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Local swimmers join Paddy Conaghan of 'Ducking and Driving' for a swim at Broadstrand on January 10. 81-year-old Paddy is raising awareness and funds for mental health. See full story on page 3. Pic: Sharon Crosbie

45,500 Cork burial records now online

Over 45,500 burial records for Cork county are now available online free of charge.

Skibbereen Heritage Centre has been digitising Cork County Council burial registers for some time and this latest upload of records brings the total number of graveyards covered around the county to date to 89.

"We're delighted to bring these records into the public domain," said centre manager Terri Kearney, "and we are very grateful to Cork County Council for its support of this project."

With so many people around the world increasingly interested in

tracing their Irish ancestry, Skibbereen Heritage Centre's genealogy service has been inundated with online queries and there will be a big interest in these records.

"We are also getting a fantastic response from all over the world to our series of graveyard video tours," said Kearney. "As well as enabling the Diaspora to connect with their ancestors' burial places, these video tours mean a lot to local people too and we've had many, many messages of support and appreciation for our West Cork Graveyards Project."

The 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 graveyard video tours to date cover Caheragh, Drimoleague, Aughadown, Abbeystrowry 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.

The West Cork Graveyards database and videos are available to view free of charge on Skibbereen Heritage Centre's website www.skibbheritage.com with an interactive map showing all the graveyards covered, as well as a tutorial video on how to use the database.

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Knitting yourself back together

Dermot donates his finished items to local charities.

With a resurgence of interest in knitting over lockdowns and the 'Tom Daly' effect encouraging more and more men to take up the craft, it's no surprise that sales of needles, wool and patterns are still a strong shopping trend going into 2022. Aside from the satisfaction that comes from creating something both practical and beautiful from scratch, knitting is also recognised as a fantastic way of practicing mindfulness. Its impressive health benefits range from reducing depression and anxiety and lowering blood pressure to offering distraction from chronic pain and even slowing the onset of dementia.

Bandon native **Dermot Hegarty**, 51, shares how knitting and crochet offer support for his mental health and why he is appealing for donations of wool.

A big football supporter, Dermot's struggle with his mental health began in 2009 when his football club, Cork City FC, got into financial trouble. Chairperson of the Cork City Supporters at the time, Dermot threw himself into trying to save his beloved football club, unfortunately to the detriment of his own health. After suffering a nervous breakdown, he was diagnosed with severe depression and eventually bipolar disorder.

Leaving full-time employment due to his illness, Dermot became very involved in his

local community, in particular with the Bandon Men's Shed project in 2014. That year, he also volunteered as office secretary with the Family Support and Community Wellbeing Bandon where he was later employed part-time.

It was at this centre that Dermot first put his mind to knitting.

Between 2017 and 2019, he was also very involved with the Inside Out Mental Health support group in Bandon.

A bereavement as a result of Covid in 2021 and his ensuing depression caused Dermot to



cast off knitting and crochet for a while but influenced by his hero Olympic gold medallist Tom Daley who made a splash at the Tokyo Games when he was seen knitting, Dermot realised how much he missed the craft. "I have never been happier than I am now, in doing something that I love," explains Dermot, who says he would love to see more men taking up knitting for the benefit of their mental health. "Men's health should be a priority in every community," he says, "in Bandon we need a premises for the Bandon Men's Shed so that it can open up again."



YouTube has offered a fantastic learning forum and is a great source of patterns to the Bandon knitter. After starting to crochet armchair throws last September, Dermot came up with the idea of donating his finished items to local groups, the Bandon Community Hospital, Jack and Fiends Centre for Autism and the St. Vincent de Paul Bandon.

As Dermot is on disability allowance, he can't afford to purchase the wool for these projects and is appealing to the local community for wool donations.

Anyone with unwanted wool



Tips for getting started with knitting:

Thousands of people across the world share their knowledge with easy to follow videos on YouTube – no question is too silly that it has not been asked hundreds of times before so google it!

Start with blankets and scarves to get used to the needles and try out the many stitches that create interesting textures.

Ravelry.com is a great resource. There are thousands of patterns to browse through (many are free) that are graded by difficulty and

you can see how other users got on with them and if they had any problems/suggestions.

Making mistakes is part of learning. You will have to unravel (called frogging because a frog says 'rip it, rip it!') many times..... do frog back when you realise you have made a mistake as you will never be happy with the finished item if you don't.

Keep an eye on the rails of local charity shops for clothing that you can unravel to reuse the wool in a new project – a fantastic way to upcycle.

of any colour or size who is willing to donate to Dermot's voluntary crochet and knitting projects can contact him on 083 0905044.

He is also looking for the loan of a large Addi Express knitting machine for a few months.



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Paddy makes waves in West Cork for mental health

West Cork open water swimmers came out in force this week to support 81-year-old Donegal man Paddy Conaghan who is 'ducking and driving' around Ireland, swimming at every Irish beach and pier he passes along on the way, to raise awareness for mental health. With over €60,000 raised, and that figure climbing rapidly, for the Donegal counselling service Gemma's Legacy of Hope, Paddy has far exceeded his initial goal of €1000.

The hardy octogenarian trained year round in all conditions for his challenge before buying a van and the necessary equipment for his trip and setting off before Christmas.

Taking the plunge at Union Hall, Inchydoney and Ring last Sunday, he stopped off in Courtmacsherry early on Monday morning, where he was given a warm welcome from friendly local swimmers. A group of about 15 local people joined the 81-year-old for a



Paddy tests the waters at Broadstrand. Pic: Sharon Crosbie

swim at 9am in Broadstrand on Monday after County Councilor Paul Hayes put the call out on social media.

"I was delighted to get a message from the 'Ducking and Driving' team on Sunday evening to see if we could arrange a swim in Courtmacsherry on Monday as part of Paddy's tour of the Irish coast to raise funds for Gemma's Legacy of Hope," says Paul. "I'm very grateful to the swimmers who joined us in the water and for the welcome they gave Paddy."

Paddy has really tapped into the public psyche and, with Sky news picking up the story this week, his journey for mental health is now inspiring people all over the world.

"Over the past two years of this pandemic, people have discovered a newfound appre-

ciation for nature and enjoying the great outdoors. I know that beach walks, hiking and swimming have certainly helped me to cope with the sometimes overwhelming consequences of this virus, so the 'Ducking and Driving' initiative is really striking a chord with the public in that regard," says Paul.

Paddy had hoped to spend two months on his tour around the coast of Ireland but he is enjoying the experience so much, he intends extending this to three months, so that he can spend longer in each place, meeting more people and enjoying more dips in the sea.

If you would like to follow the remainder of Paddy's journey or donate to his cause, search for 'ducking & driving' on gofundme.com

Ballinascarthy remembers 'The Two Cons'



A special day of centenary commemorations was held in Ballinascarthy on Dec 19 with the unveiling of "The Two Cons" memorial and storyboard in the village. Members of the Defence Forces officiated at the State event with the lives and deaths of Con Daly and Con Murphy remembered on the day. (l-r) Lt Patrick Fitzgerald, Lt Bláthnaid de Gailli and Sergeant Kevin Murray, all from the 1st Brigade Artillery Regiment at Collins Barracks.

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What's another year?



A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

Here we are again. It's the start of January and Covid is still at the centre of our lives. The questions we had before Christmas are still keeping us apart and the few answers that we got are not what we were hoping for. In the immortal words of Johnny Logan: 'What's another year?'

At the start of last month, we didn't know if Christmas was coming or going. We found out pretty quickly that it would not be much to get excited about. An 8pm curfew in pubs and restaurants and a suggestion that, though up to four households could meet up we shouldn't be seeing anyone at all, put a real damper on the whole jolliness of the festive season. I know that some carried on regardless, making the most of the craic that was to

be had before 8pm, and I commend them for that. Personally, I only got out one evening for a two-hour pre-Christmas drink and a sing-song. Lovely as that was, I felt uncomfortable. Though I am boosted and everyone in the pub was vaccinated, it just wasn't the same craic despite everyone's efforts to make merry while keeping our distance. The natural flow of fun just wasn't there. The normal arc of craic that starts slow and then progressively speeds up into a roller coaster of singing and dancing was kept to a steady, even keel of civil companionship. My one night out lowered my expectations. However, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

I've always been an optimist. Things can only get better. This too shall pass. Let the good times roll. Though this might seem like a positive way to see life, it has its downsides. Even though I live in Ireland, I don't own an umbrella. Not owning an umbrella means that I often get drenched. It also means that I put plans on hold until things start looking up. In fact, overly optimistic people like me, will shut down any planning at all if it looks like an optimistic outcome is not likely. We don't like half-measures. We'd rather be in denial than admit that things may still be bad in the future. This year, I didn't plan much for Christmas or New Year's. They just happened, with very low expectations.

The result was that we had a pretty good time. I felt lucky that all my daughters could be home for Christmas day. Two of my dearest old friends who were visiting Ireland dropped by and reminded me that time and distance mean nothing in the face of friendships that span over twenty-five years. When the small gathering we were invited to for New Year's Eve was cancelled the day before due to Covid, we regrouped, and decided that 48 oysters and two bottles of champagne between four was the perfect way to welcome 2022.

So, bring on the new, even if it feels like the old is still hanging around. I'm sick of waiting for Covid to go away before I start getting properly dressed and making plans for the future. I've spent much of the last ten months living in a sort of fog, where the future is murky, and the past is one big lockdown. To quote our national treasure, and Eurovision superstar Johnny Logan again: 'I've been praying, such a long time. It's the only way to hide the fear.' Not planning is a way of not failing. Planning with low expectations is a way to be surprised that things turned out to be not that bad. 'What's another year?' It'll be whatever we make it. Here's hoping (but not too much) that all your, and my, plans work out to be better than expected.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the January issue of West Cork People,

I'm standing as I write this month's editor's letter; at my new height adjustable desk, designed to alleviate some of the tension and inevitable aches and pains that comes from sitting at a desk all day. I was thinking recently, as I battled yet another back spasm, is it any wonder that so many of are crippled with back pain when we reach a certain age. I turn 44 this week, so for the past 40 years, since starting school, I've been in the same seated position. The only change (as I'm actually still sitting next to my best friend LOL) is that I've transitioned from lugging heavy school books to heavy bundles of papers! Anyway the desk, or rather movement that it's encouraging, is definitely helping the pressure on my spine, so I would recommend it. We bought ours locally from Trevor in High Resolution, who couldn't have been more helpful.

Those of you who, like me, have felt the urge to turn off the news (most of it related to major climate change – the carbon footprint of our dogs, plants flowering too early, wildfires in winter, not to mention Covid) on several occasions already this month, will enjoy the more positive reading material in this month's West Cork People. As usual our focus in January is on lifestyle changes and resolutions that can only make you feel good about yourself and the world. From eating the right foods for the good of your mental and physical health to skincare tips that will bring you into 2022 with a glow to exploring mindful practices to encourage a positive outlook on life. The likes of 81-year-old Donegal man Paddy Conaghan travelling around Ireland in a van and jumping into the sea every day to raise awareness for mental health is inspiring people all over the world.

Of course there is much more than health-related articles. On the centenary of the Irish Civil War, Kieran looks at why such a relatively short conflict caused so much turmoil for so long, Eugene Daly considers the fear that the 'silence of birds' would instill, Share shares the fascinating Irish lineage of the legend that is Dracula and Tommy talks to two young inspiring students from Bandon who are researching producing low emissions beef for their project in this year's Young Scientist Competition. Nicholas Mitchell 'follows the rooks' in West Cork sharing some of their fascinating rituals and Fiona reminds us that there is still hope for our planet if we think global and act local. Astrologer Kate gives an insight into the year ahead and Matthew Hurley chats to Vicky McCabe about the meteoric rise of girls' rugby in Clonakilty.

We look forward to bringing you lots more good news stories from around West Cork in 2022.

I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary



Mary O'Brien
Editor



Sheila Mullins
Creative Director



Natalie Webb
Sales Consultant

Contributors

Kate Arbon
Karen Austin
Hannah Dare
Tina Pisco
Louise O'Dwyer
John Hosford
Sean Creedon
Tania Presutti
Noah Chase
Shane Daly
Pauline Murphy
Kieran Doyle
Sherna Malone
Tommy Moyles
Fiona Hayes
Grace O'Sullivan MEP
Dr Rosari Kingston
Dr Jeff Featherstone
Matthew Hurley
Eugene Daly
James Waller
Liz O'Mahony
Elizabeth Walsh
Mark Grace
Jean Perry

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West Cork People

Expanded Local Authority Home Loan scheme launched

New regulations will make it easier for single people to avail of a State backed mortgage for a new, second-hand or self-build home, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan says.

The government's newly expanded Local Authority Home Loan scheme, announced in January will see the income ceiling for a single applicant by €15,000 to €65,000 in counties Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow.

"Through Housing for All, this government is working to bring the dream of homeownership back into reach," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"People need easier access

to housing finance, and this goes some way to making that a reality.

"It's a very significant reform and a very positive step for broadening home ownership."

The announcement comes on top of significant enhancements already made to the scheme, Deputy O'Sullivan said.

In September the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien lowered the interest rate for local authority lending by 0.25 per cent. This lower interest rate will continue to apply to loans issued under the Local Authority Home Loan, he said.

The Minister for Hous-

ing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien, announced a newly expanded Local Authority Home Loan scheme on Tuesday.

The minister said the 'Fresh Start' principle also applies, meaning that people who are divorced or separated and have no interest in the family home, or who have undergone insolvency proceedings, will be eligible to apply also.

Minister O'Brien, along with Public Expenditure and Reform Minister Michael McGrath, signed regulations giving effect to the new Local Authority Home Loan scheme from January 4.

Christopher O'Sullivan TD

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Tree of Remembrance for lost loved ones



Funeral Directors John Michael and Denise Foley Pic: Martin Walsh.

A Tree of Remembrance erected outside Foley's Funeral Home in Clonakilty for those lost during the pandemic has been warmly received by the local community.

With Covid restrictions only allowing small funeral gatherings, which kept many apart from honouring their loved ones with a proper funeral ceremony, Funeral Directors John Michael and Denise Foley explain that they wanted to do something to help complete this unfinished grieving process that so many have experienced during this pandemic.

"As a Funeral Director and headstone supplier, I have witnessed the emotional devas-

tations this pandemic has had on our local community in the families who have allowed us to lay their deceased loved ones to rest," says John Michael.

With many families and friends prevented from saying their final good-byes, this unfinished grieving left a deep loss and lingering numbness in the community.

John Michael and Denise erected a Tree of Remembrance for those lost during this very difficult time outside their Funeral Home in Clonakilty. Lit up with lights, amongst its branches, the tree holds special ornaments with the name of each lost loved one. Mons Aidan O'Driscoll and Rev

Kingsley Sutton blessed the tree together before Christmas in a small blessing and remembrance ceremony.

"The responses we have been given have touched us deeply," says John Michael. "The texts and emails we have received from family members, telling us what this gesture meant to them, confirms the very reason I became a Funeral Director and became the third generation of Foley Funeral Directors."

The tree will remain up for a short time longer in their remembrance, and the personalised ornaments can be collected by the families if they would like as a keepsake.

Big boost for Bantry General Hospital



The much anticipated Endoscopy Unit planned for Bantry General Hospital is finally going to tender, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan has confirmed.

The planned works will include a single storey extension to the existing hospital and will provide 16 beds for a Stroke

Rehabilitation Unit.

"There are often concerns about Bantry General Hospital amid claims it will be downgraded, but here we see the Department and the HSE making a serious investment to increase services at the hospital," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"The staff and management

at Bantry must be commended for always seeking to improve the hospital and it's range of services. This is a big boost for them and for the community."

"I'm well aware people have concerns about the status of 24-hour acute emergency access, and it's something I am always keeping an eye on."

"This is the most important health facility West Cork. The range of services at BHG is phenomenal. From the local injury unit to care for the elderly and stroke rehabilitation services it really is a gem of a hospital."

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HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

Welcome to 2022. Perhaps the most significant anniversary in Irish history, this year is the centenary of the Irish Civil War. Let's look at contemporary events elsewhere to put this war in context. Why did this conflict, that only had a fraction of the 38,000 deaths suffered during the Finnish civil war of 1918 (one per cent of their population), cast a longer shadow? Why did the Irish civil war, a conflict that endured for far shorter than the blood stained civil war massacres of eastern and central Europe after the end of WW1, cause so much turmoil for so long? Indeed its long poison ran in the veins of Irish

The Irish Civil War – Why was it so bitter?

parliamentary life officially, until almost 100 years later. When Varadkar and Martin tied the knot, the former declared, "I believe Civil War politics ended a long time ago in our country, but today Civil War politics ends in our parliament".

So what happened to make this conflict worse than its larger or more blood thirsty contemporaries? A clue is in the list of the Taoisigh, opposition leaders and Presidents that roamed the corridors of power in Dail Eireann and Áras an Uachtaráin, since the founding of the state: W.T Cosgrave, John A. Costello, Eamon De Valera, Sean Lemass, Erskine Childers, Gareth Fitzgerald, Charles Haughey, Michael D. Higgins, (to name but a few) all had fought or fathers who fought in the revolutionary period. Now you can begin to understand why this civil war has cast a shadow longer than most.

What also is a key factor is the bitterness of the conflict. After all, the men who would kill each other for twelve months in 1922-23 had, only a short period before this, been brothers

in arms against the British forces and might of that colonial empire. When we sneer at the military takeovers by despotic generals in Africa like Mugabe or Pinochet in Chile, we tend to forget the Irish military men who eventually turned to politics. There is something in this that can help modern leaders unlock the actions of our former politicians, and sometimes, former heroes.

With the sands of time comes a more sympathetic view of the Republican anti-Treaty side. Of the forty-eight civil war memoirs in Cork, only eight are in honour of pro-Treaty belligerents. Politically, the anti-Treaty Party, Fianna Fail, were in constant power from 1932-1973, (save a brief number of years). Ironically, the party had roots as anti-democrats and strong armed military men. Despite this, what has happened to the memory of Cumann na nGaedhail, the pro-Treaty party, that comfortably won the election in 1922 and had the backing of the people? It seems both sides have a lot of controversy that needs to be unpacked. Many readers proba-

bly hold a view that was shaped by the stance their parents or grandparents took. For others it boiled down to personalities – the cult of Collins or the cult of Dev. It's hard to break those moulds. One of our greatest writers, George Bernard Shaw,

One of our greatest writers, George Bernard Shaw, put it more gracefully: People tend not to be swayed by an argument, but rather find the argument that suits their own conclusion.

put it more gracefully: People tend not to be swayed by an argument, but rather find the argument that suits their own conclusion. This article is not about adding to the cannon of who was right or wrong. I will

aim to dissect the darker side of both of the belligerents, which may shed light on the bitterness that shaped their future.

The Republicans have tended to promote a tradition of real founders of the state. They lay claim to the soul of the Irish people. This is highly ironic given it was the anti-treaty Republicans who didn't believe in the people or their voice. Indeed, the only thing they believed in was their own convictions. The kernel for their anti-democratic stance began when they refused to accept the majority decision made after the Treaty debates and their large defeat at the hands of pro-Sinn Féin and other smaller parties that were pro-Treaty in the elections that followed in 1922. Diarmaid Ferriter's latest book, 'Between Two Hells', examines this antipathy towards democracy and does an excellent job in capturing the tone of the anti-Treaty IRA. Liam Mellows, who would later be unjustly executed by the Free State, claimed 'The army [IRA] is not concerned with majorities or minorities, but a question of what is right'. The

vehemently anti-Treaty Rory O'Connor was more forthright in his views stating, 'it would be in the power of the Republic to prevent an election'. Ernie O'Malley, one of the IRA's most fearsome rebels believed, '90 per cent of the population is practically Free State' but fought to the bitter end regardless. It was with some irony that Ireland's longest serving Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, famously refused to accept the will of the majority, declaring in 1922 that, 'the people have never a right to do wrong.' Even when he did start the electoral process with anti-Treaty Sinn Féin in 1922, he wouldn't enter parliament because it would mean he would have to take an oath of allegiance to the fidelity of the King, as a perquisite to enter the chamber. A civil war and a destroyed generation later, he nonchalantly acceded to power with his new Fianna Fail party in 1932, announcing the oath after all, was just an 'empty formula'. If only he had made this pronouncement a decade earlier. It would seem on this

Continued on next page...

Defending Human Rights – the learning behind the scenes

By Clonakilty
Amnesty Group

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for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. Amnesty is a global movement of more than eight million people in over 150 countries and territories who campaign

for human rights. But that global movement is just a spearhead – not the full spear, and even that is just for today. Beyond today and the here-and-now, the achievement of 'human rights for all' needs young people that are informed, aware and engaged in the defence of human rights. As we look around us into 2022 – just watching the news and reading the media – we can see there is a lot to be done in the issue of human rights, both at home and abroad.

So, how do we get young people informed, aware and engaged? The purpose of this article is to provide a pointer to educational resources in the topic of human rights, that you – as a parent, as a teacher or as an inquisitive young person – can draw upon to get more clued in on the defence of human rights.

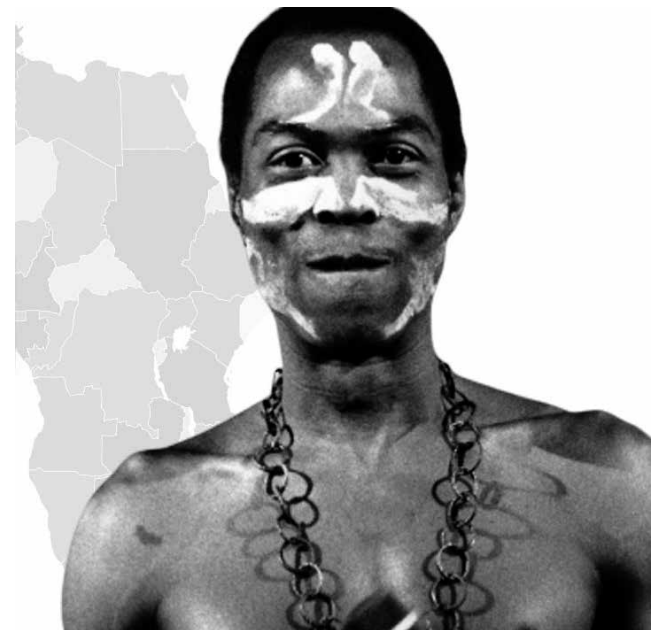
'Educational resources' can mean just a story that allows human rights issues to come to light, and this story is then discussed to bring out the issues. For example, the story of Fela Kuti – a musician who wrote and performed songs with political messages that were critical of the Nigerian military government. As a result, the government treated him very badly. In 1977, soldiers arrested Fela at his home, burned down his house and seriously injured members of his family,

including his mother who died as a consequence of her injuries. Seven years later, Fela was arrested again because of his political beliefs. He was not given a fair trial. When Fela's fans heard about his arrest, they sent messages to the Nigerian government demanding his release. A year and a half after his arrest, Fela was freed. He continued to voice his political beliefs through his music, until his death from AIDS in 1997. His story and music continue to be popular and became a stage show called 'Fela'. Listen to a sample on youtube.

The case of Fela Kuti needs research to establish the story, and advocacy and lobbying to make the case known 'at the right address'. The story itself tells of campaigns and action by Fela himself and by his defenders on his behalf.

Experienced campaigners in Amnesty International fight abuses of human rights worldwide through detailed research and determined campaigning. Hard work behind-the-scenes in research, advocacy and lobbying, and campaigns and action is the basis for an effective defence of human rights. Educational resources to develop young people's skills in these activities can be found at amnesty.ie.

Research: Human rights



change starts with the facts. Amnesty's experts do accurate, cross-checked research into human rights violations by governments and others worldwide. Advocacy and Lobbying: Amnesty uses its analysis to influence and press governments, companies and decision-makers to do the right thing.

Campaigns and Action: Through petitions, letters and protests, campaigners worldwide press for action from the people and institutions who can make change happen.

Through human rights education we can empower the next generation to develop the skills

and attitudes that are necessary to conduct research, exercise advocacy and conduct campaigns. Applying these skills in the field of human rights will promote equality, dignity and respect in our community, society and worldwide – and they are skills that can be used in any walk of life.

Fela's story is taken from "Human Rights Stories – Tales of Human Rights Defenders for Primary Schools" – just one example of the educational resources to be found at amnesty.ie.

Best wishes for 2022 from the Clonakilty Amnesty Group.

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The Irish Civil War ...Con'd from previous page



A Pro-Treaty armoured car carrying an effigy of an Anti-Treaty Republican.

evidence that the Republican tradition should never have got off the ground. The Free State provisional government and Cumann na nGaedhael [later Fine Gael] should have come down on the right side of history. Their copybook has also been blotted, many say with the stain of blood.

It was never going to be easy for the first government to find its feet. Two years of fighting the British, meant they inherited a broken land and empty coffers, as well as a divided nation. The 1929 Wall Street Crash had a devastating impact on the ability of ruling government to do what they wanted for their people. But there is more behind these factors. The hard-line tactics used

by the Provisional Government, (which would form Cumann na nGaedhael in 1923), led Labour leader Thomas Johnson to dramatically declare, 'You have strangled the state at its birth'. In an attempt to break the IRA gunmen, the Provisional Government brought in legislation that meant anyone found with an illegal weapon would be executed. What followed were devastating consequences, that had a more harrowing impact of the IRA. Seventy-seven IRA Republicans would be executed by the Free State, including Erskine Childers. What made his execution more personal and tragic was the that he was caught with a small firearm gifted to him by Michael Collins.

When West Cork man Sean Hales was assassinated in cold blood in Dublin by the IRA, there was a more chilling and horrific reaction. Dick Barrett from Ahiohill, was one of four men taken from their cells and executed without trial as a warning to Republicans. Matters were no better in the field. While the main population were not supportive of the IRA after what had been a difficult few years, the actions of the National troops changed some minds. Free-Stater Liam De Roiste, wrote that many National troops were 'under the influence of alcohol and incapable of using firearms'. The bitterness evolved into a monster. Ballyseedy in Kerry can never be forgotten or understood. National troops deliberately tied up Republican prisoners and blew them up, killing eight of the nine men. This reprisal followed a Republican booby trap in nearby Knocknagoshel that killed five Free State troops, with a survivor losing his legs. The pattern was echoed across the nation. Another booby trap blew up ten National troopers outside Macroom. Days later, a captured Republican soldier was deliberately shot in the crevice of the bomb in yet another cold-blooded reprisal. There are memorials around Cork that are tombs to these injustices; such as anti-Treaty captain Kennefick's brutal murdered in Coachford; Denis Barry's memorial in Riverstick, who died as a Republican hunger striker in prison; down to Collins' death, leader of the pro-Treaty forces. Some would later claim that Collins' assassination opened the door to another level barbarism, when he was no longer in the equation to prevent it.

Domestic life had to continue in the chaos of the war. The Free State failed to deliver on tangible and real

changes. They went as far as to break a farm labours strike who were seeking a little more than the pittance they were earning, leaving many to ponder on the benefits of independence. In the years that immediately followed, IRA pensions were only given to those who supported the Free State in the civil war, regardless of ones service in the WOI. [This changed in 1932] Thus the baton of bitterness was passed onto widows, children and the next generation.

Blaming the Republicans for starting it and not allowing the democratic process to do their talking, or blaming the Free State for the many disastrous

decisions it took to wrestle control, never served our politics for 100 years. Now in the centenary year, we must reflect upon their difficult choices made without the advantage of hindsight that we possess today. This is a year to forgive, but not forget, the men and women who in their hearts tried to do what was right for Ireland. They had no playbook or experience in such matters. Nor could they gaze into a crystal ball to witness the cataclysmic effect their decisions would have on each other and the opinions of their sons and daughters for generations to come.

Opportunity to do community-based project management training in West Cork

Are you involved in a project in your local community in West Cork? Would you like to set up initiatives in your community in the future? If so, consider signing up for the free online Community-Based Project Management short course delivered as part of the SECAD Sustainable Communities Training Programme.

This Community-Based Project Management short course introduces you to the important issues and principles for developing and managing community-based projects. The course will be delivered over seven weeks via Zoom on Wednesday evenings, from 7 to 9pm.

The course is open to anyone in West Cork that is currently involved in a project within their community, and to anyone who is interested in taking part in community projects in the future. The projects you are working on or are interested in can be big or small, and no prior knowledge of project management is needed for the course.

The course topics are:

January 12: Induction – getting to know groups and project ideas

January 19: Understanding Project Stages and the project cycle

January 26: Getting clear on project intervention logic – if the project does this, then that will happen

February 2: Common ways to describe a project – understanding terms like goal, objective, outcome, impact.

February 9: Monitoring progress. How will you know whether it's going well? Milestones and Indicators

February 16: Evaluation questions and processes. Did it do what we said? What else did it do? What did we learn?

February 23: Project budget for planned actions and finance tracking

Where people are currently involved in a project, or are planning a project, they can work on their project as part of the course if they wish. For example, in week five when learning about milestones and indicators, you can use this space to work on developing milestones and indicators for your own project with support from the tutor.

The course is part of the SECAD Sustainable Communities Training Programme, which is managed by VOICE Ireland. SECAD Local Development Partnership provides a range of rural development and social inclusion supports to motivate and empower local communities to create a more vibrant, sustainable and inclusive society. VOICE Ireland is an environmental charity that empowers individuals and local communities to take positive action to conserve our natural resources.

To sign up for the course go to secad.ie or email Abi on abi@voiceireland.org. Participants are welcome to attend for all or part of the course.



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EirGrid awards €600,000 to Clashavoon Dunmanway community groups

EirGrid, the national electricity grid operator has awarded community groups and not-for-profit organisations near the new Clashavoon Dunmanway electricity line a total of €600,000 in funding.

The Community Benefit Fund was opened for applications last July following the completion of works on the new 110 kV electricity line. The line connects two substations at Clashavoon and Dunmanway with the circuit successfully energised in September 2020.

A total of 36 projects from Dunmanway, Aghinagh, Carrigadrohid, Kilmurry, Rusheen, Macroom, Tirelton, Kilmi-chael and Coppeen West were successful in the application process.

The successful projects include the development of community and sports facilities, funding for youth facilities, along with heritage,

older persons and enterprise initiatives.

Speaking about the fund, EirGrid Head of Public Engagement, Sinead Dooley said, “EirGrid is transforming the power system for future generations and working with communities is at the centre of achieving this. We would like to thank each group and organisation who took the time to submit a funding application and look forward to seeing the development of these worthwhile projects and initiatives.”

“We were heartened by the incredible interest there was to the fund and the level of collaboration which was very evident across communities. EirGrid acknowledges that voluntary groups are the life-blood of communities and are delighted to support their work in improving the quality of life in the project area,” added Dooley.

A fund support and administration service was inde-

pendently set up to help groups with the application process and input was received from across communities, voluntary and sporting organisations.

Each application was assessed by an evaluation panel made up of representatives from EirGrid, the fund administrators M-CO, and an independent evaluator. The panel was also tasked with ensuring the benefits of the fund are shared by communities along the full length of the Clashavoon-Dunmanway transmission line and by a range of different groups and organisations.

The fund administrators will be in touch with the successful groups with a formal grant agreement and to discuss the next steps.

To see a full list of the successful applicants, visit www.eirgrid.ie/ClashavoonDunmanway

Darrara road closure to facilitate replacement of problematic pipes

Irish Water, in partnership with Cork County Council, is replacing 3.2km of problematic watermain in Darrara, Clonakilty to improve water quality and provide a more reliable water supply to the local community.

The upgrade involves the replacement of problematic watermain with new modern pipes. The programme to replace the watermain will commence in mid-January and is being carried out as part of Irish Water's National Leakage Reduction Programme.

The section of works will

take place along L4016 from the junction with the Timoleague Road, through Darrara Church Crossroads to the Pound. The works will be delivered in two phases, from the Timoleague Road to Darrara Church Crossroads and from Darrara Church Crossroads to the pound.

In order to complete the works in an efficient and safe manner, a road closure is required on the L4016 (Timoleague Road to The Pound) from January 17 to March 25, 2022. As the works are to be delivered in two phases, either may be implemented

within the closure timeframe. Local access will be maintained.

The suggested diversion for southbound traffic is to travel east along R600-505, at Clashflugh Crossroads divert right onto L-4015-40, follow the road to approach road closure from the opposite side.

Traffic intending to travel south on the L-4016-0 at Darrara Church Crossroads, shall divert west onto L-4015-27, then turn left onto L-4018 at Arundelmills Crossroads, follow the road to approach road closure from the opposite side.

Increased penalties for motorists who park on footpaths, cycle tracks and bus lanes

The Minister for Transport has signed regulations doubling from €40 to €80 the fixed charge penalty for motorists caught parking on footpaths, cycle tracks and bus lanes. The new €80 penalties will come into operation on February 1, 2022.

Speaking on the subject, Minister Ryan said, ‘Parking on footpaths puts vulnerable pedestrians, such as wheelchair users and those pushing



buggies, at significant risk by forcing them off the footpath and into traffic. Parking in bus and cycle lanes endangers cyclists and undermines State investment in sustainable public transport infrastructure. These increases should help improve the safety of all vulnerable road and footpath users, by creating a more effective deterrent to these specific forms of illegal parking.”



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.

One of the great blessings that enrich our lives is birds; their colour, their habits, their eggs, but above all their song. Among the things of which we may be most afraid is the silence of birds. Rachel Carson, in her seminal work on the effects of artificial

Lost birds

pesticides on the environment, ‘Silent Spring’, shocks; to even think of the idea is terrible. An epigraph to the book quotes John Keats: ‘The sedge has withered from the lake, /And no birds sing’.

A number of birds have become extinct in Ireland over the years. Some are making a comeback; some are probably gone forever. Among those that have gone are Bitterns, Cranes, The Golden and White-tailed Eagles, the Red and Black Kites, the Ospreys, Great Auks, Corn Buntings and Capercaillies. At the moment there are attempts to re-introduce the Eagles and I believe the Golden Eagle has been seen in Donegal.

There are a large number of factors causing these extinctions and reductions in numbers. New large scale building projects, changed farming methods, the draining of bogs and marshes, destruction of hedgerows and the use of poisonous chemicals have led to habitat destruction and loss of traditional food sources. Not only birds, but the rest of our fauna and flora are also suffering.

There are several breeds of birds in real danger of extinction. The Corncrake, that raucous but lovable bird

of our youth, has disappeared except in a few parts of the country. Corn Buntings are almost certainly gone, as are Quail. Grey Partridges and Red Grouse are endangered. Birds like Ring Ouzels, Nightjars and Cuckoos are becoming increasingly uncommon. Even common garden birds like Song Thrushes and House Sparrows have suffered serious declines in number. Birdwatch Ireland have listed species that are in serious decline. The Red List shows birds that have declined by more than 50 per cent in the last twenty-five years. On the Red List are the Barn Owl, Black-necked Grebe, Chough, Common Scoter, Corncrake, Curlew, Grey Partridge, Hen Harrier, Lapwing, Nightjar, Red Grouse, Ring Ouzel, Red-necked Phalarope, Roseate Tern, Twite and the Yellowhammer. Among other birds also in danger are the Grey Wagtail, Stonechat, Snipe, Skylark, Sand Martin and others.

One of our extinct birds, about which a well-known Irish poem was written, is the Bittern (An Bonnán Buí) and the poem of the same name was written by Cathal Buí Mac Giolla Gunna (1680-1756). Bitterns are large water birds,

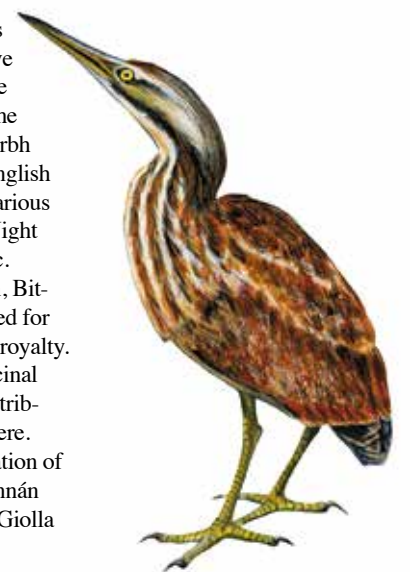
slightly smaller than herons. They have an overall streaked light-brown colour, with a black cap and white throat. The stout yellow bill is long and pointed. They are birds of quiet reed beds. They are best known for the ‘booming’ call of the males. The sound is somewhat similar to that produced when one blows across the open top of a bottle. To hear a Bittern in the reeds in the early morning is haunting. The sound is an otherworldly expulsion of air. Oliver Goldsmith described it as ‘dismally hollow’ and it seemed to come from ‘some formidable being that resided at the bottom of the waters’. You are very unlikely to hear a Bittern in Ireland but they can still be seen and heard in parts of Britain.

Bitterns were once common breeding birds in Ireland. Their numerous names in the Irish language, multiple literary references and its use in many place names attest to their being here in large numbers at one time. In fact they were here up to the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of our larger bogs were drained in the nineteenth century and now we no longer have any reeded wetlands large enough to sustain an indigenous population.

The boom of a Bittern was regarded as a warning from the spirit world and this may be one possible source for the wailing of the banshee. Like some other birds, it was believed that a Bittern's boom was the cry of a departed soul from purgatory. Goldsmith, who grew up in Ireland in the eighteenth century, tells us that in his childhood he remembered that the locals were terrified of the birds' call. They believed it presaged some sad event. If someone subsequently died, the Bittern, which they called the ‘night raven’, was blamed. Their name in Irish, Bonnán Buí, translates roughly and poetically as ‘yellow siren’. Alternative names in Irish are Béicire (yeller), Bonnán léana (the water-meadow siren), Tarbh Curraig (bog bull). In English they are also called, in various places, Bog Drummer, Night Raven, Brown Crane, etc.

In Ireland as in Britain, Bitterns were highly regarded for the table by nobility and royalty. Their culinary and medicinal popularity may have contributed to their extinction here. Seamus Heaney's translation of the first verse of ‘An Bonnán Buí’ by Cathal Buí Mac Giolla Gunna goes as follows:

*‘Yellow Bittern, I’m sad it’s all over,
Your bones are frozen and all caved in.
It wasn’t hunger but thirst and craving
That left you floundering on the shore
What odds is it now about Troy’s destruction
With you on the flagstones upside down,
Who never injured or hurt a creature
And preferred bog-water to any wine?’*



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THE HISTORY CORNER

Shane Daly

Shane Daly is a History Graduate from University College Cork, with a BAM in History and an MA in Irish History.

“One house would be attacked and the next spared, there was no telling who would go next and when someone said goodbye to a friend, he said it as if forever. In a few days the town became like a city of the dead. The great county infirmary hospital was turned into a cholera hospital but it was insufficient to meet the requirements. The nurses died one after another and none could be found to fill their places.” - Charlotte Thornley

In 1832, a little girl named Charlotte Thornley, 14, from Sligo, found herself living through an epidemic: A cholera epidemic that claimed the lives of 50 per cent of Sligo's population. Charlotte and her wealthy, middle class, protestant family however survived. Charlotte grew up and married

Dracula is actually Irish

a man from Derry called Abraham Stoker. The couple had a son called Bram Stoker.

Often mysterious illnesses in the 19th century only affected the working classes: People of means had access to better foods, access to clean drinking water, their houses were cleaner and, most importantly had more modern sanitation. Sickness rates and death rates among the working classes were disproportionately higher than that of the middle and upper classes. However, Cholera held no bias, and had no concern for any socio-economic class structures, which made it all the more terrifying. It killed anyone it came into contact with, within 48 hours, in a horrific and undignified ending. Without medication, a vaccine, and no obvious transmission route of the virus, mass hysteria ensued.

Charlotte wrote about the arrival of cholera in Sligo from the East in her book called 'Experience of the Cholera in Ireland 1832':

'It was said to have come from the East in China, it rose out of the Yellow Sea going inland like a cloud dividing into two, which spread North and South, in those days I dwelt with my parents and brothers in a provincial town in the West of Ireland called Sligo, it was long before the time of railroads or steamboats. But gradually the terror grew on us. Time by time we heard of it nearer and nearer. It was in France, it was

in Germany it was in England and with wild affright we began to say it was in Ireland.'

Its reputation preceding it, cholera immediately got to work on its arrival in Sligo in August 1832. The first recorded case was August 11 and the deaths soon were so many and so often that the coffin builders could not meet demand and people were buried in shallow graves, burned, or simply dumped outside the city walls.

One of the first things Charlotte says in her book about its arrival is:

"I vividly remember a poor traveler was taken ill on the roadside some miles from the town and how did those Samaritans tend him? They dug a pit and with long poles, pushed him living, into it and covered him up alive."

People were buried alive, due to a lack of understanding and a genuine fear of being infected. It was a traumatic time: With no understanding of germ theory and with total reliance on God and folklore as an explanation for essentially everything good and bad in life, panic set in. Full families died overnight. Everyone was dying, with no obvious connection. There are reports of people wandering the streets like zombies, a type of living dead, before succumbing to the virus and dropping dead. These poor souls that took on this side effect of the disease were known as the undead.

Living through a pandemic means we have some context for the panic that this must have brought about. However, in 2022, we understand the science of a virus and how it operates, how it is transmitted, how to mitigate becoming infected; and we have medication, we have vaccines. In 1832, there were none of those things. The best scientific explanation at the time for so many people dying was 'bad air' or that odours caused infection. Therefore, people did the best they could to avoid each other. They went into lockdown.

The Thornleys locked themselves into their home for two weeks until Charlotte's mother went out the back yard one evening and found all their chickens dead. Taking this as a sign from God, the family immediately packed and left Sligo by horse and cart, travelling towards Bundoran in Donegal. On the way they met a violent mob of people led by a local doctor that had become psychotic due to the fear and panic induced by the worry of catching cholera. The mob attacked Charlotte and



her family and tried to set them on fire because they assumed, coming from the direction of Sligo, that they were infected. Fortunately, the Thornleys were protected by passing soldiers who took them to the local barracks. However the frightened soldiers there turned them back, but did give them protection on their return journey. The entire trip took a month, as Charlotte noted in her book:

"We returned to Sligo where we found the streets grass grown and 5/8 of the population dead and had great reason to thank God who had spared us through such dangerous and trying times and scenes."

Cholera killed 1500 people in six weeks.

So where does Dracula come into this story?

As mentioned at the beginning, Charlotte Thornley grew up and married a man called Abraham Stoker. Abraham's family was from Derry, where in a field near Slaghtaverty is a giant stone under a tree known as 'The Giant's Grave'; a tomb where a fifth century High King called Abhartach.

A real person, Abhartach was killed in the 400s. The local folklore around this tomb is that Abhartach had special powers but was universally hated in Derry by the people he presided over. They hired a chieftain from a neighbouring tribe called Cathain to murder him

Entirely bed bound until he was seven-years-old, the young Bram Stoker was undoubtedly in that time told stories from his mother and father's youth, including the story of Abhartach, who was essentially a vampire.

and remove him from power. Cathain murdered Abhartach and buried him standing up.

However legend has it that Abhartach returned from the dead the next day and went back to his kingdom to confront his people. As penance, he made each member of the town give him a bowl of their own blood – which he drank. Cathain, the assassin, is disbelieving, as he knows for sure that he killed Abhartach. So, he goes to a nearby woods to speak to a saint called Eoin, who tells him that Abhartach was never alive, instead he was the living dead. A type of wizard. A 'Neamh Marbh', which is Irish for the undead. He is a 'Dearg Dulai', which translates as a drinker of human blood and it is impossible to kill him.

Eoin tells Cathain that the only thing that can be done is to put Abhartach in a type of purgatory, a state of suspense between life and death, which can be done by killing him with a sword made from the wood of a Yew tree. Then he must be buried upside down with thorn and ash twigs scattered over his grave. Once this is done, a boulder must be placed directly on top of the grave. Only when these steps are followed and completed will Abhartach be prevented from returning. Cathain follows these directions and, from the thorns that Cathain scattered, grows a huge tree. You can go to Slaghtaverty today and see that tree. Due to that story and the folklore and mystery around it, that tree exists today, undisturbed 1500 years later in rural Derry.

After marrying, Abraham Stoker and Charlotte Thornley had a son, who they called Bram.

Bram Stoker went on to write the book Dracula. A lesser-known fact is that Bram Stoker was born with a mystery illness that prevented him from leaving his bed for seven years. Entirely bed bound until he was seven-years-old, the young Bram was undoubtedly in that time told stories from his mother and father's youth, including the story of Abhartach, who was essentially a vampire. Bram wrote Dracula in 1897 and there are too many similarities to the story above for it to be a coincidence. If you read Dracula and view it through the eyes of what you now know, taking into account Bram's mother's experiences, it becomes more than simply a story about an eccentric count who lives in a castle.

Dracula becomes this terrifying unknown wave of death that travelled from the East to the West by ship, infecting people with no clear or obvious method of transmission that causes havoc. Aside from the undead, the coffin, the psychotic doctor and the drinking of blood, possibly the most telling sign of all is that the first person recorded in Sligo to have died from cholera, died on August 11, and Dracula bites his first victim when he arrives in London on August 11. Dracula is a fusion of Bram Stoker's mother's experiences during the cholera outbreak in Sligo of 1832 and the story of the undead fifth century High King Abhartach from his father Abraham's family home town in Derry.

Dracula is Irish!

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Cultivate Credit Unions offer working capital loans in fertiliser crisis



Joe Healy, former President of the IFA and now Chairperson of Cultivate

Rising fertiliser prices has been one of the main topics of conversation in farming for the past few months. There are concerns about a double whammy: the price of fertiliser will more than double and supply will be scarce.

In early December, Teagasc published its outlook for 2022. According to its 'Economic Prospects for Agriculture' report, the average family farm income in Ireland is forecast to fall by 19 per cent in 2022. This is largely due to sharply increasing input costs, in particular

fertiliser, feed and fuel.

Thankfully there has been some good news in the past few weeks. EU gas prices, a key driver of fertiliser prices for farmers, have fallen by over 50 per cent since late December. The reopening of some fertiliser plants has also helped.

But while later-season fertiliser supplies might increase and prices ease, this will come too late for farmers that need fertiliser and feed in the first few months of the year.

The surge in fertiliser prices raised fears that the agri merchants might not be able to offer credit to farmers this spring.

In order to address these fears, credit unions offering the Cultivate farm loan brand have been in talks with independent agri merchants. Cultivate credit unions will offer a credit facility to farmers affected by the fertiliser and feed crisis in the form of working capital loans.

Joe Healy, former President



of the IFA and now Chairperson of Cultivate, said: "This is good news for the agriculture sector. It is an initiative that will be of benefit to both farmers and merchants."

The Cultivate loan package is now offered by 40 credit unions in Ireland, including Bantry and Access Credit Unions.

Finbarr O'Shea, Manager at Bantry Credit Union, is a member of the Board of Cultivate and he is also Chair of the National Cultivate Marketing Group. Welcoming the initiative, he said: "We're here to

help. While that can sound glib, it's not. Credit unions are part of the fabric of rural Ireland. We always back members of our communities, especially when their backs are to the wall."

Finbarr explained that the credit unions are talking to agri merchants locally, as well as nationally. "We are encouraging farmers to act early and identify whether they may have a cashflow challenge looming. Analyse your fertiliser and feed costs for 2021 and then

estimate what you expect your likely 2022 spend to be. This will allow you to see relatively quickly whether you will need additional working capital. And if you do, come talk to us."

Turning to the increased costs of building materials, Finbarr said: "We understand the importance of continued on-farm investment. Farms have to be developed to maintain the viability of the business. Cultivate loans are ideal for this investment as well as being ideal for farmers' working capital needs."

Bandon Students at this year's BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition urge Irish farmers to change farm practices and reduce their carbon footprint

Two students from St Brogan's College, Bandon, tell **Tommy Moyles** that Irish farmers don't know enough about producing low emissions beef but they are open to learning.

Sarah Teape and Alison Darcy have carried out extensive research into the attitudes of farmers towards climate action and their knowledge of low-emission beef production methods. Their findings show that a comprehensive education programme is needed, helping farmers to understand the changes that they can make on their farms to reduce Ireland's carbon footprint.

The girls, who are both in first year at St Brogan's College, did the research as part of a project they have submitted to this year's BT Young Scientist

and Technology Exhibition, which takes place from January 12 to 14 2022.

"Unlocking the potential of Low Emissions Beef through Education" is the title of their project. Sarah says they chose their topic because they wanted to focus on climate action in a farm context.

"We are proud of the strong tradition of beef farming in the Bandon area. We want the Irish family farm to survive into the future, but we know beef production must be sustainable for that to happen," said Sarah. "We wanted to find out how much farmers knew about producing low emissions beef, and how open they would be to learning more about it."

Alison said their findings were encouraging.

"We surveyed 100 farmers, and we were delighted to see that over 87 per cent of them were willing to change their farming methods in the next five years. While the survey showed

low awareness of some types of farm practices which can reduce carbon footprint, many of the farmers have already begun to study sustainability. It's clear that they have an eye to the future, which is great news," she said.

Following the comprehensive study, the girls have a number of recommendations from their research.

- A comprehensive plan should be put in place to educate and encourage farmers, including part-time farmers, and to enable systems of farming to become more sustainable and profitable. This plan must encourage engagement from farmers and a financial incentive should be put in place to ensure the farmers get the support required to bring about sustainable change to their business.

- Beef farmers need to discuss and plan how best to reduce emissions by getting their animals to slaughter weight earlier. The grass-based system,

excellent quality silage, regular weighing and providing concentrates only when necessary should be emphasised.

- Genomics and information on Star rating is complicated and constantly being upgraded. This needs to be explained/educated to farmers in a clear and informative manner for meaningful change to happen at farm level.

- A more detailed study done on the role of beef processors in encouraging beef farmers to farm in a more sustainable manner. The current advantage club and twenty-twenty are only token gestures and no meaningful change is happening as a result of this.

- The carbon footprint of each farm should be measured, and each farmer should receive individual support to ensure they can put a plan in place to reduce emissions.

- Reducing emissions on farms requires several pieces to the jigsaw including multi-spe-



Sarah Teape and Alison Darcy of St Brogan's, Bandon have submitted their project "Unlocking the potential of Low Emissions Beef through Education" to this year's BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition.

cies grasses, fertiliser use, water usage, energy reduction, animals' welfare, and disease prevention. Education to ensure farmers are aware of all the parts of the jigsaw is essential. Reducing emissions is not an information issue, it is a communication issue and awareness of this is vital so a plan can be put in place to ensure the targets set are met.

- Farmers are farming based on tradition and they need to

be educated on how to produce beef with low emission that will allow farming to be sustainable for the future and to enable future generations to live on the land in a sustainable and profitable way.

This year's BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition takes place from January 12 to 14 2022. There's a strong future for farming in West Cork as long as Alison and Sarah are involved.



FARMING IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

In association
with



Farm life is relatively straightforward at the moment. The cows are getting a combination of hay, silage or straw over a week. It sounds more complicated than it actually is. They get a bale of silage in front of them, which usually lasts a pen four to five days and they get a bale of hay or straw on the other days. The reason for the mix is so they don't get too fat. They are in good condition at the moment; so only require a maintenance diet. The in-calf heifers have access to silage more often, as they are still growing.

De-worming

About half the cows due to calf had a high reading for rumen fluke, so they were dosed for that in December. Rumen fluke is a parasite that is about the size of your small fingernail

and lives on the stomach lining. Cows affected by this parasite tend to be thinner than usual. To check for the presence of these and liver fluke and stomach worms, I take dung samples and get a faecal egg count done in a lab. If the results are low or negative, they don't receive any treatment. Collecting the dung samples is definitely one of the less glamorous jobs on the farm but in my view it's one of the most important.

Ration

The young cattle are on silage-only diet when it comes to roughage. The bulls going for finishing receive ration and the smaller heifer calves that won't be retained for breeding are getting some too but they will be weaned off it from early February. They get 2kg per day while those that will be going to the bull next year are only getting that amount once a week. It makes them easier to handle when they go out to grass but they don't need it from a growing perspective, as they performed well over the summer. The smaller ones will be going out to grass by day once weather conditions allow and the January TB test is in the rearview mirror. The mild weather since November has seen good grass growth. With temperatures running from nine to 12 degrees most days and grass needing at least four degrees to grow, there is now a good cover across the farm.

I try not to be pessimistic with the weather but I know nature has a great way of balancing itself out so there's bound to be some few weeks between now and May where the weather will be too cold, too wet, too dry or too windy. We'll just try and make the most of the grass that is there now.



Both stock and farmers are well into their winter daily routines at this stage. Cows on Tommy Moyles farm get a mix of hay, silage and straw as their weekly diet. Pic: Tommy Moyles

Artificial fertiliser prices

That is sure to be the same in most farms across west Cork... This year perhaps more than any other. Artificial fertiliser prices have doubled since last year and last year was viewed as an expensive year for fertiliser. For example a ton of Urea which is 46 per cent Nitrogen would have cost in the region of €450 in 2021 and is now selling for between €890 to €910/ton. The danger in dealing with the market is that prices fluctuate and could catch either farmers or merchants out. In a number of cases farmers are recommended to take out loans to cover the fertiliser if they really need it. If a merchant or co-op stocks up on fertiliser at current prices and the market plummets there is a danger that they would be liable to lose millions and the situation is now at the level where that risk is too high to take.

Soil

Farmers will have to become far more strategic in their use

of fertilisers, at least those who use them will; organic farmers are in a much more comfortable position. Indeed the fertiliser price situation could see organic conversions become more appealing. For those who wish to stick with what they are used to, completing soil testing should be the first step. That will tell you if the soil pH is optimum, usually between 6.2 to 6.5 is where you need it to be. Lime can be spread to correct it if it is below this level. Soil testing will also tell you what index the P (Phosphorous) and K (Potassium) levels are at. If they are at index three or index four, then those elements are generally not required or if they are should be spread at maintenance levels only.

I'll have the first of two TB tests near the end of January following the discovery of two reactors in the annual test in November. There was a bit of good news in that they killed out without any trace of TB. It's frustrating because those cows

are no longer here but a relief that it wasn't actually TB.

Something I noticed throughout 2021 is that when it comes to agriculture, time on the farm spent doing jobs is almost therapeutic. I was planting trees in late December and it

was a refreshing change from trawling through all the policy and regulation that came our way in 2021. There's sure to be much more policy changes and proposals come our way this year, so I won't be putting the spade away just yet.

Ifac warns of a hike in payroll costs

Ifac, Ireland's farming, food and agribusiness specialist professional services firm is warning employers of additional payroll costs in 2022.

Mary McDonagh, Head of HR and Payroll with ifac says, "Plans to introduce statutory sick pay are expected to impact payroll costs this year. Coming in the wake of recent enhancements to parental, paternity and maternity leave, the cost of providing Statutory Sick Pay will be an unwelcome burden on many small businesses, particularly those in sectors like hospitality, leisure and tourism, who are struggling from the ongoing impact of Covid-19 restrictions."

It comes after the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD, announced details in June 2021 of a statutory sick pay scheme which will give workers the right to paid sick leave.

Mary continued, "Currently, while large employers often provide sick pay for their employees, many lower-paid workers in the private sector do not have the security of knowing that if they fall ill and miss work, they won't lose out on a full day's pay."

This problem was highlighted during the pandemic when workers in meat factories who contracted COVID-19 could not afford to take days off.

Statutory sick pay is intended

to address this issue and will bring Ireland into line with other advanced countries in Europe.

Details of the proposed legislation were recently published in a draft Statutory Sick Leave Bill. This may be subject to amendment as it makes its way through the legislative process. Employers need to monitor developments and begin planning for the impact on their business. Those who do not currently have a sick pay scheme will need to budget for the additional cost of providing Statutory Sick Pay, while companies with sick pay schemes will need to incorporate Statutory Sick Pay into their existing schemes.

It is envisaged that statutory sick pay will be phased in over four years starting in 2022 with employees entitled to paid sick leave for three days next year, rising to five days in 2023, seven days in 2024, and 10 days in 2025. Unlike many existing company sick pay schemes which have a three-day waiting period, employees will receive sick from the first day of illness. The rate will be 70 per cent of an employee's wage, subject to a daily threshold of €110. This threshold can be varied by Ministerial Order.

To qualify for statutory sick pay, employees must have completed 13 weeks of continuous service with their employer and will have to obtain a medical certificate stating that they are unable to work. Contact your local ifac office for support or further information on statutory sick pay.

National Farming for Nature Ambassador Awards

Do you know of a farmer or farm family who are producing great food while maintaining a flourishing farm environment, earning the respect of their peers through their innovation, impact and enthusiasm?

Farming for Nature (FFN) is a national initiative which highlights the positive role that farmers can play in looking after nature on their land and which shares – through short films, podcasts and farm walks – the invaluable, practical insights gained by these farmers in tackling our biodiversity and climate emergencies. Now in its fifth year, FFN has grown to an active network of over 60 eloquent Ambassadors who are inspiring many other farmers across Ireland to take simple measures to support nature on their land. FFN wants to further expand this network in 2022 and are now seeking nominations of farmers who are going that extra mile for nature.

The FFN Ambassador awards are sponsored by Bord Bia's Origin Green programme and is part of a wider FFN initiative (www.farmingfornature.ie) which seeks to frame a more positive, farmer-led narrative around farming and the environment. One of the founders of, and volunteers with, FFN, Dr. Brendan Dunford, explained that "At FFN, we are convinced that, with the appropriate, targeted financial

and technical support, farmers represent a great resource in tackling our biodiversity and climate crises. For the past few years we have connected with so many inspiring farmers from all across Ireland. Seeing and hearing these farmers share their love of nature, of their land and livestock, and knowing that they work day in, day out, to make sure nature has a place on their farms, is really inspiring. These people are our unsung conservation heroes, the real 'experts' in farming for nature, and we need to hear more and learn more from them.

"We welcome nominations from across the board from all types of farming systems and land types. For more information on how to get a farmer nominated and who is applicable, please go to our website www.farmingfornature.ie or contact me on info@farmingfornature.ie."

If you are a farmer and would like to be nominated, please contact your local farm advisor (Teagasc or FAS-accredited), your county Heritage Officer (County Council) or your local wildlife ranger (NPWS) to make a nomination on your behalf.

The deadline for the 2022 Farming For Nature Ambassador Awards is February 14, 2022. The online application is available at www.farmingfornature.ie.

people Environment : Making a difference



by Nicholas Mitchell

'The rook and jackdaw are too well known to need any introduction in themselves, as one need not go far from the centre of the city before seeing one or both species. On the principle that familiarity breeds contempt, it is perhaps their very abundance which accounts for our incomplete knowledge of them, in fact as I have frequently learnt to my cost.'

Edgar Harper,
A Study of Rooks, 1904

The star of the show when it comes to winter roosting birds is the starling. The breathtaking beauty of a murmuration is a wonder, as the starlings move as if one large shape-shifting organism in the darkening dusk sky, before pouring into their roost like liquid treacle. However, that is not the only show in town; rooks and jackdaws also have their winter rituals before going to



Rook

roost at dusk, but to see it, you need to 'follow the rooks'.

The Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*, Rúcach) favours agricultural country, both arable and more importantly grassland, and tends to avoid heavily wooded country, so is abundant in West Cork. During autumn and winter they gather in large numbers at dusk before spending the night in tree roosts, often with the Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*, Cág), another common bird here. They are both members of the Corvid (Crow) family that also includes Raven, Hooded Crow, Chough, Magpie and Jay.

Rooks and jackdaws do not go directly to their roost site, but gather first in fields and nearby bare trees. The great gathering starts shortly after

sundown as the birds fly in from different directions after a day's foraging. The air is filled with the 'caws' of rooks, punctuated by the canine-like yapping of the jackdaws. The steady pattern of their flight is broken by individuals wheeling away into wild tumbling flights. This is known as whiffing. Wading birds like lapwing do something similar; it is thought as defence against possible predators. In flight rooks and jackdaws can be told apart by their size and shape, the rook being about one-third larger than the jackdaw and having more of a rounded wedge shaped tail.

In order to find out where these birds will roost for the night, the first job is to find where they gather, and then



Jackdaw

watch and wait. As the skies darken, the cries and chattering blend into a more harmonious chorus, and the birds become ink black shapes and harder to distinguish. Then it happens, slowly at first, as a small group of birds take to the air, and then another group, and another. Soon, in the gloom, there can be seen a swirling stream of birds, all flying in the same direction towards their final roost, leaving behind empty fields and trees. It is a sight and sound to behold, but to find their roost, you will need either a good vantage point or to follow them.

Generally, the roosts are in either conifer woods or mixed woodland. But why do they roost in such large numbers? Possibly it is for protection from

bad weather or low temperatures, but they would be more likely to roost solely in conifers if that were so. Also, rooks and jackdaws spend the night in pairs and not huddled together like some other bird species such as Long-tailed Tits. One theory is that the roost acts as a sort of information centre and observations and experiments certainly support this. At Newborough Warren, a large raven roost on Anglesey, biologists Wright, Stone and Brown demonstrated, with the use of sheep carcasses and coloured beads, that information about the location of food is shared at the roost. Circumstantial evidence suggests that rooks and jackdaws do the same. There is a direct correlation between the

size of the roost and the number of hours of daylight. During December and January there is a maximum of eight hours to find food that will sustain the birds during the night. On dull days this will be less. It is at that time of year, when the need to find food is at its greatest, that the number of birds in a roost is also at its largest.

If you want to enjoy one of nature's lesser known spectacles then 'follow the rooks' one evening. If you happen to live near Clonakilty then White's Marsh is a good place to start. In the meantime, the Branch is continuing to run outings. Our next event should be the West Cork Bird Race. At the time of going to press, it is unlikely that this will take place in its normal format, but we hope to do something. To receive up to date news about this and other events and, given the current situation, cancellations, join our mailing list (details below).

BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch

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

Thirty-eight Carbery farmers achieve Environmental Science diplomas as part of innovative programme with UCC

Last month 15 Carbery farmers graduated from UCC with a Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy. But this is no ordinary diploma. The 15 farmers are part of a group of 38 in total, since the launch of an innovative, first-of-its-kind partnership with UCC, to have achieved this diploma through what is called the Retrospective Prior Learning Mechanism.

The partnership with UCC came about in 2017 when a pilot project with a group of farmers from the Carbery Greener Dairy Farms programme was launched. The goal was to ensure the practical learnings that farmers have taken from Carbery's Greener Dairy programme were being academically recognised by University College Cork (UCC) in what's known as Recognition of Prior Learning, or RPL.

Under this process, UCC recognises the competencies, experience and skills learned by farmers who participated in

the Greener Dairy project. The farmers are awarded over 60 per cent of the credits needed for UCC's level 7 diploma in environmental science and social policy. Farmers are then given the option by UCC to achieve the remaining credits needed for the diploma in a more formal learning environment.

"To date, 38 of our farmer suppliers have now completed that course and been awarded diplomas by UCC. Some of them may not have had the chance to do their Leaving Cert and here they are with a diploma in environmental science and social policy. It really gives those farmers huge confidence in themselves for what they have achieved," says Enda Buckley, Director of Sustainability at Carbery. And for us, it shows that our farmers are well ahead of the curve in terms of being interested in, and educated about, what it is to farm sustainably."

Belinda Gascoigne, who manages the programme for

UCC, explains "Through the RPL process, UCC has been able to highlight and validate the tremendous work that the farmers have completed in making their farms both more sustainable and profitable. Key achievements in their farming careers are now certified in an NFQ Level 7 programme."

All graduates are also participants in Carbery's Greener Dairy Farming programme, launched in 2012. Carbery Greener Dairy Farms™ (CGDF) is an innovative, dairy efficiency programme designed to measure, monitor and optimise resource allocation and best practice on farm. The primary objective was to introduce efficiencies and improve environmental sustainability on Carbery milk supplier's farms. Initially, twelve dairy farms took part in the programme. Over the years, this has risen to 70.

Through the programme – Ireland's first model for delivering best practice in sustainable

dairy farming – Carbery farmers have been able to measure carbon, water and energy footprints at an individual farm level, as well as support on soil and nutrient management and water quality. Funded and organised by Carbery, by educating farmers on the importance of sustainable dairy production, they have been supported to reduce their energy use and carbon emissions as well as increasing awareness of the importance of managing water use.

The programme was a precursor to many of the principles now in the Teagasc MACC curve (to reduce farm emissions) and also the genesis for some of the approaches being trialled as part of Carbery's Farm Zero C project. Participants in the programme have seen a 15 per cent reduction in the carbon footprint of those farms. CGDF has also shown that for every one litre of milk produced on those farms it takes just 6.5 litres of water to produce it. In other countries, the

figure for water footprint would be multiples of 6.5.

Carbery are now taking applications for participants for next year's programme. Any of their suppliers who are interested are encouraged to get in touch with any member of the Carbery sustainability team.

All graduates of the UCC Diploma from Bandon, Barryroe, Drinagh and Lisavaird Co-ops are listed below.

Year 2

- John Joe O'Sullivan
- Sean Deasy
- Darragh Kennedy
- Cormac O'Keefe
- Cyril Draper
- Gerard Lehan
- John J McNamara
- Glenn Forde
- John Hurley
- Thomas Griffin
- Padraig Hayes
- Norman Tuthill
- Donal O'Connor
- James Fitzpatrick
- Sam Kingston
- Aidan McCarthy

Year 2

- Laurence Sexton
- Denis O'Donovan
- Tim Sexton
- James Hurley
- Andrew Whelton
- Marguerite Crowley
- Martin Coleman

Year 3

- Carmel Keohane
- Owen O'Brien
- Jessica Hawkes
- Vanessa O'Connor
- John Ian Kingston
- Caroline Walsh
- Jer O'Brien
- Eamonn Ryan
- Peter Fleming
- Brendan Brady
- Diarmuid Manning
- Tadhg O'Mahony
- Michael Nyhan
- Micheal O'Mahony
- Dermot O'Leary

people Environment : Making a difference



ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Fiona Hayes

‘New Year’s Eve 2021 – provisionally the warmest on record’ claimed the UK Guardian newspaper. Whilst MET Éireann didn’t agree; or at least not for Ireland, nevertheless it reported that, during 2021 at least ten weather stations across Ireland reached heatwave conditions where temperatures of at least 25 degrees Celsius were recorded for five days or more in a row. Ireland had its first ‘Tropical Night’ in 20 years at Valentia Observatory in Kerry, where temperatures overnight didn’t fall below 20 degrees Celsius. Autumn 2021 was the warmest on record for Ireland and 2021 was the eleventh consecutive year with temperatures above average.

Met Éireann reports that we are on track for another warm year, with temperatures around 0.9 degrees Celsius above average.

Keith Lambkin, Senior Climatologist at Met Éireann said: “These temperature trends we are seeing in Ireland are in line with the average temperature rise we are seeing around the world due to human-caused climate change. While future temperature projections vary depending on many factors, ‘all’ future projections suggest further warming. This warming, as well as associated defensive actions, is likely to affect everyone in some shape or form.”

Whilst we look at what we can do to mitigate against and adapt to climate change, we truly need to both look locally and lift our heads to look globally. The consequences of climate change are wide-ranging, including desertification of the interiors of large continents and reduction of land around coastal areas creating large-scale migration of displaced people; disruption of supply chains, transport, security, pensions and insurance funds and likely changes in international and national laws.

Thirteen years ago the UN was reporting that Syrian farming families were migrating into the cities. The Syrian Ministry for Agriculture and Agrarian Reform’s estimated in July 2009 that 60,000 families had

It’s never been more important to think global whilst acting local

migrated, mainly to Damascus, Aleppo and Homs. This massive migration was caused by desertification due to climate change; and because the cities could not handle this in-pouring of people, overcrowding of housing, unemployment and social unrest followed.

By 2013 Youth unemployment in Syria was at 48 per cent and there was a 49 per cent drop out from education, all of which contributed greatly to an escalation of conflict and millions of people fleeing their homes.

Desertification, as happened in Syria, is happening across much of the Arab World as a result of climate change and destruction of ecosystems. The result is having a profound effect on migration forcing hundreds of thousands to move from their homes.

A 2015 study by the UN’s Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) predicted that the process of desertification may drive an estimated 50 million people from their homes by 2025. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes in the past decade, more than doubling the global refugee population.

During 2021 more than 4,400 migrants, including at least 205 children, were lost at sea trying to reach Spain, more than double the figure from the previous year. According to Spanish official statistics, 39,000 undocumented migrants successfully reached Spain by sea or land last year, a similar figure to the previous year.

A ship’s captain who handed 101 migrants over to the Libyan coastguard after rescuing them in the Mediterranean Sea has been given a one-year jail term, in the first such case heard by Italy’s courts. Giuseppe Sotgiu was found guilty of violating international laws that forbid the forced return of people to countries where they are at risk.

In the meantime, we are being encouraged to recycle, to use our cars less and buy electric cars, not to travel by aeroplane, to reduce waste, to switch energy supplier and turn the lights off more; to buy mushroom-based packaging, banana-based sanitary towels and other products labelled ‘sustainable’.

The Netflix movie ‘Don’t Look Up’, a comedy disaster movie using facts based on the Chicxulub asteroid that hit Earth 66 million years ago resulting

in 75 per cent of all life on the planet dying, has created much discussion on social media. The movie focuses on the lack of urgency being shown by world leaders and the lack of real information communicated truthfully, as humanity rushed towards impending disaster. In the movie, the main motivation for decision making is the possibility of creating financial wealth for a few already wealthy individuals and much media communication supported that end.

Our real life situation somewhat echoes this; with a complete lack of creativity and reality being injected into an economic system that is driving humanity towards a cliff edge; and often those who take drastic measures in an attempt to get people to look seriously at radical solutions being ridiculed or seen as an obstruction to everyday living.

NASA’s global climate change website states, “While the effects of human activities on Earth’s climate to date are irreversible in the timescale of humans alive today, every little bit of avoided future temperature increases, results in less warming that would otherwise persist for essentially forever. The benefits of reduced greenhouse gas emissions occur on the same timescale as the political decisions that lead to those reductions.”

NASA goes on to state that without major action to reduce emissions, global temperature is on track to rise by 2.5 degrees Celsius to 4.5 degrees Celsius by 2100. A child born on New Year’s Day 2022 will be just 78-years-old, possibly a grandparent; if they survive the disruption to weather patterns, a sea level rise of eight feet and the inevitable global conflict.

Naturally, most people in the world are focused on short term survival. On finding work, paying the rent or mortgage, buying or growing food, avoiding illness and educating their children.

To spend time checking facts and fully educating ourselves by picking out truth from what the media tells us, or discerning which politicians or international leaders are in the pay of people with vested interests and which truly have humanity’s interests at heart seems for many an impossible ask. Instead we make up our minds who we would like to believe and then live in a media and social media bubble that reinforces

that belief.

It is easy then, to become totally focused on recycling or getting rid of conventional plastic as the complete answer, or to believe we can do nothing to affect change and to give up; to entirely blame refugees for migration and ignore that if we had to swap places with them we would have the same dangerous choices to make; risk our lives by staying or risk our lives trying to reach somewhere we hope will be better.

Despite the dire predictions, NASA scientists report that it may not be too late to avoid or limit some of the worst effects of climate change and that responding to climate change requires a two-tier approach; reducing the flow of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and learning to live with, and adapt to, the climate change that has already been set in motion.

To achieve this two-tier approach requires everyday people to think global whilst acting local. It requires that we look up. That we take the time to educate ourselves and to think and feel and behave as if humanity is one, as we make purchases, as we choose actions, as we vote for our politicians and councillors and as we live our daily lives.

The ramifications of the daily choices we make are huge; AND we must choose our leaders wisely and make sure they know what we expect of them and will deliver on policies that they promise regarding climate change and the environment.

‘Think Global; Act Local’ is a motto with profound implications.

Business environmental award goes to Ewe

The Ewe Experience Gardens in Glengarriff received the 2021 business environmental award from Cork Environmental Forum.

The award is in recognition of an outstanding contribution to sustainability in Cork City and County through partnership and participation in the promotion of environmental care.

The awards ceremony was conducted as a virtual ceremony due to Covid, led by coordinator Bernadette Connolly.

“We are really honoured to have our environmental work recognised by Cork Environmental Forum,” says Kurt Lyndorff, co-founder with Sheena Wood of The Ewe Experience.

“The environment is central to our work and garden. Early on in our 28 years in West Cork we were called eco worriers disguised as a tourist attraction. But we actually see ourselves quietly putting the message forward at The Ewe Experience to reach more people that way and also a wider range of people.”

“The public perception has also changed a lot in recent years. Most people now realise that drastic action is needed to limit the irreversible climate change. Of course it would have been a lot better to take action in the early 1990s, but it is better right now than in the future.”

“Everyone can do their part and we are actually self sufficient with energy, as we produce enough electricity by our own renewable energy sources.”

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CELEBRATING OUR LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

Jean Perry

Jean Perry is a lifelong horticulturalist and campaigner for organic and sustainable farming and growing. She has been living and growing in Baltimore since 1989 where she ran The Glebe Cafe and Garden with her family.

Another January and another opportunity for resolutions. Recently I listened to a podcast interview with Patrick Holden of The Sustainable Food Trust talking to Andy Cato, an inspiring regenerative farmer. The subject was climate change and how our food choices could help in redressing the situation. It was suggested that an effective way to deal with climate change was to make careful food choices, by buying local, seasonal food, grown in a sustainable way. Most resolutions, notoriously, are forgotten or ignored. Changing our buying and eating habits

can sometimes be difficult but as the year moves on and seasonal food becomes more available we can make gradual changes to a more sustainable diet, helping to change land management and distribution systems. However, one food that we eat all year round is cheese and this month I have been lucky enough to talk to Darcie and Mike from The Lost Valley Dairy just outside of Inchigeela.

Darcie, Mike and their young son Ned moved to Ireland about six years ago. Darcie had been a restaurant manager in London, and Mike, a trained Opera singer working at Glyndebourne. With a young baby and little time to share with him, let alone their neglected allotment, they started to think of a new way of life that would give them an opportunity to grow some of their own food, spend more time with Ned and also have time to explore other ways of living. Mike's father comes from East Cork and Mike had spent many summer holidays in his father's cottage. So despite the lure of warmer climes they decided to come back to Ireland. Within about three weeks of moving over they knew that they'd made the right decision and started to look for a property with more land, as they were firmly on the self-sufficient journey by now. In January of 2017 they moved into a small



Darcie and Mike, with their son Ned, from The Lost Valley Dairy just outside of Inchigeela.

stone cottage with eight acres of land. With plans to grow as much of their own food as possible, they started a vegetable garden with a large tunnel and planted fruit trees and bushes, taking up about an acre of their land. At the same time animals and poultry started to arrive and they now keep goats, pet lambs, a mixture of poultry, pigs, cats, dogs and bees and importantly, a small herd of Irish shorthorn cows and a Droimeann bull. The herd started slowly with

one cow, Gertrude, who came along as a steady and reliable house cow. Mike was worried that she was lonely and needed company and so it goes. Soon they were milking four cows and with lots of lovely milk they started researching the idea of making cheese.

Mike does the milking and cheese making. He was very keen to produce a food from scratch, a food that could be preserved and eaten at any time and a food that would add value

to the raw ingredients, grown on a farm too small to receive any subsidies. They researched pre-industrial methods of cheese making, recipes with the least interventions, handmade in the simplest way. Using this research as inspiration, they have made a completely unique cheese, Carraignamuc, a Gold medal winner in The Irish Cheese Awards 2021.

The cheese is made from their own starter culture, the raw milk from their shorthorn

cows, natural rennet, sea salt and nothing else. The cheese is aged for three to four months developing a natural rind and, speaking from my own experience, it is delicious. A cheese of its place, from their farm. A second cheese, Ri na Mumhan, was developed using the same ingredients, the leftover curds from the larger moulds. By using smaller moulds and then washing the cheeses every other day in a salt, spring water brine, a completely different rind is created making a cheese similar to French Munster, soft and deliciously smelly. The recipe for French Munster is believed to have travelled to France via Irish monks, a cheese now repatriated in West Cork.

With the small amount of land at their disposal it is only possible to keep four milking cows. The calves and followers and their Droimeann Bull are grazed on rough rented ground nearby. The pigs are fed whey left over from cheese making. They use no chemicals on their land and are trying to breed resilience into their herd of heritage breed cows. Everything Mike and Darcie do on their farm is holistic and sustainable and in the best sense, simple. In an age when the pressure on farmers is always to get bigger, buy more land, get bigger machinery, it is really encouraging to see a young family sharing the workload and making a living by adding value to the produce of their land. In the meantime making delicious prizewinning cheese.

Darcie can be found in Skibbereen and Bantry Markets; you can also buy the cheese online; and other outlets can be found on their website thelostvalley-dairy.com

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Olympic medallist Emily honoured at Irish Times / Sport Ireland Sportswomen Awards

Skibbereen rower Emily Hegarty was among those honoured with the Irish Times / Sport Ireland Outstanding Achievement Award 2021 which was presented to Team Ireland medalists Tokyo 2020.

Emily – along Aifric Keogh, Fiona Murtagh and Eimear Lambe – won Ireland's first medal of the Olympic Games when the team produced a stirring effort in the women's four final to come back from fifth in the race around the 1,000 metre mark to power through the final 1,000m, finishing in third behind world champions Australia and European champions the Netherlands.

Their achievement was all the more special as they became not just the first Irish women to win a rowing Olympic medal but also the first to win a team Olympic medal.

Emily grew up on a dairy farm in Aughadown, near Skibbereen. She started rowing with Skibbereen on the Ilen River in 2009 aged just 11. The 23-year-old is a member of UCC Rowing Club where she is studying biological sciences.



people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle



A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

Another Christmas has slipped gently by and here we are in 2022. As always I enjoyed Christmas. I love that business takes a break and there's time to enjoy family and friends, even if it means meeting outside to avoid the dreaded virus. We shared lots of family dinners, taking turns to cook, trying new recipes and perfecting old ones.

I was thinking what did I eat that stood out on my taste memory; we ate so much. Amongst the many dinners, some elaborate and some simple, were roasted carrots.

I know! Roasted carrots, they sound so mundane but cooked properly roasted carrots retain their bite and at the same time transform into melt-in-your-mouth sweetness. Once roasted there are so many options to include them in or to accompany dishes.

Our roasted carrot moment came about when there was very little in the vegetable basket and to be quite honest there were no great expectations. We roast carrots regularly, usually in a medley of roasted vegetables but this time, partly due to necessity we roasted them solo in chunks.

Roasting all root vegetables enhances their flavour. The dry heat of the oven releases the

A 'sweet' carrot dish



water in the vegetable which shooshes off, as steam releasing the natural sugars which caramelise and bring about a great depth of flavour.

It's important to know when preparing this dish that the vegetables are going to shrink, taking the water out will set this in motion – the opposite from pumping food full of water to plump it up. What looks like an alarming amount of carrots will finish up about half the volume and if you can't eat them all they are excellent added to salads or soups the next day.

Carrots grow in Ireland, they're local, sustainable and a great colour. Colour in January is always a bonus, grey days need colourful food. The brighter the vegetables are the more antioxidants and serotonin within. All of these factors will help us to keep us well and positive. My mum always told us to eat up our carrots because they

would help us see in the dark which could be another bonus. Here's a roasted carrot recipe combo that we enjoyed.

Roasted Carrots, Lentils and Pumpkin Seed Salsa

Ingredients:

- 700g carrots
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 30mls olive oil
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 tsp honey
- 200g puy lentils
- 1 red onion
- 1-2 stems celery
- 1 leek, white part only
- 50mls olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbs of your best balsamic vinegar
- 50g pumpkin seeds
- 2 cloves garlic

- half a preserved lemon
- 25mls olive oil
- Salt

Pre heat oven 190°C.

Peel the carrots and chop into chunks, roughly 3-4cms. I like to chop on the diagonal as this gives bigger sides to caramelise - it also looks more interesting.

Put the carrots into a large bowl, drizzle over a little olive oil, add the fennel seeds, some salt and cracked black pepper then toss them all together. The carrots should be lightly coated in oil. Tip the carrots onto a large roasting tray – they need to be in a single layer otherwise they will braise rather than roast. Set the timer for 30 minutes then remove the tray from the oven and toss everything again, cook for a further 20 minutes. Finally take the tray out again, drizzle a small amount of honey over the carrots – not more than 1tsp, then toss the carrots once

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more. Roast for a further 10-15 minutes.

To prepare the lentils, peel and chop the onion, dice the celery and the white part of the leek. Heat a pan. Add the olive oil and the vegetables. Season with a little salt then cook on a medium heat until the vegetables begin to melt down. Stir in the lentils, then cover with 500mls water. Bring to the boil then cover with a lid and turn to simmer. Cook for 35-40 minutes or until the lentils are tender. Taste to check. Season with salt and pepper then stir in 1 tbs of your best balsamic vinegar, this will brighten the dish up.

To make the pumpkin salsa toast the pumpkin seeds gently in a dry pan on a low heat. They will begin to crackle and pop so keep an eye on them and don't let them brown. When the popping subsides tip them out of the pan to prevent them from cooking further. Peel and rough-

ly chop the garlic and roughly chop the preserved lemon. Put all the ingredients into a jug and buzz with a hand held blender or buzz in a food processor. Taste and season with a little salt and thin with a little water if it is too thick to pour.

To serve put the lentils into a shallow bowl or onto a plate, heap some carrots on top and drizzle over some pumpkin seed salsa. Excellent eaten with potato wedges – which can be roasting at the same time as the carrots.

Enjoy!

Happy New Year everyone, wishing you an abundance of health and happiness
Karen

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Doctors champion plant-based diet in new book

'Eating Plant-Based: Scientific answers to your nutrition questions' is a book for people who would like a deeper understanding of the scientific evidence supporting a plant-based diet and its impact on human health. It will be of interest to people who are already following a plant-based diet and for those who would like to switch to this way of eating but are filled with doubts. Is it safe to raise children on a plant-based diet? How do you get enough protein? What about calcium? And iodine? The answers to all these questions are simple and straightforward and this book provides a scientific background to our understanding of plant-

based diets.

Authors, Dr Zahra and Dr Shireen Kassam, are sisters, cancer doctors and board certificated as Lifestyle Medicine Physicians from the International Board of Lifestyle Medicine. Zahra The questions are based on their own experience of advocating and educating family, health professionals, patients, and the public on plant-based diets for the last decade.

A global transition to a plant-based food system has now become an urgent imperative for both human and planetary health. Even though plant-based diets are associated with some of the best health outcomes and supported by major nutrition and

dietetic organisations around the world, myths about the requirement for meat, dairy and eggs persist. This book answers commonly asked questions and concerns raised when people transition to a plant-based diet and provides a guide for health professionals who are increasingly meeting patients and clients who have chosen to adopt a plant-based diet. In this new world of social media, click-bait headlines and fake news, this book provides a 'go to' guide for those trying to cut through the noise.

If you are thinking about making the transition, it will give you the confidence to do so. If you are already following a

plant-based diet, it will help you with advocating for and discussing your choice with others in an impartial, evidence-based way.

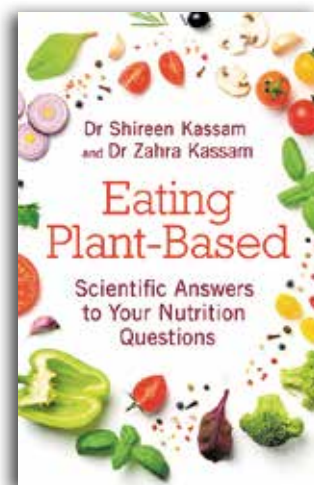
"This comprehensive book provides the answers to the common plant-based nutrition questions, backed by the most up-to-date scientific evidence. It will give you the background to help you transition to plant-based eating, deepen your knowledge, and give you the confidence to advocate with your friends, family and beyond. I implore you to read this book as if your health, and life, depended on it. In many ways, it holds the key to supporting us all in living a truly healthy life and also ensuring that we leave a world

that is as diverse and as beautiful as possible for the generations to come." – Kate Strong World Champion Triathlete.

Published by Hammersmith Health Books, Eating Plant-Based: Scientific answers to your nutrition questions, is due for publication on January 20, 2022.

Dr Shireen Kassam MB BS, FRC-Path, PhD, DipIBLM is a Consultant Haematologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer at King's College Hospital, London with a specialist interest in the treatment of patients with lymphoma.

Dr Zahra Kassam MBBS, FRCPC, MSc, DipABLM, is a Radiation Oncologist at the Stronach



Regional Cancer Centre in Ontario, and an Assistant Professor in Radiation Oncology at the University of Toronto, Canada. Zahra specialises in the treatment of breast and gastrointestinal malignancies.

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

January returns and faulty goods redress

From uncertainty about what to do with unwanted Christmas gifts, to doubts over how long you have to return a faulty item, you may find yourself wondering what consumer rights and protections you have, now that the festive season is over. To help clarify any post-Christmas confusion, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) has put together a consumer rights guide, with practical information and top tips.

Faulty Goods: If you bought an item or received a gift over Christmas, which turns out to be faulty, under EU consumer protection law, you have the right to either: a refund, a repair, a replacement product or a reduction in price, as a solution. This is regardless of whether you bought the item online, in-store, at full price, or at a discount. Consumer

protection law doesn't currently set out exactly what you are entitled to when you return a faulty item, so it is up to you to negotiate with the business and agree which option suits you best.

Research commissioned by the CCPC showed that the vast majority of consumers didn't realise they can have up to 6 years to return faulty goods.

However, how long the item was used for is considered when resolving issues, so you should act quickly as soon as you notice a fault. Contact the retailer who sold you the item as soon as you can, along with proof of purchase (such as a till receipt), to negotiate a suitable solution.

The CCPC's research showed that, when asked about the returns period for faulty goods, 45 per cent of consumers believe that it depends on the details of the product guarantee or warranty, which is not the case. Both guarantees and warranties are in addition to your consumer rights, they do not replace them! This means that even if your product guarantee or warranty has expired, you may still be entitled to a repair, replacement or refund, as covered by your statutory rights.

Product Guarantees And Warranties: Product guarantees and warranties can be popular additions for certain types of goods, such as electronics, laptops and smartphones, particular around Christmas time. Although they may offer additional assurances (e.g. a guaranteed timeframe, or to cover costs against damage or cracked screen repairs etc.) it's important to know that they are different to your statutory consumer rights. This is particularly important when it comes to faulty goods.

The CCPC's research showed

that the majority of those surveyed knew to ask the retailer who sold them the faulty item to fix the problem. A large cohort of respondents also identified the product's warranty provider (68pc) and the product manufacturer (50pc) as also being responsible for offering a solution.

When it comes to fixing the problem of an item that turns out to be faulty, you should know that irrespective of whether you have a guarantee or warranty, the retailer who sold you the item is responsible for resolving the issue, you don't have to deal with the manufacturer. This is important to be aware of, particularly in instances where a retailer may tell you to contact the manufacturer directly – as this is the retailer's responsibility, not yours.

Change-Of-Mind Returns:

If you bought an item, but have changed your mind about it, or if you received an unwanted Christmas gift and wish to return it, the first thing that you need to be aware of is that your rights and entitlements are different depending on whether the item was bought online, or in-store. If you buy something online and subsequently change your mind, under EU consumer protection law, you have 14 days from the day the item arrives, to cancel your order and then 14 days from when you cancel, to return the items and get a full refund. If

you got something as a gift, the person who bought it online may be able to return it if its within 14 days.

However, if you change your mind about an item you bought in-store, your rights and entitlements will depend on the store's own returns policy, unless the item is faulty. Most stores will offer a returns period, however, it's important to be aware that this is a goodwill gesture on the part of the store, not a legal obligation. So be sure to check out the 'change-of-mind returns' policy on the business's website, or on your till or gift receipt.

delivery delays: If you bought items online before Christmas from an EU website, but they were either delayed or never arrived, it's important to know that you have strong rights when it comes to delivery timeframes. If you haven't received your delivery, and the business told you they would deliver it by a certain date, then you are entitled to:

1. Agree a different date, or
2. Cancel the contract and get a full refund

If you were not given a delivery timeframe, then, under consumer law, the business must deliver your order within 30 days. Don't forget that you also have 14 days to change your mind if the product arrives too late.

It's also important to be aware that a business is responsible

for goods until they are delivered to you, unless you organised your own delivery. This means that if a business organises a courier to deliver an item to you, they must ensure its delivery and if the item is not delivered they should organise a replacement or a refund.

Eu versus Non-Eu Consumer Rights:

When it comes to items you bought online, one of the most important things to be aware of is that your consumer rights are different depending on where the business you bought from is based. If the goods were bought from an EU-based business you have strong consumer protections, including the right to a refund for change of mind returns (as detailed above) and faulty items.

However, if the goods were bought from a non-EU website, this means that these rights do not automatically apply and therefore, if something does go wrong or you wish to return or exchange an item or gift, it may be more difficult to get the issue resolved. However, be sure to check the business's website to check the T&Cs for any additional information on your right to a refund and, if it's not clear, contact the business directly to explain your circumstances and ask what options are available to you.

For more information on your consumer rights when shopping, visit ccpc.ie

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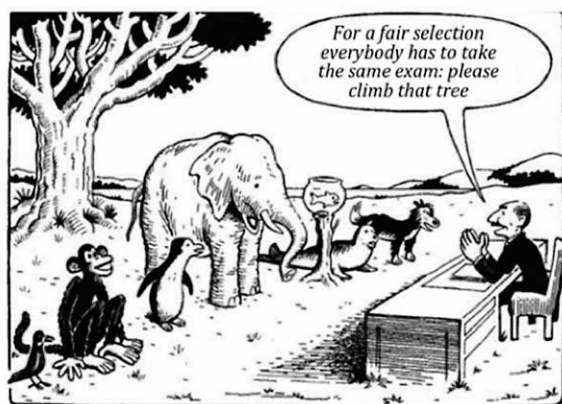
An Roinn Coimrce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Knocking down barriers

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!



"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

– Albert Einstein

Let's all start 2022 with some common sense!

We can all hopefully appreciate that to judge all animals on the basis of the same physical ability, regardless of morphology, would be non-sensical.

Yet do we all get it, that to expect all people regardless of physical ability to negotiate the same environments, often designed for persons of a particular ability is unreasonable? So, who designs a crossing point with a ramp at one side and a kerb at the other? Who notices it? Who built it? Who

was the architect? Yes, this still happens, in your area, in your environment. Look around.

A: How does anyone get past this? Then consider a wheelchair user, a PWD with a walking aid or a person with a visual impairment? A person with a buggy? How does anyone abandon something so carelessly, so thoughtlessly?

B: OK, this really takes thought. There is no dishd kerb, no way off the path for a PWD. If the bike does not cause an accident, then how will a PWD, a wheelchair user, get past the van which is illegally parked? How does a person with visual impairment cope with these manmade challenges? These are real situations,



real people behaved in this less-than-considerate way.

C: If the overgrown hedge does not get a visually impaired person, that bin should do the trick. It is going to be an interesting dilemma for a wheelchair user; can't get past



the bin to the ramp, the hedge reduces the width of the already narrow footpath, so cannot turn. Who abandons obstacles in this inconsiderate fashion?

D: Wheelie bins! Why do people never wheel them out of the way of those who cannot? There is a wheelchair user assessing this situation, as there is no possibility to safely get off the footpath and her path is blocked.

E: Who constructs a barrier across a dishd kerb, who signs it off, who never notices, except of course the ones who need to use it? Clear technical expertise at work.

It is 2022! Can we all start to open our eyes, widen our vision of what our environment could be, and start to judge our environment on how useful it is, or by the barriers created within it, for everyone in our community? That translates into accessibility for all.

An environment reflects equality only when it is accessible and reflects accessibility in the way in which the community within it think and act.

Let us level the playing field and stop creating man-made challenges for those who do not need them.

The many health benefits of honey

Ballyhooly native Andrew Shinnick, with his brother John, is a third generation beekeeper. When they're not beekeeping, Andrew is a senior Army Officer and John, a full-time dairy farmer. Together the brothers run the award-winning Blackwater Honey. Andrew is also on the board of directors of the Irish Beekeepers Association CLG and is involved in Eblana Beekeeping Association based in Dublin along with County Dublin Beekeeping Association, which is part of the Federation of Irish Beekeepers Association CLG. Additionally, Blackwater Honey is a member of the Native Irish Honeybee Society, an organisation that aims to help preserve and breed the native Irish honeybee – *Apis Mellifera Mellifera*.



(l-r) Andrew and John Shinnick of Blackwater Honey

In order to promote human health, the interest in the use of natural food products with functional properties has grown in recent years. Honey is just one of those natural food products renowned for its biological properties, especially its antioxidant, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory capacities. Beekeeper Andrew Shinnick tells us more.

Due to its natural antioxidants, including mostly phenolic compounds, honey has the capacity to serve as an important source of antioxidants in human nutrition, and thus, can have many beneficial effects on human health. In a review, published in 'Nutrients', a peer-reviewed, open access journal of human nutrition, honey was found to have had anti-diabetic, anti-hypertension and anti-obesity properties. Honey is high in fructose, a form of sugar with a stronger

taste, however it has a lower impact on blood sugar. It was also shown to raise insulin sensitivity, which is dulled in type 2 diabetics.

In terms of obesity, the low glycaemic index on the food limits weight gain and fat storage from eating it. The review however, did warn that many shop-bought honeys contain a mix of cheap sugar syrups or artificial sweeteners, which would have the opposite effect for diabetics. Interestingly, honey consumption was shown to not affect cholesterol nor had it an effect on hypertension. Additionally, in a 2018 scientific study by TCD and UCD, Irish heather honey was found to have the highest TPC (Total Phenolic Content) of all Irish single origin honeys and even had a higher TPC than Manuka honey, thereby making it a superfood.

In many vitro and in vivo

studies, effectiveness of honey in a number of its medical uses is due to its antibacterial activity that is capable in inhibiting Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria including multi-drug resistant strains, and some species of fungi and viruses. In addition, different honeys have been shown to decrease inflammatory response and are thus potentially useful in anti-inflammatory treatments. Honeys are being extensively applied in wound therapy as an alternative to more expensive and advanced wound products. There is also evidence to suggest that honey can heal partial thickness burns and post-operative infected wounds more quickly and effectively than conventional treatments.

However, the most well-known and beneficial usage of honey, is its ability to help alleviate hay fever symptoms.



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By consuming honey, it has been reported that it helps the person to build up a resistance to the pollen experienced in that area. Many people ask, will any Irish honey work if they cannot get a 'local honey.' The general answer to this question is, yes. Any 'trusted Irish honey' will help, as the plants that the bees feed upon will generally be the same. Ireland does not have huge variations in its biodiversity from one county to another. The only exception to this rule would be in the many urban areas due to the bees' ability to forage on additional plants, many of whom, might be non-native. One should always avoid those cheap 'blended EU and Non EU honeys' and those often pretending to be Irish honey for the use in hay fever. Always read the label carefully, as there are some well-known Irish companies selling so called 'Irish honey' which often contain no Irish honey in them. More of a reason to seek out your trusted local beekeeper whereby you will not only be helping to support the local economy but also helping to prevent honey fraud, which is on the increase each year by large countries such as China and the Ukraine.

Young people in West Cork will be celebrated this year as part of European Year of Youth

The EU has dedicated the year 2022 as the year to celebrate young people all across Europe. The pandemic has had a significant negative effect on young people and the European Year of Youth will be a chance to bring their needs to the forefront. Young people in Cork will be invited to participate in various events as part of the celebrations.

2022 has been dedicated European Year of Youth with an aim to empower, support and engage with young people in a post-pandemic perspective. The EU has said that the young generation is a priority for Europe and next year will be a year to offset damage caused by lockdown. The year will see long-term activities for young people initiated to extend beyond 2022.

Ireland South MEP Deirdre Clune said the overall objective of the year is to reinforce the efforts of the EU and the Irish Government and Local Authorities in Ireland to support young people in a post-pandemic world.

MEP Clune said: "The year 2022 has been dedicated to supporting and empowering young people across Europe. I am really pleased that 2022 has been dedicated to young people as it is so important for us to acknowledge the significant impact the pandemic has had on the younger generation. This initiative will be a great opportunity to listen to their voices and bring about change as their voices reach policy makers. We will also be especially looking to hear from young people from rural areas and vulnerable groups. In Ireland young people will have an opportunity to get involved and as MEPs we will be working on helping young people do that."

The EU will aim to engage young people in key consultation processes, such as the Conference on the Future of Europe, as well as in other public policies at EU, national and local level. Events to be organised under the EYY umbrella are conferences, initiatives promoting youth participation in policy making, awareness raising campaigns on a more inclusive, green and digital society, as well as studies and research on the situation of youth in the EU.

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Ten skincare tips for the New Year



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.

With the start of a new year, it's always a great time to assess your skincare regime but with new products constantly hitting the shelves and the seemingly endless skincare advice out there on the internet, it's not always easy to figure out what's right for you and your skin. I've put together a list of some of my top skincare tips to help you on your path to healthy beautiful skin in 2022. From choosing the right products for your skin type to the importance of cleaning your makeup brushes, these easy tricks will help guide you to glowing skin ASAP.



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 as well as Church Cross, Skibbereen. Dr. Kingston's area of research are the healing modalities present in Irish vernacular medicine and she incorporates them, where possible, into her clinical practice. In her clinical practise she specialises in infertility and digestive issues. www.rosarikingtonphd.com

Consistency is key

You won't improve skin health after just one use of a cleanser or a serum. Give your products enough time to work and be patient and consistent. You need to stick to your routine and chosen products in order to improve the quality of your skin and see visible changes. Frequently changing your routine because you don't see results without allowing enough time can actually be worse for your skin. Remember active ingredients take time to deliver and don't neglect your neck and décolleté! These are areas that often get forgotten and can show a significant amount of skin ageing and damage.

Simplify your skincare routine

I'm a firm believer that 'less is more.' Layering on multiple skincare products all at once is a big no-no. It can be harsh on the skin, resulting in more breakouts and clogged pores. By scaling down the number of products you use, you can unlock the power of caring for your complexion with just a few effective products used each and every day. Your skin does not need a 10-step routine, and in fact chances are you won't keep it up long enough to actually see results.

Never skip sunscreen

Ask anybody in the beauty industry their number one beauty tip and you'll always get the same answer – Don't skip SPF. Those UV rays don't hibernate for winter, which means you've got to protect your skin all year round. By protecting your skin from UV Rays you'll keep your skin looking young and

feeling healthy and you'll also be proactively protecting your skin from skin cancer. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or greater AND take note, the sunscreen in your makeup does not give you adequate protection! A separate standalone sunscreen is a must.

Always take your makeup off at night

No matter how tired you might be, don't go to sleep with the entire day clogging up your face. Washing your face before bed removes makeup, dirt, sweat, and other impurities your skin comes in contact with during the day. If you're too tired to wash your face before bed, wash your face as soon as you get home that evening. That way, you'll go to bed with a clean face without making your bedtime routine any longer than you want it to be.

Step away from the magnifying mirror

Good things do not come from a magnifying mirror! Please stop obsessing over every line, pore, bump and so on. What is perfect skin anyway? Smooth skin? Unlined skin? No visible pores? No dark spots? It's none of these. For me, healthy skin is what we should be striving for... skin that glows and radiates health. In the words of Dr Howard Murad "Healthy Skin is a reflection of overall wellness." Please be kind to yourself and don't get caught up in trying to achieve perfection, it doesn't exist.

Out with the old

Give your bathroom shelf an update! If you're a skincare junkie, it is very likely that your



skincare shelf is heaving with products, but have you actually checked to see if they are still in date. Beauty products, unfortunately, don't last forever. Most should have a printed expiration date or a 'Period After Opening' (PAO) date on them, which might be something like '24M', meaning 24 months. While this is not an exact science, as a general rule, if it's changed colour, changed smell, or indeed changed texture (gone a little furry) – it's time for it to go!

Keep things clean

If you don't keep your makeup brushes clean and free from bacteria, dirt, and oil, you're basically taking one step forward and ten steps back as this will only lead to infection, clogged pores, and breakouts—which nobody wants. Keep your brushes and

your skin clean and happy. Other items that can harbour bacteria and that many of us forget about are our pillowcases, phones, and face cloths. Do your skin a huge favour and clean these on a regular basis.

Breathe! Minimise your stress

As best you can, try and minimise your stress. I know the past two years have not been without their challenges, but stress affects skin in so many ways. The stress hormone cortisol leads to an overproduction of sebum (oil) in your skin glands, which causes acne breakouts. It also impacts your immune system, which can cause your skin to be more reactive and sensitive and stress can also worsen existing inflammatory skin conditions like eczema, psoriasis, and rosacea.

Book a facial treatment

If you haven't already experienced one, book in for a facial treatment – this is a great way to get deep cleaning, exfoliation, and hydration without having to lift a finger. Facials also help stimulate your skin and keep it in tip top shape. Moreover, it's an opportunity to find out if your skin is lacking anything and what might be needed to tackle your concerns and get it back on track.

Avoid over-exfoliation

While exfoliating can help reveal radiant skin, over-exfoliating is something to be cautious of – your skin might end up having the opposite reaction to the one you were hoping for. It can leave your skin feeling dry, irritated, sensitive, and can also lead to breakouts and inflammation, making your skin barrier very unhappy. Remember, your skin cells naturally exfoliate on their own. Working from the deepest layers to most superficial layers, they slough off roughly every 28 days, although as we get older, the process can take longer! So, like so many of the best things in life, exfoliating products should just be used in moderation.

For all the latest beauty news follow me on Instagram and Facebook @shernamalone.ie

Book in online for one of my advanced facial treatments or a skincare consultation in The Aesthetic Clinic Clonakilty www.shernamalone.ie

Advanced Facial Treatments, Professional Peels, Medical Microneedling, Radio Frequency, Dermalux LED Light Therapy, Teen Facials.

Planting a herb garden for your health

This is a good month to decide if you want to have herbs growing in your garden. So many of the ones used therapeutically may be obtained from the wild but some, such as marshmallow, elecampane and lovage need to be planted to ensure supply.

Culinary herbs need to be planted near the kitchen, as they are best picked fresh. A large tub or a variety of pots will give a sufficient supply for most people. The main herbs here are rosemary, sage, parsley, thyme, garlic, oregano, marjoram, chives, and bay. I have discovered that it is advisable to keep bay in a pot unless you want a 30ft tree in a few years. On the other hand, plant it as a hedge and it will form a dense screen very quickly. However, I am aware that some people have a

lot of trouble trying to get bay to grow so it probably depends on soil and shelter.

Rosemary needs dry, gravelly soil and most of the above herbs thrive in soil that drains freely. The edge of a driveway may often be the perfect place for these herbs that need free drainage. Also, parsley is ideal planted along borders as its bright green leaf contrasts beautifully with bedding plants. Parsley is a biennial and though it normally seeds itself, it may also die. If this happens on a regular basis for you, be prepared to plant parsley every year to ensure a continuous supply. Parsley is rich in vitamin K (good for blood clotting and bone health), vitamin A (good for vision and immune system) and C (necessary for the growth, development, and repair of all tissue).

Parsley will overwinter in West Cork, but if your garden is rather windswept it may be better to bring a pot or two indoors for the winter. Parsley is such a beneficial herb; it should always be used in cooking, both fresh and cooked. Onions and garlic are also needed on a daily basis because they are so beneficial to our health, but time constraints may often prevent this during the busy working week. To offset a busy schedule, a good quantity of onions, parsley and garlic can be sautéed at the weekend and placed in a container in the fridge. A portion from this container can then be added to potatoes, pasta, stir fry during the week thus saving time.

Herbs like marshmallow, mullein, and elecampane need rich, deep soil but they are useful herbs for respiratory infections

so deserve a place in the garden.

The one herb I am enthusiastic about planting is Calendula officinalis or the common marigold. Once it is planted it will self-seed and return year after year. Its bright orange flower is so uplifting, and it is especially useful as a home remedy. It is full of antioxidants and is anti-inflammatory. It is especially useful to soothe sunburn and is very good for healing wounds. Anybody who is prone to leg ulcers should use a calendula wash daily. It is anti-microbial and anti-fungal with one test tube study showing it being effective against twenty-three strains of candida.

It is better to start with a few familiar herbs such as the ubiquitous parsley and thyme. Thyme is effective against e coli but more importantly, salmo-

nella. Salmonella is the hidden danger in undercooked chicken so stuffing the cavity with thyme before cooking will prevent this particular danger.

The use of herbs in the home to maintain health is one way of ensuring a healthy lifestyle. In my forthcoming 12-month class I will be exploring, not just the use of plants, but also other traditions from our Irish heritage, which sustain good health, and which provide shelter and centring in these challenging times. If interested in this 12-month online course, please email me at rkherbclinc@gmail.com for the programme and cost. My book, 'Ireland's Hidden Medicine', is available in local bookshops and from www.drrosarikington.com.

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What to do to keep
fit and be safe?

You might be looking to lose those Christmas or Covid kilos or maybe you're one of the lucky ones who was able to take advantage of the rearranged life and actually get fit or started training or walking and so on during the pandemic. Either way, it is getting harder to keep up a regime as the days are darker and colder. The sea is colder and wilder, the roads are more dangerous, and our bodies seem programmed to snuggle in by the TV or fire as soon as work is done. We know however that if we do even 30 minutes of exercise after work, or before or during work, we will feel so much better says **Tom O'Herlihy**, Manager at Clonakilty Park Leisure Club.

We will eat better, sleep better, work better, feel happier and be better to be with! A recent study by an international team of scientists found 150 minutes a week of physical activity that gets you slightly out of breath can have a massive

impact on immunity. It suggests exercise can reduce fatalities by 37 per cent, the danger of even catching similar diseases by 31 per cent and boost the effectiveness of vaccines by up to 40 per cent.

The question is, what to do to keep fit and be safe?

Press ups, sit ups etc at home:

There are plenty of online sources of body weight exercise programmes. You can do these routines at home, at the beach, or in the gym. If you are doing a workout you find online, be sure to have it checked out by a qualified exercise professional. It is very easy to overdo it and injure yourself following a program that was not specifically written for you. It is also almost impossible to verify the qualifications of an online instructor.

Gym workout:

Air changes in the gym are nine to 11 per hour, so about every six minutes the air is completely changed. That, and the fact that you clean everything you use before and after you, make it very Covid-safe. There are no cars or trucks driving past the walking machines and, surprisingly, no dogs. No rain of course! And my favourite bit about walking or running on the treadmills is that I can walk next to James and talk to him even though he is running!

Group exercise class:

An exercise class has the benefit of a live qualified instructor, motivating you while ensuring that your technique is perfectly safe. Everyone in a group exercise class indoors must be vaccinated. The air is freshened every six minutes. Any equipment you use is cleaned before and after you use it. There's a great atmosphere and it is very social.

Park Run: Park run is on every Saturday in Clonakilty showgrounds and Castlehaven at Rineen Woods. It is free and safe and anyone can do it. It is an ideal way to finish your week if you have been walking or running during the week.

Walk the roads: Walking the roads is probably the most convenient option for most people. If you live on a quiet road, or one with a safe footpath, you can go any time. Pick a gate, junction, road sign, any landmark. Wrap up warm and dry (in Hi Vis) and just go – 500m down the road and back is one kilometre! The next day, go the other direction as well. It is easy to ramp it up – after the school run, before the pick-up, lunchtime, between meetings and so on. There's no need to change, no need for lycra or even running shoes to get started. Just pick your time and stick to it.

Forest walks: If you're lucky enough to live near one, use that.

Run roads: That is the same as for walking the roads except you will need to change and wear proper running shoes.

Run the beach at Long Strand, Inchydunoy Dunes, etc:

Running or walking on the beach is as good for your head, as it is for your body! It is more subject to the weather though, so you will need to have a back-up workout. If it is too wild/wet/

windy or the tide is too high, don't cancel, do your walk on a safe road nearby and then go to the beach for a cool down and mental chill. Also remember, running, or even walking, on soft sand and in the dunes is a very demanding workout, so break it up with easy walks to recover.

Swimming: Swimming in the sea is more dangerous in the cold weather, even if it is flat calm. Hypothermia is a very real danger as we don't notice the effect it is having on us until it is too late. If you are out swimming with your buddy and they begin to swim away from the shore what do you do? Swim after them? Are you faster than they are? Swim ashore and call the lifeboat? It is a real danger. There are plenty of enclosed places like the Warren, Lough Hyne, Baltimore Bay, and so on where swimmers can be accessed from several areas but your risk assessment in the winter should always include the mental incapacity of hypothermia even with wetsuits.

Swimming in the pool, if you are lucky enough to have access to one, doesn't have these hazards and allows for easier measuring of your performance. For example three extra lengths in the same time and so on. However, most pools now require you to pick your time in advance, even if it is only 20 minutes in advance, whereas the sea is there all day, weather-permitting.

The gym and pool do have several advantages in the Covid

era despite, or perhaps because of, being indoors. Pool water has been shown to inactivate Covid in 30 seconds. Pool hall air is also full of chlorine which kills Covid. Pool hall air is replaced 3.5 times per hour, that is fully refreshed every 17 minutes, no recirculating, just all fresh. All those benefits may seem like comforts, but the main thing is they do away with barriers.

If you do train indoors, you can decide when to train: After work and before dinner; On the way to collect the kids from school; After taking the kids to school; While the kids are at an after school activity (If they are at football for an hour, you can fit 40 mins of exercise in); Between online meetings.

Any of those can be combined with meeting a friend for a catch up while exercising or going for a coffee afterwards. The trick is to build it in to your timetable. If you say, 'I'll meet Pat on Monday for a gym workout and a chat and a coffee afterwards', that's great. But then if something comes up in Pat's life, your workout might get cancelled. If you say 'I'll have my gym time every morning after I take the kids to school, and book it for the week', you can still arrange to meet Pat on Monday, but if he can't make it, you still have to take the kids to school so the workout will still go ahead. (And you might meet James in the gym!)

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Space To Heal with Lisa Hodnett

In her practice 'Space To Heal', Lisa Hodnett has been seeing clients for more than a decade in Clonakilty, clients with a variety of conditions such as acute trauma, anxiety, depression, panic attacks and so on. Lisa provides a unique blend of talk therapy and energy work, which supports the client in a very nurturing, self empowering and effective manner. More often than not, it's the energy work and energy release treatment that provides the quickest results for those with dis-ease or in turmoil.

"You see, 'everything is energy', your hand, your body, your



emotions – we are all just energy," says Lisa. "Have you found yourself saying things like, I'm so frustrated, I'm so disappointed or wanting to explode with anger or lash out at the car in

front of you that isn't going fast enough? How do you feel then? What has been triggered? We can tap into this energy and release it, a little like releasing the top of a pressure cooker, the inner force relaxes and we can return to rational thinking and not behave out of our reaction – which I'm sure you agree is never a good plan!"

With attention and awareness, Lisa explains how we also get to know our emotional triggers and can learn tools to help us in those moments when our buttons are being truly pushed." I love this quote, 'I didn't install your buttons I just triggered

them'."

Lisa has a Diploma in Psychotherapy with the Irish School of Awareness Therapy and she is an accredited member of NFSH, National Foundation of Spiritual Healing (working directly with the NHS in the UK) providing energy healing to patients. She is also a practitioner of Energy Release Psychology, Reiki Master and Meditation Group leader in West Cork for many years.

Check out www.lisahodnett.ie or call 087 2244429 for information or an appointment.

SAMIRA BRANCH
ACUPUNCTURE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
HERE'S TO A HEALTHY 2022

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ALL COVID-19
GUIDELINES IN
PLACE

Acupuncture can help with the symptoms of Long Covid

If you've been struggling with stress and anxiety lately, or the symptoms of Long Covid, you are not alone! Many of us are trying to get back to a more normal life but finding it tough after the challenges of the last two years. Acupuncturist Samira Branch made a list of symptoms you may be feeling, which are normal but can be alarming. Fortunately, these can be helped with acupuncture by

relieving chronic stress and giving your body a boost so it can find a healthy balance again.

- Low energy or mood
- Not wanting to go out and meet people or feeling panic in seemingly normal situations
- Not being interested in your hobbies
- Not being able to relax and enjoy life
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Fluttery tummy or a knot in

your tummy

- Nausea
- Palpitations
- Sweaty palms
- Rapid breathing
- Insomnia
- Feeling tired and irritable
- Feeling you're not in control
- Worrying and repetitive thinking
- Becoming obsessed or overly controlling of certain things
- Lack of focus

- Poor memory
- Poor diet

Although Long Covid is a relatively new phenomenon, acupuncture has helped several people with breathing difficulties, sore or burning lungs, exhaustion, migraines, sinus problems, poor sense of taste, smell, and appetite

For more information, or to book a session you can contact Samira on 087 9024274.

A creative hub like no other

Dedicated to helping people improve their mental health and wellbeing through the use (and discovery) of their own creative powers, No. 49, North Street in Skibbereen will continue to operate in the coming period, rain, shine or Covid. Some of its activities have gone (partly) online. Others take place outside in a covered and heated backyard. Here's a sample of what's (relatively) new in No. 49 in early 2022. All sessions are free.

Restorative Meditation

This group is led by Paola Vais, an Italian architect who came to Ireland for a 'career break' 25 years ago. She started working in a sailing school in West Cork...and never left. After training as a chef at Ballymaloe Cookery School, Paula decided to study mindfulness meditation in Dublin. "I'm a blow-in with many hats," she says with an audible smile. "The basic idea is to acknowledge what is happening inside without judgment. Feelings, physical sensations, thoughts coming and going. I teach ways to find a place for the mind to rest through a focus

on breathing, or the senses (hearing, seeing, touching), or your hands or feet. By creating a little distance, thoughts or emotions can no longer overwhelm and you can come back to the 'now'. Even if just for a few seconds. People find it a useful start of their week. It grounds them. And I show them movements that can help reduce stress. Techniques that they can take away with them."

Monday 11am-12pm, drop-in session, dress warmly in the winter weather.
westcorkmindfulness.com

Going write within – Part 2

Started in October, facilitated by Moze Jacobs, who now hands the baton to Stanley Notte; this is a series of creative writing workshops.

Stan is a man of numerous talents and skills. Retired from the Irish Naval Service he has since gone all-out creative: poetry, videos, graphic design, motivational speaker.

But his life hasn't been a bed of roses, and he is unashamedly honest about that. Owing to circumstance and intergenerational trauma, he has lived with a mental health issue for many years – something which only dawned on him gradually.

"Prior to my diagnosis, I started writing," he told the Two Norries Podcast. "And I know 100 per cent that it was to express the pain within me. My belief now is that we're all on this planet to be creative."

Stan will use songs as source material during his weekly workshops (he's brilliant at found poetry) as well as memory/memories. He will encourage participants to write 'just for the craic' as a way to kick start the creative juices, to use exaggeration, and to work from the subconscious.

Can't wait to sign up? Contact Kevin at kevin.oshanahan@hse.ie or drop in. Thursday

2-4pm from 13/01 onward live or on zoom.
www.stannotecreations.ie

Peer Support Group

Many people face challenges that can affect their mental health. There is no shame in that. Nor does it need to be a reason for despair. Experience teaches that one of the best ways to dealing with this is to communicate with those who can relate and are happy to help.

Peer support groups can offer just that, making it easier to take that crucial first step toward breaking out of isolation. The groups are freely accessible to everybody and are facilitated by two people who have been trained in providing a safe, confidential, non-judgmental space. A place where people can feel accepted and understood.

They are aimed toward people living with or in recovery from mental health issues such as grief or trauma from life's adversities or simply, 'feeling unable to cop'. Problems encountered may include loneliness and isolation, anxiety/worry/fear/stress, addiction or substance abuse, divorce or separation, relationship difficulties, stress-related physical ailments.

The members of the peer support group in No. 49, North Street are very open about its

A peer support group can:

- Help you open up about what you feel and experience
- Introduce you to ideas and approaches that others have found helpful
- Reassure you that you're not the only one who is struggling
- Help you find a connection with others and give you a sense of belonging
- Encourage you to value your strengths
- Build your self-esteem and confidence
- Help you to feel more hopeful about the future

value to them.

"It's a great help to know we're not alone. With depression it is all about people disconnecting from themselves. Any kind of communication and sharing is so important. Regular attendance gives us coping skills to deal with stressful situations and help us regain the ability to think clearly, concentrate, assess information, arrive at sound judgments, and make wise decisions.

To obtain and maintain good surviving skills requires time and practice. That is why attending is so beneficial. You gain confidence and learn more about yourself. And, if someone wants to come along and just wants to be silent instead of sharing or speaking, that's fine,

too. We learned in the training that our aim is to plant the seed of wellness. As if nurturing a tree. Wellness rubs off; people use their own experiences to help each other."

All views and experiences are equally valued, rather than anyone being seen as more of an expert than others. How much support you give and receive can vary depending on what feels right for you at different times.

Peer support can be helpful on its own, or it can be something you try alongside therapies or medication. It can also be a helpful way of getting support if you're on a waiting list for one of these treatments.

"It's not always about getting or giving advice. It's also about having a safe space to get things off our chest and occasionally sharing a laugh about it all!"

A group is forming in Bantry (phone 087 6074908). For the Peer Support Group in Skibbereen, contact Kevin at kevin.oshanahan@hse.ie or drop in.

Every other Monday 2-4pm from January 11.

General information on direct support in Cork and Kerry can be found at cumannadaoine.com thewellbeingnetwork.ie 49northstreet.ie

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

HSE update on CAMHS centre in Clonakilty

Enabling works have been completed on a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) centre in Clonakilty and additional construction works are planned over the coming weeks, the HSE has said in correspondence to Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan.

"I've received correspondence from the HSE outlining where the proposed CAMHS centre in Clonakilty currently stands, and I'm pleased to say they've provided a promising update and works are underway," Deputy O'Sullivan said. "It's a vital service for early intervention in moderate to

serious mental health issues and it's great the HSE recognises the great work of CAMHS and is planning for a centre here in Clonakilty. We need a central hub to accommodate its team in an accessible West Cork location."

"If we can help children before they become adults with

early mental health intervention then we will significantly improve lives."

In the letter to Deputy O'Sullivan the HSE described the proposed location of a CAMHS service in St. David's Unit on the grounds of Clonakilty community hospital is "a much welcomed service enhancement for the local community."

"I am informed that enabling works have been completed including upgrades to fire detection systems and emergency lighting. Additional construction

works are planned over the coming weeks," the correspondence from a HSE Representative, said.

However the HSE warned that with COVID restrictions work is proceeding slower than usual.

"Onsite personnel will be limited to single trades at any given time, with this in mind, the project itself will progress at a slower pace than we would

envisage in normal non-COVID circumstances."

The successful CAMHS programme already has a base in Dunmanway, providing access to clinical psychologists. We need another central hub to compliment the centre in Dunmanway and to accommodate the team in another accessible West Cork location.

Follow your joy to achieve 'Sound Self-Care'

Do you set goals for the New Year? Maybe you go for it and enthusiastically work out for three days and then life happens and you wonder where the time went and it's Christmas again... Maybe just thinking about your New Year's resolutions make you feel overwhelmed?

Claire Marie Barton says that like so many of us she has been there and done that many times. So much so that she has set up an online women's circle called 'Sound Self-Care' designed to help people strengthen their self-care in order to thrive and bring calm into their lives.

"Over the past few years there has been more talk of self-care. Initially I wasn't paying much attention, thinking it was things like eating healthily, getting regular exercise and of course some 'me' time. But

while the first two were on the list even if they didn't always happen, the 'me' time bit was more of a luxury to have if everything else got done, which it never did.

"I was a busy mum with two young boys and I felt strung out. I was grateful for my life and all the blessings but I didn't feel the joy of it. I went to an energy healer who gave me the following prescription: 'Go for walks in nature on your own'. I had huge resistance for some reason but when I started doing it I felt amazing. Over time, I have added other things to my self-care tool kit like sound healing and angel cards and things started to shift.

"Looking back, I knew what I needed to nourish myself, but I felt blocked and didn't give myself permission for my 'frivolous' needs. There were so

many other things to be done.

"Now I realise that to be able to give ourselves the self-care we would love to really thrive, we need to be in the right frame of mind. We will do something if it's easy and we enjoy it. Why not start your self-care journey by following your joy? Moving towards the small things in life that feed you, like a walk in nature, pursuing a hobby or just meeting a friend for a cuppa?

Sound healing is a wonderful tool that can quiet the mind and bring relaxation to the body. It allows you to connect with yourself and instills clarity and a feeling of peace. Angel cards are a lovely positive way of giving us gentle nudges and guidance.

"I have created an online women's circle called 'Sound Self-Care' designed to inspire

and strengthen your self-care practices throughout the year. The circle meets twice a month and every week members receive a group angel card reading.

"We have regular sound healing workshops so you can learn easy ways of using sound healing for yourself as well as online sound baths where you can just relax and listen.

"Being part of this circle allows time for reflection, clearing and healing. You can also connect with like-minded women in a safe, confidential space. 'Sound Self-Care' can bring a sense of calm into your life and help create more space for you to follow your joy in other areas of your life."

If you would like to find out more, visit www.clairemariebarton.com or contact Claire on 087 2323 623.

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For more information visit www.clairemariebarton.com
Contact Claire on 087 2323 623

The stress games

Stress equals Pressure divided by (perceived) Coping Ability shares Psychotherapist and Coach **Noreen Coomey**, who coaches that if the pressure doesn't change, we need to increase our Coping Ability to keep our balance. Stress makes you stronger when you can control it. Noreen gives some advice on how we can all do just that.



There are four elements we can tune into to assess our response to stress – thinking, emotional, physical and behavioural.

Thinking – our fight-or-flight brain takes charge in a stressful situation; our logical brain is disconnected. To fix this we can:

1. Write a list of our thoughts – to force us to look at situations more realistically and keep ourselves grounded.
2. Shut off the energy that

we give to negative thinking by taking a few deep breaths – calming the body and brain – blow bubbles!

3. Make a short list to answer the following: a. What can I control? b. What is out of my control? c. What can I do?

Emotions – strong emotions interfere with our ability to function normally making it difficult to perform tasks. The work here is to calm the emotional brain. When you become aware of the emotion:

1. Label and detach the feeling (angry, sad, afraid) from the event – make a note of it.
2. Compare what you feel to what you know – use the facts to get understanding.
3. Focus on what needs to be done today – to bring your logical brain back on board.

Physical and Behavioural symptoms – change in appetite, headaches, tension and so on (normal in times of stress)

preoccupation with Covid-19, angry outbursts, inability to rest, changes in exercise and eating patterns, compulsive cleaning, risky behaviour. Three suggestions here:

1. Take your 10,000 steps daily to reduce the level of stress chemicals in the body
2. Practice controlled breathing for four minutes.
3. Find distracting fun activities – what you did as a child – skipping, singing, playing in the dirt, blowing bubbles!

Albert Ellis says, "the best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, ecology or the president. You realise that you control your own destiny."

Discover more about Noreen's 'Stress at Work Strategy' by contacting her for a free introductory call.

noreencoomey.com

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Free period products for young people offered by the Sexual Health Centre

The Sexual Health Hubs' free period product initiative was launched in Clonakilty recently by TD Holly Cairns. The Sexual Health Hub project was first launched in September 2020 by the Sexual Health Centre, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The hubs are now being expanded – in terms of location and service provision – to ensure that period products are more accessible to young people across Cork City and County.

The Hubs project won this year's Youth in Community Award at the Lifelong Learning Festival Awards in October this year for its innovation and unique multifaceted approach to youth needs across Cork. The Shack youth centre in Clonakilty now hosts the first Sexual Health Hub to include Free Period Products, with menstrual pads, tampons, and relevant information about periods and period products available

for young people. The Sexual Health Centre team believe it is imperative to supply accurate, honest and inclusive information along with products so that young people can more easily engage in conversations about periods.

West Cork TD Holly Cairns stressed the importance of the resource for local youth: "The Sexual Health Hub here in Clonakilty is a wonderful addition to the town that will help empower local youth with accurate information about their bodies and health. It also gives young people an opportunity to engage with staff who can explain about specific sexual health services that they otherwise wouldn't hear about."

"We know that access to menstrual products is a luxury that many do not have. So, it is very encouraging that as well as sexual health information and condoms, free period products are also now available to young people in West Cork, in an environment that is familiar and safe for them," noted the Social Democrat's Spokesperson for Social Justice.



TD Holly Cairns at The Shack youth centre in Clonakilty.

Health Promotion Officer at the Sexual Health Centre, Muire O'Farrell explained the need for youth-oriented services in relation to sexual health: "Young people are often discouraged from taking care of their sexual health and wellbeing. We are committed to changing that

through the Sexual Health Hubs by partnering with youth groups, outreach workers and resources centre across the county. The Hubs can provide a solution to the limited reach of current sexual health specific services in Cork."

Cork City Councillor and

Youth Officer for the Cork Education and Training Board (ETB) highlighted the exclusion experienced by rural youth in relation to health services:

"Young people in rural areas can be distanced from accessing vital services and information for their own personal health, development and wellbeing and so bringing these hubs to them is dexterous, direct and very welcome. They can be cut off from services because of geography and IT infrastructure in normal times, let alone in times of restrictions and lockdowns. The Cork Sexual Health Centre has been very innovative in responding to the health needs of young people in the city and county as part of their involvement in the UBU Your Place, Your Space funding scheme which is what we need youth services to continue to be."

This initiative is funded by Cork ETB. If you are interested in setting up a Sexual Health Hub, you can contact the Sexual Health Centre on info@sexualhealthcentre.com or 021-4276676 for further information.

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HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

Happy New Year. I hope you have had a good Christmas, and have managed to navigate your way through these recent challenging weeks without too much trouble. In Organico, we had a busy Christmas, but we also had a good break, and we are looking forward to 2022 – in particular we are excited about celebrating our 30th Birthday this year. Our father Alan Dare first opened the doors to Organico in 1992, and this year we are going to celebrate the last 30 Years of Organico in West Cork. Exciting times!

Recently one of my team members mentioned to me that her gingivitis (bleeding gums) had vastly improved when taking a Coenzyme Q10 supplement. This caught my attention, as I've recently been seeing blood when brushing my teeth

Amazing effects of Coenzyme Q10 in repairing and healing gum disease naturally

and although we have been selling CoQ10 since the 90s, I had not realised it was so effective for gum health. I decided to investigate further!

CoQ10 is a fat soluble vitamin-like substance that is found in every cell in the human body. It's found in various foods including organ meats, sardines and spinach. Although our body is able to manufacture its own CoQ10, after the age of 20 our ability to do so declines and is very depleted by the age of 40. In addition to this age-related decline, there are other factors that deplete the amount of Coenzyme Q10 found in the body. One is common Statin drugs such as Lipitor. Other factors such as unhealthy diets, environmental toxins and stress can also diminish CoQ10 levels. To restore healthy youthful levels of Coenzyme Q10, dietary supplements or focused increase of foods containing this nutrient are required.

Once I started digging, I found several interesting articles online by dentists who report that people with gingivitis and periodontal disease have benefited by taking CoQ10 as a supplement. Periodontal disease is basically an inflammatory disease where the body's reaction to toxins in the mouth

creates inflammation, which results in the destruction of the gum and bone around the teeth. One Boston dentist says that CoQ10 is an anti-inflammatory and appears to work to directly bring down inflammation in the gums, reducing bleeding, repairing pockets and overall improving the condition of gums.

Interestingly, studies show that the effect of CoQ10 on gum health can take place in as little as a month. This did make sense to me as my team member who reported an improvement in her bleeding gums said it happened very quickly. She also said that the bleeding gums came back when she stopped taking the supplement, which indicates that her body is no longer able to produce enough CoQ10 to maintain good gum health on its own.

Another dentist who was researching this topic in the US focused on the fact that people with gum disease often have a deficiency of CoQ10 when compared to people without gum disease: "The body's ability to heal and repair periodontal tissue depends in part on an adequate supply of CoQ10. Gingival biopsies have revealed sub-normal tissue levels of CoQ10 in 60-96 per cent of patients with periodontal disease. These

Once I started digging, I found several interesting articles online by dentists who report that people with gingivitis and periodontal disease have benefited by taking CoQ10 as a supplement.



findings suggest that periodontal disease is frequently associated with CoQ10 deficiency'.

He goes on to say: 'CoQ10 is found naturally in many foods, such as spinach, broccoli, sardine and mackerel. After the age of 35, our natural ability to synthesise CoQ10 from foods slows down. As a result, a gradual deficiency of CoQ10 develops over time. Compounding this action, poor eating habits, stress, and infection all negatively impact the body's ability to provide adequate amounts of CoQ10'.

The same dentist says: 'If you're experiencing persistent gum problems, i.e. bleeding and inflammation or even halitosis (bad breath), do your own ex-

periment. Begin taking CoQ10 for at least three months. Remember, nothing changes overnight. You be the judge. Do your gums look and feel better? Has your general health improved? If the answer is yes, you might want to consider adding this supplement to your daily regimen.

Overall, my conclusion is that it could be a good decision to consider taking CoQ10 supplements after age 40 for its health benefits for the whole body, but in particular if you suffer from bleeding gums or are concerned about periodontal disease. CoQ10 has an excellent safety record with few, if any side effects. I'm certainly going to try it out for the next two to

three months and see how I feel.

Daily dosages can vary but usually 60-100mg/day is suggested for general maintenance and 200-600mg/day is better for therapeutic purposes.

If you are interested in trying a CoQ10 supplement, there are many options available in all good Healthfood Stores, but it seems from my reading that taking it as a Spray form, which you can hold in your mouth for a few minutes before swallowing makes a lot of sense. Several Dentists referred to topical applications and this is the closest we have to that. We have a new Spray in Organico from an Irish company called One Nutrition, it tastes great and it's even on Special Offer this month – and it's available instore and online. Call in and have a look at our range of natural toothpastes and mouthwashes also.

If you want to check out the Blogs and Studies mentioned here, this article is on our Blog with links for you to follow.

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Vitamin D vital for good health

Vitamin D has been the best publicised of all vitamins over the past two years but why is it so important and how can it improve your health? **Dr. Paula Gaynor** and **Mark Clifford**, co-founders of West Cork health supplement brand SOMEQA, explain why Vitamin D is vital for a bright and healthy New Year.

Also known as the 'sunshine' vitamin, Vitamin D is produced by the body when ultraviolet rays from the sun hit your skin and activate Vitamin D synthesis. In Ireland, the sun is not strong enough from October to March to allow your skin to make any Vitamin D. In summertime, the use of all-important protective sunscreen also lowers the amount of Vitamin D your skin can produce. Food is generally low in Vitamin D, making it difficult to get enough through your diet.

Unfortunately, Vitamin D deficiency is quite common in Ireland across all ages. Some

of the signs of Vitamin D deficiency include getting sick more often than usual, fatigue and tiredness, bone and back pain, depression and hair loss. Supplementation with a high-quality Vitamin D is recommended to avoid deficiency and ensure optimal health benefits.

Here are five health benefits to be gained from taking a good quality Vitamin D3 supplement:

Supports Bone Health

Vitamin D is a key nutrient for bone health. It contributes to the absorption of phosphorus and calcium — two compounds that provide density and strength to the skeletal system and teeth.

Boosts your Immune System

Vitamin D is described as an immune system regulator. It has been shown to be an important way to arm the immune system against respiratory infections and, more recently, against Covid-19. Studies of patients with severe Covid-19 infections have shown they are more likely to have insufficient or low levels of the vitamin, according to Professor James Bernard Walsh from Trinity College Dublin.

Supports your Heart Health

A number of studies have found that people with low levels of Vitamin D have a greater risk

of developing heart disease, including heart attack, stroke, and heart failure compared to people with higher levels of Vitamin D.

Supports Mood and Cognitive functions

Studies have shown that low levels of vitamin D are linked to a decline in cognitive performance and impact on mood. Many people unknowingly suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) due to lack of direct exposure to UVB rays. Increasing levels of vitamin D has been shown to help reduce the symptoms of depression.

Helps with Insulin Control

Insulin is the hormone responsible for regulating blood sugar levels. Vitamin D is believed to help improve the body's sensitivity to insulin and thus reduce the risk of insulin resistance, which is often a precursor to type 2 diabetes. Vitamin D also has a role to play in insulin secretion in the beta cells of the pancreas.

SOMEQA supplements are available in health stores and pharmacies throughout West Cork and at gosomega.com.

January is a good time to claim tax relief on a range of expenses

January offers a good opportunity for people to avail of the tax reliefs to which they are entitled on expenses including medical bills and working from home, Fine Gael Senator Tim Lombard suggests.

"Managing your finances can often seem like a daunting task, but many individuals and families can avail of number of tax breaks they may not have known they were entitled to.

"People can claim relief on the cost of health expenses, which can be yours or those of a family member. Twenty per cent tax back can be claimed on health and medical expenses and non-routine dental expenses.

"You can also claim 20 per cent tax back on the cost of private medical insurance.

"Medical expenses can be claimed easily by using the



myAccount facility on the Revenue website and ensuring you keep the receipts for what you are claiming.

"PAYE workers can claim e-working expenses incurred across last year. In 2021, the allowable cost was 10 per cent of electricity and heat and 30 per cent of broadband.

"However in line with Government policy to facilitate and support remote working, Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe announced on Budget

Day that, from January 1, an income tax deduction amounting to 30 per cent of the cost of vouched expenses for heat, electricity and internet incurred while working from home can be claimed by taxpayers. The employee must have incurred the cost and it is the responsibility of the employee to retain proof such as receipts.

"Revenue advise that the simplest way for taxpayers to claim their e-working expenses and other tax credit entitlements

is by using the myAccount facility on the Revenue website.

"Also, the Government recently approved the establishment of the Electricity Costs Emergency Benefit Scheme under which a payment of €100 will be made to each domestic electricity customer.

"This is one of a range of measures to mitigate the effects of the unprecedented rise in electricity prices on households. The scheme is currently being finalised, but it will be automatic and will apply to all customers.

"Tax relief of 20 per cent can also be claimed on third level tuition fees, as well as housing tax reliefs for home renovations and renting a room.

"The start of the year is a good opportunity for people to organise their financial affairs and also to shop around to see if

they can secure better offers by switching providers on a range of services.

"It's definitely worth sitting down and taking the time to

claim for certain expenses as it can result in hundreds of euro back in your pocket," Senator Lombard concluded.

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Looking back to move forward



LGBTI+ MATTERS

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



Fern Higgins Atkinson is Chairperson of BRÓD and the Youth Health Promotion and Development Officer in the Ability West Cork Programme, West Cork Development Partnership.

A new year, a new start? When we shed the remnants of the old year like snakeskin and shimmy into our shiny new fresh starts, our intentions tend towards the positive. Changes, resolutions, ambition and determination. For the most part, these noble thoughts often turn to dust after a couple of weeks. Hard to maintain, maybe unrealistic and January being the longest month of the year, are all barriers

to our success. I stopped the merry-go-round of resolutions many years ago, my unrequited desires for myself were left behind. My willpower and need to fulfil my changes were low. Instead of berating myself every February, I gave myself a break. My internal monitor was sent on annual leave. The pressure to get fit, eat less shite, maintain a skin care regime – all went away too.

For those who remember, 22-years-ago we had just survived the 'millennium bug'. Twenty years ago we exchanged the Irish punt for the euro. In 2004 the smoking ban was introduced and in 2006 Zappone v. Revenue Commissioners (2006) was brought before the High Court...and failed. Four notable points in history at the starting point of the new century. As we made our way through the difficulties of the Celtic Tiger and its fatal end point, we rolled toward further important events, with particular reference to the LGBTI+ community. The Gender Recognition Act was passed in 2015, as was the Marriage Equality Act, after a successful campaign on the island of Ireland and further afield. We arrive now, in 2022, with a couple of eventful years behind us. I really do not think that anyone will forget the years 2020-2022, in fact, they could be called 'The Covid Years' in the future and be relegated to the vaults. I cannot imagine another time in history where such a huge volume of commentary has been created. To curate this section of historical discourse, will surely be a mammoth task. I am interested in people, the way they work, the way they interact, relationships with the world and the inner self, society and its formation, regulation and the resistance that may be shown to conformity. The way



we, as people, like to collect, gather together, reject each other and try to survive. Our reasons for being, are as many as there are people; we are here, we exist. Within this, we must navigate the complexities of human emotion, we strive to be 'better', more complete, fulfilled. Sometimes, we get lost and the life raft that we cling to may be stuffed full of paper and straw. It is easy to sink in the rough sea of life. Sometimes, we need a hand, some empathy, a listening ear. We need other people to make sense of ourselves and our world.

The last two years have highlighted this need for companionship and the peaceful presence of calm reassurance that we are ok, that there is someone out there to hear our voice. We have been thrust into an unnatural space, we are online, not in each other's arms. We are divided and isolated. We are not following our human patterns of socialising, loving, fighting, laughing and crying. There is a sadness and apathy that can all too easily settle into our bones. LGBT Ireland conducted 'The Life in Lockdown Snapshot Survey' in late 2020 and received 1855 responses. They discovered that 62 per cent of people reported a decline in their mental health, which they confirmed was "substantially higher than the 51 per

cent impact in the general population" (LGBT Ireland, 2020). Feelings of isolation, anxiety, sadness, loneliness and anger were discussed, lack of physical touch and being cut off from the community were also central issues. One respondent mentioned "our queer spaces aren't open so it is difficult to feel like we belong, especially in rural areas" (LGBT Ireland, 2020). BeLonGTo also conducted a survey, 'Life in Lockdown', in May of 2020 and captured the responses of 294 young LGBTI+ people between the ages of 14-23. Of this number, 93 per cent of LGBTI+ young people were struggling with anxiety, stress or depression at that time. Loneliness, challenging home environments and feelings of isolation were common key themes for this cohort.

We may become desensitised to the plight of others, our views may narrow as we are consumed by the events of the last two years. We must not forget that the same issues still exist for the more vulnerable in our communities, in fact, they are increased as we can see from the survey findings above. You may be thinking at this stage of the article that the outlook is grim, luckily, it is not. We have some wonderful resources and supports in Ireland. Slowly, steadily and surely evolving to suit the needs of the LGBTI+

community. The gathering of information about the lives of people in times of difficulty is important. Without it, we would not know what people need and further, we would not know what to provide.

Throughout the 'Covid Years', BeLonGTo have adapted their work with young people to include digital youth work, digital youth groups, free online training for educators and facilitating spaces for youth workers to share ideas and support each other to support their young people. Shoutout has moved all of its LGBTI+ workshops online and updates their social media regularly with community news. Up Cork LGBT Youth project is available in the city for 15-23-year-olds and down here in West Cork, we have Carbery Youth Services 'Rainbow Folx' which runs from Clonakilty (The Shack) and Skibbereen (family resource centre) weekly. LGBT Ireland host the national LGBT helpline (1800 929 539), the transgender family support line (01 907 3707) and if you visit their website, you can avail of online chat and monthly peer support groups. TENI have continued to offer online support and advice for transgender people and have a lot of information on their website.

Both LINC and the Gay Project in Cork have been

continuing their good work throughout these times also and it is well worth visiting their social media/web for further local information. Seeding the County is another jewel in the Cork crown, a county-wide project to engage with and assess the needs of the LGBTI+ community in Cork county; they also have a community newsletter, which is a good way to keep up with local news. The Sexual Health Centre in Cork is providing great resources and support through many valuable initiatives. Sexual health hubs are popping up around the county, there is a HIV support campaign: 'In the Know' is a sexual health programme delivered to young gay and bisexual men and MSM, they offer free rapid HIV testing, STI testing (small charge) and all manner of other supports covering sexual health and wellbeing (they even post out free condoms!). Check them out! The INTO LGBT+ teachers group meets six times a year and has lots of information about social groups and events on their website and social media pages. Finally, GCN (Gay Community News) is such a fantastic source of information and news for the LGBTI+ community, I would recommend that anyone dip into this publication to broaden knowledge and keep up with current LGBTI+ news.

So, back to 2022. What's ahead? The changes that have come about since the start of this century are far reaching. The LGBTI+ community has achieved so much in terms of progressing fundamental rights, raising awareness, changing laws, sharing personal stories, being generous with others and facilitating acceptance. One more step towards ensuring equity and equality in Irish society is underway, a working group is currently examining ways in which the Irish State can exonerate gay men that were charged under laws that have since been repealed, it is hoped that this process will begin before the end of this year. This is long overdue there is no doubt. This brings me to my final point. We have had a confusing and challenging two years, our own struggles can sometimes overwhelm us and make it difficult for us to think of others. I have decided to take up a couple of resolutions again this year. They aren't about fitness, skin care or healthy eating. They cost nothing and also give good returns...Kindness and empathy.



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Roe Health finds the right approach to helping you get well

Market Street Clinic in Skibbereen has rebranded as Roe Health to present a clearer picture of the comprehensive holistic health services under its umbrella. Run by respected husband and wife team Eoin and Amanda Roe, Roe Health is a functional medicine, chiropractic, hypnotherapy and acupuncture clinic. The couple, both highly trained in their professions, offer help for a range of complex health issues, in particular for anyone unsure of where to turn to for help.

“People who don’t have the symptoms of a known pathological condition may be rejected by the medical profession and, as a result are chasing solutions going from one alternative practitioner to the next,” explains Eoin. “Oftentimes a more holistic, very in-depth approach, looking at multiple issues at the same time, is what will really help them.”

This is what Eoin and Amanda strive to offer at Roe Health: A complementary holistic approach with a positive outcome for the client. Roe Health’s services include Functional Medicine, Chiropractic, Diagnostic services, Clinical Hypnotherapy, Inner Child Healing, Acupuncture, Chinese Herbal Medicine and Life and Health Coaching.

Eoin’s training and continued learning and research in functional medicine serves to help him understand where a person’s physiology has gone wrong and how to correct it using lifestyle, diet and nutritional interventions. At times these changes can be challenging for an individual but with Amanda available to offer emotional support, clients are in a better position to make the necessary lifestyle changes or deal with past issues.

Eoin has been working full-time as a chiropractor since 2013 and as a certified functional medicine practitioner since 2019, helping people to manage chronic health conditions.

“The more I work with individuals with chronic health problems, the more I realise that I don’t necessarily have all the skills to help people,” shares Eoin. “I can understand what the problem is, what dietary and lifestyle advice is appropriate and how that is going to help the person. But they have to make the changes and, for some people, Amanda’s skills are better at helping people make changes. Additionally there are also emotional factors involved for many people so working with someone like Amanda, who is focused on helping people deal with and overcome

these issues, can be really beneficial.”

A trained clinical hypnotherapist, acupuncturist and life and health coach, Amanda helps clients who have experienced trauma or who are emotionally overwhelmed and dealing with anxiety, depression, weight/eating, hormone issues and other physical ailments.

“Our mental health affects our physical health but sometimes it is our physical health that is causing our mental health to suffer,” she says.

As a clinical hypnotherapist and acupuncturist, understanding the full picture is key when it comes to achieving the best outcome for her clients.

“I know how my skills can best help my clients but also if their symptoms are beyond my expertise. For example, if their pain is structural pain rather than emotional pain, they may need chiropractic help. Or if they are showing signs of having an autoimmune condition or suffering from neuro-inflammation or other complex issues, then I know they would be best helped by Eoin. In that case, I will share that information with my clients.”

Functional medicine is an increasingly popular medical approach that can help people find answers to symptoms such as brain fog, fatigue, gastrointestinal complaints, sleep problems, chronic pain or autoimmune conditions. “Whilst people may have similar symptoms they can often be from different causes,” explains Eoin, who is passionate about understanding the underlying mechanisms that are causing difficult to diagnose health issues in individuals.

Offering advice often based on scientific studies and a good understanding of pathophysiology, Eoin can work with clients to make impactful changes to their lifestyle, diet and nutritional supplements, while preventing time being wasted on often expensive and ineffective treatments.

There is a rise worldwide in autoimmune diseases and one of the most common presented at the clinic in Skibbereen is



Hashimotos. “Many people with this condition just think that they have low thyroid function (Hypothyroid),” explains Eoin.

Diagnosis of Hypothyroidism will be done with a blood test indicating an elevated TSH and low level of T4 (thyroxine). If this is the case thyroid replacement therapy usually L thyroxine is given.

Hashimotos is confirmed by an additional blood test showing the presence of Tg and TPO antibodies.

While for many, using thyroid replacement therapy works really well, other individuals may find that their dose of L thyroxine is continually increasing and they are still suffering with low thyroid symptoms

such as fatigue, sensitivity to cold, constipation, hair and skin issues, difficulty controlling their weight and muscle weakness.

There is also another group of people who seem to have what looks like normal thyroid function (on a blood test) but still have antibodies present – so they can have autoimmune reactivity and thyroid symptoms but are considered to have normal thyroid function.

“For those showing immune reactivity in the case of Hashimotos producing TPO and/or Tg antibodies, very specific guided nutritional advice can help them to manage their Hashimotos and reduce their symptoms,” says Eoin. “This approach is not a

replacement for thyroid hormone replacement therapy,” he stresses, “as if someone has low thyroid function, it is important for them that it is well-managed using hormone replacement.”

Autoimmune conditions cannot be treated or cured but they can be managed very well.

“By their nature autoimmune conditions flare up and calm down naturally,” explains Eoin. “There are significant triggers from foods, environmental toxins, chemicals and other lifestyle issues that can have a significant impact for individuals and cause flare-ups.”

While autoimmune conditions are on the rise, so too is anxiety, with so many people struggling with the stressful

challenges of this pandemic.

Amanda is seeing more individuals suffering from anxiety across all age groups. “Often they have already been to see councillors and their doctor and they are now looking for a natural holistic approach to avoid or come off medication (always under supervision of their doctor),” she says.

“Trauma, anxiety and fear exhaust the body and clients may find that they are more emotional, finding it harder to cope, and having difficulty sleeping.”

These individuals are often suffering from a range of symptoms like adrenal fatigue, depression, PMS, irregular periods, peri-menopausal symptoms, infertility, aches and pain, headaches or digestive problems.

“Stress exhausts the body,” says Amanda, “and no two clients symptoms are exactly the same.”

Amanda’s training allows her to treat the mind and body simultaneously, which means that her clients can get better faster – this has a positive impact on their relationships, work and life.

If you are curious about whether Eoin and Amanda’s services may be right for you, it is possible to speak with either of them and book a free 15 minute consultation on the website www.roehealth.ie or make contact via the web form.

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

Chronic fatigue and hormone balance

I was asked recently why is that so many women that are approaching menopause suddenly start having so many energy issues and symptoms like brain fog, which translates as not being able to think clearly and having symptoms of cognitive decline.

The reason for this has to do with the way your body makes energy and how your hormones impact on that ability. There are numerous hormones

involved in normal homeostasis or self-regulating function and, for women, this is much more critical than it is for men, purely because there are more fluctuations in hormone production, not only through the menstrual cycle, but even during the day and through their lifetime. On top of this other hormones such as thyroid hormone and insulin also have a big impact on energy production.

To understand it fully, we

need to start by looking at how the body makes energy. Obviously digestion and absorption of foods are important but what we are really interested in is what happens at a cellular level in the body.

Every cell in your body requires energy to function but especially your neurons and muscles and this is done within each individual cell by organelles called mitochondria which, convert glucose or fat into ATP (the principal molecule for storing and transferring energy in cells). In normal functioning mitochondria during the production of ATP, bi-products called oxidants are produced. These are cleared away by anti-oxidants. So having a low antioxidant level will impact on your mitochondria's ability to function and therefore your energy levels.

These mitochondria actually have their own DNA separate from the cell nucleus, and they have a number of functions that respond to your environment. In times of physical stress ie. when you exercise, the mitochondria will join together to make bigger mitochondria to produce more energy.

So where do the hormones

come in? Hormones – estrogens, progesterone, testosterone and thyroid hormones all have different effects on every stage of mitochondrial function.

But more important is to know that the production of hormones in your body is completely reliant on your mitochondria. So you need mitochondria that are functioning well to produce adequate hormones in the first place.

The production of hormones in your body is completely reliant on your mitochondria. So you need mitochondria that are functioning well to produce adequate hormones in the first place.

What this means for perimenopausal women is that their ability to produce hormones diminishes naturally but even more so if their mitochondrial function is already impaired. You then enter a vicious cycle

where less hormone is produced, which further effects mitochondrial function, so one of the keys to maintaining hormone production is to restore mitochondrial function.

Improving mitochondrial function is possible and needs a comprehensive approach. But as hinted to earlier, one of the best things that everyone can do to improve mitochondrial function is to exercise. Exercising, for both men and women, prompts the body to produce more mitochondrial cells, particularly in your muscles and neurons. The more mitochondria you have, the more energy you have. Another area to focus on is a diet high in antioxidants these come from fruits and vegetables; you can of course supplement with these as well, for example Vitamin C is an antioxidant. Vitamin C and many other antioxidants help clear away the harmful bi-products of normal energy production in your cells so they can function better.

If you would like help understanding why you are having issues with energy or brain fog please feel free to get in touch through our website www.roehealth.ie or call me on 087 9582362.



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.

Happy New Year! My tip from the outset is let us ration our listening to blanket coverage of Covid misery through the media!

I believe this pandemic will end and life will go on. I don't wish to trivialise this pandemic or any other global catastrophe but it is a fact that good things can come out of the most appalling situations.

A New Year and some good news?

Starting with Covid: Initial predictions were that it would take years for a vaccine to be developed and tested. We had absolutely zero weapons against it and people died in their thousands. Low and behold before 2020 was out, a vaccine was on the horizon. This broke all previous production records and it really works, keeping so many alive and safe. Thank you to Dr Jenner and his cow pox research.

A full understanding and extension of vaccine technology is leading to vaccine development to treat malaria and even cancer. We all know a lot more about immunity. There are lots of unanswered questions however here as well. Why are our children spared the worst effects of Covid? We know that babies don't have fully developed immunity in their first year of life but they seem protected as well, and that, thank God, has to be good news.

Look at the 1919 'Spanish flu' that picked out young people, 20 million of them in fact, some just leaving the trenches in France as tough as old boots, catching the virus on the way home, and dying en route. Even that devastating disease came



to an end and why did it? There was no living with the Spanish flu then. It just disappeared. Apologies to the Spanish of course...we were not so politically correct in 1919!

We have just invested massively in new drugs, which interrupt the passage of the Covid virus through our bodies. These work, and will be another weapon to combat the disease. These drugs are a direct result of the work done on the HIV virus and its journey through our cells.

Do you remember when we were all going to die from AIDS in the 80s, and now, a patient who contacts HIV and is treated,

will probably live longer than an age-matched person without HIV! Amazing!

I could go on. Look at WW2 – nothing moves technology on like a national emergency. Rocket technology was developed and once again led to the Americans landing a man on the moon a few years later, which again was amazing. Let us also face the fact that a technology race between the super powers became a surrogate activity to replace a nuclear war. You get my point.

We all appreciate nature a lot more. We have more time to exercise and enjoy our lovely

country. My happiest moment last year was seeing my two children complete the Clonakilty marathon in appalling conditions a lot faster than I ever did. What a great day!

How many new babies have been born as a result of lockdown activity?

Have you noticed how cosmopolitan Ireland is becoming? I work with doctors from all corners of the world, who keep the service going and love being here. It is so interesting talking about life in other countries and the huge sacrifices they have made to get here.

Asylum seekers risk all to reach the Utopia that is the UK and Ireland.

So let us appreciate what we have. Are we all getting a little spoilt and needy? Few of us locals want to do the menial jobs. Foreign nationals keep our factories, hospitals and service industries going. That is good news to some extent but sad that we have lost the run of ourselves looking for more and more by doing less and less.

You will never win the lottery, and if you did, it would ruin your life, guaranteed.

There is an optimal combined income for a married couple

well south of 80k; too little is not good and nor is too much.

There was a daffodil grower in Ireland who was featured on the radio. He put a huge advertising board next to his fields on a main road asking for people to apply to pick his daffs. This was during a time of high unemployment. Not one local Irish person applied and he was offering accommodation and a half decent salary. His daffodil pickers have come from Romania every year since then and do a great job.

The happiest staff in the hospital where I work are the porters. We share the same changing rooms and have great craic every morning and throughout the day. The highly paid managers not so!

They used to say that the happiest person in the hospital, when there were gardens nearby, was the gardener.

A short stint picking daffs might do us all the world of good!

So let's keep our chins up, appreciate what we have, and try and make this a good year to remember. There is a grand stretch to the day!

Next month, I'll continue my series on symptoms started in December.

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

New year health habits that can benefit our eyes and ears

January marks a fresh start, with a renewed focus on our health and wellbeing. There's no better time to shake off bad habits and introduce good routines, and the best news is that many common resolutions also benefit our eyes and ears. **Marie Burke**, Optometrist in Specsavers Bandon, explains more.

Eat your vitamins

Many use the New year as a time to lose the Christmas pounds and introduce healthy food habits and Specsavers is encouraging people to look for foods that are rich in eye-health boosting vitamins. For example, spinach and kale, are rich in lutein which is essential for eye health, and oily fish such as salmon, is packed full of omega-3, which is great for eyes. Kiwi gives a burst of A, B and C vitamins, which help maintain healthy cells and tissues, meanwhile peppers contain zeaxanthin which help to absorb potentially damaging light.

Exercise more

Whether it's hitting the gym, or trying that new Zumba class,



exercise is the top of many people's resolution lists. Ms Burke says: "Not only is exercise great for keeping fit and feeling great, research indicates that our lifestyle also has an impact on our vision. Good cardiovascular health could be associated with lower risk of eye disease, which means staying active and eating healthy could stave off eye conditions such as diabetic retinopathy.

"While there is still more research that needs to be done in this area, we would suggest that everyone tries to maintain a healthy lifestyle by getting

enough exercise and the essential vitamins and minerals they need from a balanced diet, as it can do wonders for health – and if it can help prevent ocular diseases this is an added bonus."

Reduce alcohol consumption

As well as affecting our sleep and our mental health, alcohol can also affect our eyes and ears, which is why using the new year as a chance to cut down on alcohol consumption could be a good idea. Ms Burke says: "When you lose more fluid than you take in, your body becomes dehydrated.

Our eyes can become dry and irritated, and we can even start to get slightly blurred vision because there are not enough tears to lubricate the eye. The best way to try and combat dry eyes is to rehydrate by drinking plenty of water. Your optician can recommend eye drops that can also help."

Specsavers Antibacterial Dry Eye Compress can be used hot or cold to alleviate symptoms of dry eye, meibomian gland dysfunction (MGD), and blepharitis. Priced at €9.99 the cloth will be available to purchase in

Irish stores from January 17.

Stop smoking

As the new year comes around there is no better time to kick bad habits, such as smoking. Ms Burke says: "Studies have shown that smoking can double your chances of developing cataracts, triple chances of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), increase the risk of uveitis (inflammation of the middle layer of the eye) and double the risk of diabetes, which in turn could lead to diabetic retinopathy."

While traditional tobacco smokers remain the most at risk of developing AMD, research also indicates that vapour from e-cigarettes can cause irritation and lead to dry eye syndrome.

Smoking can also damage your hearing, with smokers being as much as 70 per cent more likely to suffer with hearing loss than non-smokers.

Take time for self-care and wellbeing

Life can be really busy, which is why taking time for self-care and wellbeing is one of the best habits to take into the new year. With partial working from home set to continue in 2022, it's important people remember to take a timeout from screens too. Ms Burke says: "Our eyes are not designed to be fixated on

a single object for a long period of time which is why they can often become strained when we sit at a computer all day. However, the '20-20-20 rule' where you look at something 20ft away, for 20 seconds, every 20 minutes, can help."

Specsavers recommends everyone has a sight test once every two years. To find out more or book your next appointment call Specsavers in Bandon on 023 8820382 or visit www.specsavers.ie/bandon.

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Learn to live mindfully

Living in such a time of major uncertainty and change, while constantly juggling work and personal life and sometimes striving too fast and too hard to find a balance, can add more stress to an already stressful life.

However, Paola Vais believes that each one of us can learn to remember how to be present, and finding a teacher that 'walks the walk' and can gently guide you on the first steps to mindfulness is the best way to start on the path of living more mindfully.

"Very few have not heard about mindfulness and how it may benefit our well-being," says Paula "but I would like to go back to the definition of mindfulness according to Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course and said, 'Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment,

and non-judgmentally'.

But what has mindfulness meant for Paola that led her to train to teach it?

"My clearest childhood memories are of moments where I was fully there, fully present and not wishing I was somewhere or somebody else," she shares.

"Growing up, that sense of being present started hiding, I found myself more and more wishing I was somewhere else, doing something else, being someone else.

"Re-discovering the innate capacity of presence and cultivating it more and more consciously has been the greatest gift the practice of mindfulness and kindness have brought me. "Mindfulness allows me to find a sense of being at ease even in the midst of difficulties, to pause and become fully present with the experience of the moment.

"This is why I love teaching mindfulness, being able to share

the gifts that mindfulness and kindness practices have given me brings me great joy."

Paola says her daily practices of meditation and mindful movement, immersed in nature as much as she can, are what allows her to manage the most anxious moments. "By pausing and allowing the feeling to be there: pause if I feel overwhelmed, pause to enjoy a sunset without thinking of the next day, pause to feel the joy and the sadness, the anger, the pain, without running away from the difficulties of life."

After years of practising meditation and attending retreats, Paola Vais trained as a MBSR teacher in Dublin in 2011 and with Breathworks in the UK in 2016. She has been teaching mindfulness courses and short retreats since 2012.

The next courses are starting in February: In person MBSR course – February 8 in Clonakilty; Online Mindfulness

for Health, for chronic pain and illness – February 2.

For information e-mail pgvais@gmail.com or call 087-2453292.

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people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Let small sustainable habits take root



MENTAL HEALTH & MINDFULNESS

Susan O'Regan

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

For more information contact: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com Mob: 087 2700572.

These January days can be tough going, so how do we sustain our mental and physical health and restore our vitality? Sustainability seems to be the word on everyone's lips lately, meaning 'the ability to be maintained

at a certain rate or level'. So, perhaps, before plunging into a potentially short-lived list of resolutions or goals, which many of us habitually do at this time of year, it might serve us better to take time and explore how we manage and maintain existing wellbeing habits before launching into something new. If time is scarce, we need to make wise choices, and either introduce, maintain or strengthen habits that sustain us, which we can then draw on at times when we might need extra sustenance. By choosing long haul, sustaining habits rather than opting for quick-fix solutions we learn to rely on and trust ourselves rather than continually looking for solutions outside of ourselves.

It can be hard sometimes to decide on, never mind implement or stick to a health and wellness schedule, especially if we're facing into January already tired and depleted, so perhaps a good place to begin would be to review any existing wellbeing habits and routines, regimes or rituals. What's working well and nourishing you? Because it has been such a challenging and uncertain time for

so long, we may have allowed some good habits to fall to the wayside. Are there any habits that worked well for us in the past that we can re-instate before taking on something new? We might start with checking in with the basics. Everything counts, for example, drinking water, getting enough sleep, eating well, taking regular physical exercise, connecting with others every day as well as connecting with nature. That list probably sounds exhausting and enough to be getting on with, because we all know, it takes quite a bit of effort, energy and discipline to stick at the core habits or practices that keep us well.

But consistency pays off, slow and steady wins the race, and I would encourage you, even if daunted, to maintain hope and to add one more daily habit to that list, mindfulness meditation. Because so many of us are tired and perhaps teetering on the edge of burn out, it is more important than ever to find little ways to replenish ourselves regularly. It is my firm belief that practising mindfulness meditation every day provides the underpinning

source of many good habits, for me all else flows from this gentle cultivation and repetition of habits of mind and body. We need both physical and mental exercise for physical and mental strength and agility.

There are many ways into mindfulness, such as connecting with nature, which is so vital, or through movement, but we also need a more 'formal' meditation practice to build a strong foundation. You can start right this minute; I started re-reading a book this holiday that I always recommend to anyone wishing to begin practising mindfulness and it's called 'Mindfulness:

a practical guide to FINDING PEACE IN A FRANTIC WORLD' by Mark Williams and Danny Penman. Could any book be more aptly named just now? The first practice it offers is a one-minute meditation, which I will summarise here now.

See if you can sit with a straight back and have your feet firmly planted on floor. Feel all the parts of your body that are in contact with the chair. Feel the touch of your hands against this paper as you set it aside for a minute and either gently close your eyes or lower your gaze. Now bring your attention to your breath and where you can feel your breath, as it flows in and out of your body. There's no need to change your breath

in any way, simply tune in to the feelings and sensations of your breath, wherever you're feeling the movement of your breath in your body. Soon you will notice that your mind has drifted away from the breath, back to thinking. That's normal, that's ok, simply notice this and gently bring your attention back to the breath. You may feel relaxed, you may not, it's about being curious and noticing what's happening, as it's happening. This noticing that your mind has wandered and gently returning to the breath in your body is the essence of mindfulness meditation.

It sounds simple but it is not easy. I personally struggled with mindfulness meditation at the beginning and in those early days would not for one second have believed that I would end up teaching it! It is not easy for anyone at first so please don't think you cannot do it or that it's not for you. Stay with it. Habits need time to take root, so don't give up, even if you don't particularly like it. Give it a chance to see if it is working or not. This January might very much be a case of one small step at a time, I feel we all need a period of restoration after the experience of the last two years. So go easy on yourself, try not to fixate on goals, take your time. Please get in touch if you need some support starting or sustaining the

habit of practising mindfulness meditation.

Drop-in sessions are beginning again at Myross Wood, Leap on Tuesday mornings from January 18, 10-11am: €10.

'Reconnect and Re-engage' is a three-week wellbeing programme on Fridays in collaboration with Green Skibbereen and Cecas at Myross Wood. It is free of charge thanks to funding provided by CETB via the 2021 Mitigating against Educational Disadvantage Fund.

Sustainable Wellness is a four-week programme involving mindfulness, movement and self-massage that Emma Fitzpatrick and I run regularly, beginning January 13, 10-12pm. €25 per session or €85 for the entire programme.

Online guided meditation sessions continue via Zoom 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 or group sessions are also available.

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

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This Free 3 week well-being programme is for anyone who may be struggling and feeling isolated at this time. It will be facilitated by Susan O'Regan (mindhaven.ie) in a gentle and supportive way using mindfulness, reflection and forest bathing techniques.

**Venue: CECAS, Myross Wood House, Leap
Friday 21 & 28 Jan and 4th February,
11.30am – 2.30pm (includes a light lunch)**



**Its completely free: To book a place: contact Susan O'Regan
on 087 2700572 or susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com**

This Programme is funded by the Mitigating Educational Disadvantage Fund administered by Solas via Cork ETB



Bantry Lions raise €2,745 in Food Appeal

The Bantry Bay Lions held their annual Christmas Food Appeal at SuperValu and Lidl in December. Food and money donations amounted to €2,745 and this included a much appreciated donation of €120 from Anne Harrington on behalf of Four Valleys Active Retirement Club members. Thanks to the

generosity of the local community enough money was raised to enable the Lions to donate 55 'Food Only' Vouchers of €50 each to St Vincent De Paul plus two hampers for Canon Paul Willoughby. Special thanks to SuperValu and Lidl for all their help and co-operation.

Club President Marion Rouse

and all members of the Bantry Bay Lions would like to thank people in the local community for their generous support throughout a very challenging year.

Provided by John Dervan, PRO – Bantry Bay Lions Club



Pictured at the presentation of the vouchers to Brenda Harrington of St Vincent De Paul. are (l-r) Lions Ramor Craigie, Ann McQueen, Francis Greaves, Nora Lynch, Michael Dunning, SVP member Brenda Harrington and Lion Eileen Dunning. Pic: Susy Greaves

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Dip into The Wild Atlantic Pool and Leisure Centre

The Wild Atlantic Pool and Leisure Centre in Baltimore is the perfect place for a winter warm-up! Local and friendly, the centre boasts a 16-metre pool, a jacuzzi, and a small but well-equipped gym. The pool is heated to 30 degrees Celcius for comfort, and is 1.3m deep throughout, so you're never in over your head!

Swimming is a fantastic workout and fantastic fun! If you're not sure how to get started, talk to the Wild Atlantic Pool staff about one-to-one lessons. For more proficient swimmers, Masters' swim sessions are offered twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Or, if you just want to do your own thing, there is plenty of unstructured time to come for a dip. Swimming is excellent exercise to maintain flexibility and strength and, in a heated, indoor pool, can be enjoyed whatever the weather



or time of day.

If you don't fancy a swim, walking in the water is great exercise, as it takes weight off your joints while still providing a cardiovascular workout, and water resistance helps build muscle. If you want something more energetic, the facility in Baltimore offers aqua-aerobics classes as well. Aqua-aerobics

are a great mood-lifter and an excellent way to get yourself going and feel great for the day. Afterwards, you can cool down with a few gentle laps of the pool, or soak away any remaining tension in the jacuzzi.

Upstairs, there is a fully equipped gym, with treadmill, cross-trainer, stationary bikes and rowing machine, and both

free weights and weight machines. Again, if you're not sure where to start, there is a gym instructor on staff who can show you how to use the equipment and put together a programme for you. If you'd like to try a group class, there are Pilates classes each Wednesday, and Fit for Life, a class for gentle functional fitness, on Tuesday mornings.

While the weather outside is frightful, take advantage of this facility on your doorstep, with special offers all through January on memberships paid up front. The Wild Atlantic Pool and Leisure Centre is open seven days a week – check the Facebook page for the monthly programme, or any changes to it. If you have questions, please call 028 20622, or email info@baltimorepool.ie – the team is always happy to help.

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Eat well to beat burnout

Cases of burnout spike in January after going back to work, but there are things you can do to help yourself avoid it. You know that exercising is good for releasing stress, but have you ever thought about how your food could help you with how you feel? asks Health Coach **Phoebe Webb**.



Burnout is a result of feeling physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted for a long period of time. It comes after suffering from stress and overwhelm constantly over weeks, months and even years. It can come from various sources such as work, family, and social expectations, and it can show itself in many forms like fatigue, headaches, constipation, bloating, skin rash, and brain fog to name a few. You might find yourself emotionally drained, unable to think straight and failing to keep up with your work.

When you experience stress you have high levels of cortisol in your body, which is your bodies main stress hormone. This hormone is there to help you cope with stressful situa-

tions and it comes in useful for certain things like when you're working towards a deadline, but if your cortisol levels stay high long term this is when problems start to occur.

Stress depletes nutrients from your body, and it also hinders the absorption of new nutrients that you should be getting from the food that you eat. Every moment you spend in a stressful state you are using up valuable nutrients, so eating whole and nutritious foods is important to keep those nutrient levels up. There are certain vitamins and minerals that are particularly sensitive to stress, so make sure

you're getting plenty of these from your diet to help lower your symptoms; B vitamins, vitamin C, and magnesium.

B vitamins are your energy vitamins. There are eight different B vitamins in total, and you can get them from your diet by eating animal products like meat, dairy, eggs, fish and seafood. You can also get them from plant-based foods like leafy greens and legumes but they don't have the same levels as animal products so if you are vegan or vegetarian you might have to take B Complex supplements.

Vitamin C helps to make an-

ti-stress hormones in your body, our adrenal glands need vitamin C for instant energy when we are stressed. It also helps your body to absorb iron, which means you have more oxygen in your cells which leads to having more energy. Vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamin C like peppers, cabbage, peas, oranges, grapefruit and tomatoes.

Magnesium helps to support your nervous system, energy production and it helps to balance your hormones, all very important when overcoming burnout. You can find magnesium in foods such as nuts, potato skin and crab however, it is very common to be deficient in this mineral because of the poor quality soil our food is grown in. I recommend taking a magnesium supplement in the

evenings.

Another nutrient that is vital when it comes to beating burnout is Omega-3 because it is essential for your brain health and supporting your nervous system. Did you know that approximately 60 per cent of your brain is made of fat and over half of that fat is the omega-3 kind? This is why it's such an important nutrient for your cognitive function and memory, it helps to reduce inflammation in your body. Eat oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines two to three times a week, as well as including olive oil, nuts and avocados into your diet. If you don't eat fish you can buy algae supplements.

When you are experiencing symptoms of burnout it is really important to eat less sugary and

processed foods and instead eat more whole foods, like vegetables, fruits, meat, seafood and legumes. These will keep your energy levels higher for longer and top up the nutrients that your cortisol levels are depleting at the same time.

Regarding the supplements I have mentioned above, it is advised to check with your doctor or qualified nutritionist before taking any of them, especially if you are on medication.

Phoebe Webb, a qualified Health Coach specialising in helping people to overcome burnout through diet and lifestyle changes.

www.phoebewebbnutrition.ie

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people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle



DIY FITNESS

Tania Presutti

Danish freelance journalist and fitness professional Tania Presutti, who now resides in Clonakilty, delivers a series of efficient DIY fitness exercises you can do at home.

Welcome to 2022 and to another year of new resolutions. If, like most of us, you have goals or new interests to test out in 2022, but haven't gotten a plan together yet, need support, or already feel like packing it up, this column is for you. If you haven't, but are looking for

Planning to succeed

inspiration, feel free to read on too.

Being a trainer, a (former) fighter and a regular at the gym, I know January is full of people who have decided to use the New Year to find the 'new' them, with promises to themselves to become more active, more healthy, lose weight, get fitter, look better.

What happens is often a short-lived, intense attempt at the new lifestyle because lots of resolutions come out of feelings (and over-indulgence regrets from the holidays) but with no plan, aside from buying a gym membership (and then hoping to stick with it 'because it cost a lot'). After a few weeks of dieting and training, with no or little results to show for it, a lot of people drop out and return to their old ways and comfort zone.

A few succeed and live to tell the tale of the power of the New Year's Resolution, but these are often the people who made a plan. To change your lifestyle, whether it's to add something,

or to cut something out, the best chance for success comes with planning.

I know this because life still screws up my best plans. For example, I was sure my December would be filled with running. But life happened, I moved and only got to do a quarter of what I imagined. There are two ways to deal with a situation like this: 1) Give up and do nothing and 2) Accept that your plan fell through and turn to plan B.

My plan B was to do something at home instead of running on the nights that I could. I picked up my 100 burpees and shadowboxing routine again. I also let myself off the hook for the running, or rather lack of it. Nothing is more depressing than telling yourself how you ruined your plan. So unless you need an inner 'whip', I suggest to skip that, and go to the part where you are proud of yourself: I didn't run today, but I did 20 push ups.

I find this advice crucial for lifestyle changes: Be prepared that not everything will go according to plan, nor does it have to for you to become successful. Instead leave room and give yourself permission to change things up. Have a plan B.

In your plan B, set alternatives to a given activity in case

it gets cancelled/you can't make it/get an injury so you can't do specific things or simply feeling too tired. For example, perhaps biking can replace running if you have problems with your ankles. A home-training session or another gym class can replace your chosen gym class if you can't make it. Burpees can replace most exercises, whether it's running, weightlifting or a dance class. Any exercise activity can replace smoking.

Be honest with yourself in your plan: Do you need support from people around you? From strangers on the Internet? A mix? Nobody? Is anyone in your circle un-supportive?

If you are a person who thrives on support and accountability, identify the people in your life who will support your goals and help you reach them. Likewise, you should try to identify those who aren't supportive or even working against you. Until you have your new habits down as a part of your life, you don't need the extra stress of people questioning your goals or resolves. Try to stay clear of them, or at least avoid discussing your goals with them. Instead look to where you get support and use that energy to your benefit. If there are people believing in you and your dreams, it's

because they want you to do it. This mental knowledge and emotional support can help you on the days, it's hard to get started or to finish a session strong.

Thirdly, if health and/or weight loss is part of your New Year resolution, you should also include diet and sleep. Both are important to get results. You can either start to count calories; this might feel like a lot of work, but the calories in vs calories burned calculation never fails. You will lose weight when you're in a deficit. Another approach is to cut down on portion sizes and replace any drinks but tea and coffee with water. For both plans you are still free to eat what you like, however the amount will be limited.

Write down your plan A and B in a training journal to keep you on the right track. For example: Write the structure of your weekly training in plan A: Which days, time, class/ type of training, with who: a training buddy or someone who is supportive.

Plan B is for change of plans: Alternative days (or time) for classes/exercises, home training, different type of training in case of feeling fatigued/injury, another possible training buddy for support.

Set a minimum to let yourself

of the hook in a gentle and easy way, if that's what you need. Some days 20 push-ups is all what you can give – and that's fine. It's 20 more than doing nothing.

Last, but not least. Set a goal and a lot of small goals on the way to the big one.

The big goal could be 'Lose 10 kg before summer', 'run a half marathon in 2022', 'lift 100kg in deadlift', 'learn to fight/box/dance'.

A small goal could be 'Be active three days a week', 'drink water instead of coke six days a week', 'get seven hours of sleep every night', 'run at least 8km every week for two months'.

As you move along and tick off small goals, set new ones to bring you closer to your big goal. Stick with it through setbacks and breaks, don't give up. Consistency will take you to the goal line.

I hope this has inspired you to go and achieve. Think big, set goals, make plans and succeed with them. I wish you the best journey and should you need a shout out, a kick in the right direction or a cheer, feel free to reach out to me at: taniaskitchenfitness@gmail.com or via Instagram @trainwithadane.

I'll be happy and proud to be in your corner.

Anam Cara begins 2022 with face-to-face support meeting in West Cork

Anam Cara will begin their support services in 2022 with a face to face group meeting in West Cork. The national organisation will hold their first meeting in West Cork on January 18 and would like to extend a warm welcome to any bereaved parent in the area.

On Tuesday, January 18, Anam Cara will hold their meeting in The Munster Arms Hotel, Bandon at 7:15pm. Regardless of the age of the child or circumstances of death, Anam Cara offers these peer to peer support meetings monthly, free of charge.

Registration is required to attend the meeting on Tuesday, January 18. Anam Cara would welcome any bereaved parent in the West Cork area and surrounds to contact them to register for this free event. Anam Cara can be contacted on 01 4045378 or by email info@anamcara.ie.

FitLine helping older people stay active

"When I know someone will be ringing me and asking what I have done, it keeps my mind on what I need to do to stay organised," said Gerry, Limerick. "I stay more active and I keep it going. The FitLine programme is very good and I would recommend it to someone who is thinking about joining."

Age and Opportunity's FitLine is a freephone telephone line designed to help older people who want to get more active and feel a bit healthier, but perhaps don't have the motivation, confidence or information on where or how to take that first step. The service is completely free.

After you've made the first call, a FitLine volunteer mentor will arrange a time to ring you every two weeks to offer advice, support and gentle encouragement to get moving, until you're happy with your progress. FitLine mentors are volunteer older people who understand the challenges of

getting active.

Some find it easy to be physically active but for others it's not so simple. Perhaps you don't know what activity to do or you lose motivation. Age and Opportunity is continuing to provide safe opportunities for people to be more active.

To find out more freephone 1800 303 545, email fitline@ageandopportunity.ie or visit ageandopportunity.ie.

Age and Opportunity is the national organisation that provides a range of opportunities for older people who want to get more involved in arts

and culture, sport and physical activity, civic engagement and personal development. They've received funding to expand their current FitLine initiative as part of the Keep Well campaign.

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people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Ballroom dancing classes come to Bandon

Some people considering dance lessons believe they have two left feet. "This could not be further from the truth," says instructor Anne Hurley, who has been teaching dancing in Cork for the past 20 years. "If you can walk, you can dance."

Anne is currently organising a new 'beginners' class, which is scheduled to commence on Monday, January 31 at the GAA Club in Bandon, from 7-8pm. Details of the course can be found on www.corkdanceclub.com or by contacting Anne at 087 2487696 or email corkdanceclub@gmail.com

"The beginners' class will start with easy steps in the old time waltz and will help you get used to dancing with a partner. We guarantee you will go home being able to dance," promises Anne. "The next week will start with revision of the previous week's steps and then gradually introduce other dances such as the social foxtrot, quickstep, tango, jive and many more. My usual strategy is to give you just enough of each dance to make it around the floor before going back to learn more steps in each one. That way, you can go out and practise as soon as possible, without having to sit out the dances you have yet to learn."



Ballroom dancing has re-

gained popularity owing to the success of TV shows *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Dancing With The Stars*, so whether you have a company dance to attend, you want to dance at your wedding, or you just want to be a casual social dancer, there is a suitable class for you. The classes feature a mixture of ballroom, Latin American and fun dances in the beginners' courses and regular continuation courses are also available.

Dancing has numerous benefits – gentle exercise, personal satisfaction, a new circle of friends and an improved social life to name but a few! Numbers in the beginners' group are limited so book early to avoid disappointment.

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IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant

Clearing out stuff

show. My advice is 'be brutal' and there is no better time of the year to clear out 'stuff' than in January.

January was named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and transitions and protector of gates and doorways. He is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past, the other into the future. In ancient Roman times, the gates of the temple of Janus were open in times of war and closed in times of peace. It makes so much sense then that January is the month where we can draw back in order to regroup and get ready to face the year ahead. It is a time for reflection, peace and purification. Having spent the last few years knee deep in the world of Neuroscience, it never ceases to amaze me how much better all of our lives would be if it became part of our childhood teachings. Focus and clear thinking is impossible if you are surrounded by clutter...there it is in a nutshell. Not alone is having 'piles' of clothes a waste of time (constantly having to sort through everything to find what you need), it is definitely not the key to having a successful working wardrobe. More does not always mean better and a clever eye and well-thought-out plan to 'cull' is one of the best things that you can do for your wardrobe, your life and, most importantly, your mind.

Use this month to assess

what you have and, like Janus, reflect back on how much you have used certain clothes, or not, while also looking forward realistically, on whether you will ever wear or use them again. Not for one second am I telling you to just dump stuff; I'm asking you to let go of what you don't need. In the world of Neuroscience, the brain is constantly assessing and eliminating all perceived threats, in other words, the brain is looking for safety and peace and, like a small child, likes to be rewarded. So here is your reward, when you make space, you feel better and you can then start scanning for some glorious new bits. Getting rid of a pair of

black jeans that have faded and look dull next to black is a good thing – you can treat yourself to a new pair. On the other hand, throwing away a pair of expensive winter boots just because they need some love from the shoe repair shop is downright silly. Give whatever you can to anyone that you know who you think might like to have it; this helps you to feel less panicked when you know deep down that you haven't worn something and that it's unlikely that you ever will. I've done that so many times and it is a delight to see someone you care about wearing it, looking great in it, and loving it far more than you ever did!



Bin all of the excuses! Now why would you deprive yourself of buying/borrowing something new? This kind of thinking goes far beyond the matter of not having the money to replace something, there is also the thought process behind whether or not you deserve to have something new or better... try to remind yourself of that. As Irish women go, we are great at convincing ourselves that something 'will do'. Even the tone you use when you say 'it will do' is somewhat self-sacrificing, isn't it? We have sacrificed enough in the last few years, so we all deserve everything that this wonderful world can give us, even if we have to seek it out and pay for it ourselves.

I really hope that reading this will help to get you into the right mindset to have a good old clear-out. It will be good for your soul and a tonic for the mind. Don't overwhelm yourself, just pick sections of your wardrobe, take your time and always celebrate if you fill a bag of goodies to give away or pass on, especially if it is because something no longer fits you. If it hasn't fit you in quite a while, let it go, if you haven't worn it in the last few years, let it go; and keep reminding yourself that holding on to it is a constant reminder that you are NOT wearing it and is in fact a bit of a dig at yourself! It's ok to have a small bag of 'will

I/won't I 'let it go' – you can hold on to that bag for about a week and reassess but most of time you will be happy to let everything in that bag go.

We all have friends with young kids and young kids love costume jewellery and high heels so make a date with yourself to fill some bags of bits that you no longer use, especially those skyscraper heels that never even made it from 'the car to the bar'! They will bring the biggest smile to the littlest of faces and open the doors to a world of imagination and fun.

And of course the most wonderful part of re-organising and reducing your wardrobe is when you re-discover those gems that you had forgotten you had, treasures that re-invent themselves and love you more every time you put them on but somehow you had forgotten all about. The entire culling process was worth it now, wasn't it?

Happy New Year, try to find the 'happy' in everything and in every place and if you are feeling a slow and a bit tired and reflective, that's ok, take your time because that's what January is all about! Spring will slowly and surely come and resuscitate you. You have lots of wonderful clothes and bright colours to look forward to, I promise you that...

The look of sheer panic and dread in the eyes when I suggest letting go of clothes that someone hasn't worn for years... Does the idea of this trigger your fears? Letting go can be a real problem for certain people. Granted, so many of us grew up in times when 'waste not want not' was shoved down our throats but times have changed and we simply must move with them. I have found that it is definitely an age thing; a huge section of women over 40 become emotionally attached to clothes or shoes and have a real struggle letting them go, even when they have served their purpose and fulfilled their lifespan. Younger women see, more clearly, the lifespan in an item of clothes and retire them accordingly when they either no longer fit or the wear and tear is starting to

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

January Sun Signs by Kate Arbon



Aries: This is a time to acknowledge the comfortable and familiar environment that supports you. This Full Moon you might want to spend more time at home or with your family. You'll be strongly motivated to create a caring and secure environment, but a crowd can be

claustrophobic. Draw on your basic security as a source of strength but avoid being over protective of your private space. Too many demands from your work colleagues, boss or career goals can find you choosing between withdrawing or having to face a confrontation. Take time out to regenerate then power up for the next surge of productivity.



Taurus: Try not to get distracted whilst you tie up important loose ends and meet deadlines. You may want to work towards your real goals and higher aspirations but it's the basic tasks that take up your attention now. Frustrations can build up but you need to keep some

energy for new projects next month. Difficult emotional experiences around this Full Moon can be the result of differing opinions with people in your everyday life. You may clash over beliefs but if argue your case you could be drawn in to irrational arguments and emotional reactivity.



Gemini: You can be a very kind and giving person but you also need to feel secure. Being a little more concerned with your financial status now is probably a good thing although some people may view you as unusually materialistic and possessive. This Full Moon

will find you focusing on your personal resources and economic fluctuations. It's time to rely on your own skills and talents. Be confident in your abilities and turn them to good use. It's up to you to name your price for your efforts. Depending too much on others can lead to feeling restricted by their expectations.



Cancer: With the Full Moon in your sign you are likely to be a glowing example of both vitality and attractiveness. The full force of your feelings have a powerful impact on your surroundings and the people in your life. You may be seen as over-emotional or sentimental, but you know how to provide a truly nurturing environment for others. You're motivated to show how much concern and care

you have for those you love. Your close relationships can be a source of revelation or illumination and you feel better for seeing what has been unexpressed until now.



Leo: During January you need to withdraw from the world so you can commune with nature and focus on your inner feelings. Ideally create a sacred place of your own where you can be alone. Try to work more consciously with the inner world of your imagination

through creative work or meditative practice for a few days. Your everyday responsibilities and duties can become overwhelming if you allow them to dominate your life. This Full Moon allows you time to regenerate and find a balance between spiritual and physical needs.



Virgo: Disconnect from the daily grind and tap into your lighter side for a while. Ensure that you spend time only with people that elevate and support you. This month you desire strong bonds with your friends and you are extremely sensitive to how they treat you.

You want fairness and inclusion. Doing what you love most with the people that you care for has the greatest value over the Full Moon. You get the chance to enjoy the good life this month and know you well being can't be bought through accumulation of assets or wealth.



Libra: You may have been striving to achieve some longer term goals and you want the recognition now. Over the coming weeks you can reach out towards your ambitions. Stand in the spotlight whilst you take time to wave your own flag and get noticed for your contribution. The solid foundations you have created will give you confidence to go to the next stage. Your strong sense of duty to those that support you means you give the praise to others where it's due. Your role is primarily to live up to family or social expectations over this Full Moon. Everyone is cheering you on.



Scorpio: Your interest in philosophical and spiritual issues is heightened this month. The powerful need for a strong belief that is solid and true for you demands your attention now. In the past you will have unconsciously been affected by the convictions and values of

those close to you. You can now break out of the less relevant details and expand your inner window on the world to break new ground. Think big and stretch your imagination this Full Moon. Being part of a network of like minds may have been restricting your independence in recent months. It's important to find your own path and stand by your convictions.



Sagittarius: This month could be a very transformative time. You unearth resources within yourself that you were previously unaware of. You no longer need to rely on certain items, belongings or even other people as you become more emotionally stable. Over this

Full Moon your experiences will confirm that depending on others undermines your ability to provide for yourself. Take time to stand aside for a moment to recognise where any deals, arrangements or contracts have tied up your energy. This sense of freedom will do you good and you'll easily see how you have already created your own abundance.



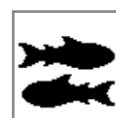
Capricorn: Early January has the Sun shining in your own sign and the Full Moon focus is on your relationships. You may have difficulty distinguishing between your own feelings and those of the people closest to you. Tune in to yourself. Allow your partner or close

friends to have their own moods. Be careful not to merge your experiences with theirs. It can be too easy to imagine the reaction of others always has something to do with you. If you have already got a little too involved or caught up with each other recently, just take time to stand back now and regroup later this month.



Aquarius: This month you can really get things together whilst keeping your focus on the details. You are likely to make yourself indispensable and are happy to take on a lot of tasks to be of service. Once done, you'll be able to stand back and take pride in your accom-

plishments. If you are not careful however, other people will take advantage of you during this Full Moon. Don't end up being the martyr by getting distracted from the broader visions and deeper issues in your own life. Take some time to consider your inner motivations and fundamental needs.



Pisces: Spontaneity is the theme for you this Full Moon and it's time to loosen up and have some fun. Taking the lead and making some bold statements is also an option. Don't let friends or your social group dictate your moves. Going just a little bit over the top will be

acceptable as your enthusiasm overflows and you get creative with your energy. You have a strong emotional need for some romantic encounters but you do know how to nurture and maintain the romance in an existing relationship too. So go the extra mile and enjoy!

January has a New Moon at 13 degrees Capricorn on the 2nd at 6.33pm and a Full Moon at 28 degrees Cancer on the 17th at 11.43pm.

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Cork creative talent sought for new TV and film initiatives across Ireland

Interested in a career in film or television? Or do you want to take the next step in your emerging or established profession?

The National Talent Academy for Film and Television (Academy) has launched three new opportunities for creative talent who want to develop a career in television or feature films. The focus on regional creative talent for these opportunities means the Academy is making individual calls to

creatives in counties across the country – including Cork.

All three initiatives are free and aimed at those new to the sector as well as those with emerging and established careers in the industry. They will be hands-on, immersive and highly interactive and are focused on screenwriting, directing and producing.

The Academy, which was established earlier this year, aims to roll out a suite of experiential and exciting programmes and opportunities – with a focus on diverse and regional creative talent – across 2022.

Its new website www.nationaltalentacademies.ie provides a range of information and skills development as well as launching its first three programmes. They are:

- **Pathways.** This is aimed at opportunities for new talent; for those who don't work in the industry and want to find out more.
- **Script Mentorship.** This is a scheme for new writers and script editors. Ideally, for those who have gained a foothold in the industry but need to develop their craft to progress further.
- **Shadowing.** This programme allows screenwriters, directors and producers the opportunity to gain on-set experience on high-end TV and feature film productions. This is for established talent who want to take

their career to the next level.

More details about the initiatives and how to apply can be found on www.nationaltalentacademies.ie

The Academy is an initiative of Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland and is managed by the Galway Film Centre. It is part of the National Talent Academies network, which also includes Animation managed by Animation Ireland and a number of regional Crew Hubs managed by the Atlantic Academy (Danú Media) in Galway, Film in Limerick in Limerick and Clermont Enterprise Hub in Wicklow. The network has been established to develop a highly skilled, diverse talent and crew base throughout the country and to further build capacity within the sector.

National Talent Academy

for Film & Television, Galway Film Centre Talent Executive, Jade Murphy said: "We are delighted to partner with Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland and the many stakeholders in the sector to bring the ambitions of the National Talent Academy for Film and Television to life. Our aim is to support talent in building sustainable careers in the sector by removing barriers to entry and providing tangible opportunities for people to upskill and develop. We encourage anyone interested to get in touch and start a conversation today."

Gareth Lee, Skills Development Manager for Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland said: "We're delighted to see the National Talent Academy for Film & Television Drama announce its first batch of activities for the sector. With the other Talent Academies and

Crew Hubs coming on stream in 2022, it truly is an exciting time for skills development within the sector with lots of opportunities on the horizon for new, emerging and established talent. We're looking forward to working collaboratively with stakeholders through the National Talent Academies network to grow the skills base and support further growth within the sector."

The Academy is encouraging people interested in a career in screenwriting, direction and production and existing industry members who wish to develop their skills or talent pathway further to visit www.nationaltalentacademies.ie and view the current and future opportunities provided across a range of innovative opportunities and initiatives.

The silent majority



THE DNA OF WEST CORK PEOPLE

Mark Grace

Mark Grace is a genetic genealogist and family historian at Ballynoe House, Ardfield, Co. Cork

It does not matter which websites you join for family history or DNA matching; the problem is the same. Even with the most sophisticated sites (where you might expect greater understanding and involvement of members), it is a sad reality that over 99 per cent of users do not respond to any form of correspondence, even if you find them on social media. The Silent Majority.

I have many decades of experience, sending more than 10,000 messages over many platforms. The bottom line is that you should not expect a response but be delighted if you do. As mentioned in the last article, you should include in your testing strategy time to reach out to important matches. It will take time.

I encourage everyone to contact their DNA matches, even though the chance of a reply is small; and to be considerate by responding. The lack of response halts investigations. For the DNA newbie (who has initial enthusiasm) and expert alike, it is the most frustrating aspect of genetic genealogy. I hope this article will provide a wider understanding of the issues involved and allow you to adjust your strategies accordingly.

A recent upgrade to the Ancestry messaging system now shows when messages are delivered and, more importantly, when they are read. Not all systems do this. A review of my most recent 500 messages showed that about 60 per cent were unread after one year. It appears the majority are silent because accounts are dormant, although some are active but they never access their message inbox. Users should also get an email alert that messages have been received. It is possible

to switch off messaging, but few do. I do have a couple of important and unexplained DNA matches I simply cannot reach, as they have deactivated messaging.

I know this phenomenon is often mentioned between active members. Many, like me, include in our public profiles that we 'respond to all messages'. We do not want people to be discouraged, as that is an obvious side effect. It is also important that we thank people for replying and explain why their reply was helpful.

About half of the top 50 matches for all DNA kits I manage are non-responders. This includes people as close as second cousins who share a great deal of DNA with a lot of mutual genetic history. You might think close family would be open to a family DNA project, but that cannot be assumed. You can ask once and send a polite reminder after a few months, but that is all you can do. Opinions do change. In one case, I spent five years discussing DNA sharing with one reluctant cousin who then did share. They were delighted with what I could tell them about their more ancient origins. So much so, that other family members in their branch decided to test and share too.

A couple of years ago, I re-messaged the top one hundred DNA matches on Ancestry who had never responded. It was a straw poll to see if I could elicit a response on why they did not reply to my first approach. Despite the irony of reaching out to non-responders, I got five replies, which included the same answers received from people who did reply and declined to share. Ahead of this article, I also contacted about thirty of these and I am grateful for their detailed responses which have been summarised here.

The primary areas for the lack of response can be categorised as Life, Level of Interest, Technical Understanding and Trust. For the first, Life simply gets in the way. Most people are infrequent users of sites because they are busy or simply forget, even though data sharing takes just a couple of minutes of their time. It is not a significant hobby for them.

Despite hundreds of thousands of users and the popularity of both genealogy and DNA testing there are few high-level users with in-depth knowledge, so the level of interest is low on average. People

take DNA tests 'for a laugh' or just because it was given as a gift and have no further interest in the detail. Sites do not categorise users level of interest to help find those more open to sharing their data and learning more. Testers with complicated personal and family relationships may not be interested in wider connections and decline to share, even though they may miss out by not collaborating. As I mentioned in the last article, as Ancestry does not provide the necessary matching detail, their results are unverified and not usable for detailed genetic genealogy when not shared.

There are two main types of technical issue. Sites like Ancestry and GEDmatch are hard to navigate and understand for self-confessed technophobes. On top of that, trying to understand what the DNA results mean or simply not knowing what to do next. The importance of and reasons behind verifying matches to prove shared heritage is lost on most. Many reach a mental brick wall at this point, even with the most basic of concepts. A DNA test result is just the start of an adventure into your deepest ancestry and most are surprised by what can be revealed. Many users do not go into their Settings and set up their accounts properly, connecting their DNA to themselves or provide even a rudimentary tree, especially if the family history side is of no interest.

There is also a wider belief that sharing data involves costs when it is free to share to GEDmatch and MyHeritage, as two examples. It is often forgotten that if you have tested but do not subscribe to other services, you can still log in and review your matches and access your data. You own your DNA file.

Trust is a big one. I keep an active and public profile for my research so that people can know who I am and what I do, and that I am a volunteer collaborator. It builds trust, as confidence across the internet is low, and a primary reason people do not respond. Many consider approaches with offers to share data (even my offers of free help) are suspicious or spam, even though my personal DNA data is publicly available. There are concerns data may be 'stolen,' not treated confidentially, or 'manipulated' in some way. The issue of privacy and data security is a complicated one with many myths and misunderstandings, so will be

discussed separately in a future article.

When reaching out to other people I have found it does not matter if you write a short "Hello" with a request to discuss shared heritage, or you write a full detailed pitch on who you are and why you are making contact. The result is the same. To save your own time, I recommend keeping initial approaches short and to the point. I have a text file with standard wording from various approaches so I can simply copy/paste into any messaging system. It saves a lot of time, especially when I spend more than 90 per cent of my time reaching out to matches rather than analysing results.

For those who wish to keep their research separate from personal email I recommend setting up a Gmail account. It offers an additional level of privacy for test site membership and registrations (which is usually the only personal identifier) and can be suitably opaque in name. Gmail is not subject to email Gateway

Blocking which can be a problem ('message undelivered') when trying to reach people with Yahoo/AOL addresses and other email providers (such as Sky) who share the same legacy blocking software. This goes back to the days of spambots and indiscriminate blocking by

If you have received a DNA test kit for Christmas, beat the rush for results by sending your kit back promptly..... Please, also share the detail to genuine researchers. Despite the frustrations of The Silent Majority, there is so much personal satisfaction receiving the gratitude of someone who has been helped to prove their genetic identity.

network providers of certain internet routers to reduce the problem. It is frustrating if your business or research domain is on the wrong side of one these gateways. A reliable email address is important.

If you have received a DNA test kit for Christmas, beat the rush for results by sending your kit back promptly. Do not be discouraged. Reach out to your nearest matches when you get your DNA results back. Please, also share the detail to genuine researchers. Despite the frustrations of The Silent Majority, there is so much personal satisfaction receiving the gratitude of someone who has been helped to prove their genetic identity. Look out for some of these stories, in general terms, in future articles.

For any questions that can be answered as part of future articles (email genealogy@creativegraces.net) or follow the West Cork DNA projects (based on my wife's DNA and that of her genetic cousins) on Facebook 'My Irish Genealogy & DNA'.

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2022 turns a corner but still some challenges lie ahead



ASTROLOGY

Kate Arbon

Kate Arbon is an astrologer, writer and spiritual teacher. Living in West Cork for over 20 years she gives personal consultations locally and internationally using traditional natal and Horary astrology.
email: astro@katearbon
www.katearbon.com

This year some areas of life continue to be very challenging and the frustrations are not over. Other planetary events will provide a real sense of progress with some rare moments of great significance to be experienced.

In the wake of 2021 and on the back of previous years, we are looking forward to this New Year, hoping for better times ahead. So what can we expect? It's certainly a gentler year with the harshest transits from 2020-21 fading out. 2022 offers a good smattering of positive trends preparing the way for significant major shifts in 2023. We can start to feel we have turned a corner as the general mood lifts over the coming months. Keeping this in mind, 2022 does still have a few challenges we will need to navigate and it brings the continuation of a theme that has been developing over several years. This year can be best understood as a transition year, marking a time of maturing and developing some areas of life and the chance to graduate out of others.

We start the year with Venus retrograde and Mercury in Capricorn. This puts a focus on our values and what we want to include in our life. Capricorn, as a sign, is very prepared to sacrifice trivial and immediate gratification for longterm value and reliability. In mid-January and just as life begins to take a more normal routine once more, the quicksilver planet

Mercury starts the first of four retrograde phases. Throughout the first month we are looking back over what has happened and comparing it to what we want to happen next, but with some uncertainty about how it will fall into place. Keep in mind that what we begin the year with, in terms of preferences, ideas and connections, may come up for revision during February and early March. Plans and arrangements will need adjustment and flexibility. Decisions may be questioned and deals renegotiated.

Saturn in Aquarius square Uranus in Taurus

They separate from close contact in early January but continue whilst staying within orb, getting very close again, within one zodiac degree, during September and October but never quite connecting.

This was one dynamic that really kept the pressure on all during 2021 and it's still lingering like heavy rain clouds after a downpour. Saturn has been in a tense square aspect to Uranus since early 2021. These incompatible archetypes are maintaining a provocative distance throughout 2022 even though they don't get to make exact close contact again. This is like two adversaries still throwing out jibes even after the fight is finished. In effect this can mean the energy or intent of the friction that has been stirred up by these two planets, is not fulfilled this time.

The two planets involved have very contrasting energies. Saturn brings lessons and limitations through keeping things confined within strict boundaries. Uranus brings change and discontinuity with an unpredictable effect operating as a 'wild card' to introduce new potentials.

Saturn's influence will try to maintain the order and insist on restriction, limitation and compliance. In Aquarius, it is all about ideology and new systems of social order. Uranus is the planet of experimentation, new thinking and innovation. In Taurus, there is a focus on material resources, practical values and the body's basic needs.

Both planets have potentially negative and positive traits and we are experiencing a mix of both. At times it seems that reason, traditional methods and core values are the best options. At other moments there is merit in overthrowing rigid and restricting dictates. It could seem like the safest thing is to follow those with long-held authority and respected credentials.



Likewise, it can also appear essential to deny dogmatic autocrats the ability to make the rules. Finding a stress-free path through this complex and frustrating time is how you get the best of both planets. We are not likely to have any startling twists or turns in the pattern of heavy constraints that emerged last year but we are likely to see continual pressure to adopt the 'new normal' of social regulation that has become the fashion trend for the 2020s

The overshadowing effect of the Saturn Uranus theme is pushing the issue that many people worldwide are facing now. Do we want a future that is pre-determined and controlled in every aspect under the promise of safety and security or do we evolve into a community that is prepared to trust natural rhythms and inherent goodwill in humanity? Which way will we choose to develop and maintain a thriving socio-economic system?

This is the end phase of a much bigger dance that these two titans make over about 45 years. It is a dissolution or degeneration of the old ways and an inherent part of our social, financial and political life cycle and the opportunity to build our social structures on a different foundation. The last time we were in a similar pattern was in the mid-1970s and that pattern culminated and was renewed in 1988. Before that, it was in the early 1930s culminating in 1942. This current phase reaches a peak in 2032.

We are still in the throes of the breakdown of our social and financial structures and so we can expect more change and some chaos before we start building in a new phase. This year is about finding a clearer picture of what needs to be developed as part of the future

and also what has to go entirely. For many people, there is still an expectation that we can continue on and return to the familiarity of life in previous decades. Those who can envisage it will begin creating a new way forward. It will be an easier experience when the activism of resistance and opposition is replaced by cooperation and innovation along with practical solutions. Saturn, in its better form, brings personal responsibility and self-reliance to those who choose to accept it. Uranus brings independence and inspiration that is unconditional.

Jupiter in Pisces

From December 29, 2021 to May 11 and again from October 28 to December 20.

This positive combination allows the year to start with a sense of optimism. Jupiter brings the bounty of life and the potential for bigger and better things. Pisces heightens empathic receptivity. It brings a sense of the divine or connection to other dimensions. It feels like there can be an improvement in general conditions and an escape from uncertainty and restriction. Pisces is a creative and even mystical sign that connects to other realms with ease. It can be inclined to want to escape the material world in exchange for something more spiritual. Its true expression is more towards freeing the spirit from the confines of the mundane and expressing a more intuitive and compassionate connection with the world and its inhabitants. Jupiter in Pisces allows us to reach out and expand our higher aspirations and goals. Our imagination is strengthened and we can be highly intuitive and inspired. We seek broader and better horizons that are aligned to values beyond the material world. It

takes some of the fear away and replaces it with optimism and faith in a brighter future. There is a sense of being guided or aligned with a divine force. At worst it can create a sense of unreality or confusion. It could bring extremes where the visionary elements are heightened but with no practical application to follow through. Use these weeks to meditate, start a dream journal or grow your spiritual practice. Be creative and allow your intuitive insights to guide you.

Jupiter joins with Neptune

From around April 7 to April 17 and exact on April 12.

While Jupiter moves through Pisces it connects with Neptune, a planet very at home in Pisces. This amplifies the energy of Neptune during this transit in early April. Neptune brings the non-material world closer. It can dissolve the boundaries and structures that give meaning to our physical world. Events can become confusing or nonsensical and things can appear ridiculous or extraordinary. There is a dream-like quality with Neptune and it is the planet most associated with illusions and also delusions. As Jupiter gets close to Neptune the illusions that have been created as deception or distraction become more obvious. It's as if the elephant in the room has grown so big it can't be avoided now. There could even be a feeling that the world has become a little like an Alice in Wonderland chapter. For some, this can be a time of great disorientation as the reliability of reality becomes less dependable. This combination brings out the truth. Many have put their whole faith in some delusional fabrication. This can be like the adult version of discovering your parents lied to you about something fundamen-

tal that you had totally believed in. It may be hard to accept that there has been deliberate deception and this delusional fabrication has been the basis of critical decisions. It can deliver a growing disillusionment or a point of revelation. This is the time to dream big and use the creative imagination to visualise and manifest the reality that's wanted now. The trend will be towards a combination of powerful optimism and positive creativity. Some will adhere to their beliefs so strongly that it causes a rift between them and others. There can be either a clash or a merging of realities. It may be difficult to reconcile the differing strands of belief. Letting go of rigidity, inflexibility and intolerance is the most positive response.

Venus joins Jupiter with Neptune at the Solar Eclipse

Venus passes Neptune on April 27 and then Jupiter on April 30.

This happy combination brings a positive and powerful lift to late April. With the Neptune Venus pairing, we have two planets often considered to be in harmony, merged together. Neptune acts as the higher octave of Venus. Love and connection at the more physical level of Venus are upgraded to the level of the unconditional and complete love of Neptune. Within a few days, Venus takes that lovely all-inclusive power to meet with Jupiter. This amplifies and expands the sentiments up to another level again. In deep feeling, otherworldly Pisces this could potentially be a moment of joyous connection with something wonderful and beyond the usual human experience. These few days may help to open up personal relationships to another level or make a heartfelt connection on a universal level. The added ingredient of the New Moon and Solar eclipse in Taurus on April 30 suggests this could be a point of a significant consciousness shift into a heart and soul centred source of connection. The evidence may not be immediately apparent in the physical world, but this energy could establish itself at a very deep level as it unfolds over the coming months. Make time to attune to this rare planetary sequence so you can fully enjoy the benefit and also contribute to the potency of a powerful event.

Jupiter in Aries

From May 11 until October 28 and then December 20 until

Continued on next page...

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Is weight loss difficult for you?



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year with great company and good food.

January is a time of goal settling and New Year's resolutions. I wonder if you, like many others, have a desire to lose weight and feel good in your clothes as your resolution for 2022?

Many of us struggle with our weight, as it fluctuates from week to week or over the

decades, and have tried lots of different diets and eating plans through the years.

It just doesn't seem fair that some people find it easy to stay slim whilst eating and drinking whatever they want, whilst others who eat healthy, calorie count and exercise religiously still can't reduce their weight or feel good in their clothes.

If you are trying to lose weight and whatever you have done in the past has not worked for you longterm, then the only way to get a consistent longterm result is to change what you're doing.

Finding an approach that is right for you, your body, and your mind, is important. It can help you lose weight, feel great and improve your health longterm.

There is no one plan that suits everyone, so understanding YOU is key to success.

Your body is constantly communicating with you and giving you clues as to what is going on. When you know how

to interpret these signs, realising what to do next is clear.

So ask yourself:

- Do you eat for comfort or when you are upset?
- Do you experience poor concentration or sleepiness after meals?
- Do you experience abdominal pain, gas or bloating after you eat?
- Are you often hungry between meals or soon after you eat?
- Does food give you a burst of energy or leave you feeling drained?
- Are you often tired?
- Do you sleep poorly?
- Has your waist increased with age?
- Do you crave sweets, salt or caffeine daily?
- Do you have PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome)?
- Are you suffering with joint and muscle pains?
- Do you have digestive problems?
- Is there diabetes in your family?

If the answer to any of these questions is Yes then a personalised approach tailored to your individual needs will help you to lose weight and relieve these symptoms.

Stories that you are big boned, or have natural weight gain because of age, are keeping

you stuck. In reality it could be food sensitivities, inflammation, a hormone imbalance or your emotions that have been making it difficult for you to lose weight and I can help with these.

If you have any questions please do get in touch.

Amanda Roe is a Clinical Hypnotherapist, Acupuncturist, Life and Health coach providing natural solutions that will improve your mental, emotional and physical health. For more information call/text 087 633 1898 or email amanda@roehealth.ie

When YOU feel good everything is possible!



I can help you with
Anxiety/Stress, Depression
Fear, Phobias, Trauma & PTSD
Psychosomatic (mind/body) illness
Weight loss & Eating issues
Inner Child Healing
Womens Health & Hormone Balancing

Call/text Amanda Roe: 087 633 1898
www.RoeHealth.ie Email: amanda@roehealth.ie

ROE HEALTH + HYPNOTHERAPY & ACUPUNCTURE

2022 turns a corner ...Con'd from previous page

May 16, 2023.

This combination favours new starts, growth initiatives and a direct approach to achieving your purpose. Jupiter is about expansion, aspirations and finding a better path in life. Aries will confront and push forwards despite obstacles or resistance. So this is a very different energy to the previous months and it's a time for action. We may see new leaders emerging and an increase in start-up enterprises. There could be aggressive expansion, especially in areas of high competition or conflict industries. There may be a hint of the righteous crusader during these months as people feel they need to take a stand and fight for what is right, in their opinion. In Aries, there is only one opinion so this combination does not foster tolerance or negotiation. But this energy is not just about a direct confrontation between people. It can bring a lot of constructive renewal. There is the courage to take the lead and activate new initiatives. It brings a generally optimistic drive that pushes forwards with enthusiasm to build a better life and become a better person too. This is about being our best selves and reaching fearlessly towards that as a goal. At worst there is risk-taking, overconfidence and a 'might is right' attitude. Use this energy to drive forwards and motivate yourself to act in the way that represents your higher values.

Start a new training program, develop your assertion skills and try new challenges.

Jupiter retrograde in Aries

From July 28 to October 27. Jupiter retrograde in Aries gives you time to take a step back from overexertion and full-on pace. Things may not be as straightforward as you expected and your confidence may take a knock. Allow this time to help you redirect your focus and gather your momentum once more. Consider if you are using your energy to the best ends for your overall goals. There can be glitches or hindrances in the more militant operations around the globe. Forceful plans cannot proceed as expected.

Jupiter retrograde in Pisces

From October 28 to November 23.

Whilst Jupiter retrogrades in Pisces we can feel less buoyancy than when direct in motion. We may need to get out feet back on the ground and be realistic about what we can actually achieve. Don't abandon your dreams now, but just be sure you haven't chosen a path that is destined to give you burnout or no tangible results.

There could be setbacks and a lack of clear direction coming from governments and world leaders during these weeks.

Mercury retrograde

During January-February, May-

June, September-October and December-January 2023.

This year the first three retrograde phases of Mercury are all in the Air and Earth element with the final one at the end of 2022 entirely in an Earth sign. The retrograde puts us on notice to take extra care of what we are thinking and how we are connecting or communicating. A Mercury retrograde is the right time to reconsider your plans and go over the details once more. Double-check dates, times and appointments and be prepared to switch things around at late notice. With the Air Earth focus, we need to attend to the practicality of putting our plans and ideas into action. Making the words materialise into reality is the challenge. Too many great notions and not enough ability to follow through could become apparent during the retrograde phases this year.

Eclipse Season

During April-May and October-November

We have four eclipses this year and they all fall across the Taurus Scorpio axis. This is part of a current series of seven eclipses in these signs that started in November 2021 and ends in October 2023. An eclipse often has no particular event attached to the event but it acts as a trigger point that brings a longer-term shift. It

can be a crisis point that tips the balance so a new phase emerges. These patterns are not always seen in an obvious way, but we can look at the themes described by the signs and planets connected on the day to get a glimpse of the potentials. The North Node of the Moon is currently in Taurus so this shows us the direction of new trends. The South Node is in Scorpio which indicates the kind of issues that become critical and cause the shifts. So this year and into 2023 we can expect specific issues relating to hidden agendas or previously hidden secrets. It suggests that more will emerge around abuses of power, sex scandals and exploitation in the coming months. Taurus is describing the path ahead and it speaks of a more harmonious connection to the physical world and its resources. The issue of basic security, food, natural commodities and our access to them are uppermost. The things we value to provide a peaceful and bountiful life are all Taurus themes. Scorpio issues are being stirred up this year. This is the shadow side. Greed, envy, fear, the hidden and taboo subjects. Whatever we have that we are uncomfortable with, either within ourselves or in society are now being exposed. Scorpio brings out what is 'toxic' so it can be purged or purified. We see the darker side and we get the chance to cleanse, become

whole and restore balance through finding the purity or simplicity once more.

The fixed signs Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius are more strongly affected by the eclipses this year.

Mars in Gemini

Mars travels through Gemini from August 20 to March 25, 2023. It goes retrograde in Gemini from October 30 until January 12, 2023.

Mars is the activating planet and can be the trigger or spark that motivates action and change.

This year it moves through the signs quite rapidly from Sagittarius in January and into Gemini by mid-August. By then it is travelling more slowly until it eventually slows and starts the retrograde phase in October and so it stays in Gemini until late March 2023. This is about a seven-month visit and a very long time for one sign to have that Mars activation. We can expect the cutting edge of Mars to be expressed through our communication channels. There's going to be some kind of 'War of the Words' before the turn of the year. It could be that media sources and some individual voices get severed or censured. There is likely to be clashes, and flashpoints are caused by things said, or ideas expressed in some form. It is a time to be aware of how provocative speech can be and also how

spoken or written opinions can come back to haunt you. Gemini is a sign of two sides and it wants to combine opposites, it sees the contrast or duality and recognises that two parts make the whole. With Mars creating its friction it can be hard to find compatibility and compromise. Ideas and thoughts can be contentious and used as weapons. There are two sides to every story and over these weeks they may be very much at odds. Use these months to become aware of how much energy, time and personal connection is lost in doing battle over differing opinions. Develop mindfulness around your communications and learn to recognise the inherent power of the spoken word.

An evolutionary step?

This year we will have to acknowledge, to ourselves at least, if we have chosen to follow our personal truth and are prepared to step out of the safety of approval or have we accepted the social values we are offered so that we can stay within our comfort zone. Will we continue to follow our fearful mind and self-limiting beliefs by doing what we are told is the right and only way? Or will we become more aware and connected with our deeper and more refined spiritual nature and intuitively find the balance and harmony required for an evolutionary step?

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

O'Sullivan secures harness racing meeting with Minister McConologue

Cork South West deputy Christopher O'Sullivan says a meeting scheduled for next week between agriculture Minister Charlie McConologue and the Irish Harness Racing Association (IRHA) is very welcome progress for the sport, which means a lot to the people of west Cork.

"Minister McConologue has agreed to meet with the Irish harness racing association next Wednesday to discuss much needed funding for the sport," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

The sport, which is very popular in west Cork and includes landmark events like the Red John memorial event in Lyre near Clonakilty every year, sometimes struggles for funding because it does not get funding from the horse and greyhound fund.

The meeting follows a previous productive meeting Deputy O'Sullivan facilitated between the IHRA and (Finance Minister) Paschal Donohoe just before Christmas.

"We discussed the possibility of harness racing being awarded a tote licence. This licence could be a key factor to the sport securing much needed funding and investment internationally, particularly in France where the sport is bigger than thoroughbred racing," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"I want to commend the IHRA and their management for securing dialogue with the minister for agriculture, and as well the west Cork harness racing enthusiasts who have worked hard to secure these meetings.

"Wouldn't it be great if harness racing in west Cork could secure a permanent home, a purpose-built track, where we could attract participants from around Ireland, and also even internationally from the UK, France and elsewhere. I look forward to next Wednesday's meeting and hope we can make progress in relation to funding."

Dental care for pets

Does your pet's breath smell bad? It could be a sign they have gum disease, the most common illness in dogs and cats; by the age of three, 85 per cent of dogs and 70 per cent of cats have some form of gum disease! **Deirdre O'Brien** from RAWR has some important advice.

There are many ways of preventing dental disease and its side effects, providing your pet with a longer and more comfortable life. While none of these measures guarantee perfect dental health, your pet's general wellbeing can be greatly improved by caring for their teeth.

Proper dental care can detect dental disease that not only affects the mouth, but can also lead to more serious health problems such as heart, lung, and kidney disease. Good dental hygiene is just as important for pets, as it is for humans. Yet, it is one of the most overlooked areas in pet health.

Periodontal disease is an infection of the tissue surround-



ing the teeth that takes hold in progressive stages. This is a very painful disease for your four-legged friend but can be prevented with proper dental care.

Periodontal disease starts out as a bacterial film called plaque. Bacteria attach to the teeth and, when they die, can be calcified by the calcium in saliva. This forms a hard, rough substance called tartar or calculus, which in turn allows more plaque to accumulate. If left to spread, plaque can lead to gingivitis, an inflammation of the gums that causes them to become red and swollen and to bleed easily.

Initially, plaque is soft and brushing or chewing hard food and toys can dislodge it; by far the single most effective method of plaque control in any pet is brushing their teeth. Dental chews are also good as

they cause abrasion that scrubs the surface of the teeth.

However, if plaque and calculus develops below the gumline, professional cleaning will be needed to help manage it; if the plaque and tartar buildup continues unchecked, infection can form around the root of the tooth.

In the final stages of periodontal disease, the tissues surrounding the tooth are destroyed, the bony socket holding the tooth in erodes, and the tooth becomes loose.

The treatment for periodontal disease involves a thorough dental cleaning and x-rays may be needed to determine the severity of the disease. Your veterinarian will make recommendations based on your pet's overall health and the health of their teeth, and provide you with options to consider.

Your pet's teeth should be checked at least once a year by your vet for early signs of a problem. Have your pet's teeth checked sooner if you observe any of the following problems: bad breath; broken or loose teeth; extra teeth or retained baby teeth; teeth that are discoloured or covered in tartar; abnormal chewing, drooling, or dropping food from the mouth; reduced appetite or refusal to eat; pain in or around the mouth; swelling in the areas surrounding the mouth.

Some pets become irritable when they have dental problems; any changes in your pet's behaviour should prompt a visit to your vet. Always be careful when evaluating your pet's mouth because an animal in pain may bite.

Pet owners play an important role in their animals' oral health. Regular teeth brushing at home coupled with regular dental check-ups can help your pet live a longer, healthier life. Remember to use special toothpaste for pets, as human toothpaste contains unsuitable ingredients. Your vet can show you the best brushing method. Be patient with your pet and give them lots of praise so the experience is a positive one.



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.

Apart from teaching your dog the basic commands, there are some other methods to deepen the bond with your canine companion.

Many people complain to me that their dog doesn't listen to them. That's usually a correct assumption because you need to train your dog to focus on you. The more you do that, the more he will check in with you BE-

The essence of dog ownership

FORE anything untoward happens. For example, I ask Juno to sit and look at me before we go outside. That means she goes out the door quietly. I ask her to sit and look before I open our gate to start our walk.

By getting her to check in before she does something, she's calmer and it helps her remember that I'm there even if just following her as she trots off to sniff at all the exciting scents. When I started training her to pay attention, I would always reward with a treat. Now I reinforce the behaviour with a smile and lots of praise and an occasional treat. It also means that even when something really exciting happens such as a cat crossing her path, she still manages to bring her attention back to me and not run after it.

Training your dog in the basic commands means you're communicating with him. If you reward and praise your pet when you ask for a particular command, you're connecting with him in the best possible way. You can make it fun. You're building up trust with him and he's focusing on and listening to you. The more you



do it in a fun way, the deeper your relationship. It becomes a two-way street: you ask, he gives; you reward, and your relationship is reinforced along with the basic command.

Juno and I have a game which evolved from these training sessions. I'll hold up a treat. She'll start going through her various behaviours and/or tricks to see which one will elicit a reward. We're both totally engaged with each other. I'm laughing and smiling and that makes her continue with her repertoire. It also means that if I think she's become a little lax on one of the basic commands, then I'll reinforce it once more

by getting her to repeat it and give her a treat when it's performed immediately. There's no stress in this, just a little repetition. The next day, I find she's performing that particular behaviour with no longer a hesitation.

If possible, it's important to walk in the countryside as often as possible. Dogs need to be outside sniffing, playing, running, doing whatever makes them happy. And they're generous; they like us to be part of that fun. It's also a time when you can watch your dog with a critical eye. Is your dog enjoying himself? Is he running around with his head up and

tail wagging? Or does he look dejected, depressed, in pain? Although dogs are generally pretty stoical in the face of illness, and so on, if you're used to watching your dog, you will quickly see any changes in his health or behaviour.

When I was first learning the TTouch therapy, it used to amaze me how an anxious or excitable dog could be calmed in a short space of time just by a few specific touches. Unless a dog has been abused, he will more than likely love being stroked or massaged. When I have to leave Juno at home because for some reason she can't accompany me in the car,

I make a point of giving her a few mindful touches on my return. It's become a ritual for us. Now she will plonk herself on the footstool at any time, look back at me and expect this. What's so compelling for us is that she quietsens and focuses on what I'm doing. We find it both very relaxing and bonding.

Apart from that, I like to perform a 'vet check' on her on a regular basis. This means that I can look in her eyes, check her gums and inspect her ears to ensure there's no problem. I will run my hands all over her body, including her private parts, to ensure there are no foreign bodies on her, no lumps or bumps that shouldn't be there or thorns, cuts, scrapes or bruising. Then I'll check each paw: the pads and between each digit. You'd be surprised how the dirt lodges in between the toes. I'll check her tail by running my hand up and down. By doing this regularly, it becomes no big deal even when a vet does it.

Practicing any or all of the above means that you and your dog are communicating and connecting on a deep level. corkdogtrainingclasses.com

people NEW YEAR, NEW YOU: Food, Health & Lifestyle

Self-care: The starting point for effective parenting



Parenting in these times is a huge balancing act and often the needs of the parents can get forgotten in the 'busy-ness' of family life. Most parents want to have warm, open relationships with their children but trying to achieve this while balancing all of life's daily demands can at times be overwhelming. In taking care of ourselves we are better able to meet the needs of others and

to create and support healthy family relationships. So, what is self-care? The term has been grossly overused says Relationship and Parenting Mentor Bernadette Ruane, so much so that it often feels like just one more thing on an already long 'to do' list. If we can develop a warm, caring relationship with ourselves, all the rest will fall into place.

One of the ways you can

do this is by creating healthy boundaries. Boundaries are vital in offering support and safety where children and adults can thrive. How you communicate supports this; for instance starting a sentence with 'I' rather than 'you', e.g. swapping 'You are not going to this party!' with 'I don't feel comfortable with you going to this party because of Covid'. This simple shift can be a complete game changer, leaving both parties feeling more empowered and listened to.

Another example would be, when your children or teens, it creates an opportunity for you to practice good self-care. You can do this by taking a 'time out' for yourself, giving you the opportunity to feel calmer and think more clearly.

Breathe; Acknowledge 'this is difficult right now'; I'm OK; Try placing your hand on your chest, supporting yourself with your own tender touch; Ask yourself 'what do I need in this moment?'

You are now in a better place to deal with your child's behaviour. This simple, short exercise will allow you to re-

spond rather than react, creating a more nurturing relationship with yourself and your child. This is the true essence of self-care. When you take your own needs into consideration, you are more available to consider the needs of others. Try it, you may be surprised at how good it feels.

Self-care, because you're worth it!

'You can search throughout the entire universe and not find a single being more worthy of love than yourself.' Buddha

Bernadette offers parenting courses as well as individual sessions. There are currently places available on her next six-week parenting course 'Stress-Less Parenting, Parenting with Connection and Understanding' which will take place from the

comfort of your own home via Zoom. Starting Wednesday January. 26, 7.30pm to 9pm. She is currently offering a complimentary 20-minute phone call to see if this approach suits you.

In-person sessions are available in Clonakilty.

Stress-Less Parenting; Parenting with Connection and Understanding

6 WEEK COURSE VIA ZOOM

Starts: Wed. January 26th
7.30-9pm

Cost: €100. Small groups.

For more information: Email bruane99@gmail.com
or call 086-343-7006



Books to encourage happy young readers

Trev Burke, the creator of the Happy Attic Stories, a collection of fun books for young readers, struggled with reading and writing when he was growing up. What Trev was told was a low IQ did in fact turn out to be severe dyslexia, undiagnosed until he was in college.

Four years ago, the 39-year-old put pen to paper, initially for a birthday present for someone, and started writing a collection of books aimed towards children who may not be the biggest readers but who love books. Now he has seven books bursting with colour and fun with three more on the way.

Trev shares how although he couldn't read, as a child he really loved books; turning the pages and the smell of new books. "One day a 'Where's Wally' book came to school and it was a revelation for me," he says. "Finally a book that had no writing and all pictures. Our homework that night was to find certain things in the book. The next day something amazing happened, I was the top of my class. Even though it was only for one day, I never forgot how incredible that feeling was."

"If Happy Attic Stories has that effect even only on one child, I would consider all the work over the last few years worth it."

Trev reveals that he now considers dyslexia a gift.

"Even though school was tough, because of the challenges I faced, I learn in different ways and approach things in ways that others would not, which I

think gives me my creativity and imagination.

"If we didn't make mistakes, we would make nothing."

A talented artist, Trev begins each of his books with one random picture after another. The story comes later. "Usually it involves getting down on the floor, scattering the pages all around me and picking what works," he says.

2021 was a particularly busy year for the author, who also works as a cleaner at a school in Ballincollig. He published two books last year, his last one 'Purple and Reggie's Super Splashy Adventure Under the Sea' inspired by the children's pictures at Scoil Mhuire, where he works.

Find all the adventures on www.happyatticstories.com and Happy Attic Stories on Instagram and Facebook



Clonakilty Film Club

Clonakilty Film Club returns on Tuesday January 18 at the earlier time of 6.30pm to work within Covid guidelines. The Spring season opens with ‘Petite Maman’, a French drama, written and directed by Céline Sciamma, whose previous film ‘Portrait of a Lady on Fire’ was widely applauded. It stars Joséphine Sanz, Gabrielle Sanz, Stéphane Varupenne, Nina Meurisse and Margo Abascal and won the Audience Award at this year’s San Sebastián International Film Festival.

The film follows a young girl coping with the death of her maternal grandmother by bonding with her mother and is described as warm, delicate portrait of mother-daughter love.

The second film in the Spring season will follow on February 1st – time and title to be announced on the Club’s Facebook page : Clonakilty Film Club.



Ortús Chamber Music Fest

The seventh Ortús Chamber Music Festival will take place from Friday, February 25 to Sunday, February 27, in venues in Cork City and County. Co-Founder, and Artistic Director of the Festival Mairéad Hickey, will welcome a cohort of some of the finest classical musicians on the international stage. Performing alongside Mairéad, (violin) will be celebrated Irish musicians, Fiachra Garvey (piano) and Siún Milne (violin), and international star violinist Fumika Mohri from Japan, cellists Brandon Cho (USA) and Alexander Kovalev (Russia), and violists Sindy Mohamed (France) and Sara Ferrández (Spain).

Full details of the festival and ticket information can be found on ortusfestival.ie and through social media channels.

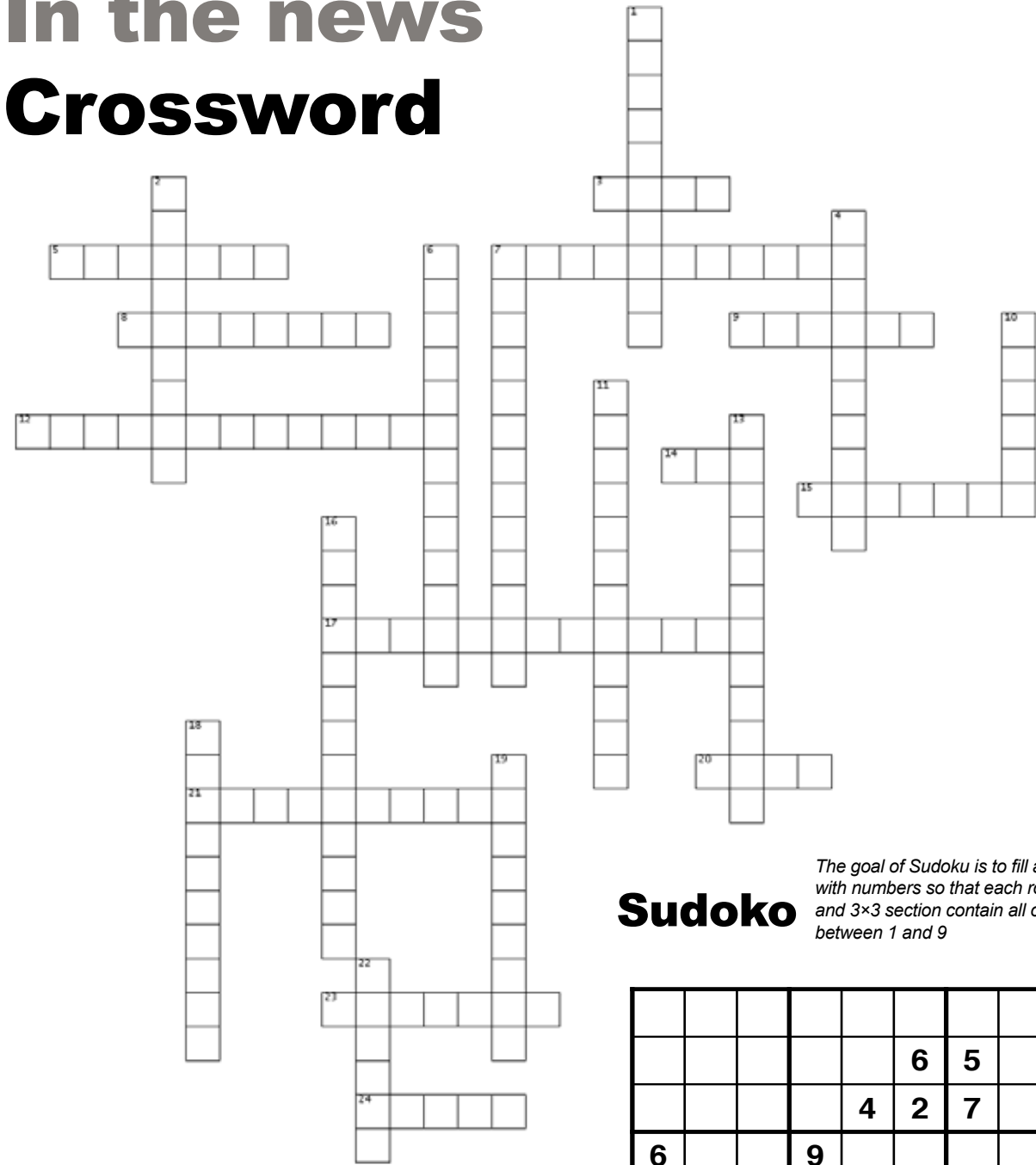
If people are interested in becoming a Festival Friend, please visit ortusfestival.ie/support/ or contact ortusfestival@gmail.com. Ortús is also on Facebook and Twitter.



Sinead O’Halloran Pic: Magda Lukas

COMPETITION – WIN A €20 NATIONAL BOOK TOKEN

In the news Crossword



- Down
- 1. Central Asian and former Soviet country that renamed its capital in 2019 to Nur-Sultan (10)
 - 2. The rate of increase in prices over a given period of time (9)
 - 4. Sister Michael rules with an iron fist in which hit show (5,5)
 - 6. Media tycoon originally from Czechoslovakia (5,7)
 - 7. Serbian No.1 who got stuck in an airport (5,8)
 - 10. Golda Meir’s tenure as PM of which country is portrayed in upcoming film ‘Golda’? (6)
 - 11. The place where the last British Lord Lieutenant in Ireland handed over power to Micheal Collins and the new Irish provisional government (6,6)
 - 13. Last stop for jockeys before they emerge to parade ring (8,4)
 - 16. Bahamian-American actor who played the iconic Virgil Tibbs (6,7)
 - 18. Sea adventurers or Tampa Bay footballers (10)
 - 19. Italy has just returned a fragment of which monument to Greece? (9)
 - 22. An evening drum recalling soldiers or an indelible mark (6)

- Across
- 3. A healthy everyday dish across India (4)
 - 5. Which Kenneth Branagh movie is tipped for Oscar glory this year? (7)
 - 7. British term for temporary hospitals inspired by a social reformer (11)
 - 8. The Broken Trident appears on which new country, newly deemed a republic’s, flag (8)
 - 9. La République En Marche! is the party of which world leader (6)
 - 12. Fair weather friend who keeps us forewarned (13)
 - 14. Emirate that now relaxes on Sundays (3)
 - 15. Most common substance refrained from in January (7)
 - 17. Last day of Christmas that celebrates hardworking women (7,2,4)
 - 20. Name of Betty White’s character in Golden Girls (4)
 - 21. Brazil’s national cocktail made from cachaça, sugar, and lime (10)
 - 23. Seat of power that was overrun by a wannabe Buffalo Bill (7)
 - 24. Last letter of the Greek alphabet – hopefully never hits Covid headlines! (5)

Sudoku

The goal of Sudoku is to fill a 9x9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3x3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9

				6	5		8	
				4	2	7		
6			9					
	2			5		6	7	
5					3	1	4	
		7		3			9	
3	4	6						
			8		1			

#47054 Difficulty: moderate

				7			1	
9	1	7						8
			5		4			
					6	4		
8	3	2						
							5	
5			9			3		7
	6				3			
		9				2		

#17157 Difficulty: hard

Answers on in next month’s issue

To be in with a chance of winning a €20 National Book Token, complete the crossword, take a photo and email it your name & phone number to info@westcorkpeople.ie before January 28.

Please put ‘crossword competition’ in the subject line.

people Arts & Entertainment

Concert performance of Vivaldi's Bajazet in Cork

Tickets are on sale for Irish National Opera's first production of the New Year, the Irish premiere of Vivaldi's *Bajazet*. The work dates from 1735 and opera lovers who enjoyed the high-wire singing in INO's first Vivaldi opera, *Griselda* in 2019, will love the adrenaline rush of the instrumentally virtuosic vocal writing and show-stopping arias in *Bajazet*.

The new production is directed by Adele Thomas and designed by Molly O'Cathain. And the title role is sung by Italian bass-baritone Gianluca Margheri, who has been praised for his "Mediterranean good looks, youthful arrogance and self-assurance" and "beautiful and supple voice".

The production visits Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork on Thursday, January 20.

After finishing its nationwide tour in Ireland, *Bajazet*, which is a co-production with The Royal Opera, will then travel to

London for six performances at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre. It will be the first Vivaldi opera and also the first production originating in Ireland to be presented by The Royal Opera.

INO artistic director Fergus Sheil says "*Bajazet* is an explosive opera with characters that are larger than life inhabiting a world of power games, brinkmanship, violence, betrayal, impersonation, disguise, defiance and revenge. The dramatic action is matched with a musical score that jumps off the page with vitality, clarity and all the heat of blistering Italian sunshine. Vivaldi's vocal writing is as colourful as you expect from the composer of *The Four Seasons*. He challenges his singers to perform with outstanding virtuosity and the vocal acrobatics drive the drama forward throughout."

The production of *Bajazet* is unusual in the annals of opera in modern Ireland. Unlike INO's much-praised *Griselda* in 2019 — the first production ever of a Vivaldi opera in this country — *Bajazet* is a pasticcio, literally a pastiche, an opera created out of pre-existing music. This may seem odd today, but it was a common practice in the 18th-century and,



in this particular case, Vivaldi also used a pre-existing libretto. He based his *Bajazet* on the libretto of Handel's *Tamerlano*, and re-purposed arias from his earlier operas along with arias from other composers and some new ones by himself.

The work is based on historical figures. *Bajazet* (Bayezid I) was a 14th-century Sultan and *Tamerlano* (Timur) was the founder of the Timurid Empire, which embraced the territory we know today as Afghanistan and Iran. Then, as now, this was an area of conflict, and Vivaldi's opera — which was composed for the 1735 carnival season

in Verona — is set in a tense, claustrophobic environment, as powerful men and strong women negotiate their relationships.

Director Adele Thomas believes that the opera reflects the emotional turmoil we have collectively experienced during the last two years, and sees its characters as "bundles of frayed nerves." They are all, she says, "in their own ways prisoners, locked in together in a near hysterical state of living trauma. And the reason for this is that their world has not so much been rocked but turned completely upside down. There are only two types of people in this

new world: those who can play a longer game, shapeshift, learn to adapt and survive; and those who cannot... It's the people we see as traditional 'heroes' who fail most spectacularly in this opera. And it's the people we don't expect to prosper who find new ways to play a slower, smarter game."

INO's stellar cast includes counter tenors James Laing and Eric Jurenas as *Tamerlano* and *Andronico*, mezzo-sopranos Niamh O'Sullivan and Claire Booth as *Asteria* and *Irene*, and soprano Aoife Miskelly as *Andronico's* friend *Idaspe*.

Vivaldi's *Bajazet* is conduct-

ed by INO Artistic Partner Peter Whelan, working with the Irish Baroque Orchestra, of which he is artistic director and with whom he so vividly brought Vivaldi's *Griselda* to life.

Aliye Cornish, the orchestra's CEO, says "the Irish Baroque Orchestra is delighted to be collaborating once again with our partners at Irish National Opera, following on from the success of Vivaldi's *Griselda* in 2019 and Handel's *Acis* and *Galatea* in 2017. We look forward to bringing this daring and demanding music to audiences across Ireland, affirming our commitment of bringing high-quality artistic endeavours to regional audiences, as well as a run of performances at London's Royal Opera House, where we will make our company debut".

Bajazet is sung in Italian with English surtitles and is supported by Culture Ireland.

Audience members are required to present Covid certificate, along with photo ID, on entry to this event. Wearing of mask/face covering is compulsory once inside the building and throughout the performance.

Booking: eventbrite.ie.

Gallery Asna: The Return of Analogue

Gallery Asna (the newly named Clonakilty Arts Centre gallery) is kicking off 12 months of exciting exhibition programming with two exhibitions of analogue photography in January and February.

Local photographer Thady Trá will firstly be showcasing new work developed and printed in his Clonakilty Arts Centre studio. This will be Trá's first solo exhibition and Gallery Asna is delighted to be supporting his emerging talent.

Trá writes of his work: "I am a West Cork photographer and I see everyday life through the lens in my own way. I love to shoot black and white film, which I develop and print in my darkroom. Growing up in Clonakilty I take inspiration from the people and creative energy of this town, which I love and happily encounter everyday."

Trá's show will be followed by 'The Chess Tables' an exhibition of skateboarder portraits by Jack Knowles, from Dublin. Knowles spent the summer of 2021 documenting the skateboarding scene in Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, in the

area known as the Chess Tables. According to Knowles, "skaters go there for its smooth concrete surface and its social scene; that grew in popularity due to Covid restrictions limiting access to skate parks."

Discussing his approach, Knowles writes: "I documented the area and the skaters through live-action shots, portraiture and

still life. I shot all the work on 6x6, 120 black and white film photography. I regularly visited the area and spent most of my time conversing and getting to know the skaters who skated in the area. I took inspiration from the American photographer Bruce Davidson and his approach to series-based work by immersing yourself in a group

to create the strongest and most meaningful work."

In terms of his aims for the work Knowles states, "The focus of the project aims to humanise skateboarders and the skateboarding community. In doing so, it attempts to subvert the negative image of skateboarding in Ireland. Additionally, the images investigate the

Irish skating subculture and the recent growth in skateboarding in Ireland."

Jack Knowles is the first of Gallery Asna's 'open call' artists, selected from a field of over 50 applicants, to show in 2022.

Thady Trá, 'What I See': January 15-29

Jack Knowles, 'The Chess Tables': February 5-26
Gallery Asna, Clonakilty Arts Centre, 2 Asna Square, Clonakilty. Mon-Sat, 11-5.

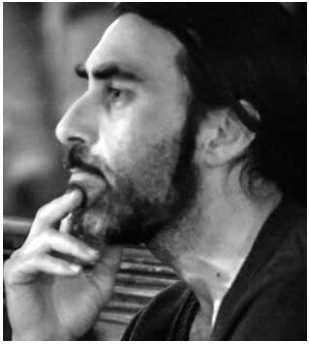


Thady Trá



Jack Knowles Chess Tables

The New Italian Masters



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.

Everything in our world is cyclic. Like the seasons modes of human expression revolve, recapitulate, renew. The greatest fallacy of the contemporary art world is that art is on a constant path of 'progress', via radical deconstruction and conceptual evolution. But art is not technology. It is not a laptop requiring monthly updates to make it somehow 'better'. Theatre is basically the same as it was 3000 years ago. And so is painting. Painters today move coloured mud over a surface with some hairs tied to a stick, just as they did in ancient Greece.

Over the last hundred years painters have worked in a more abstract way, their work more akin to the semi-abstractation of naïve medieval art, Byzantine iconography and the orchestral storms of Celtic ornamentation. The fruits of modernism can be seen in this way, as a return to the mystical abstractions of Byzantium and the magical coloured fantasies of the medieval period.

As the wheel turns, it should be no surprise, therefore, to see realist modes of painting come back into view. And it is an utter delight to now see the techniques of the 'Old Italian Masters' being salvaged and explored by a new generation of Italian painters. They are the 'New Italian Masters' and four of them are outstanding: Nicola Samori, Agostino Arrivabene, Roberto Ferri and Alessandro Sicioldr.

What the 'New Italian Masters' share is an active exploration of Renaissance, pre-Renaissance and Baroque methods, techniques and sen-

sibilities. They are excavators of old knowledge, revitalising techniques such as 'tempera grassa' and supports such as copper, wood and stone. As craftsmen they have more in common with each other than other painters, and for these painters the exploration of their craft is everything.

Even as they revitalise 'old master' techniques and approaches, the 'New Italian Masters' are both like and unlike their forebears. By turns visionary, surreal, corporeal and postmodern, they carry the weight of a history embedded with transformation, on the one hand, and a loss of belief on the other. They inherit a culture which has largely lost belief in – or knowledge of – the painted image, just as it has lost belief in Christianity.

The work of Nicola Samori (b.1977), who is now considered a leader in contemporary European painting, hovers between belief and disbelief in the painted image. His typical approach is to recreate a Baroque masterpiece (in many cases paintings by Jusepe de Ribera), then 'flay' the painting by carefully cutting and 'skinning' the layers of oil until a portion of it is left hanging, like a skin, from what remains. The visceral power of Samori's work relies on his breathtaking rendering of the work of past masters. It is the incredible beauty of his rendering which makes the 'flaying' of his paint so shocking.

Samori belongs to a cohort of neo-Baroque postmodernists who love to paint the 'Baroque body', but who cannot quite believe in the illusion, and who find poetry in its sudden and jarring defacement. One reason for this approach, I would argue, is that artists, such as Samori, who are trained to approach art through a postmodern,



'Il Rizoma di Pugin', by Agostino Arrivabene (2016). Oil on linen

dialectical lens, feel the need to create a bridge between the deconstruction of late modernism and their own desire to paint the figure. This need is allied to a deep faith in the idea of the avant-garde, the idea, since the advent of modernism, that art must always 'break new ground'.

For Samori, to paint the figure in a true Baroque manner, and then 'flay' the very paint he has so beautifully applied, acknowledges both the desire for the painted 'Baroque body' and the avant-gardism of both Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), renowned for his slit canvases, and Francis Bacon (1909-1992), who so famously appropriated and transfigured Velazquez's 'Pope Innocent X'. In slicing away the paint he also calls into question our own belief, in both the painted image and what it represents, whether it be a Ribera 'saint' or a Caravaggio 'Christ'.

Where Nicola Samori plunges us into a post-Christian crisis of belief, Agostino



'L'Amore, la Morte e il Sogno' by Roberto Ferri

Arrivabene (b. 1967) holds us within an affirmative spiritual crucible. Arrivabene, untouched by concerns of the avant-garde, bypasses the postmodernists' dialectical dilemma and engages directly and deeply with visionary artists of the past and present. His work, resonant of William Blake and Gustave Moreau, plumbs the very heights and depths of visionary, mystical experience. It is a treasure trove of mysterious and beautiful visions, a veritable 'ark' of arcane visual knowledge and spiritual resonance.

Like Samori and Ferri, Arrivabene excavates Renaissance and Baroque techniques. But his excavations go much further, into the elusive and magical symbols of the subconscious. His is a primordial sphere of creativity which touches, like Odd Nerdrum, upon the shamanic and dwells in the border regions between life and death.

Paintings like 'Il Rizoma di Pugin' and 'Albedo' (2016) reveal both Arrivabene's debt to Odd Nerdrum (discussed last month) and to the 19th century symbolists Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon. Yet whilst those influences shimmer like ghosts within his forms, Arrivabene's images are completely and utterly unique.

In 'Il Rizoma di Pugin' we see one of Arrivabene's signature motifs: slender, luminous plants growing out of a radiant human form. This almost spiritual transfiguration of human being into light-filled, aboreal nature is developed to a fantastic degree throughout Arrivabene's oeuvre. The mysterious clarity of the painting belies the density of its meaning, which, like a vision from a dream, lies elusively beyond the viewer's conscious grasp.

The paintings of Roberto Ferri (b. 1978) owe something to Arrivabene's therianthropy

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(shape-shifting into animal or plant), where limbs appear to be shooting plant-like roots into the ground, such as in 'Sant' Antonio' (2018). Where, however, Arrivabene's transformations become part of a mystical vision, Ferri's emerge as mechanical, corporeal constructions. Figures are bound, chained, entangled, amputated and joined, by any number of means, including nails, tree roots, geometric instruments, handles and pipes, such as in 'L'amore, La Morte e il Sogno'

(2017).

Just as Arrivabene channels spiritual light, Ferri shines the light of 'reason'; he interrogates the corporeal via instruments of science, through de Sade-like constructions worthy of Renaissance chambers of pleasure and pain. Haloes and crosses, angels and cardinals vie with centaurs and oracles, almost every figure a vision of earthly beauty and an object of desire.

Like Arrivabene and Samori, Ferri employs techniques such as 'tempera grassa', largely

lost since the Renaissance.

Unlike Samori he maintains a deep belief in the image of the painted 'Baroque body', his only concession to the modern era the organic morphing of limb into root.

Alessandro Sicioldr (1990) is the youngest of the artists I am positing in this group. His visionary surrealism reads like a dream-like merging of Hieronymus Bosch, Piero della Francesca, Odd Nerdrum and Agostino Arrivabene, his senior by 23 years. Even as his influences

shine through, Sicioldr's formal language and mystical vision are unmistakably his own.

Extraordinary visions like 'The Birth' (2018) are a testament to his outstanding ability to absorb and respell forms in compositions of internal poetic integrity. 'The Birth' is almost a metaphor for its own unfolding: figures, birds and a face emerge from shells and shells emerge from fish; all creation is linked, just as artists themselves are linked, one emerging from the other, Sicioldr emerging from Bosch, Nerdrum and Arrivabene whose very constructions he assumes, respells, makes new.

Between Sicioldr, Arrivabene and Nerdrum we see a spiritual chain of inter-generational connection in formation. Such links between artists in the 20th century were seldom made, as each sought to sever all links to the past in a perennial search for the 'new'. But something that appears to be new without carrying an ounce of the past inevitably turns out to be hollow and lost. It is only through the absorption of languages past that artists can, in the crucible of the subconscious, reveal the unbroken chain of human vision in works both spiritually true and lasting.



'The Birth', by Alessandro Sicioldr

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Exhibition at Uillinn explores the environmental pressures on water

A solo exhibition by Marie Hanlon entitled 'Water More or Less' runs from January 8 to February 12 at Uillinn in Skibbereen. The exhibition comprises six installation works, each addressing an aspect of water stress: flooding, drought, desalination, industrial contamination, seasonal shortages and the unappealing realities of water treatment.

With world population predicted to reach 9.7 billion by mid-century, demands on water may surpass available supply. Earth's water is finite, it is unevenly distributed and unequally shared. Radioactive contamination from fracking is reducing water reserves; climate change is bringing extremes of flooding and drought, and nature's water cycle is under pressure – yet we remain unperturbed about water.

'When Water Becomes Explosive' draws attention to processes of fossil fuel extraction where water at high pressure is used to explode rock deep in the earth. The artwork's nine-squared structure is appropriated from an American ball game

called '9 Square in the Air'. Vertical and horizontal tubes reference extractive drilling and the artwork highlights the dominance of the oil industry, especially in America. Oil is prized while water is rendered toxic; but might the value of these substances reverse over time?

'Water Table' presents seven water tanks with levels in each ranging from full at one end, to empty at the other. The piece addresses fluctuations in rainfall experienced across the globe. An accompanying soundwork by composer Rhona Clarke generates aural images; heavy rainfall reduces to a trickle, followed by evocations of dry, parched and waterless places.

'Cut Off' is an installation of taps with knotted plexiglass flows. This work alludes to the precarious condition of domestic water supply in Ireland. We are now experiencing longer summer droughts, our infrastructure is outdated and our population is increasing so our domestic water supply is increasingly under pressure.

Other works in the exhibition deal with flooding and water treatment, with recycled wastewater a future possibility in Ireland. A research piece on desalination is combined with a small artwork in the form of a silver bullet with a capsule of desalinated water from the Irish Sea, and 'Rising Water' juxtaposes a video on flooding with a sculptural work, which taken together convey the destructiveness yet perverse beauty of floods.



Cut Off (installation detail)

poses a video on flooding with a sculptural work, which taken together convey the destructiveness yet perverse beauty of floods.

Marie Hanlon is an Irish artist working in sculpture, installation, video and drawing. She holds an MA in Art in the Contemporary World from the School of Visual Culture NCAD, Dublin and a BA in English and Art History from University College, Dublin. In recent years she has produced several collaborative projects with Irish composers, notably with Rhona Clarke. Her work has been exhibited and screened widely in Ireland and internationally. In 2015 Marie Hanlon was elected to Aosdána – the official body of cultural producers in Ireland.

"My work explores perception in relation to the familiar, it takes that which is commonplace or no longer engaging and reinvests it as a place of attention. Small interventions or modes of presentation exploit aspects of selected objects, places and materials. The idea is to

slow down the act of looking, to elicit engagement by adjusting the familiar. In a society which competes ever more loudly for our attention, the human response is often to 'tune out' or to succumb to automatic responses. Through intrigue,

play and the unexpected, I wish to re-engage attentiveness, especially around materials and things which we believe we already know." Marie Hanlon



When More Is Less

people Sport & Fitness

Girls' rugby soars in popularity in Clonakilty

Clonakilty girls' rugby has experienced a meteoric rise in the last year or so. Much of that hard work has been down to the club PRO and U16 girls' manager Vicky McCabe, who chats to **Matthew Hurley** about the club and the fierce drive in its female membership.

“I started off as most of us do, as a parent. My daughter and a few of her friends really enjoyed rugby but didn't really enjoy how many more boys than girls there were in the mini teams! So, we decided to set up a girl's mini division and it has grown from there,” says McCabe. “I have gone from parent to manager and coach of minis, then u12s and u14s girls, as well as being head of girls' rugby.”

For the last two years, Vicky stepped back as coach due to study commitments and has been manager of both the u14s last year and the u16s this year. She is also the club PRO with Sinead McNamara, head of minis girls, and Teresa Oliver is head of youth girls.

The rugby club had its first U18 Girls' side for the first time in quite a while.

“We also made club and

possibly provincial history this year by having so many girls registered in the u14 division that we registered two teams into the league competitions. We split the girls equally into the red and green teams. This helps us ensure that all girls get decent playing time,” explains the PRO.

According to McCabe, in their first season (2013/14), Clon had around ten girls playing in different age groups.

One-hundred-and-sixty-nine girls are now registered with the club. This number continues to grow year on year, with the last two years in particular showing real progression.

“We have u8s, u10s, u12s, u14s, u16s and u18s. The aim in a couple of years is to have a female adult team too,” says McCabe.

In addition, girls rugby in Clon has 33 coaches. All coaches go through training with Munster, are Garda-vetted and get basic first aid training and concussion training.

McCabe now takes up a management role. She organises the team sheets, communicates with parents or other organisations involved and makes sure the team shirts are washed.

“I loved coaching but just did not have the time for it, as it really does become almost a second job,” she says.

“We have a great team of coaches for the u16s and indeed, across all the age groups. I still



Clonakilty RFC Girls u14 team on their historic night of red vs green. Pic: Vicky McCabe

(love) being involved with the girls though. I have known so many of them since they were about eight or nine and it is just fabulous to see them grow and hone their skills year on year.

“Games are the most stressful days, as you worry about every one of them. You really feel their lows but wow, it's lovely to celebrate their highs with them.”

McCabe also enjoys the PRO aspect of Clonakilty Rugby.

“The PRO role is great because the club does so many great things and I feel very strongly that we should be sharing those things with the wider community. We are a very inclusive club and are proudly ‘autistic friendly’.

“Courtney Canning and Sinead Burton, our community engagement officers, do a huge amount of work in the community, especially with children from the Lodge in Clon.”

The club participates in various social media activities on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

“We also share a first team sheet before each match and recently we have added team sheet videos along with that.

“Whatsapp is used by all of us to communicate with each other, in committees and with parents. We also have a news group set up on Whatsapp for those members who don't use the usual social media pages.

“In addition, we are in the process of redoing our webpage to share all above info too, along with (the) history of the club, etc.”

However, it is more than regular activity on social media platforms, with the club recently putting out welcome videos.

“We recently had a great video put together by Neville Burton, Director of Rugby, as we have started selling pride laces, and we got our whole seconds adult team to wear them for a match, as well as our u18 girls' team,” adds McCabe.

“We wanted to welcome all players to the club, and the video was a huge hit and has been shared far and wide by



Clonakilty RFC Girls u18 team. Pic: Teresa Oliver



Clonakilty RFC Girls u16 team. Pic: Dave Sheehan

various LGBT Facebook pages and social media accounts.

“It's not all just rugby, although we obviously shout about gains and achievements there too! I feel very passionately about girls playing rugby, so I also like to share how well our girls' section is doing. Indeed, other clubs, trying to set up girls sections, have said Clonakilty is an inspiration and drives them on.”

Covid-19 has been tough to handle for various sports in West Cork in the past year. McCabe says the guidelines were “tricky and frustrating at times,” but everyone wants to go onto the pitch and play despite this.

“We have always used the IRFU guidelines as our way of

working. We are only nervous now as to what disruptions may come our way from Omicron,” she says.

“Hopefully not many, as we would like to finish the season properly. Last year we were locked down for much of the end of the season, so as soon as lockdown lifted, we made a special effort to have a proper end-of-season session with each age group.

“We also ran a summer tag league for four Friday nights during summer for our youth teams, which was a great success, as the teens were dying to get out and socialise and this was a safe, out in the air way of doing it.”

Clonakilty RFC also has many volunteers to help out

around the club.

“We are very proud as a club to maintain a good ethos of keeping rugby fun for the younger ages and keeping teens engaged through fair play and equal playing time.

“Especially with girls when there is generally a drop-off in participation in the later teen years, we are delighted we have so many girls with us and they are joining all the time, no matter the age group. So if any girls would like to get involved, it's never too late!”

Clonakilty Girls Rugby has risen tremendously in the last couple of years. Despite Covid trying to get in the way, it doesn't seem to be slowing down anytime soon.

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Having taken down the decorations, is the house feeling a little sad and bare? We've been surrounded by sparkling lights and baubles for so long that such a feeling is completely normal at this more dormant time of the year.

To alleviate the January blues, now is the perfect time to add some much needed cheer by sprucing up your walls with a fresh coat of colour. A new year brings new colour trends but, before you dive in, consider the mood you would like to achieve in your space and, to avoid jarring clashes, think of how rooms lead on to each other...none exist totally independently.

Below are a few colour combinations that might inspire

New colour combinations to see a new year in

you if you are thinking taking on your own little new year project. They will work as main and feature paint colours for walls or woodwork or as a main paint colour with accent accessories – be it furniture, soft furnishings, artworks or ornaments.

Blue/Brown: Quiet and calming, this colour combination has been around for many years because it stands the test of time. In recent times it can be seen a lot in kitchens and open plan living spaces – think of navy kitchen units against earth toned walls. I love Hague Blue from Farrow & Ball paired with Brave from Dulux. Brave is an earthy tone that I feel connects us back to nature and complements a lot of colour schemes.

Blue/Olive Green/Peach: This unusual combination could be used in a bedroom to encourage calmness and serenity. Blue and green are nature inspired hues, while peach acts as a playful pastel accent colour. What works well with these colours is a space that has a lot of natural light and wooden floors.

Turmeric/Greige: Some of you might raise an eyebrow at the knowledge that 'mad' yellows are coming back into fashion but many people have continuously loved and used them! I say 'stay true to the style of your property and to you'. If you are drawn to strong yellows go ahead...if you have any doubts they may not be for you.

To warm a room up try pairing Greige, a blend of beige and grey, with Turmeric, a marigold yellow made by Colourtrend.



Turmeric is a bold colour but if used wisely, and toned down with neutral grey-beige, it imparts a soft, sophisticated glow on a space; I personally think white is a little too cold and stark against Turmeric.

Pastel Yellow/Mint: Darker shades of green have lately been used abundantly in so many designs, from hallways to kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms, but consider Mint for a change. As much as the taste of mint is refreshing, so too is the colour – a light and fresh shade of green that pairs beautifully with another colour that is also often seen in nature – pastel yellow.

Sage/Terracotta: Warm terracotta balances out the coolness of sage and this combination is fantastic for properties by the sea or large spaces with lots of natural light. Ubiquitous in Scandinavian homes, these colours also work in the northern

light of Ireland. An alternative is to place terracotta accessories against sage walls. Popular sage paints are Book of Kells and Storehouse by Colourtrend.

Royal Blue/Tangerine Orange: Are you feeling brave because these are definitely not colours for the fainthearted! Tangerine adds warmth to a cool royal blue in this bold, exciting mix. Maybe tangerine on a wall with a royal blue sofa (there are lots of blue sofas and armchairs in shops at the moment) or bring these colours together in a wallpaper. An easy and inexpensive insiders trick is to frame some beautiful designer wallpaper!

If you are a little bit nervous of a bold colour scheme, I recommend just bringing accessories in into a space at first, baby steps. Whatever you do, have fun imagining possibilities for your home.

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January in the garden



GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

We are moving into a New Year and with so many new opportunities in the garden, now is the time to prepare and order new plants and seeds.

Dahlias arrive into the shops from January onwards so there is more choice available now in colours and various heights.

Dahlias need to be kept in a cool, dry, frost-free place after purchase. They can be started into growth from February onwards in a frost-free greenhouse or conservatory. When starting off your Dahlias place in a tray or pot, label with name of variety, colour, height and type

(eg cactus, decorative, pompon, dwarf/bedding. Plant outdoors in their summer flowering position from May 19 onwards.

Begonia tubers start arriving in garden centres and shops during January. As with Dahlias follow the same advice for storage and starting off. Begonias come in an upright and trailing habit. Gladioli arrive this month too and can be planted outdoors where they are to flower from March onwards. Choose a sunny, well-drained position. Make provision for staking.

Look out too for Nerines. Plant in a sunny, very drained position, keeping the top of the

bulb proud of the soil. Nerines are a 'must have' in the garden. They flower late in the autumn and almost into the early winter, so provide a valuable splash of colour at a time when colour is disappearing from the garden. Add grit when planting to improve drainage. Nerines come mainly in pink but other delightful shades are available such as red and white.

Protect vulnerable, tender plants from severe weather. You can use frost protection fleece, a cold frame or cloche.

Hoe/control any germinating and emerging weeds. Hit them now before they take off!

If you still have bulbs such as tulips and daffodils unplanted, get them into the ground without delay. Discard any soft,

rotten or mouldy bulbs.

Continue with winter digging where weather and soil conditions permit.

Plant hedging where conditions permit, adding a slow release organic fertiliser at planting. Firm in well after planting and protect from rabbit, deer and hare damage.

Get your 2022 seed catalogue and make plans for the season ahead

Put seed potatoes sprouting. Prune grape vines before the sap starts rising.

Warm up some soil with cloches/cold frames for early seed sowing outdoors.

Clean thoroughly/disinfect all your pots, trays and containers in readiness for the spring.

Continued on next page...

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...Con'd from previous page

Glasshouses and polytunnels should be thoroughly cleaned out and all debris got rid of.

Sow early flower and vegetable seeds under protection where you can maintain good light and frost-free conditions.

Tomatoes, peppers, lettuce may be sown now given the right conditions. A water-proof, thermostatically-controlled fan heater is a good investment. A stand-by generator is also a worthwhile purchase for home and garden but do advice from your electrician before making

a purchase.

Send the lawnmower off for servicing and overhaul before the lawn mowing season starts.

Mid-winter colour

There is nothing more cheerful and uplifting than the sight of very welcome colour and fragrance in the mid-winter garden. Winter flowering heathers are reliable stalwarts and thrive and bloom come rain, hail or shine. There should be a collection in every garden. Plant in informal groups of odd numbers.

Early bulbs such as Snowdrops, dwarf Iris, Crocus, early Narcissi such as 'January Gold' Cyclamen, Eranthis (winter aconites) are essential components of early colour in the garden.

Helleborus both the Lenten Rose and Christmas Rose provide delightful flowers from late winter until well into the Spring. They are excellent woodland plants and look particularly good at the base of trees. Cut away any tatty, damaged or spotted leaves as the first buds emerge.

Winter flowering cherries such as Prunus subhirtella autumnalis provide valuable and much appreciated colour from Autumn to Spring during mild spells during the period.

Dogwoods (Cornus) and Willows (Salix) provide bright stem colour in shades of brightest red and golden yellow throughout the winter. Both the dogwoods and willows are tolerant of heavy and damp soils.



Hamamelis (Witch Hazel)

Hamamelis (Witch Hazel) is a real superstar flowering in the depths of winter. It fills the winter air with its powerful fragrance, as well as illuminating flowers of sulphur yellow and burnt orange. Grow in a sheltered, lime-free site, spacing at least 5m apart from the nearest shrub.

Sarcococca has shining evergreen foliage with sweetly scented flowers borne in mid-winter. Grow in a lime-free soil. It is tolerant of shade.

It is a valuable addition to the collection of winter interest plants.

It can be underplanted in the autumn with bold and expansive groups of Crocus or Snowdrops, which will provide a very welcome layer of colour after Christmas.

Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn' will flower in mild spells from October to April. It boasts light pink flowers with a sweet fragrance. Dwarf conifers provide evergreen colour and

texture in the winter garden. Vibrant foliage colour, attractive cones and variety of growth habits are some of the noteworthy features of conifers. Do check the ultimate height and growth habit before planting.

Fruit Garden

Inspect fruits in store and remove any that rotten. Apply potash to strawberries, gooseberries, red and white currants, apples and pears. Check all tree stakes and ties and make sure they are firm and sound. Continue pruning of apples and pears except in hard frost. Collect and dispose of the prunings off site. Prune newly planted cane fruits.

Continue pruning established and newly planted bush fruits. Inspect apples and pears for canker and treat accordingly if present. Take precautions against peach leaf curl on peaches and nectarines.

An enriching tip!

If you can source well-rotten

farmyard or stable manure do store it in readiness for planting and mulching. However, do ensure that the manure doesn't contain the seeds or roots of persistent, pernicious perennial weeds. Leaf mould when well-composted is a great provider of humus and nutrition to beds and borders. Gather up and compost the last leaves of the autumn. If any of these aren't available use Gee-up.

Lawns

Don't walk or work on the grass if frosted or frozen, as it will show up as yellow patches. Improve drainage in the lawn by pushing a fork 15cm (6") into the ground with a garden fork. Immediately after aerating spread sharp or horticultural sand over the area and work it into the holes with a stiff brush. This prevents the holes closing up too much and further enhances drainage. Even out bumpy lawns this month.

Vegetable Garden

Continue to harvest Brussels sprouts, leeks, winter/Savoy cabbage, parsnips, swedes, turnips, kale.

Bend leaves over developing cauliflower curds to protect against frost damage and blemishing.

Sow onion seed under cover and schedule to plant out at the end of March.

Wishing you all a very Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year with a year full of gardening success!

Clonakilty Garden Centre
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Beautiful selection of ceramic pots. Winter interest plants - Hellebores, heathers, Daphne, Camellias.

Start the New Year with bare root planting - great range of trees, shrubs and hedging in stock.

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by John Hosford Just 1 mile off the N71 Bandon-Clonakilty road.
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****NOTE WE ARE CLOSED ON THE WEEKEND OF 29TH -30TH JANUARY, 2022 DUE TO A PREVIOUS COMMITMENT. ****

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people Motoring



CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

After a few weeks driving electric cars, last week was a stress-free one and there was certainly no 'range anxiety' involved, as I was driving a good old style petrol car. It was the very stylish looking DS3 so everybody was happy.

My wife, who doesn't drive, sometimes has difficulty finding my press car in various shopping centre car parks, but she has no problem finding the

A stylish French offering in the DS

DS3. It was a black car and not a bright yellow one, so I asked how did she find it so easy to locate. The rear windows are a giveaway she said.

Yes, the rear windows in the DS3 are strange looking, as they are only half the size of the front windows.

All the windows can be opened by the driver or front seat passenger in a cabin that includes a lot of switches. But maybe not as many as the toggle switches you will find in a Peugeot car.

The Ds switches are located in the area where you would normally find a gear lever in a manual car. And if you don't look at what you are doing you could be applying the hand-brake instead of opening the driver's window.

That's the way it is in DS cars. DS, who are part of the Citroen group, have been trying to establish their own identity. Citroen stopped making the DS range in 1975, but they brought it back a few years ago and now

there is a big push for the DS to be seen as a stand-alone brand.

The front of the car is very attractive with the DS logo embedded in the honeycomb grille. The door handles pop out similar to those in the new electric Kia EV6 or Tesla cars.

Inside there is a neat seven-inch screen on the dash for the radio and air conditions controls.

I dove an automatic 1.2-litre pure tech petrol version, which was very easy to handle. It got a lot of curious glances in those supermarket car parks and I certainly has a frugal engine.

With Citroen and DS now under the umbrella of the Gowan group in Ireland, you can expect a bit more marketing. Recently DS confirmed that Leinster and Ireland rugby player Dan Leavy had been signed up as a Brand Ambassador for DS.

Of course DS is big in France and President Macron has been loyal to the brand whose ambition is to embody both French know-how and innovation in the

automotive industry.

When he was elected President in May 2017 Macron's choice of vehicle for the drive down the Champs-Élysées for his inauguration was a specially adapted open-top DS7 Crossback.

DS models have transported French presidents since the sixties when Charles De Gaulle credited the state-of-the-art suspension on-board for saving his life.

The boot is just about average for a small car, but while there is a 'well' where you could place a spare wheel, what you get is a repair kit.

Price start at €33,590, which is much the same as the Peugeot e-2008 that I drove recently. Road tax €210. There wasn't rear view camera in the car I drove, but I'm assured that a reversing camera is standard.

The DS3 might be a bit small for a president, but it still has a lot of French style.

