some fascinating facts, including these two:

Some of the mosses and liverworts that grow in the west of Ireland are tropical species, which grow nowhere else in Europe. They can survive here because of the mild, damp climate, which is like a tropical cloud forest.

There is such an abundance

of mosses on earth that they absorb more carbon than all the trees in the world. This 'carbon capture' is needed to help prevent climate change. So it is just as important to save tiny plants as it is to save trees!

Turning the clock back 210 years from 2021, to 1811, Ellen Hutchins, botanist of Bantry Bay, was enthusing about mosses and liverworts and very excited by new discoveries she was making. While Ellen is better known for her work on seaweeds, including her beautiful and accurate watercolour drawings of them, she loved mosses and liverworts and the habitats in which they are found. West Cork is fortunate to have a wide range of habitats – mountains,



woodlands, riverbanks, and beside streams and waterfalls. Ellen wrote "nothing delights me more than the sight of a great rock covered with a variety of mosses". One of her favourite places for plant hunting was in Glengarriff Woods, "a very favourite spot by the rocky,

woody side of a little waterfall, particularly dear to me as the place of growth of one of my new species and many mosses. I have spent many happy hours creeping among its rocks and never quitted it without regret. The troublesome little affairs of

*Continued on next page...*



## people Environment : Making a difference

### Mosses and Liverworts ...Cont'd from previous page

this world continually deprive one of the enjoyment of such pleasures."

Ellen wrote how 'botanising' gave her a reason to go on walks regularly, and a focus in collecting tiny samples of interesting plants to take home and look at in detail through a hand lens or microscope. Could this spring, 2021, be your opportunity to focus in more closely on this aspect of the natural world?

Each trip out of the door was for Ellen a voyage of discovery. She found rare and beautiful mosses in the most ordinary places, noting in her plant list ones found "on an old apple

tree that was cut down", "on the wall" by a friend's house, "on rocks under the bridge" at Ballylickey, "on stones in heathy places" and in "mountain marshes".

Would you enjoy venturing into this miniature world too? Order the book for €12 from [www.ellenhutchins.com](http://www.ellenhutchins.com) and get a printed copy of the free leaflet with it. An Explorers' Kit is available with leaflets on seaweeds and lichens as well as bryophytes, a hand lens on a lanyard, a tree trail and an all-important weatherproof map case to keep them clean and dry. The website also has informa-



Moss sporophytes: photo by Rory Hodd

tion to explore botany further.

You could take it all one step further, and use the Botanical Art Starter Pack to draw and paint mosses or Spring flowers in watercolours. The Pack contains everything you need, just add water and a moss, leaf or flower! Award-winning Irish botanical artist, Shevaun Doherty, who developed the pack for the Ellen Hutchins Festival, says, "botanical art takes time and practice but it is a wonderful way to observe and appreciate the natural world." The Pack is available to buy from the website and since its launch in 2019 has been posted worldwide.

The Ellen Hutchins Festival will run again in Heritage Week, August 21-29. This year the focus of the (live or virtual) Festival will be on coastal and wetland wild flowers. Walks and sessions will either be led by botanists or available as self-guided DIY activities. A day-long online seminar is being planned on wild flowers associated with water, from upland streams to the sea. Speakers will be drawn from Irish and local experts. Finola Finlay of Roaringwater Journal and Wildflowers of West Cork will chair the day.

## Just how urgent is human evolution?



### ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

Just 11 years ago, March 2010, during an interview with the Guardian Newspaper, the scientist James Lovelock stated "I don't think we're yet evolved to the point where we're clever enough to handle as complex a situation as climate change. The inertia of humans is so huge that you can't really do anything meaningful."

In 1957 Lovelock had invented the Electron Capture Detector, which proved important in detection of CFCs in the atmosphere, as it is used in gas chromatography to detect trace amounts of chemical compounds. This electron capture detector was also used to pick up minute traces of pollutants in the atmosphere, such as the pesticides that spurred Rachel Carson to write the 1962 book *Silent Spring*.

In the 1960s, whilst Lovelock was working for NASA, looking at methods of detecting life on Mars, he began to consider whether life could be detected on a planet simply by examining that planet's atmosphere. He realised that the atmosphere would be pushed out of equilibrium by gases produced by living processes, such as methane and oxygen. Lovelock

realised that chemical equilibrium is tantamount to death and any sort of chemical disequilibrium could be regarded as a tell-tale signal of life. For him this explained why the Earth's atmosphere contains high levels of nitrogen and oxygen and he developed the Gaia Theory, named after the Greek Earth Goddess and hypothesising that life on Earth is a self-regulating community of organisms interacting with each other and their surroundings.

At noon on June 18, 2015, five years after Lovelock told the Guardian Newspaper that Humans aren't evolved enough to handle climate change, the Vatican released the document 'Laudato si' (Praise Be to You); the second encyclical of Pope Francis. The encyclical has the subtitle 'on care for our common home'. In it, the Pope critiques consumerism and irresponsible development and laments environmental degradation and global warming. He urges people to overcome the inertia that five years earlier Lovelock had noted, calling for all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action".

In November 2019, whilst addressing the International Association of Penal Law at the Vatican, Pope Francis proposed that "sins against ecology" be added to the teachings of the Catholic Church and said that "ecocide" should be a fifth category of crimes against peace at the international level.

The Pope used the late Polly Higgins definition of ecocide as submitted to the UN Law Commission in 2010; saying that "By 'ecocide' we should understand the loss, damage and destruction of ecosystems of a given territory, so that its

enjoyment by the inhabitants has been or may be severely affected. This is a fifth category of crimes against peace, which should be recognised as such by the international community."

On January 20, 2021 in an amendment to its report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, the European Parliament stated that biodiversity and human rights are interlinked and interdependent, and that it is the obligation of states to protect the biodiversity on which those rights depend, including by providing for the participation of citizens in biodiversity-related decisions and providing access to effective remedies in cases of biodiversity loss and degradation. It went on to express support for efforts at international level in relation to environmental crimes and in this regard, encourage the EU and the Member States to promote the recognition of ecocide as an international crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Recently Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Carole Dierckx Minister for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development made clear that Luxembourg would be "ready to support the recognition of ecocide in European and international law when the time comes."

The ministers stated that they are aware of the fact that, since 2019, initiatives proposing a crime of ecocide have multiplied and that Belgium raised the issue directly at the International Criminal Court last December.

They promised that their government would continue to follow developments in neighbouring countries noting

that France, Belgium and Spain have all resolved to 'examine the possibilities' for such legislation.

Perhaps Lovelock is right. Despite warnings from both science and the church and actions urging us all to change the legal system to protect our home, we seem as a species, to have little drive to overcome the inertia and put protections such as the 'Law of Ecocide' in place.

We have apparently handed our power over to a bureaucratic system that upholds the inertia and does not recognise or allow for "all people of the world to take 'swift and unified global action'".

The American architect and systems theorist, Buckminster Fuller, stated "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Our existing models of politics and government, manufacturing, commerce, agriculture, education, community, justice and economics are all failing to "take 'swift and unified global action'" to care for our common home.

We, as a species, are however incredibly smart and inventive and it is our use of language that leads to our action. It is time to build new models that make the existing models obsolete. However human behaviour is such that we only take action when something is bothering us, so long as everything seems fine we happily go along with business as usual.

It is time to become inventive, and to do that, we have to become anxious about the future.

We have to use language that urges all of us 'not' to accept

the current slow pace of change but envisages rapid change; and pushes political decision makers towards that rapid change.

If politicians in government, instead of resolving to 'examine the possibilities' for such legislation as making 'ecocide' a crime, instead voted to MAKE ecocide a crime and did so rapidly, then suddenly for the decision makers at the top of organisations that create ecocides, business as usual will no longer be fine. Suddenly they will have to take action; existing business models will threaten them with criminal proceedings and they will rapidly invent new and better business models.

The power is with the people.

It is we, the people, who can create this urgency. We, the people, can pressure our politicians. We the people can cooperate and collaborate for change at community level and our communities can cooperate and collaborate to create urgency for 'swift and global action'.

We the people can start by signing the 'Ireland Against Ecocide' petition found at [www.Change.org](http://www.Change.org) to tell the Irish Government to join with other EU Countries in recognition of Ecocide as an international crime. Go to [www.change.org/IrelandAgainstEcocide](http://www.change.org/IrelandAgainstEcocide)

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## people Environment : Making a difference

## To know or not to know – food matters

**Moze Jacobs** and **Alice Glendinning** remind us this month that Doughnut Economics is a work-in-progress. Conceived as the brainchild of UK economist Kate Raworth, it is very much at an experimental stage. It is working to find an economic way forward that helps communities thrive, minimises waste, and goes some way towards reversing the horrific rate of biodiversity loss, species extinction everywhere and fight hunger and inequality.

To achieve at least some of this, likeminded individuals and businesses in local communities (who are willing and able to work on change) will need to “stick their heads and hearts together” in order to find local solutions for international problems. On an unprecedented scale. At a time that is both very challenging and very suited to such an effort, as people are now connecting online like never before.

DEAL, the virtual Doughnut Economics Action Lab set up by Rawlings last year, aims to ‘turn Doughnut Economics from a radical idea into transformative action’. It is now heading for 5,000 members around the world (Durban to Tamil Nadu, Lima to Liver-

pool), including almost 300 people from Ireland. A community platform, it is ‘a place for pioneering change-makers to connect, share, inspire and get inspired’.

Of course there is a wide gap between ideals and practice. As everyone knows who tries to radically change their personal lives. We may have a deep and sincere wish not to ‘harm (life on) the planet’ but we’re all consumers who need to eat, stay warm and dry, wear clothes. And unless we’re self-sufficient in all those ways, compromise is inevitable. One of things that make it harder to take informed decisions about our daily lives is a lack of knowledge about the products that are available through the ‘regular’ channels.



*Plastic waste in Schull harbour*

This is not just an Irish issue. Product labelling is subject to EU-wide regulations. It is mandatory for manufacturers to provide nutritional facts,

for example about ingredients (including palm oil and palm fat), allergens, energy values, fat and salt content. No labels can be read while shopping online,

which seems at odds with this legislation.

At the same time, information on pesticides that may have been sprayed on the food that we intend to eat is totally lacking. Which seems absurd. “Pesticides are chemicals used in agriculture,” writes the World Health Organisation, which “may induce adverse health effects including cancer, effects on reproduction, immune or nervous systems”, in humans, depending on the dose. Even harder to discover is how our individual shopping actions affect biodiversity, nationally or abroad.

An excellent source of information in this respect is the ongoing podcast series by Pádraic Fogarty of the Irish Wildlife Trust (iwt.ie). It provides essential and very accessible information about ecosystems, wrens, forests, and the conundrum of how we barely even notice the unfolding climate change and biodiversity crisis. He explains it as follows. “Ecological collapse has directly affected many Irish communities and yet it may feel to many people that this has not affected our way of life. Indeed,

Irish people today enjoy a high standard of living in comparison to practically everywhere else – how can this be when the biodiversity we’re told is vital to our survival has been left in ruin?

The answer lies in our consumption patterns. Everything we eat, from a bar of chocolate to a take-away curry, contains ingredients from the four corners of the Earth and even many of the products we thought we could safely assume are Irish are nothing of the sort.

The West Cork Doughnut Economy Network is working toward a (private) meeting/conversation in March for businesses that are active in the food sector (or want to be) in West Cork such as growers, producers, distributors, shops with an interest in sustainability, the idea of staying within the planetary boundaries, and engaging with the local community. If you’d like to join us or have any queries, please mailwestcork-doughnuteconomynetwork@gmail.com. More info: www.doughnuteconomics.org.

## The time is right for a change of energy



## GROUNDED

An occasional column by **Grace O'Sullivan** – mother, environment and peace activist, ecologist, MEP

Grace, a mother of three from Tramore, Co. Waterford, spent 20 years working with Greenpeace and was a crewmember of the Rainbow Warrior, when it was bombed by the French Foreign Intelligence Service in 1985. She served as a Senator for three years, before being elected to the European Parliament, where she is a proactive and outspoken member of important committees on Fisheries (PECH), and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). She is also a member of delegations on Mercosur and Palestine, and a member of a number of working groups. She is Green Party Spokesperson on Environmental Protection, Natural Resources, Marine and Tourism.

The benefits of improving your home energy set-up and moving towards more green, energy-efficient models are clear. You become more self-sufficient; you get to tap into natural, sustainable energy sources which can provide you with cheap, available, long-lasting power. You also get to play your part in the journey towards making the earth a carbon neutral planet where we live our lives in a way that is not trashing our environment and putting the lives of ourselves and future generations at risk.

At a European level, energy is a topic that’s at the top of the agenda. When Ursula von der Leyen took up her new position as European Commission President, she launched the boldly visionary European Green Deal, a far-reaching plan that aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The vision set out in that plan includes a programme of change aimed at reducing climate emissions. Included in this are ambitious actions around revising the EU’s climate and energy legislation by June of this year, when we will be seeing a big legislative package called the ‘fit for 55 package’ that will

include the reform of the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Renewable Energy Directive. It will essentially impose higher renewable energy targets and energy efficiency targets.

These legislative changes, aligned with a shift in public opinion as Covid-19 (and its scientifically-proven links to the climate crisis) forces us all to become more aware of the perilous situation the planet (and all of its inhabitants) is in, means that the time is right for impactful change.

With a target spend of 37 per cent of the €750 billion Next Generation EU recovery fund earmarked for spending on Green Deal objectives, it means that we are looking at a roll-out of the sort of financial backing we need to be able to fully realise our good intentions, and get behind moving away from fossil fuel towards cheaper, more energy-efficient green energy sources.

Within a strong and comprehensive policy framework, European industry and businesses are looking at opportunities to be ‘trailblazers’ as we transition to a more modern economy that values ‘wellness indicators’ as our base lines around the measurement of how an economy

is thriving, rather than the limiting, abstract and unbalanced traditional (and dated) tool of using GDP as our benchmark measuring tool for ‘success.’

What all this means, for most of us, is that the Europe we live in over the not-too-distant future, is transitioning towards becoming a universally fairer place, where we live in warmer homes, in a healthier and safer planet.

“the Europe we live in over the not-too-distant future, is transitioning towards becoming a universally fairer place, where we live in warmer homes, in a healthier and safer planet.”

In terms of energy, the evolving European model, with its moves away from a reliance on dirty, unsustainable, environmentally-destructive fossil fuels, opens up possibilities of providing resilient energy supplies and empowering people to move in another direction.

One of those directions, is towards renewable self-con-

sumption, what Solar Power Europe describes as: cheap and clean power at your doorstep.

In this ‘self-consumption’ model, we see families, communities and businesses controlling their energy bills and protecting themselves against volatile energy price fluctuations. We see a place where those consuming energy have real choice. The more people ‘sign up’ the more the market will, in the words of Solar Power Europe ‘steer the development of solutions such as storage, smart appliances and more flexible contracts for consumers.’

At a legislative level, the European Commission has an important role to play in ensuring that such consumers – both residential and industrial – are able to use the energy they produce and access the benefits of payment for excess energy injected back into the grid.

On the home-front, in Ireland, the Government have increased the residential and community retrofitting budget by 82 per cent to €221 million for 2021, which will include retrofitting of social housing. They also launched a microgeneration consultation last month to finally bring support to domestic solar PV, wind, hydro and Com-

bined Heat and Power (CHP).

Micro-generation, which includes micro-solar PV, micro-hydro, micro-wind and micro-renewable CHP with a maximum electrical output of 50kW, is designed to primarily service the self-consumption needs of a property where it is installed.

Currently in Ireland there is no support scheme for this range of micro-generation technologies. There are a number of grant schemes available that support renewable technologies, particularly Solar PV, for self-consumption, such as the Domestic solar PV and Better Energy Communities schemes operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, and TAMS II operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Developing a Micro-generation Support Scheme is a positive move, which allows people and communities to become actively involved in the energy transition. It will support new micro-generation projects and give individuals, families and communities more opportunities to generate their own renewable electricity, and receive a fair price when they sell the excess into the grid.



## people Home &amp; Garden

## Nature has a plan



## 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.

Right about now we are looking around us at the buds on the trees, the daffodils in bloom and the wild garlic just starting to flower... Just like that – and another cycle around the sun has completed itself and year after year fulfills itself.

I don't know about you, but I often wonder if the earth needs to think about things.

Does nature just know that in this year we should get an abundant crop of blackberries,



ransoms thicker than ever and extra hawthorn or sloe – or is it just for the craic?

Can you imagine if these sorts of marvels of nature were completely random... One year the gorse might forget to bloom, dog roses lose their smell or wild thyme would grow in fields instead of clinging to rocks and barren ground.

What if Mother Nature herself was a little like us on a busy day – walking into a hedgerow and thinking to herself – now what was I supposed to do here? That happens to me on a daily basis!

However, what we all witness continually each and every season, year after year, layer over layer of field, stone and bog – is

the exact opposite.

A carefully crafted and well thought out randomly haphazard nonsensical plan of epic proportions that just so happens to correspond beautifully to our spring, summer and autumn with all the buds, new growth, flowers, berries, roots and shoots that we could possibly require.

When we follow along with the stirrings of earth between equinox and Samhain, we get to enjoy a feast of colour, scent and that wonderful taste on the air, as spring rolls into summer.

Can you just smell that freshness after a morning breeze or the rising heat from the bogs with its' heady musty odours?

So, getting back to my

thoughts here – nature has a plan, even when we can't always follow along and track her peculiar behaviour, as she rises and lifts in certain ways known only to herself...

She always seems to end up in the same place!

The buds form on the trees, sooner or later.

The flowers grow into berries one at a time.

Brambles reach down towards the earth.

Leaves fall when they have given up their substance.

And we marvel at it all... makes me realise one thing, as I wander into the herb garden, it all gets done and it doesn't need to have a plan.

## Cork South West Greens welcome €1.7m for social housing retrofits

Green Party Local Representatives Marc O'Riain, Kin-sale, and Rory Jackson, Skibbereen, have welcomed the announcement that €1,771,355 will be allocated to Cork County Council under the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme for Social Housing, with a target of 66 social homes to be retrofitted in the area.

Cork South West Greens welcomed the investment to improved social housing in Cork South West as a key commitment in the Programme for Government. Rory Jackson: "This is a great start to an ambitious program to deliver better, warmer, and more efficient housing in Cork County. The quality of our climate actions must be delivered in ways that provide a just transition for people in our community."

The Programme for Government has set a target of retrofitting reaching over 500,000 homes by 2030, of which it is expected that approximately 36,500 of those will be local authority owned homes. Approximately 40 per cent of Ireland's energy-related carbon emissions come from buildings alone, making retrofitting key to achieving Ireland's objective of reducing its carbon emissions by more than half. Retrofitting ensures these homes will be easier and cheaper to heat, allowing for more comfort and better air quality.

Announcing the allocations, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform Malcolm Noonan said: "Since the original scheme began in 2013, over 73,500 local authority homes have undergone energy efficiency works, but this was, for the most part, wall and attic insulation works.

"This revised programme focuses on a much deeper retrofitting, ensuring that the fabric of the home is upgraded and an energy efficient heating system is provided. This will greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the residential sector and help Ireland reach its greenhouse gas emissions. Importantly, it will result in warmer, more comfortable homes which will benefit the health of all those living in them."



## A COTTAGE GARDEN PROJECT

Jean Perry

Jean Perry of Glebe Gardens will share the ongoing successes and failures of growing a small cottage garden using no-dig and organic principles to see just how much food she can get out of such a plot. Join her on this journey...

I dusted down my trusty propagator and set it up in the small tunnel, ran the extension lead to the nearest socket and plugged it in. I set about this annual ritual with increasing trepidation as the propagator came with us from England

## Spring sowing

in 1989 and had already been in steady use for at least six or seven years before that. It is basically a heated mat 3ft 6inches wide and 2ft 6inches deep with a thermostat, which hasn't worked for years and a cover, which has been replaced with homemade efforts more than a few times. It gives me great satisfaction that it still works after nearly forty years. Due to the lack of a working thermostat, I have to be very careful to move trays around and keep the mat moist, even so I have managed to cook many trays of seedlings over the years. It does take a bit of handling. So now, for at least a couple of months, one of the first pleasures of my day, on my way back from feeding the chickens is to pop into the tunnel and see what has germinated. It never ceases to amaze me that a pinch of tiny dry seeds can turn into a tray of lovely green seedlings, full of promise, in just a few days.

Vegetable seeds are generally very reliable and easy to germinate. Lots of varieties don't need any heat at all, some just

need a warm windowsill but more tropical varieties such as tomatoes, aubergines and peppers do much better with some consistent heat. Lettuce seed can germinate in temperatures as low as 40 degrees Fahrenheit but as a general rule 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit would be optimum, and definitely not over 75 when germination will be retarded.

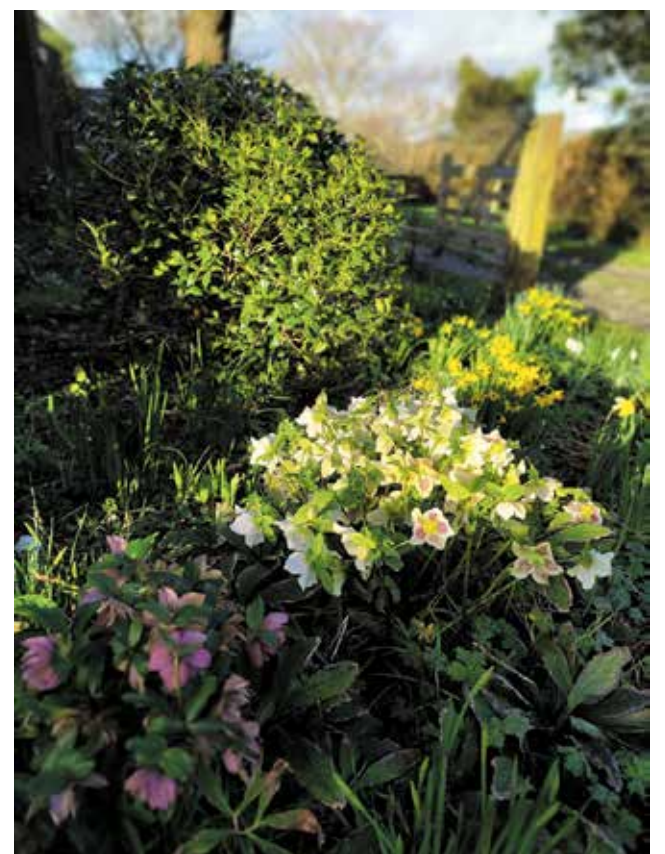
Flower seeds can be a bit trickier. Annuals are relatively straightforward and most don't need any extra heat, though it will speed up the germination time for some varieties. Half-hardy annuals do need some help and I find it best to wait a while before I sow things like cosmos and nicotiana, as even if they germinate early, they tend to sit and sulk in cold compost. Perennials on the other hand can be very unpredictable. Some need to be sown in the autumn and left outside covered against the rain but open to cold and frost, which primes them to burst into life when the weather warms up. Some are sporadic with a few

seeds germinating straight away and more later on. Some take months or even a year to germinate; then again others will pop through within a couple of weeks from a spring sowing.

I find growing from seed to be really satisfying and have learnt not to empty seed trays too early if nothing shows through. It is great to experiment with a few different things each year. If nothing grows it won't break the bank but if you are successful then you can grow many plants for the price of a packet of seeds. It is very rewarding to grow plants that would be difficult to buy, such as Santolina etrusca, a really pretty cotton lavender that I grew from seed and now have enough plants for a low hedge in the herb garden. Some plants such as delphiniums look so much better in groups and are relatively easy to grow from seed. For less than the price of one plant you can buy a packet of seeds and have lots to plant out or swap. Of course there isn't the instant gratification of immediate flowers but quite a

few perennials will flower in the first year if sown early enough

and anyway, we gardeners are patient people aren't we?





## people Home &amp; Garden



## 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](mailto:maura@mauramackeydesign.ie)

Many of us have had to completely re-imagine our living spaces to suit our new way of life and the interior trends for this year reflect these changes. Whether this is the case, or you are just looking for something to pass time while confined to home, changing colours or soft furnishings offers an easy

## Refreshing your home



These botanical print blinds by Luxaflex are available from blind suppliers across West Cork.

and affordable way of re-designing your home interior. Continuing on from last month's article, the following tips should help you get started.

**Bring the outside in**

We have all found solace in our environment so wanting to bring some of that indoors is a natural inclination. Whether it's the kitchen, bathroom, office, or other living areas in your home, plants are an excellent way of making a space more appealing and alive or softening an interior. In fact, many plants, for example the Boston Fern or Spider plant, also provide health benefits in purifying the air. You could even create your own indoor herb garden by adding



some plants to your windowsills or if you're tight on space hanging from the ceiling in a Macrame planter. Keep in mind that some plants can be toxic to humans and pets, so if you're placing them at ground level, do your research first.

If you have more of a talent for killing rather than growing plants, then go for the artificial

option.

Natural materials such as stone, glass, wood, ceramic, wicker and hemp will all add texture and tactility to your home.

Going for botanical prints in your curtains or blinds can also bring a room to life.

**Home Office**

Working from home is the new norm and whether you're lucky enough to have a dedicated home office room or are working from a corner of a living room or bedroom, the most important feature remains the same – the background to your video calls. Gallery walls are timeless with the shift this year towards making them more meaningful. So if you have a favourite print (a scene of a holiday destination you loved or piece of abstract art) hidden away somewhere, take it out and frame it or hang it up; this will show off your style and personality but will also give you a feel good factor when working in this space. Using lots of different frames will add more interest to your wall.

**Bold Bathrooms**

This year bathrooms are making a statement – the bolder the colour the better. Walk-in showers, waterfall taps and freestanding Victorian baths are all very on trend.

For smaller changes, go bold with your décor, adding pops of colour in your bathroom accessories. Wallpaper has become very popular in bathrooms, especially botanical or forest print. You could also install a back-lit mirror to give your room that tropical spa feeling.

**More emphasis on wood**

The connection to nature continues in the kitchen; the inclusion of wood in many areas of the home is a big trend this year but especially in our kitchens. The use of natural woods such as walnut, oak or ash for kitchen cabinets for adding warmth and texture is set to rise in 2021. A reclaimed wood countertop is a beautiful and sustainable option.

If you are not changing your kitchen but want something different, simply add some wooden furnishings like breakfast stools, shelving, or even chopping boards.

**Calming colours**

Neutral colours are a popular choice again this year, which isn't surprising, as we are all craving the sense of space and tranquility that comes with light, airy colours. This year however there is a shift towards

warmer, earthier tones such as honey, almond and tan; warmer options that are comforting and grounding. The understated shades are perfect for creating an intimate space where you can unwind and relax from the

changing world outside. When you are deciding on a paint colour for a room or space, ask yourself how you want to feel in the room. The answer is in the question!

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## people Home &amp; Garden

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The arrival of March heralds longer days and, with the clocks going forward at the end of the month, we will have an extra gardening hour in the evening. Welcome as the longer days are, beware of the temperamental nature of the month, from mild sunshine one day to hard frost or cold northerly or easterly winds the next.

**Jobs for March**

Start mowing lawns regularly, reseeding any bare patches.

Mulch bare soil in borders with well-rotten farmyard manure or stable manure.

Avoid any manure that contains weeds of persistent weeds such as nettles, bindweed, docks, thistles or briars.

Increase watering on indoor plants, as days lengthen and sunshine hours increase. Continue to use lukewarm water. Water in the morning so the plants are dry going into the night. Commence regular feeding of indoor plants this month using an organic liquid fertiliser

Prune back shrubs with colourful stems such as Cornus (dogwood) and Salix (willows). One-year-old shoots produce the best stem colour and this is the reason for pruning them in spring.

Ornamental Rubus with their white stems should be pruned now too.

Prune all these shrubs hard, to about one or two buds of

last year's growth, to produce a stubby framework.

**Prune Eucalyptus:** Not everyone has room to grow Eucalyptus as a full-grown tree but it responds well to hard pruning, making a lovely foliage shrub. Just prune all last year's growth to 15cm (6") from the ground and you will be rewarded with the attractive, round juvenile leaves on a small bushy plant.

**Prune bush and shrub roses:** Use sharp secateurs for pruning, removing dead and damaged shoots. Cut older stems that have become excessively woody. Use a loppers if growth is too strong for your secateurs. A pruning saw may also be used for very strong growths. Gather up all prunings and dispose of off site.

**Bare Root Trees and Hedging**

This really is the last month for planting bare root hedging, trees and shrubs. Any later than this month is too late, as they will have come out of dormancy and, with leaves emerging, will lose water rapidly from the foliage. Don't let bareroot plants out of the ground for too long. Don't let the roots exposed to frost or drying winds. Plants grown in containers can be planted all year round.

**Bulbs**

Deadhead daffodils as the flowers fade but leave the foliage alone. If the flowers are left on, the plant's energy will be diverted into seed production. At this time it is important to build

**GARDENING**

John Hosford  
The Weekend Garden Centre

up the bulb's reserves so that a new flower bud is formed for flowering next spring.

**Plant snowdrops**

Plant snowdrops in the green this month. Snowdrops in the green grow better and with more success than dry bulbs planted in the autumn. This is the best time to divide or plant new snowdrops. Overgrown clumps can be lifted and divided now or new plants can be sourced from specialist nurseries.

**Summer flowering bulbs**

Summer flowering bulbs are in the shops and garden centres now. The more tender bulbs can be delayed until next month. All summer flowering bulbs enjoy a sunny, well-drained position. You can plant at intervals over a period of a few weeks to give a succession of flowers throughout the summer and autumn.

Gladioli can be grown in several different ways in rows for cutting in tubs and in groups in borders. For the best effect in ornamental borders plant gladioli bulbs/corms in groups of five or more, 10-15cm apart and 7-10cm deep. On heavier soil plant a little deeper and place the corms on a layer of coarse grit.

Lilies and anemones can be planted outside. Plant lilies at three times their depth. On heavier soils plant the bulbs on a layer of coarse grit to aid drainage, as lilies don't like to sit in damp soil. Cannas for planting out in late May or early June can be encouraged into growth indoors now but don't be tempted to plant outside too early.

Bulbs that were forced into flower inside can be planted out when the flowers are over, if this was not done earlier.

Early narcissi, hyacinths and dwarf iris will have finished flowering by now so the best place for them is in the garden. Remove them carefully from their containers intact keeping disturbance to a minimum. Feed with a high potash fertiliser to encourage next year's flower buds. Don't force the bulbs for a second year, as the bulbs rarely flower as well again. It is best to buy new ones in the autumn.

**Alpines and the rock garden**

Weed seedlings will be growing in grit or gravel between the plants. Although a covering of gravel is fairly good at suppressing weeds; groundsel, bitter cress and annual grasses

can germinate in the moist soil beneath and push through. Pull or dig them out immediately on detection. Top up any bare patches with gravel to give a neat & tidy finish as the alpines come into their main flowering period in spring.

**Over-wintered Containers**

Top-dress over-wintered containers with a fresh dressing of fresh compost.

**Fruit Garden**

Finish all planting of bare root fruit trees and bushes. Protect blossom on wall-trained fruit. Cover overnight with jute bags, old blankets or hessian. Remove the morning to allow insects access for pollination. Plant strawberry runners.

**Lawn Care**

Rake leaves and surface rubbish and mow the lawn at a high notch once soil and weather conditions permit. Tidy-up lawn edges with a half-moon edging iron.

**Vegetable Garden**

Harden off early sowings of vegetables. Ideally plant them under cloches or cold frames, which have been put in place two to three weeks in advance to warm up the soil.

Sow lettuce, cabbage and cauliflower to give a succession of crops.

## Save up to €2,000 annually by switching energy providers

Almost 100,000 households in Cork are missing out on savings of up to €2,000 in energy costs per year by failing to switch providers, a new survey has revealed.

Those living in bungalows or detached homes across Ireland can benefit most by trading in their current supplier for a new one, according to the WeSwitchU.ie Index.

The index shows the gap between the cheapest and most expensive plans on the market – with a €2000 annual difference between some dual-fuel plans for these house types.

For semi-detached homes the index reveals savings of €800 for dual-fuel customers (€2,250 versus €1,450 per annum), and €620 for apartment or terraced-house residents (€1,600 versus €980 per annum).

"Based on average consumption, the index clearly shows

that many Cork households can potentially slice €2,000 off their bills from a premium annual cost of €5,000 to a net cost of €3,000 with the cheapest provider," said Brendan Halpin, CEO of WeSwitchU.ie.

"There is huge inertia out there when it comes to switching providers but when you remove the obstacles and the perceived 'hassle' of moving, it could save people the cost of a family holiday in Ireland every year."

Research from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) report found that half of Irish households have never switched energy supplier.

Based on Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census 2016 figures, that means 97,711 households in Cork city and county are potentially losing out.

The most recent CRU national data also shows a drop in switching rates for 2020.

Only one in seven change every year – and 65 per cent of those forget to do so in year two.

Typical behaviour is to automatically continue on with the existing supplier when a contract expires

The WeSwitchU.ie index also looks at electricity costs alone, and potential savings amount to €420 for those living in Ireland's standard three-bed semi-detached.

Annual bills range from a high of €1,200 to €780, based on 4,200kwh – the average annual electricity used in medium-sized homes.

The savings grow to €760 (€2,030 versus €1,270) for those living in bungalows and detached homes and €356 a year for apartment and terraced home residents (high of €840 against lowest €484), who typically use less electricity.

"Based on the maximum an-

nual savings, customers have the power to put €166 every month back in their pockets," said Mr Halpin.

"Those who make the switch themselves benefit from the savings in their first year but need to look at the market again after that time to keep up the momentum.

"Once you sign up with WeSwitchU.ie, you do not have to search year-in, year-out for better deals as we continue to pursue savings on an annual basis and do the switching for you.

"When your contract expires we provide breakdown of the best deals for your needs and switch providers on your behalf.

"By removing the main barriers to switching – hassle and time – you are guaranteed to always be on the best rates."

The savings are based on CSO and SEAI data for annual average electricity and gas usage across various house types.



# West Cork boasts ideal conditions for growing potatoes



## 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.

As the lockdown continues many people are finding more time at home and have, over the last year, started to grow their own fruit and vegetables. One of the easiest foods to grow with amazing returns for the effort involved is our most popular vegetable in Ireland, the potato. It is a fantastic crop to grow on new ground, as it will improve the soil quality for other crops in future years.

We have ideal growing conditions here in West Cork, and we are finding many of our customers are getting brilliant returns on their homegrown spuds! This season at Deelish Garden Centre, we have over 30 varieties in stock. With new regulations post Brexit, we decided to stock up before Christmas this year, with over 5 tonnes of Scottish seed potatoes! Each year we try to source new varieties as well as stocking tried and tested favourites. If you are unsure just which variety to grow, listed below are the three main groups including popular varieties, growing time and blight risks of each group.

### First earlies:

Plant early to mid March. 10-12 weeks to mature. Less chance of blight but smaller harvest. Popular varieties: Orla Duke of York, Sharpe's express.

### Second earlies:

Plant mid March to early April. 12-14 weeks to mature. Small chance of blight. Good selection Medium harvest. Popular varieties: British queens, Charlotte, Nicola.

### Main crop:

Plant in April. 18-22 weeks to mature. More chance of blight. Large harvest Popular varieties: Golden wonders, Kerr's pink, the Sarpo group.

### Chitting

Once you have decided which varieties you want to grow, it is time to 'chit'. Seed potatoes, particularly earlies and second earlies benefit from 'chitting' prior to being planted. This process encourages strong shoots to sprout over several weeks to encourage faster growth and heavier crops once they're in the ground.

From late February to March, chit your seed potatoes by setting them out in seed trays, shallow boxes or empty egg cartons in a cool, bright, frost free position to allow them to sprout. You will notice that the immature 'chits' are all at one end (called the rose end). Place the rose end upwards. Sturdy 'chits' will form and should grow one inch in length. Be careful not to let them get any longer, as they can break when planting out slowing down the growth. Main crops don't necessarily need to be chitted.

### Planting out

Once you are happy with your chitted seed potatoes and the weather seems right, you are ready to plant! Here in West Cork, it is possible to plant seed potatoes right through the year under the protection of glass-houses and polytunnels. Outside it is possible to plant out after the last frost, (typically mid to late March). The soil should be freshly dug over and weed free. The traditional way is to dig a narrow trench 12cm (5in) deep. This can be lined with compost or even grass clippings for a better crop. As potatoes are hungry growers, I also like to add Topmix organic pellets (a mix of chicken pellets and seaweed dust with added potash) to the trench at this stage. If possible a mulch of well-rotted manure topped with seaweed and wood ash would be even better. The seed tubers are spaced 30cm (12") apart for earlies and 37cm (15") for main crop varieties. The rows should be 24" (60cm) apart for earlies and 75cm (30in) apart for maincrop.

There are other ways of growing if you do not have a large garden, or any garden at all! Small crops of potatoes can be grown in large, deep containers (rubble sacks and stacked tyres also work) and this is a good way of getting an early batch of new potatoes. Line the

bottom 15cm (6in) of the container with potting compost and plant the seed potato just below this. As the new stems start growing, keep adding compost until the container is full.

### Aftercare

It is important to 'earth up' potato crops as the shoots emerge above ground, to protect them from frosts, which blacken the shoots and delay production. Simply draw some soil over the top of the shoots to cover them again.

If there is a chance of a late frost, cover the new shoots with a garden fleece or straw. Remove when the threat of frost has passed.

First earlies and second earlies in particular require plenty of water during prolonged dry weather especially when tubers are starting to form. This is also a good time to feed with an organic liquid concentrate. This will strengthen the plants against disease, improve yields, and add flavour to the potato.

When the stems reach a height of 23cm (9") above ground they should be earthed up again to prevent tubers near to the soil surface from turning green.

Weed out any unwanted plants along the trenches through the season (if the potatoes are growing well, there won't be many).

### Harvesting

Harvesting times will vary depending on the growing season, weather conditions at harvest time and the size of tuber you want. Start to harvest first earlies as 'new potatoes' when the plants begin to flower, approximately 10-12 weeks from planting. Tubers will generally become larger the longer their growing period.

Maincrop varieties are usually left for at least two weeks after the leaves and stems have withered, to allow the skins to set. Cut down the stems with secateurs to just above soil level as the leaves wither and yellow, or if they show signs of blight. After harvesting, leave the tubers on the soil surface for a few hours to dry and cure the skin. Once dry store them in paper or hessian sacks in a dark, cool but frost-free place. Avoid storing in polythene bags, as potatoes will 'sweat' and rot. Some main crop varieties tend to taste sweeter a few weeks or months after harvesting, as the starches change to sugar.

### Common problems

**Potato blight:** This is the most common disease in our wet, warm summers. The initial symptoms are a rapidly spreading brown watery rot, affecting the leaves, and stems. Tubers can be affected too, and have a reddish-brown decay below the skin, firm at first but soon developing into a soft rot.

**Remedy:** Spray potato crops with a protective fungicide even before signs of blight become apparent. Copper sulphate is used as a preventative, not a cure. Add 50g Bluestone (copper sulphate) to 2 litres of hot water. In a separate container add 60g washing soda to three litres of hot water. After half an hour, mix the two liquids and spray directly onto the potatoes, making sure to spray under the leaves as well. Do not spray if raining, as the mixture will not stick. Use a watering can in the absence of a sprayer and ensure to clean it thoroughly after use. This five litre mixture is enough for 20 square metres. Begin spraying this potato blight treatment from about June, particularly when periods of wet weather are forecast and spray again after a few weeks to protect any new growth. We have also had great feedback from gardeners spraying with horsetail concentrate available as a concentrate here at Deelish. It is used as a preventative before any signs of blight appear as it strengthens the plants cells and make them more resilient to blight. If plants do become infected, any leaves should be removed and destroyed. Where potato crops have already developed tubers then these can be saved by cutting away the foliage and stems. Leave the soil undisturbed for two to three weeks to kill off any lingering spores so that they don't infect the crop when it is lifted.

Always try and grow potatoes on new ground or rotate every year if possible. Keeping the potatoes fed with a good organic fertiliser containing plenty of trace elements will also help with preventing blight.

For Blight resistant varieties, consider growing any of the Sarpo potato varieties, including Mira, Axona or blue Danube. I plan to grow Carolus this year as my main crop, as it also has excellent blight resistance and we love the large yields and the taste. Setanta is also another very popular blight-resistant choice.

**Potato blackleg:** Potato blackleg is a common bacterial disease, which causes black

## DEELISH GARDEN CENTRE

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rotting at the stem base. Initial infections cause stunted growth and yellowing stems. If tubers form, the flesh may be grey or brown and rotten.

**Remedy:** Blackleg generally infects individual plants rather than entire crops and does not spread between plants or persist in the soil. Remove and destroy any infected plants, improve soil drainage and plant blackleg resistant potato varieties such as Charlotte.

**Potato scab:** This disease causes raised scab-like lesions on the potato surface. It does not affect the taste of the potato, and is easily removed on peeling.

**Remedy:** Common Scab on potatoes is best controlled by improving poor soil conditions with the addition of organic matter and by keeping potato crops well watered throughout the growing season. Use any infected tubers first and do not store them. Home guard is well known variety for scab resistance.

**Eelworm:** Initially, crops display patches of poor growth and affected plants may show chlorosis and wilting, with poor top growth. These symptoms develop from the ground upwards. Heavily infested plants die prematurely and yield a poor crop of under-sized tubers.

**Remedy:** There are no

pesticides available to home gardeners, which will control eelworms, and so crop rotation should be used to avoid spreading the pest and to reduce infestations. Some varieties are more resistant. Nicola (one of my favourites) and Picasso have good Eelworm resistance.

### Slugs

Slugs cause damage to both the foliage and to the developing potato tubers. Damage is fairly obvious as the culprits are easily identified by the silvery slime trails that are left around the plant foliage and on the soil surface.

**Remedy:** There are a multitude of ways to kill or remove slugs and snails including homemade remedies such as beer traps. Use eco-friendly slug pellets or you can try nematodes or copper barriers. Sarpo Mira, Golden wonders and a few others have good slug resistance.

Don't let any of the above common problems put you off growing potatoes, as they really are a joy to grow! In my opinion, it is hard to beat the taste of a freshly dug home-grown spud, straight to the plate and served with a little Irish butter and a pinch of salt! Wishing you all the best with the growing season ahead and remember gardening doesn't have to cost the earth!



## people Home &amp; Garden

## Seed sowing

**Mags Riordan** of Bumblebee Farm is guiding us 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 she focuses on seed sowing.

Most seeds are easy because they're large enough to handle except for Antirrhinum, but more on that in a while.

Firstly, you'll need as fine a compost as you can get, as this allows for free movement of the fine roots of your new babies once they germinate. A good clean seed or module tray. Be sure to clean it well and a few drops of teatree oil in the water when rinsing won't go amiss. You need a clean sterile environment, as newly germinated seedlings are vulnerable in the early stages. Loosely fill the seed tray, level off but don't press the compost, as this will

compact the soil which makes it more difficult for roots to move freely. Water the growing medium before sowing your seed; this will settle the compost enough to get rid of any air pockets. Most of the seeds are big enough to handle and can be placed on the compost and gently pressed in.

Nasturtium can be sown to a depth of 5mm but the rest can be sown on the surface with a little sprinkling of compost over them. Antirrhinum seed on the other hand are incredibly fine, almost dust-like, so a little more care is needed. Pinch gently and try and spread and space the seed out as evenly as you can. I would recommend sowing these separately and at least three to four weeks before the other seeds in the plan, as they also take longer to germinate. If you're using a heated propagator, this will speed things up by a week or two. They take about 20 to 30 days to germinate and a further two to three weeks to grow beyond the first two cotyledons but after that they fly along. Because they are slow to get going, allowing the extra time should have them all flowering at the same time.



It's best to water from below by placing the seed tray in a dish, sink or bath and allow it to soak up water from below. Allow excess to drain away.

Watering this way helps avoid damping off and washing the seed out of the tray. Try and keep the compost moist but not sodden. Moisture and heat



are all that your seeds need to germinate at the time. Everything they need is contained in that miracle seed. At this time of year, a sunny windowsill is fine to get seed to germinate.

We will be sowing all the seed on our next Instagram live on March 20 if you want to see us doing it and we will have a Q&A at the end to answer any of your questions.

Julie from Blooming Native seed will be joining us to chat about the best native wildflower mixes for our pollinators, and using them in a garden situation, as well as the best ones for our native pollinators. As always this will go up as a video for you to watch later if you need to.

Bee Kind



## people Motoring

## The new Opel Crossland offers an attractive package



CAR  
REVIEWS  
Sean Creedon

James Brooks, Managing Director at Leeson Motors, the Irish Importer of Opel, said: "The new Crossland retains all the key ingredients the Crossland X predecessor model had. Comfortable, practical, spacious, keenly priced and powered by efficient engines, our new Crossland model now brings to market the stand-out, new Opel front style signature and a smart new rear finish.

"Many more comfort and safety features have been added, to offer a really attractive package for drivers looking for the perfect compact family crossover with SUV looks. The arrival of the all-new Crossland heralds the start of a complete rejuvenation of the Opel model line-up in 2021."

I always associate Opel with the Republic of Ireland soccer team when Arnold O'Byrne was a regular sight on RTE promoting the Opel brand with Irish stars like Frank Stapleton. An Irish MD cannot be responsible for the overall sales of a world brand like Opel, but somehow Opel's popularity seemed to decline when Mr O'Byrne left

the company.

The new version of the Crossland comes with a range of frugal petrol and diesel engines; it has comfortable seats, excellent interior proportions and an easy-to-use dashboard. Talking of dash, there does seem to be a lot of dashboard in your line of vision.

I drove a white version with a black roof and some lovely red lines. The red colour is replicated inside on the doors, dash and seats, which makes for a very bright interior. There is plenty of room in the back seat for three adults. I really like the high driving position and the good news is that the spacious boot contains a proper spare wheel.

Available in seven different body colours and in SC, SRI and a range-topping Elite trim. The new Crossland is powered by a choice of a 1.2 83bhp stop-start petrol 5-speed manual, a 1.2 130bhp turbo stop-start petrol, 6-speed automatic, a 1.5 110bhp turbo stop-start diesel and a 1.5 120bhp turbo stop-start diesel.

A hallmark signature of all new Opel models to come,

is the front Vizor face. It is married to an equally strong rear visual identity featuring a new, high gloss black tailgate panel housing the Opel logo and book-ended with stylish rear lights.

With prices starting from €22,395, standard equipment from level one SC includes a plethora of extras. The sporty

SRI trim, from €23,895, is packed with features over the SC trim, to include park assist front and rear, rear view camera, and many more goodies. The range topping Elite trim, from €25,395, is the ultimate in luxury.

Opel also has a new version of their Mokka due here very soon and as James Brooks

said, the Opel range is due a 'complete rejuvenation.' Now if Stephen Kenny can succeed with his brand of 'total football,' maybe we can relive those halcyon days of Euro '88 and Italia '90 in an Opel car.

Check out the Crossland on Opel.ie or contact your local Opel dealer for further information.



Opel has dropped the 'X' from their new Crossland, but that's only the name and they certainly have made up for the disappearance of the 'X' with some impressive designs in the new car

Crisp and compact on the outside, spacious and versatile on the inside, the new Crossland is the first in the range to adopt the Opel brand's unmistakable new Vizor front face signature.



# The courage to be authentic



## A SPORTING LIFE

Pat Culhane

Cork native, Colm Ó Dubhghaill, is not your typical 21-year-old. He is one of the top longboard surfers in Europe and has a number of national titles. You might catch him on the beaches of West Cork, where he often trains. This is on top of pursuing entry to a medical degree. And he remains particularly grounded about it all.

Colm was raised in Glounthaune in the suburbs of Cork city. With two brothers, one older and one younger, they played all kinds of sports in the garden growing up. “World cup, three-goals-in and pucking around (hurling) were among our favourites. Our German Shepherd, Sally, would chase the sliotar and bring it back to us. She is still around today and keeps us on our toes.”

Brought up in the family home through Irish, Colm was also taught through Irish at Gaelscoil na Dúglaise primary school. His mother was also a teacher there. Then Colm attended Coláiste an Phiar-saigh post-primary school in Glanmire.

“I started playing sport at the age of nine with Douglas GAA Club, which had strong links with Gaelscoil na Dúglaise. My older brother had played with the school teams and I wanted to follow suit. Our coach in primary school was also the coach in the club. To make the school team, you were better off playing with the club.”

“Unlike my brothers, the skills of ball sports didn’t come naturally to me. I was fairly fast but had to spend a lot of time

on my ball skills, such as hitting off my weaker side in hurling. I also played soccer briefly with the Avondale club and rugby for the Dolphin club when in primary school. But hurling and (Gaelic) football were what I wanted to progress with most. There were fixture clashes between the various sports, mainly on Saturday mornings. That influenced my decision to stick with Gaelic games. And I was making the championship teams, such as the Féilé team.”

“I think my Dad has always had a really positive influence on my sports participation. He was like our own home coach. I often went to him for advice and he was my greatest guidance and source of encouragement throughout – in sport and in general. He taught me the fundamentals of sport, including many of the main skills.”

“Dad played with the Erins Own club in Cork, which is a stone’s throw from where I grew up. And we played with Douglas, a neighbouring club, as our primary school was in the catchment area. I remember going to mass on a Sunday wearing a Douglas half-zip, and Dad would tell us to cover it up or change, in case anybody from Erins Own would see us. He is in his mid-50s now and still plays with the UCC staff soccer team.” Colm’s father, Dr. Rónán Ó Dubhghaill, is currently the Vice-President for External Relations at University College Cork (UCC).

Despite a passion for Gaelic games, it’s surfing that that emerged as Colm’s favourite. “When I was nine, we spent a few summers down in Ballyferrier on the Dingle Peninsula. My grandparents had a house there. This is where I had my first encounter with surfing. I did a week of lessons on Inch Beach and the same the following summer. When I was 11, we bought a foam-board off the surf school and that was really the start of my surfing journey. Straight away, I found surfing exciting.”

“As I progressed in secondary school, I started surfing more and more – mainly at Garrettstown beach, at Inchydoney and Long Strand too. At 13, I started surfing with Garrettstown Surf Club. As my teens progressed, surfing took over from Gaelic games.”

“We had two coaches at Garrettstown every Saturday. One was Jason Coniry from Clonakilty, who passed away from cancer a few years later, sadly. Gary Mason was the other, who also coached at Dolphin Swimming Club. Being



Surfing in Noosa Heads, Australia 2018. Pic: James Parry

surrounded by these established surfers got me into competing, as they had vast experience of the circuit.”

“In the summer of 2012, when I was 14, my Dad drove me and two friends to my first competition – an Irish Surf Association, national junior competition. After a few competitions, I became interested in the longboard category. The shortboard category involves a board, typically, under seven feet, and longboard over nine feet.”

“I became longboard national champion (junior, Under-18) when I was 16 and again at 17, in 2014 and 2016. And, so, my ambition grew. Every two years there was a European championship, and an Irish team would be put together. At 16, I had hoped to go to the Azores in Portugal with the Irish junior team but didn’t make it. I bottled it in a crucial heat. That was very disappointing!”

Despite a hectic surfing training and competition schedule, Colm didn’t allow this to affect his studies, gaining a place on the BSc Physiology degree programme in UCC, where he is now in the third year. “I didn’t surf the year of my Leaving Cert. Even though my results were grand, I decided to take a year out, as I didn’t know what third level course I wanted to do. I just wanted to surf. That summer, I worked as a lifeguard on Garrylucas Beach and saved some money. I was mad to get back surfing again.”

“I spent a month in Spain surfing, then Cornwall. The

following spring, I went to Australia for two months and competed in the famous Noosa Longboard Festival in Noosa Heads, about two hours north of Brisbane. There I competed against the very best, including past world champions. It was a very humbling experience. I did it for the competitive experience and to improve my overall surfing. I didn’t think I was going to win.”

“I was pursuing becoming a professional surfer at that point, which comes about through competing and getting brand sponsorship. I managed to get some sponsorship through a surfing equipment brand called Slide 65. But it was mostly my personal funds that sustained this pursuit. I had real ambition but didn’t get close enough. You could see the clear advantage for those growing up in the likes of Australia, with some of the best waves in the world on your doorstep.”

It was after this, in 2018, that Colm decided to start in UCC. “I surf with the UCC Surf Club and won two national longboard intervarsity competitions. I was also competing regularly in senior events on the national circuit around this time. I made the senior national team after winning the two selection events.”

“In 2019, the world longboard championship was in France and the European championship in Portugal, which I represented Ireland in. After a rocky start in the round-robin Europeans, I ended up coming sixth, just missing out on the

final. I was surprised and delighted with that.”

Despite his somewhat quiet, relaxed and warm demeanour, it is clear that Colm is a deeply motivated individual, content in pursuing the road less travelled.

Take longboarding – an individual sport that is a smaller community within an already small community, in Ireland at least. Colm is also an active member of UCC Swimming and Waterpolo Club, competing in intervarsity competitions. Despite a very active and enjoyable social life, it involved “a lot of sober nights out. I never drank and never started. I was involved in a number of other activities.”

“As you pass through life, you realise that mental ill-health is within touching distance of everybody: one in four will suffer directly during their lifetime. Although I’ve never suffered from this, I have been involved in the UCC Niteline service in recent years. It’s a non-judgmental, non-directive listening service for students run by students and is confidential. Firstly, I was a call-taking volunteer and then took up a role on the committee as Volunteers Officer, liaising with Cork Samaritans to train students each semester. It was a brilliant experience – very sociable and felt we made progress in helping people.”

Colm is also working towards a four-year graduate entry medicine programme. I realised that I wanted to do medicine from working as a Lifeguard, interacting with and

helping people, like first aid. And having to respond to serious situations on the spot with limited information; I found that exciting. I have always enjoyed the sciences throughout school and college too. It’s a serious challenge to get in, but hopefully I’ll get there.”

Colm possesses an unusual blend of motivation. Extrinsically, for example, he enjoys the acceptance among his peers of winning a surf competition. Who wouldn’t? Intrinsically, Colm’s motivation in sport and beyond runs much deeper than this.

“I have never held back in any aspect of my life and want to empty the tank on my chosen pursuits. I want to get the most out of myself. It not about proving myself to society; what people think is out of my control. It’s about my journey and I want to make the best of it.”

Colm is certainly doing a good job of it and there is no sign of him slowing down. His courage and dedication to be authentic, consciously or not, is refreshing and inspirational. One to look out for!

This is my last article for the foreseeable future. It has been a pleasure writing with the West Cork people over the last number of months. I will return now to focus on my doctoral degree, which I am completing in my spare time. Thanks to the Mary O’Brien, Sheila Mullins and the interviewees for all their support.

For more, see [patculhane.ie](http://patculhane.ie) or @Pat\_Culhane



## people Sport &amp; Fitness

## West Cork is the home of Cork football

SPORTING  
TALES

Paul Lordan

Paul Lordan is a sports and history enthusiast, and he is delighted to combine his passions in his column. Paul is well placed to comment on sport as a former hurler and footballer with Shamrocks. He is also a former Munster Senior League soccer player and manager with Avondale United, Casement Celtic, Garryduff and Passage AFC. Paul's grá for all things West Cork results from the fact that he is descended from a family of farmers in the Coolmountain area.

Recently happened upon a number of references to two now defunct Gaelic Football clubs based in Cork City called Nils and Lees. Although no longer in existence, both teams were dominant forces on the club scene from the late 1800s until the 1950s with a total of 18 senior titles between them. (Lees are in second place in the Cork Senior Football Championship roll of honour with 12 titles despite folding in the late 1950s) The fact that the majority of their players were West Cork men living and working in the city served to greatly pique my interest. Today, when driving through any town or townland in West Cork it becomes immediately apparent that Gaelic Football dominates our sporting landscape. Whilst many (myself included) view West Cork as the spiritual home of Gaelic Football in the county, I felt compelled to prove that West Cork's contribution to football goes beyond delivering 18 county titles to the city division!

West Cork men have been central figures in six out of Cork's seven All Ireland Senior Football victories. The only exception was the 1890 All Ireland Final win which occurred when the county champions (Middleton) represented Cork. In 1911, Cork's 6-6 to 1-2 annihilation of Antrim featured a significant

Macroon contingent in corner back John Lynch, midfielder Sean Lehane, and forwards Bill Lehane, John O'Neill, and Con Kelleher. They were ably assisted by Mick Mehigan from Clonakilty and Clondrohid's Jack O'Driscoll. Although Adrigole's Murt O'Shea and Dunmanway's Jack Young were playing with Cork City outfits Lees and Nils respectively, they added to a rather sizable West Cork presence on the team.

Cork had to wait until 1945 before getting their hands on the Sam Maguire Cup for the third time. By this time, Jack Young's son Eamonn had left his native Doheny's and played his club football with the Army side in Cork City. This move did his intercounty prospects no harm, and he starred at midfield in a 2-5 to 0-7 win over a Cavan team that would end the decade winning three championships in a row. Legendary Clonakilty centre back Tadhgo Murphy captained the rebels, and he was joined by club mates Fachtna O'Donovan and Humphrey O'Neill. Goalkeeper Moll O'Driscoll and substitute Jim Ahern rounded off a sizable Clonakilty contingent. Although a Lees player, Bere Island native and Veterinary Surgeon, Patrick 'Weeshie' Murphy marshalled the defence from the full back position. It is also worth noting that influential wing back, Paddy Cronin who played his club football with Fermoy, was a native of Ballingeary.

In 1973, a talented Cork team finally made the break and defeated a Liam Sammon led Galway side by 3-17 to 2-13. Adrigole's Kevin Jer O'Sullivan, and Declan Barron of Bantry Blues were pivotal figures in this win. Over the course of their storied intercounty careers, both men won two All Star's apiece, and were named in Cork's Gaelic Football Team Of The Century. Clonakilty's Dave McCarthy excelled in the left half forward berth, whilst Bantry's Donal Hunt and Naomh Abán's Mick Scannell made substitute appearances on the day.

In 1989 and 1990, Cork managed to win two championships in a row. The first victory saw Cork defeat Mayo by 0-17 to 1-11, and the second saw Cork overcome their long time rivals Meath on a scoreline of 0-11 to 0-9. Castlehaven's Niall Cahalane, Larry Tompkins, and John Cleary were among Cork's key men at this time. As were Ballingeary's John O'Driscoll, and O'Donovan Rossa pairing Tony Davis and Mick McCarthy RIP (rightly lauded for



The Clonakilty Team that contested the 1954 County Final.



Cork 1973 Football Team



Eamonn Young and Tadhgo Crowley at Cork Senior Football Training at The Mardyke.

his big impact from the bench in the 89 final, and starting at corner forward in the 1990 final). Although Paddy Hayes played his club football with St. Finbarrs, it is worth noting that he originally hailed from Skibbereen. Paddy started the 1989 final, and made a substitute appearance in the 1990 final, as did a young Mark O'Connor from Bantry.

It will be eleven years this year since Cork last secured the Sam Maguire trophy. In 2010, a talented Cork side managed to secure championship

silverware, having lost finals in 2007 and 2009. Alan Quirke from Valley Rovers was a rock between the sticks for this Cork team while Noel O'Leary (Cill na Martra), Alan O'Connor (St. Columns), and Graham Cauty (Bantry Blues) further cemented their legendary status within Cork football circles with a series of stellar performances throughout the campaign. John Hayes from Carbery Rangers saw action from the bench in the final, and he was joined on the panel by Anthony Lynch (Naomh Abán), Kevin McMa-

hon (Carbery Rangers), Fiachra Lynch (Valley Rovers) and Fintan Gould (Macroon).

In the ladies game, legendary players such as Nollaig Cleary (Gabriel Rangers), Orla Finn (Kinsale) and Emma Spillane (Bantry Blues) have five All Stars and multiple All Irelands between them. Twenty of Cork's 74 ladies football clubs are located in West Cork. There are a few further key points that illustrate the sheer importance of West Cork's contribution to Cork football. Twenty-nine per cent of all active clubs in Cork are located in West Cork despite the fact that hurling is not overly prevalent in the area. The Cork Senior Football Championship has been brought back to West Cork on 41 occasions over the last 134 years. 27 of Cork's 69 Football All Stars hail from West Cork. Intercounty greats such as Con O'Sullivan (Urhan), Kevin Kehily (Newcestown), John Evans (O'Donovan Rossa), Kevin O'Dwyer (O'Donovan Rossa), Ciaran O'Sullivan (Urhan), and Phillip Clifford (Bantry) all managed

to win All Stars without getting their hands on a coveted Celtic Cross. It is also worth noting that eight members of Cork's Gaelic Football Team Of The Millennium, and six members of Cork's Gaelic Football Team Of The Century hail from West Cork. Cork players have been included in the Irish Compromise Rules panel on 36 occasions over the last 25 years; 15 of these players have hailed from West Cork (including Graham Cauty who was Player Of The Series in 2008).

I think the assertion that West Cork is the homestead of football in our county is well founded. The remarkable nature of West Cork's contribution to Cork football's greatest days is heightened when you consider the impact of a largely sparse or seasonal population. Additional challenges such as historically high levels of emigration, poor infrastructure and a disproportionately high concentration of smaller clubs and local rivalries has made the continued success of West Cork football all the more impressive.



## people Sport &amp; Fitness

## A further €16,708 boost to West Cork swimming pool operators

A further allocation of €16,708 has been made to West Cork swimming pool operators in the second and final phase of the COVID-19 swimming pool grant scheme.

Senator Tim Lombard explains: "It continues to be a very difficult time for swimming pool operators. Today's funding, as well as that announced in December, is part of a €78,565 investment in West Cork facilities and will help provide some

stability in the months ahead.

"This funding scheme is part of the July Stimulus package aimed at supporting publicly accessible swimming pools to respond to the challenge of maintaining facilities and assist with the costs associated with reopening and remaining open within COVID-19 safety protocols, as well as to promote participation in the sport of swimming."

"The West Cork facilities

to receive further funding are:

Actons Hotel Leisure Centre, Kinsale; Celtic Ross Hotel & Leisure Centre, Rosscarbery; Club Maritime in Bantry; Dunmanway Swimming Pool; Inish Beg Swimming Pool, Baltimore; Kinsale Hotel & Spa; Schull Harbour Hotel & Leisure Centre; The Water School in Bantry; The Wild Atlantic Pool & Fitness Centre in Baltimore; and Westlodge Hotel Leisure Center, Bantry.

"It is important for our local communities that sports facilities are serviced and maintained throughout lockdown. The high cost of maintaining swimming pools while closed and the difficulty of reopening at reduced capacity is recognised by the Government, and today's funding is a welcome support to ensure that our local swimming pools are in a position to reopen when it is appropriate and safe to do so."

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## Fitbits and bits to aid your fitness motivation



## DIY FITNESS

Tania Presutti

Danish freelance journalist and fitness professional Tania Presutti, who now resides in Clonakilty, delivers a series of efficient DIY fitness exercises you can do at home.

As you might remember, my last couple of columns have asked – and sought to answer – the question about staying healthy and motivated during the lockdown.

In this Spring column, I will look into other ways to stay motivated, and on a personal level, I'll reveal my top external motivation.

No matter how interesting or challenging our choice of training is, it does sometimes get boring, or rather we have zero motivation to get up, get changed, and get out. When I started running about one-and-a-half years ago, I found that aside from following a plan or programme, using a fitness watch helped me stay motivated and consistent.

If you are new to fitness watches, I can briefly tell you that the overall purpose of using them is to keep track of your general fitness level. You can get watches which range from the FITBIT, which does



the basic – Track your sleep and step count, active time and calories burned (and recognise a few activities automatically (often) walking, elliptical and running) – to more elaborate fitness watches, which beside the aforementioned, also have a range of activities to choose from, include GPS for route-tracking and altitude levels, VO2 Max, waterproof for swimming and more accurate sport tracking data.

In short, you can roughly distinguish the two by saying Fitbits in general are for people interested in health and wellbeing, and sport or fitness watches such as Polar, Garmin, Suunto and so on are for people more interested in sport and fitness. These watches can break down your training to see progress, over-training, recovery and maintenance to help you improve.

Common for both types of fitness gadgets is that they provide a steady flow of fitness data – and therefore motivation to be healthy.

A couple of months into running seriously (following a

programme) my first wish was to get a pair of decent running shoes and after another couple of months, a watch. The benefits from either were essential to me as a runner. Good shoes are obviously needed to protect feet and legs (joints, muscles and bones) from the continuously pounding, which running is; and the fitness watch provides me with unending data and motivation.

The data shows me the route I ran (in km or miles), calories burned, and time consumed. It also tells me speed, cadence (steps per minute), heart rate, elevation, and the watch gives suggestions to rest and recovery periods following a run or training session. It also tells me my VO2 max (Maximal oxygen uptake), which reveals my fitness level. VO2 max is reached when your oxygen consumption remains at a steady state despite an increase in the workload. It is at this plateau that the athlete moves from aerobic metabolism to anaerobic metabolism. From there, it is usually not long before muscle fatigue sets in and forces the athlete to stop

exercising.

To invest in a fitness watch or Fitbit is an individual choice, but for me, it provides two main motivations: 1) It gives me a lot of data, which I find interesting to decipher and 2) It gives me a sense of accomplishment. As I'm rarely running with anyone and don't have a coach, like many of you who train alone, it can some days be hard to stay motivated or see your progress. My watch basically works the same way my Muay Thai trainer did; it comments on progress, areas to work in, gives kudos and a scold when appropriate. So you could say, it provides me with feedback and motivation.

Now I wouldn't suggest throwing money at a Fitbit or fitness watch right after reading this column. First take a good, honest look at your situation: What is your goal? Would this kind of motivation work for you? What kind of data do you need – and do you need any at all to stay motivated?

For most people external motivation is a helping hand to stay consistent with training and/or dieting, and if you are the type to respond positively to this, a fitness gadget could be a great help to stay motivated and focused, especially in these times where it's hard to do classes and group exercising.

Fitbits are famous for sending weekly reports, which highlight the days you've reached your step count, average calories burned per day, average sleep, activity minutes and days of exercising.

These can be very motivating and helpful to stay active, and you can even set some Fitbits to remind you to move, if you've been sitting too long.

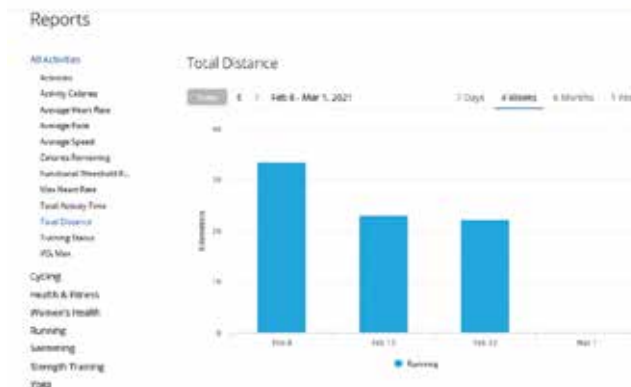
As you can see from the report, Fitbit gives you a good break down of all the vital information to track your general

health and fitness level. Fitbits range from around €65 to €299 in retail.

If you're into sport and fitness, especially running, cycling or triathlon, you could consider a sport or fitness watch. It's my guess that all the brands offer the same functions, with tiny differences, like Garmin using Vo2 Max term and Polar using Fitness Number to describe the same thing (Your fitness level).

Again, before you head out to buy or order online, take time to think about your needs versus price versus offerings. I opted for a fairly basic running watch, which is great for what I need it to do: GPS run tracking, cadence, speed and heart rate. It gives me a fairly accurate picture of my fitness Vo2 (for accurate Heart Rate you need a strap).

The watches also track calories consumption and if you are looking to lose weight, you can track your calorie intake via apps or websites like My Fitness Pal, and compare the two. If you are in calorie deficit, you will lose weight.



Here you can see how Garmin reports can look. Options range from one week to one year and everything from activity calories to average speed can be displayed.

You might also find, that an old school notebook or wall

calendar is all that you need to keep focus, noting down your work out, time and date. Which I can only commend you for. One of the pits with using a fitness gadget is you can get a bit obsessed with the numbers and even feel disappointed if you go running or biking without your watch. As with most other things electronically, it's about finding a balance, where you get the benefits, but don't get obsessed.

Last mention is websites and apps, which can support your fitness goals and gadgets: [www.strava.com](http://www.strava.com) (for running and cycling tracking); [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com) (tracking diet and exercise); [www.finalsurge.com](http://www.finalsurge.com) (training log for athletes)

Apps: Yoga for beginners (For iPhones/ iPads and Androids free w/ in-app purchases); Pear (Personal Fitness Coach) (Apple and Androids, free w/ in-app purchases); Fitbit Coach (Apple and Androids, require subscription 7.99\$ month or 39.99\$ annually)

I hope you find this month's

column useful, even it didn't contain any exercises; I'll get back with the sweaty stuff next month. If you have questions or comments they are as usual welcome at: [taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com](mailto:taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com) or via Instagram: @trainwithadane