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On January 28, Gaisce, The President's Award, held a special ceremony, in recognition of 34 President's Award Leaders from all over Ireland who have graciously supported young people to achieve their potential including Máire Fleming of Kinsale Community School, who is pictured with Gaisce representatives Avril Ryan and John Cunningham. Pic: Maxwell's

West Cork coast part of Ireland's first ocean 'Hope Spot'

An ocean area covering about 7,000 square kilometres of waters off West Cork – north of the Beara Peninsula and Dursey island – Kerry and Clare has this week been designated Ireland's first 'Hope Spot'.

The Greater Skellig Coast – a rich ecosystem for dolphins, porpoises, puffins as well as seagrass beds and fish nursing grounds – joins 148 others already designated spots around the world, including the Galápagos Islands, the Great Barrier Reef and parts of Antarctica.

Hope Spots are areas that have been scientifically identified as critical to the health of the ocean.

The announcement was made on Tuesday, January 31 by renowned oceanographer Dr Sylvia Earle, the first female chief scientist of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Time Magazine's first 'Hero for the Planet' in 1998.

MEP for Ireland South Grace O'Sullivan has warmly welcomed the news. Speaking from the European Parliament in Brussels, MEP O'Sullivan said: "This is further proof that 2023 is going to be the year of the oceans for Ireland. We are putting in place new legislation at home to expand our Marine Protected Areas from around two to 30 per cent of Irish seas by

2030 and setting up MARA, a new government agency for maritime planning. At the same time, the EU is planning to increase protections of those areas including ending the practice of intense bottom-trawling in vulnerable marine ecosystems and increasing conservation efforts under the first ever EU Nature Restoration Law.

"We also need to put in place some immediate protections however, in particular ending the practice of pair-trawling in Irish inshore waters. This practice targets the non-quota sprat fishery and has a massive impact on ocean wildlife who depend on sprat for food."



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Finding home

On her most challenging and arduous journey to date, West Cork's favourite harp-playing pilgrim Anja Bakker, 53 – from the road in Hungary, 260 days into her expedition – shares with **Mary O'Brien** some of the highs and lows she has experienced so far and how home has become such an important anchor in keeping her on the road to achieving her dream of reaching Jerusalem on foot.

Her third pilgrimage in just over a decade, Anja Bakker's indomitable and passionate spirit can't help but inspire. This courageous traveller first began walking

with her harp in 2010 on a pilgrimage from her home in Clonakilty to Santiago de Compostela (2500 km). She followed that up with a pilgrimage from West Cork to Rome (3500

km) in 2018. At this moment in time, although she still faces another eight months walking, Anja is close to celebrating the halfway mark on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem; a prodigious challenge, which started on April 2, 2022 – after being delayed by a couple of years due to the pandemic – that involves covering from 6000-8000 km over sometimes difficult and dangerous terrain in extreme weather conditions on foot and carrying the 20 kg weight of a harp on her back.

The Dutch-Canadian musician walks with her harp (Séan) to symbolise her relationship with Ireland: Clonakilty has been home to Anja now for many years. Her hope is that this journey will help her gain the wisdom and understanding she finds so out of reach in the fast pace of everyday life and perhaps grant her the answers to some questions that will give her the freedom and ability to let go.

Ten months in and Anja's spirit is undoubtedly weary. She has walked through Ireland, England, and the Netherlands, followed the River Rhine into Germany and then the Danube into Austria. She then traversed Slovakia and Bratislava before reaching Hungary, still following the Danube, first east and then south into Budapest. On New Year's day she reached Serbia and is now nearing Belgrade.

Along the way she has been mesmerised by the rivers that guided her and the kindness of strangers. "The beauty of the rivers, the mist, the wildlife around it. Spending that amount of time on your own in nature is wonderful," she shares. People have travelled to walk with her and have opened their homes to her. One family in Vienna organised a concert venue so Anja could play her harp to an audience. A man of Bulgarian Turkish descent fixed her leather belt for her. Benedictine monks have hosted her for free in beautiful baroque-style abbeys. One family fed her an enormous amount of cake! In a graveyard, she met fellow pilgrim Otto Klar, who gave her the phone number of Johannes Aschauer, founder and initiator of The Jerusalem Way. He invited her to stay at his house for a few days and they're still in touch. "You couldn't make it



up if you tried," says Anja.

While the physical and mental challenges of this journey are undeniably tremendous, the kindness of individuals and her own mantra 'to start each day with a clean slate' helps Anja to cope and move forward.

Last August she lost her mother, who passed away unexpectedly. Anja broke her journey briefly, flying home from Germany to lay her to rest. She carries that grief with her now. Her pack is heavy with the extra gear needed for winter so she has lost weight. Her feet are suffering so her pace has slowed. In Hungary she suffered bouts of paranoia and enormous loneliness. "I didn't understand the language and people weren't very approachable," she shares. "I mistakenly thought that I would have a lot in common

with the Hungarians because of music... I didn't do my research properly."

It's winter so there is less daylight therefore each day begins very early in order for her to reach her destination with enough time to find somewhere to sleep, a challenge in itself.

Christmas was spent in the company of a cold tin of beans, as she couldn't find anyone willing to take her in.

In Serbia, the people were friendlier, the loneliness less. "People gave me advice, asked questions, offered lifts," says the pilgrim.

The biggest physical challenge, she shares "is to keep my body intact, not to push too hard, not to do too little."

She gets anxious thinking too far ahead so it's important for her to take each day as it comes.

"When I was stuck in the mud in Hungary because there was no choice of roads, it wasn't helpful to think too far ahead because I was literally dealing with pulling my legs out of the mud so I could just move on."

Dependent on the goodwill of strangers, Anja remains hopeful that maintaining an open heart and open mind will keep her safe. "It is a beast of a journey and the question is who's got the longest breath... the journey, the countries, or me? I just hope I can hold my nerve."

Traversing village to village, town to town, country to county, Anja is seeing firsthand the differences and splits that occur across different cultures. "Once you go into Eastern Europe, you meet so many influences, Russian, Turkish, Islam, the Orthodox Church, the Catholic



"The beauty of the rivers, the mist, the wildlife around it. Spending that amount of time on your own in nature is wonderful,"

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Church and, in Serbia, where I am now, the history becomes very complicated,” she shares.

Anja explains how journeying on foot gives a completely different perspective on life to travelling via modern transport.

“Viewing the world and seeing it change as you walk is very different to reading about it in a newspaper,” she says.

In Serbia, at an inn where Anja was staying, a man took out his gun and started shooting at the floor, not with the intention of hurting anyone, but in celebration. “I felt pretty far from Ireland in that moment,” says Anja.

Life on the road is unconventional. “100 km down the road someone’s perspective is completely different. I am now at the point where I really feel that I cannot have an opinion about anything anymore because of this.”

As she approaches Belgrade, Anja’s gut is telling her to head south to warmer climes which will bring her away from her trusted guide, the Danube, but also further away from the war in Ukraine. She leans towards Sofia in Bulgaria, as she can follow the flow of another river on lower ground, which means flatter and more manageable terrain. She trusts the river. After that, she will face a choice between going to Istanbul, which means walking across Turkey in late spring/early summer in extreme heat or staying close to water and taking the mediterranean route along The Jerusalem way, which takes her further south and, if she can get visas, facing the risk of travelling into war-torn Syria and Lebanon.

The niggling doubt that stubbornly remains in her mind is that if the mountains didn’t stop her, the Middle East will.

Anja is now facing into the hardest part of her journey in the coldest month and has some pretty big mountains to climb, literally and figuratively!

This is the longest period of time that she has ever been away from home. “Today someone asked me about The Pogues and, in describing the music scene in Ireland, I



“100 km down the road someone’s perspective is completely different. I am now at the point where I really feel that I cannot have an opinion about anything anymore because of this.”

suddenly felt a real surge of homesickness,” she shares.

She misses her daughter, her bed, her cats, her local DeBarras for a pint, the lads she works with, just wandering into town and going for coffee with friends, her garden, lemon meringue pie, vegetable soup... “Who would have thought I’d miss Irish vegetable soup,” she laughs.

This journey has given her a new perspective on her life.

“It is small, it is simple, but it is just perfect and I’m so grateful that I can call Clonakilty my home.” She starts to cry as she remembers.

Update: Just before print, Anja made contact to say she has safely reached Belgrade and is now sitting tight in the city while she waits for the weather to improve. This also gives her a chance to rest her weary bones and recover from two bouts of stomach sickness.

“Belgrade is a surprising city, still very much imprinted by the last war,” shares Anja. “In fact right now I’m sitting waiting for the President of Serbia and his counterpart in the Czech Republic to arrive. The building next door to the hostel has some tie to the Czech Republic; it was taken by the Russians after WWII and is today being returned into the care of the Czechs. There are military and police officers everywhere but I was allowed to cross the road and go to the Kafana (coffee/wine/bar/restaurant where they play Serbian traditional music) for my soup (chicken and vegetable), which I earned yesterday evening by sharing the what they call ‘Celtic Spirit’. So I get to be in the front row today!”

Anja now plans to follow the ‘Via Militaris’, an ancient Roman Road that connected Istanbul to Belgrade and the West: “This route is not as straightforward as it was in Western Europe because a lot of it now lies many metres under the tarmac of the busy Pan Slavic roads.”

“I am really proud of how far I have come and I believe I can go even further, I think I can even go to the end, oh but it will be so good to come home.”

While she is still searching for answers to the bigger questions, Anja has gleaned a clearer understanding of the fragility of humanity, her place in this world and the good and the bad out there.

“The biggest discovery of course is the work I have found you have to do within oneself,” she says, “and this has come with standing out in the world on my own two feet.

“I think the big answers will come in time...when I can sit down and look back over the experiences I have had, that is when the answers will come.”

To anyone at home, know that Anja is missing you and sends her love. “It is really strange walking through a world where none of the faces are familiar. I really appreciate every single one of you so much, for being the community in which I get to spend my every day.”

Anja is sincerely grateful for all the help and donations she has received to date to help her on this pilgrimage. Any offers of beds or food along the way are appreciated and if you would like to make a small donation to help make this pilgrim’s journey a little easier please visit her page on gofundme.com ‘From Here to Jerusalem’.



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Hail Brigid and bank holidays



A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

Who doesn't love a bank holiday? It's a day off from work. A day to celebrate, to lounge around, or perhaps even an occasion to grab a quick break away as most bank holidays are tacked on to a Monday to create a three-day weekend. This year we're getting a new one, bringing the total of Irish bank holidays to ten.

From this year on, St. Brigid's Day will be celebrated on February 1. The new bank holiday falls on the first Monday in February, except when St Brigid's day happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that Friday, February 1 will be a public holiday. This year the new bank holiday falls on Monday, February 6. The government introduced St Brigid's Day to mark "the enormous sacrifices made by Irish people during the Covid pandemic and highlight better times ahead". It also marks Imbolc, which is the start of Spring in the Irish calendar.

Days off work were a bit of a mixed bag before the creation of official bank holidays. They

were largely holy days celebrating local patron saints and varied depending on the individual business and region. In 1871 the Bank Holidays Act was passed in Westminster, creating four public holidays when the banks were closed. These were Easter Sunday, Whit Sunday, the first Monday in August and December 26. Good Friday and Christmas Day were not included, as they were already customary holidays. In 1903 the Bank Holiday (Ireland) Act added 17 March, Saint Patrick's Day for Ireland only. Northern Ireland retained the holiday after Irish independence.

In 1924 the Irish Free State passed the Public Holidays Act. What is perhaps surprising is that, though workers got a day off they were not necessarily paid for that day. In fact, it wasn't until 1939 and the Holidays (Employees) Act that paid leave was introduced. This Act set into law Christmas Day, St Stephen's Day, St Patrick's Day, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and the first Monday in August as bank holidays. Whit Monday later became the first Monday in June in 1974. New Year's Day was added in 1975 and the last Monday in October was added in 1977. The most recent addition before St Brigid's Day was in 1993, with the May bank holiday.

With only ten days off, Ireland is not particularly generous. Topping the list of the countries with the most bank holidays are Colombia and India, joint first in the world with 18 bank holidays a year. Thailand, Lebanon and South Korea are in second place with 16 days off. The European

average is 12. Finland has the most bank holidays in Europe, with 15. England and Wales come second to last in the rankings alongside the Netherlands with just eight days off. Last is Mexico with only three official national holidays, though there are up to 11 customary holidays.

The choice of Brigid is a particularly good one for a number of reasons. She is both a revered Irish saint and an important figure in the pagan tradition, thus bridging the country's pre-Christian and Christian traditions. That the new bank holiday falls on Imbolc, the first day of spring in the Irish calendar is also a good choice. Celebrating the return of the light, and the rebirth of the Earth, makes sense after the dark days of winter.

St Brigid is one of the three national saints along with St Patrick and St Columba. Born north of Dundalk in 451, she is also known as St Brigid of Kildare, where she founded a monastery, becoming the first Abbess. The Goddess Brigid is deeply rooted in Irish pagan folklore. The saint and the goddess share many of the same attributes and have stories and customs that overlap. Like the saint, the goddess is associated with poetry, healing, protection, smithcraft, and domestic animals.

St Brigid Day is also the first bank holiday that commemorates a female patron saint. Like with bridges and statues, the powers that be are finally getting around to commemorating women – see Rosie Hackett Bridge and calls to erect a statue to Mother Jones in Cork city. So, Hail Brigid! In the words of singer Lizzo: "It's about damn time!"

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the February edition of West Cork People,

I hope you'll forgive me any mistakes this month, as I have been writing one-handed, or rather alternating between tapping with my left hand and shouting at a piece of technology that struggles to understand a West Cork accent. I've developed a rasp to rival Clint Eastwood!

On the bright side, my diction has improved remarkably. I now say 'comma' not 'cUmma' and 'fungh-ee' not 'fung-i'. FYI: Say 'fungi' to a computer and what you'll get back is 'fun guy'!

Apparently of all the bones I could have broken (my first ever break), it's a 'good' one, as it should heal in a matter of week rather than months: A boxer's fracture – a break in the neck of the fifth metacarpal bone in the hand – it usually occurs when you punch an object at high speed, which will tell you how hard I fell...over a house step walking the dog in the dark – not my finest moment!

Somehow someway, as we always do, with all of us pulling together, we got this paper out; and not only that but it's a pretty great read.

If you're in the city this month, make sure to stop off at County Hall where the older generation of West Cork have shared some of their fascinating stories and lore in Sharon Whooley and Tess Leak's heartwarming exhibition 'The Museum of Birds and Beasts'. You're sure to leave smiling.

West Cork's entertainment scene starts to heat up in February and from Clonakilty to Ballydehob and over to Bantry, you will find gigs galore. See inside for more details.

For the month that's in it, we have put together a little feature that will interest all the lovebirds out there; and anyone still searching for that special someone should enjoy reading the interview on navigating the world of online dating with Dr Ray O'Neill, one of Ireland's top relationship experts, who is based in West Cork.

If you're still feeling the January blues and in need of some motivation as we head into the Spring, have a read of Anja's story on page 2 and 3. This inspiring pilgrim, who is journeying from West Cork to Jerusalem on foot through all sorts of terrain and conditions, with a harp on her back, shares some of the highlights and challenges of her 6000-8000 km trip.

We also have a great Spring Homes section this month featuring a variety of West Cork businesses who will inspire you to get stuck into all those jobs around the house and garden that you've been putting on the long finger.

Louise encourages us to embrace secondhand clothes culture, Karen shares her delicious healthy winter slaw recipe, Kieran delves into the world of animal and plant language and Grace updates us on Séan Binder's trial in Greece.

For this and lots more see inside.

I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary



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New appointment

Sherry FitzGerald O'Neill have expanded their team by recently adding experienced property surveyor and negotiator Hugh O'Neill as Branch Manager of the Skibbereen office. A native of Clonakilty, Hugh will be available to clients in Skibbereen and throughout West Cork. Having worked in the industry for over 10 years, Hugh previously worked in commercial sales, valuations and lettings at Cushman & Wakefield in Limerick (2015-2018) before moving to the Valuation, Profes-

sional Services and Advisory team at Cohalan Downing on the South Mall, Cork (2018 – 2023). Hugh is a Chartered Surveyor and Registered Valuer being a member of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (MSCSI) and of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MRICS). Hugh is son of the late Tim O'Neill, livestock dealer and farmer and is the grandson of the late Con O'Neill, well regarded Auctioneer at Skibbereen Mart from its inception in 1958 and through the 1960's and 1970's.



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West Cork People

Giving the youth of Clonakilty their space

Today's connected world is a challenging one to be growing up in. According to the 'Goldilocks' hypothesis, while a moderate level of digital media engagement is beneficial to mental wellbeing, lower or higher levels may be detrimental for the mental wellbeing of teenagers today. While research is ongoing into just what exactly a 'moderate' and safe level of digital engagement is, a number of studies are showing that the pandemic years have had a serious impact on the deteriorating mental health of Ireland's 'Generation Covid' and our adolescent mental health services are severely stretched with long wait times. In this challenging environment, spaces such as the Clonakilty Youth Centre, which opened its doors in a new state-of-the-art building last September, offer young people from all backgrounds a safe and inclusive space in which to socialise, engage and get support if needed.

Located on the bypass at Deasy's Car Park, so within easy walking distance to town, the community space is available for a variety of youth services, groups and organisations, as well as just being a safe space for young people to simply hang out with each other.

It took two decades of petitioning, fundraising and hard work by a dedicated committee and the local community for this youth centre project to reach fruition, but the youth of Clonakilty and surrounding areas are now reaping the rewards of having a dedicated space in a state-of-the-art fully accessible building.

from young people mentioned talking to people and getting support and engaging with their own peers in activities like music and games.

"Socialising and making friends can be tricky but usually it's easy at the shack cause everyone is so welcoming."

"I like playing the guitar... and it really helps with my confidence and social skills."

"I get to do my homework and play games."

"Talking to people like Luke make you feel more safe and comfortable."

"I come here to study and meet people. Talking to people is really helpful and makes things less stressful."

evenings and community art projects, all of the activities are organised based on the requirements of the youth.

"We are also available for one on one sessions, giving help and direction with CVs, employment or simply helping with homework," says Cindy.

The YMCA Carbery youth service will be running a Music Production and Songwriting six-week programme with local composer and musician Justin Grounds, on Thursdays, starting on February 16. On Mondays, for eight weeks, starting on Monday, February 13, the service will be running a youth leadership course for youth aged over 15, to encourage them to take on youth leadership roles in the space, which in turn helps them develop as young people. (To book a space on these programmes contact 086 0327866 or cindy.kingston@ymca-ireland.net)

"I think young people have definitely struggled with finding their sense of place



again in the world after Covid," shares Cindy. "Having a safe and positive environment for them to come meet their peers, make new friends and discover differences and similarities with other young people helps them to grow."

Future plans for the youth centre include expanding on the current facilities, to create a larger space for meetings and activities, and to expand upon

and complement the existing multi use games area (MUGA) adjacent to the youth centre at Deasy's car park.

Committee member Paul Hayes says that Foroige will be up and running in the youth centre shortly and there are also plans to make music lessons, computer and IT classes available, as well as slots for other groups and organisations such as the Red Cross.

"Great credit is due to the hard working voluntary committee who have worked so hard over many years to bring this fantastic facility to fruition and also to Margaret Shanahan architect and Kirby Construction for their expertise and support all the way through the building project."

To contact the youth centre about bookings or for information email info@ccyc.ie



Issues identified by the young people attending the YMCA youth service, which operates a space in the youth centre called 'The Shack' show that some of the most challenging societal pressures placed on them include identity, friendships and fitting in, exam stress and judgement by people and anxiety and mental health with the role of social media being a big contributing factor.

Coordinator and Youth Worker at YMCA Carbery Youth Service, Cindy Kingston is based full-time at the Clonakilty Youth Centre.

"The YMCA Carbery youth service provides a youth-led, inclusive, relaxed and welcoming space where the young people who visit can be heard," she explains.

When asked to give feedback on the benefits afforded them by the centre, most of the responses

"It helps calm me down and helps me be myself."

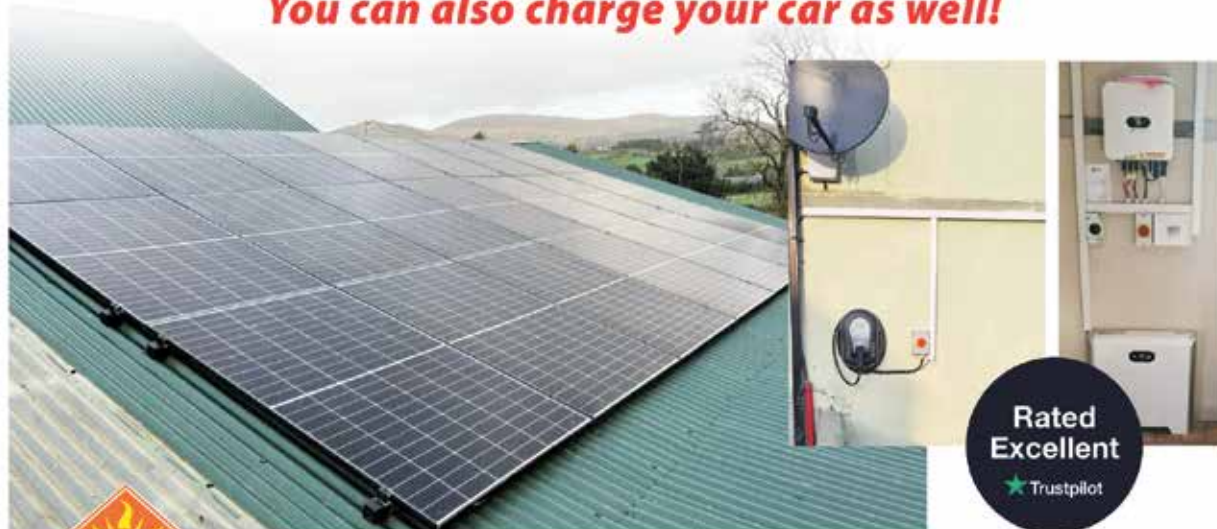
"The young people feel at ease and comfortable here," says Cindy. "While the services are adapted based on the needs of the young people, we focus a lot on mental health and physical wellbeing and many of the youth who attend regularly are now flourishing in these areas. One person commented to me the other day that this is their 'new safe space'."

There are two other part-time YMCA youth workers at the centre: Ronan McCann is in charge of the music and recording studio and Luke Murray runs the 'Rainbow Folx' group, a social and befriending support group for LGBTI+ young people and allies in Clonakilty.

From sexual health to fitness classes, workshops in songwriting, film making, self-care and art therapy to pizza and quiz

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HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

A few years ago, an inquisitive student asked me, if I could learn any language what would it be? Having an interest in history, I said Latin, in order to unlock the knowledge of the past. In turn, I asked her the same question and she said she would learn computer coding languages to unlock the future. It said a lot about this clever student and how she thought. But since reading Karen Bakker's breakthrough scientific book, 'The Sounds of Life,' I want to revise my own answer: I would love to speak the language of animals and plants. Yes, you read that correctly: their language.

This not some 'Doctor Dolittle' fairy-tale. Bakker's book is 350 pages long and 150 of those pages are footnotes, appendices and a bibliography of such scientific depth, that one cannot but be impressed by the level of research and scholarship. I'm keen to stress her level of research, because what you are about to read will change your perception of how we treat animals and nature, and it is based on sound scientific

Science and the language of animals: life will never be the same

knowledge.

What Bakker has done in her book is to illuminate how advanced mammal and even plant language is. Before we look at her research, however, let's look briefly at human language. Language is humanity's most precious evolutionary trait and has given us advantages that has seen our species conquer the world. Communication has allowed ideas to germinate, and spread, and has created social and cultural ties that have grown into organised societies.

One of our earliest written texts is the Bible. Many have interpreted it in an allegorical sense, others quite literally. The Bible has given us 'permission' to dominate the planet for our own means. In the book of Genesis, God declared, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." And by God, have we honoured that contract to the letter of the law: bringing species to extinction and many more to its brink, devouring rainforests, making deserts of oceans from over fishing, polluting our hemisphere to such a degree that we are finally accepting [though not agreeing on how or what to do] that climate change is on the verge of taking us from the book of Genesis to book of

Revelations. All that in just a fraction of the 300,000 years that our ancestors have walked the earth.

The colonisers, from the age of Columbus, brought the conquistadors and their ruin to environments that had previously flourished. The Industrial Revolution brought us advancement but at the cost of destruction to the atmosphere. Now the era of mass travel and our insatiable appetite for materials has turbo boosted us into a place where the world is faced with cataclysmic changes that may hasten the line of Homo-sapiens to an end.

Would we be more considerate of our environment if we could understand the animal and plant kingdom? Incredibly, with the advancement of science and engineering, algorithms are already being used to decipher what they are saying. Still think this is more science fiction than science? Let's have a look at some of Karen Bakker's incredible research, and perhaps begin with another famous biblical image: the honey bees.

The famous honey bee dance, that has been observed by bee keepers for millennia, has now been decoded. Scientists have learnt what the bees are 'saying'. This body language communication is used by bees to explain where suitable habitation is, and also how far away, and how long it can take to get there. They can even communicate to each other the dangers or suitability of such an environment. Even more incredibly, through a combination of engineering and computer science, they can be 'spoken' back to, using artificial robotic bees that have been programmed with the language. This is vital because bees need help to live in a changing world. As we have come to learn, losing honey bees in a region has had disastrous knock on effects for pollination and inter-species dependency, including our own. Bakker explains that by learning to communicate, we can 'send' bees to safe environments where they can recolonise and thus protect their existence. All this has been made possible by learning the language of bees!

What this shows is that communication cannot be solely defined in ordinary human terms, that is, by words, sound, or even vocal cords. Not to accept that would be akin to not accepting, say, sign language, as a form of communication for audio impaired people.

If you are not satisfied that

Coral reefs, which are officially recognised as living organisms, can communicate in their own unique ways. Scientists are already learning their language so that corals that seem beyond repair, can be regenerated. Incredibly this means that scientists can 'tell' the zooplankton and other species, 'to come live here in our coral'.



body or sign language in animals really constitutes language and communication, and you need more proof, look no further than the mighty elephant. We tend to consider the roar of animals as a rudimentary and simple form of warning or calling. But scientists through their study of bio-acoustics, have now unlocked elephant vocabulary. Bakker's book goes into great detail, but in a nutshell, the mighty elephant fears no creature in the jungle like the bee, which can find the few soft spots on its armour-like hide. Scientists have discovered that elephants have a specific call or 'word' in their lexicon to warn of approaching bees. Conservationists realise that the conflict between man and beast too often leads to destroyed farms and dead elephants. Understanding their language means that farmers in Africa can ward off elephants that may otherwise encroach upon their crops. Again, through this new knowledge of bio-acoustics, warning systems have been developed to replicate elephant calls that communicate an exact message, 'bees are here: don't come in'. The proof is in the pudding. Hundreds of farms that have used this technology have reported that elephants understand and have kept away, whereas before, fences, wires and 'human sounds' had little effect.

Bakker also looks at the whale call. We are familiar with dolphin and whales sounds. Did you know they also have sounds at a frequency beyond our simple human pitch? Without us knowing it, whales have been carrying messages about mating or warnings about dangerous waters and locations. We have,

for too long, interpreted any animal or mammal sound as some sort of raw 'instinct' rather than language. Yet these 'simple' beasts have demonstrated to scientists complex communication and language that is constantly evolving. Part of the reason Bakker has written this book is to illustrate how, armed with animal and mammal language, we can find ways to co-habit rather than dominate our planet. In Canada, for example, ships are now using bio-acoustics equipment to communicate to whales in their language, warning that they could be in danger in certain shipping regions, and this has helped whales avoid accidental strikes.

Bakker doesn't stop there. Sea turtles, once thought to be noiseless, communicate to each other in frequencies beyond our abilities. Their language allows them to direct each other to beaches where they can safely hatch their eggs. They have had to do this, because so much of their traditional laying ground has been destroyed by humanity. Coral reefs, which are officially recognised as living organisms, can communicate in their own unique ways. Scientists are already learning their language so that corals that seem beyond repair, can be regenerated. Incredibly this means that scientists can 'tell' the zooplankton and other species, 'to come live here in our coral'. If they return to the reefs, their symbiotic co-habitation within the coral, replenishes it. Science is forever challenging what we know and understand. People will resist these relatively new discoveries because understanding mammals' language means understanding their emotional empathy. In recognising other

species' language and empathy, we will soon come face to face with moral decisions like, can we treat animals like we do already? Mass dungeons of piggeries, crammed factory hen farms, prison-like zoos, artificial fish farms. If we continue to discover what they could tell us, we could be horrified by what they say. It will suit some people to stay deaf in order to maintain the hierarchy of mankind over the planet. There are eight million types of species that share our planet, but just one, human beings, are destroying it.

There is a beacon of hope. Parallel to the COP conference on climate change, there is a COP conference on biodiversity. Biodiversity, simply put, is the range of habitats that we have on our planet, such as marine ecosystems to geoparks. The breakthrough decision, made in 2022 by the international community, was to adopt a roadmap to protect area-based targets. This roadmap has designated 30 per cent of the Earth's land surface as a protected area. It aims to restore the planet's degraded terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine ecosystems by 2030.

While climate change tends to divide people, through everything from apathy, to economics or just simply denial, the protection of our biodiversity is something that environmentalists and scientists have been making more progress on. Karen Bakker's book, 'The Sounds of Life' illustrates how far we have come in understanding our worlds' species. We have been deaf to them for too long; it's time to listen.

Christopher O'Sullivan TD

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I am delighted to announce that my new **BANDON CONSTITUENCY OFFICE** at Market Buildings, New Road is now open at least 3 days a week and I will host constituency clinics on the first Monday of each month from 10am to 12 noon.

My constituency office in Clonakilty remains open 5 days a week.

If you feel I can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact my team and I.

Constituency Offices:
 40 Ashe St, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, P85V308.
 Market Buildings, New Road, Bandon, Co. Cork, P72K738.
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 Tel: 023 88 11011

Donation of new defibrillator made to Kinsale Community First Responders

Kinsale Community First Responders, a community-run first response group, were recently supported with the donation of a new defibrillator and storage box provided by Cumnor Construction.

One of the group's responders, Brian McCarthy commented, "We respond to emergency calls tasked through the National Ambulance Service and we rely on our local defibrillator network to help save lives. Through the generous support provided by Cumnor, we're able to expand our public network of emergency defibrillator devices with this latest unit located at Cumnor's Convent Garden development in Kinsale Town".

Kinsale Community First Responders have trained volunteer first responders in the community to respond to calls when needed.

"When someone dials 999 or 112 in the Kinsale district area reporting a cardiac arrest, chest pain, stroke or choking, our group are alerted at the same time an ambulance is dispatched.



Eddie O'Mahony, Director Cumnor Construction presenting a new Defibrillator to Colette Forde, Chairperson Kinsale Community First Responders.

As our responders live in the community, we can reach the patient quickly and provide assistance before the ambulance arrives," shared Brian.

The group, part of the Community First Responder Ireland network, was formed in 2019 and is supported solely by fund raising and donations. All monies raised are put back into the

community to keep emergency defibrillator devices up to date as well as provide equipment, supplies and training for the volunteer responders.

The group also raised €2,267 recently at a fundraising and group awareness day in Kinsale, which was generously supported by the local community.

Our values on trial



GROUNDLED

MEP Grace O'Sullivan

It's a rare moment that the cities of New York, Cork, Brussels and Athens are linked by the same thread. But in the second week of January, journalists and activists were gathering around a previously unknown case about to take place on the island of Lesbos in Greece.

The admirable young man Seán Binder, whose name has become well-known from Tralee to Thessaloniki, was going on trial in Greece for his role in search and rescue missions dating back to 2017. The charges against him were spurious and almost incredible in their vagueness. But it was linked to something bigger going on in the halls of power in Brussels.

I had been in contact with Seán's campaign for the best part of two years as they were keen to show that this was not just a local Greek issue. The criminalisation of refugees and humanitarian workers across Europe's borders was an EU problem.

The wake of Putin's horrendous war on the Ukrainian people has brought a number of reflections on Europe's asylum and migration policy as well as on Ireland's response; Communities big and small in Ireland have clearly been willing to open their doors to people fleeing from the war. Lest we open the door to the politics of us-versus-them and xenophobia however, it is clear that we need a coordinated response including housing, education and healthcare. We have also learned that there is still a strong will amongst European countries to act on humanitarian crises in a humane and caring way.

The people of Lesbos in Greece have been living through one refugee crisis to the next, for over two hundred years. Ethnic Greeks fled the Ottoman Empire through its ports, while Muslims took refuge there, going in the other direction. Democrats have taken shelter on Lesbos from Greek coups and dictatorships throughout the 20th century. Jews fled the fascist occupation during the Second World War. And more recently, the people of that small island have seen hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, even Congo pass through their island looking for a better future in Europe.

In the middle of that recent mass movement of people was Seán Binder, who more often than not, in his own words, offered just a blanket and a smile

to people who had just made it through unimaginable trauma on the crossing from Turkey to Greece in flimsy dinghies.

Seán had invited me to attend the trial, to ensure that the failings of the trial and the legislation surrounding it could also reach the centre of EU asylum and migration policymaking in Brussels. Together with about two dozen other defendants and a strong team of campaigners, activists, family and friends, the 27-year-old who was raised between Castlegregory, Tralee and Cork City had an incredible network of support around him. From Ireland, messages came streaming, in support.

On the other side of the bench in the packed courtroom, it was clear the prosecution was well aware of the holes in their case: Seán and his colleagues had not been afforded the right to translated documents. The indictments didn't even say who was accused of accusing what crimes and where. The case was bound to fail. And it did, thankfully.

A week later, we brought the case to the attention of Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson on the floor of the European Parliament. Reform of EU migration and asylum is expected to be kickstarted again this year. To avoid another trial like that faced by Seán Binder, we need to ensure that policy works for refugees, humanitarians and our communities at home.



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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.

Waders are, for the most part, birds of coastal mudflats, inlets and sandy beaches. Some frequent grassy meadows, remote uplands and boggy land. Many waders were eaten at one time, especially in times of hardship. Thousands of years of hunting have made them wary of man, so a close view is never easy.

The curlew is probably our best known wading bird; unfortunately, this bird, with its lonely call so typical of Ireland, has become very scarce and is now

Wading birds in folklore

on the red list of endangered bird species. Curlews have huge down-curved bills from which they get their Irish name 'Crotach', meaning 'humped' or 'hump-backed', which could refer to the birds themselves. An alternative name, 'goibíneach', means 'the beaked one'. The male curlew is called a rooster and a group of curlews is called a curfew. They are well known for their haunting 'coor-lee' call, often heard at night, especially at twilight, hence the collective name 'curfew'. Several curlews calling at dusk or at night is a sign of a coming storm.

Curlews have a very soft pliable bill with which they probe the mud or marsh for food; the very end of the bill can open to grasp prey. Curlews suffer greatly from the frost and are protected from hunting in Ireland. Undoubtedly this harsh winter has been hard on them. Seeing a curlew at sea was considered bad luck.

It was believed that curlews did not build nests (because they could never be found). It is said that when St. Patrick first went to the Isle of Man he heard the shrill call of a curlew warning that a kid goat had fallen down the rocks. He blessed them both and, from that day, no man was ever to find a curlew's nest or to see a goat giving birth. Today we know that curlews make their nests on bogs and moorland. The drainage of so many of our bogs is the main reason for the sharp decline in their numbers. The Ulster Scots word 'whaup' for the curlew is

Oystercatchers are marked with a faint cross on the breast, which was believed to be the symbol of Christ. This is explained by a folktale that when Christ was hiding by the Sea of Galilee, an oystercatcher covered him with seaweed so that he could not be found and so was rewarded with the cross on his breast.



associated with the name of a long-beaked goblin that is said to move about in the roof space in the dead of night.

There are two types of snipe found in Ireland, the Common Snipe and the Jack Snipe. Looking a little like a small woodcock, snipes are rarely seen, skulking birds. They remain completely still when approached and will not fly away until the very last minute. They are masters of camouflage being a general brown colour with buff stripes. Regarded as game birds, large numbers are shot every year. It is from the shooting of the unfortunate snipe that we get the word sniper.

Snipes are active at dusk and at night. The males have a fantastic display flight known as drumming or bleating. During this flight, a male flies high and then dives, vibrating its specially modified tail feathers to produce an eerie wailing sound and to get the attention of the female.

Jack snipes, the smallest of the family and winter visitors from Scandinavia, are found in wet land and make a sound like a goat, hence the Irish name, 'Gabhairín Reo', meaning 'little goat of the frost'. To hear the Jack Snipe was a great sign of good weather. If you heard one before March 20, you would be guaranteed a good summer. To hear them call at night is considered a sign of frost to come. In Irish the Common Snipe is 'An Naosc' (or Naosach) and the Jack Snipe 'An Naosach Bhídeach' – 'bídeach' meaning 'small' or 'tiny'. A well-known proverb about the snipe is: 'An fhaid a bheidh naosc ar mhóin is gob uirthi' (while there is a snipe in the bog – forever and ever – literally as long as there will be snipe on the bog and a beak on her).

Patrick Pearse, in his poem,

'Brón ar an mBás', writes: *'Do labhair an naosc binn is an crotach glórach' (the sweet snipe sang and the noisy curlew).*

A verse from the ancient Irish song Donal Óg, goes like this in translation: *'It is late last night the dog was speaking of you; / The snipe was speaking of you in her deep marsh. / It is you are the lonely bird through the woods / And that you may be without a mate until you find me'.*

The Lapwing has several alternative names. In English they are known as the Green Plover, Peewit, Philip-a-week, Philapeen (little Philip). In Irish the usual name is 'Pilibín' (little Philip), but are also known as 'Pilibín Glas' (green plover), 'Pilibín Míog' (cheeping plover), 'Adhairín' (little horned bird). They are green plovers, known for their acrobatic flying and 'peewit' calls for which they are called – a haunting lonely call usually heard in cold winter weather. They are colourful birds with radiant green plumage above, snow-white below and a distinctive crest at the back of their head. From the distance they appear black and white but are mostly recognisable by their flowing crest. Adult lapwings and other plovers protect their nests by running away and feigning a wing injury to draw would-be predators towards them and away from their nest, endangering themselves to protect the eggs or fledglings. This is described in Irish as 'cleas an Philibín' (the Lapwing's trick) and from it we get the Irish phrase, 'is é seoladh an Philibín óna nead aige é' (he has the Lapwing's escort from the nest, meaning he is evading the issue). During the breeding season male lapwings have a dramatic display flight. They

will tumble down through the air in a series of lateral falls, all the while calling loudly to the females. Lapwings, and indeed all plovers, were always greatly respected in Ireland. They were once eaten extensively, usually roasted or in pies and their eggs were considered a delicacy. A lapwing seen screaming in wheeling flight in the evening was a sure sign of a bad night and their call meant frost was coming.

The Redshanks are the sentinels of the seashore, flying off noisily if any danger looms. In Irish they are called 'Cosdeargán' (red-footed bird). Alternative names are 'Cailleach bhreach' (speckled hag), 'Circín trá' (little beach chicken), 'Glúineach dhearg' (red knee-bird), 'laidhrín dearg' (little red-toe, 'ladhrán trá' beach claw-bird). Their cousins, the Greenshanks, are winter visitors. Beautiful elegant waders with dull green/yellow legs, in Irish they are the 'Laidhrín glas' (little green toe).

The common sandpiper are tiny brown-grey and white birds of the seashore and lake's edge. In Irish they are called 'Gabadán coilean' (common beak bird). A well-known Irish proverb goes like this. 'Ní féidir leis an gobadán an dá thrá a fhreastal' – the sandpiper cannot attend to two strands – it is impossible to do two jobs well at the same time.

Godwits are large striking waders with very long bills. It is easy to confuse them with the curlews. Most of the godwits seen in Ireland are winter visitors. Like curlews and snipe, they have the ability to flex the very end of their bills, allowing them to grasp prey underground. The Irish name 'guilbneach' means sharp-beaked. The name Godwit probably comes from the Old English meaning 'good creature'. Godwits used to be eaten and were considered a delicacy. There are two types which visit Ireland, the bar-bailed Godwit and the black-tailed Godwit. The former are also called Barwit, Norwegian Whaup, Red Godwit or Russin Curlews, while the latter is also called Blackwit or Whelp.

Oystercatchers are marked with a faint cross on the breast, which was believed to be the symbol of Christ. This is explained by a folktale that when Christ was hiding by the Sea of Galilee, an oystercatcher covered him with seaweed so that he could not be found and so was rewarded with the cross on his breast. Another legend has it that St. Brigid was fleeing from persecutors and collapsed on the seashore. Seeing her distress, oystercatchers covered

her and kept her hidden from view. In thanks, she blessed the birds and gave them the sign of the cross. St. Brigid is often depicted holding an oystercatcher in each hand.

An old Irish folktale tells of an oystercatcher that foolishly lent its webbed feet to a seagull. The seagull never returned the feet, and since that time, the oystercatcher's call is a forlorn screech. This tale gives us the proverb: 'lasacht an roillig don fhaoilean iasacht ná fillfidh go deo' (the loan of the oystercatcher to the seagull, a loan never returned). Oystercatchers screech wildly if somebody gets near their nest, something I have experienced many times myself. In Scots Gaelic an oystercatcher was said to call 'bí glic, bí glic' (be shrewd, be shrewd) when its nest was threatened. The oystercatcher is the national bird of the Faeroe Islands.

Heron's art still commonly called cranes in Ireland. They should not be confused with the Cranes (grus grus) which were once common here. The confusion of names makes historical reference difficult to resolve. Alternative names for the heron include Julie the Bogs, Long Tall Sally, Shelia Crane. In Irish they have numerous names including 'Cáit fhada' (Long Katie), 'Corr mhóna' (bog cranes); 'Jónaí an Scrogaill' (Joan of the long thin neck); 'Síle na bPortach' (Julie of the Bogs).

The Heron is famous for its ability to catch fish, with its combination of patient, motionless waiting and its lightning quick stabbing with its bill when prey appears. In folklore the heron has been associated with St. Colmcille (or Columba). It was said he turned a queen and her handmaid into herons in retaliation for their lack of hospitality.

Another member of this family is the Little Egret (Eigrit Bheag), which have been settling here since they first nested in 1997. In recent years it has established itself in this country and can be seen along our rivers and shoreline. They can be seen regularly along the banks of the Ilan river and in Rosscarbery. They may have been resident in the past but died out, but now are making a comeback, probably due to our warmer climate. They are beautiful snow white birds with pristine yellow feet. Despite being targeted in the past for the pot, and by the fashion industry for their feathers, they are increasing in number again. Egrets get their name from the French 'aigrette', meaning 'little heron'. The word has now also come to mean the long ornamental plume such as that seen on an egret or heron.

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Clonakilty's Local Enterprise Office welcomes two new business advisors



The Local Enterprise Office in Clonakilty is delighted to welcome two new business advisors, pictured above (left-right) Lisa Finn and Catherine Monaghan with Head of Enterprise, Kevin Curran. The Local Enterprise Office offers support to all businesses the best way they can, helping businesses to grow by providing a full range of training programmes and supports to suit everyone's requirements from start-up's to those who wish to grow.

Local Enterprise Office in Clonakilty delivers first business networking event for 2023

Cork County Council's Local Enterprise office in Clonakilty hosted an event 'Reboot Your Business and Develop Resilience in Challenging Times' to help customer facing businesses in West Cork develop resilience going into 2023. The event took place on January 24 in Inchydoney Hotel, with businesses from all sectors in West Cork in attendance.

Speakers, James Burke, Tom Flavin and Catherine Monaghan discussed how to develop easy and strategic plans for growth and the use of simple marketing ideas to drive sales. Developing techniques such as menu engineering in a food establishment and how to establish your social media platform to target your audience, can all help businesses continue to grow build more resilient models to stay ahead of the market.

Kevin Curran, Head Of Enterprise Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West opened off the morning with details of the supports offered by the Local Enterprise Office. Mr Curran said "It is our

intention to continue to support all business the best way we can. If research indicates that specific initiatives will help us to help business grow, then we will provide them. We will also continue to run a full range of training programmes so we

believe that we are providing a range of supports that will suit everyone's requirements.

The Cork County Council's Local Enterprise Office in Clonakilty is delighted to be hosting more networking events and workshops for Na-

tional Enterprise Week, which will run from March 8 to March 11, 2023. You can keep an eye out for these events on localenterprise.ie



Speakers pictured above (left to right) Tom Flavin, former head chef, Catherine Monaghan, Business Advisor at Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West, James Burke of James Burke and Associate, Kevin Curran, Head of Enterprise Cork North and West.



Exciting line-up for Local Enterprise Week 2023

The Cork County Council Local Enterprise Office Clonakilty are planning an exciting week ahead of Local Enterprise Week 2023, which takes place from Monday, 6th until Friday 10th March 2023. The schedule will see a number of workshops and training events for clients across all sectors and all stages of business development, from start-ups to established small businesses.

SAVE THE DATE! Further details will be available in the coming weeks, so keep an eye on our website for booking information www.localenterprise.ie/CorkNorthandWest/Training-Events/Online-Bookings

Free Business Advice Appointments

Available online throughout the week and in The Ludgate Hub Skibbereen.

Monday 6th March

Start Your Own Business Programme
(Day #1 of 7, finishing 27th March)
Time 6.30pm-9.30pm; Cost €50 per person.

This online programme is for someone with a business idea who wants to research it further. Modules covered will include market research, pricing and costing, cashflow projections, the revenue, sales & marketing, getting online and the business plan.

Tuesday 7th March

Trading Online Voucher Information Webinar

Time: 9.30-11.30. Sign up to this free webinar to find out more about the scheme, eligibility criteria, what research you must undertake and the application process.

10 Steps To Self-Employment

(Day #1, Day #2 on Friday 10th March)
Time: 10am-1pm.

This two-morning online programme is recommended before a client partakes in our intense Start Your Own Business Programme. By the end of this programme, you should be able to decide if self-employment and being an entrepreneur is for you. If you decide to proceed with your business idea, the next step would be to partake in one of our intense Start Your Own Business Programmes.

Branding unpacked: From Brand to Business

Time: 11am-1pm. This in-person workshop is designed for people who are already in business. As the term branding can be sometimes confusing, this workshop will help you get under the hood or branding, explaining simple and powerful elements that are often overlooked and misunderstood.

Wednesday, 8th March

Social Media Webinar

Time: 10am-12pm. This webinar will cover social media and its relevance to your business and different sales and marketing opportunities.

Enhancing your brand through Visual Merchandising

Time: 2pm-4.30pm. This in-person practical workshop will help you discover how to boost your sales with visual merchandising, with tools and techniques to display your products and services.

Export Webinar

Time 3pm-5pm. An online webinar which with help small businesses get started in European Exporting.

Export Webinar

Time 7pm-9pm. This online webinar will help businesses with the practicalities of worldwide exporting, to include UK, Europe, America, Australia, and Asia.

Thursday, 9th March

LEO Finance & Grant Information Webinar

Time: 10am-11.30am. This Webinar will provide you with information on the LEO Grant & Financial Supports available to your Business

Starting your own food business

Time: 2pm-5.30pm. This half day in person workshop will take place at The Ludgate Hub Skibbereen and is targeted at anyone thinking about or within the first 24 months of starting a food business and will provide a roadmap to the possible journey ahead.

Friday 10th March

Digitalisation for business, making your business work for you

Time: 10am-11.30pm. This event will help established businesses understand what the term "digitalisation" means, why it is important and what is involved in making your business more digital.

Merger of Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Unions made official

Members of both Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Unions voted in favour of a momentous merger by passing a Special Resolution at their AGMs in mid December.

The vote at each Credit Union's AGM was the culmination of months of discussions, research and due diligence, which involved both Credit Unions finding out all that they could and should know about each other. The discussions were carried out with honesty and transparency led by Project Manager Noel Cunningham, supported by the assistance of legal and accounting expertise and backed up by Clonakilty CEO Anthony Forde and Dunmanway CEO Ted Murnane. Throughout the discussions, the future and security of both Credit Unions their members, their staff and their communities were to the forefront of the mind of both Boards.

Arran O'Driscoll, Chair of the merged entity now known as Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union, stated that the most important feature of the merger was that it was entirely voluntary; meaning that both Clonakilty Credit Union and Dunmanway Credit Union chose of their own free will to open discussions and explore potential opportunities together.

Both Boards of Directors were fully behind the merger and, in supporting it, believed that the merger is in the best interest of both Credit Unions, their staff and their members.

Arran stated that Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union will now move forward and ensure that the Credit Union continues to make a distinct and positive difference to their members and communities.

She added that now that the merger is complete, the Board of Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union who is responsible

for the strategic direction of the Credit Union, will strive to improve and offer more services to its members. "By coming together and combining our resources, the Chair stated that the Board's aim is to become a stronger Credit Union, retain our local identity and presence and build on community investment. The Chair opined that the combined strength would offer greater security and help the Credit Union face any possible future shocks should they arise."

Arran confirmed that the merger will bring change but positive change. She also confirmed that the offices in Clonakilty and Dunmanway will remain open thereby protecting local jobs. Loans will continue to be approved in the two local offices by staff who are familiar with local members.

Arran added that Credit Unions are different: "We want to be here for our members

savings and loan needs. Six days out of seven, a member of Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union can visit either building, speak with one of our staff members, enquire about a loan or lodge savings. Arran noted that the ethos of the Credit Union movement is co-operation and opined that the merger is the best example of cooperation and members helping members.

She concluded that the Board is looking forward to the new future, which lies ahead for Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union, their staff and CEO Anthony Forde. She also wanted to take the opportunity on behalf of the Board to thank everyone involved in the merger and, in particular, wish Ted Murnane all the best in his retirement after many years of commitment and dedication to his role as CEO of Dunmanway Credit Union.

Grow Remote West Cork Chapter information night

In response to the myriad challenges of the last few years, four of West Cork's digital hubs joined forces in 2022 to set up a community group for remote workers. Over the last year, Grow Remote West Cork has connected remote workers locally to share resources and opportunities. It is now hosting a free information session for anyone interested in building a remote career on February 2 in Clonakilty.

Grow Remote is a national, community non-profit organisation that promotes the social impact of remote working to both employers and employees. Through events, and an ever-increasing network of local 'chapters', Grow Remote has built a unique ecosystem; local chapters are a great place to connect with other remote workers, to help others in your community find employment and to drive the repopulation and economy of your local area. The West Cork chapter was set up in partnership with Ludgate Hub (Skibbereen), Brookpark Business Centre (Dunmanway), Bantry Bayworks (Bantry) and Mix Coworking hub (Clonakilty).

If you are looking for a new job or are interested in finding out more about the new fully-funded 'Remote Work Ready' training programme, Grow Remote West Cork is running a free information session on Thursday, February 2 at 5.30pm at MixCo on Wolfe

Tone St, Clonakilty. The event will include light bites and refreshments.

Guest speaker on the night is Dónal Kearney, Community Manager of Grow Remote, who says: "The West Cork chapter of Grow Remote was one of our most active in 2022 and we are delighted to support their ongoing work to raise awareness of the social impact of remote work in the towns and villages of West Cork. Grow Remote's mission is to make remote work more visible and accessible in communities across Ireland and we are confident that this fully-funded Remote Work Ready course in West Cork will offer high-value skills and contacts to the participants."

The information evening will encourage networking between remote workers, employers and locals, and those interested in working remotely in the future are especially welcome. It is also perfect for local organisations or state bodies hoping to learn more about preparing and training employees.

Investment announcement for Fishery Harbour centres to include Castletownbere and Cape Clear

Castletownbere and Cape Clear have been included in a major investment of €37.3million in capital projects in fishery harbour around Ireland.

Cork South West deputy Christopher O'Sullivan has confirmed that Castletownbere has been allocated €5.1m in a recent announcement by Minister McConalogue.

Deputy O'Sullivan said "This allocation of much-needed funds is critical to the infrastructure of the facilities in the

area. The announcement of this funding demonstrates how successful Castletownbere has become, and how critical it is to not only fishing fleets, but land-based sea processing businesses also."

O'Sullivan continued, "I welcome the news that the programme also supports maintenance at Cape Clear, with road improvement, watermain, safety and maintenance works on the program, as well as works to make the pier accessible."



Appalling execution of protestors in Iran

The death penalty (also known as capital punishment) is an irreversible and violent punishment that has no place in any criminal justice system. Recent executions of protestors in Iran are a shameful development at the top of the scale of evil – people executed for just protesting. Please take a stand on this issue – sign an appeal to the Ambassador of Iran in Ireland on the website of Amnesty International (copy this link to your browser: You are free, you can protest in support of those who do not have this freedom.

There are many reasons that the death penalty is an unacceptable punishment.

1. It's the ultimate denial of human rights: First and foremost, sentencing someone to death denies that individual two

vital human rights guaranteed under international law, as established by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): – the right to life (Article 3); – the right not to be tortured or subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment (Article 5).

2. It doesn't deter crime: People in favour of the death penalty often say that it's a useful deterrent for the most abhorrent crimes in society – but evidence shows that this isn't the case.

3. It's irreversible, and mistakes happen (all too often): Execution is the ultimate, irrevocable punishment: the risk of executing an innocent person can never be eliminated. And such mistakes cannot be unmade.

Since 1976, 143 US death row prisoners have been

exonerated completely for their crimes. Who knows how many have been executed for a crime they did not commit?

4. It's often used within unfair justice systems: The countries executing the most people are often the same countries about which serious concerns are raised regarding the fairness of their judicial systems.

The 'top' three executing countries in 2012 – China, Iran and Iraq – are all guilty of issuing death sentences under circumstances that are far from transparent.

In both Iraq and Iran, many death sentences are issued after convictions relying on 'confessions' from prisoners that have been obtained by force, often through torture in detention.

5. It discriminates: You are more likely to be sentenced to

death if you are a member of a minority group within a state that executes. The death penalty disproportionately affects members of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as those living in poverty.

Serious mental health issues are also common in defendants sent to death row. At least one in ten prisoners executed in the US between 1977 and 2007 had experienced severe mental health problems that meant they were literally unable to comprehend the crime they were alleged to have committed, and unable to understand the terms of their sentence and imminent execution.

6. It can be used as a political tool: You are more likely to be sentenced to death if state authorities see you as a threat.

Ireland has long accepted

that the death penalty is an unacceptable punishment. Those of us who have the freedom to do so should object to its use anywhere. Iran's present authorities do not show that they pay

much attention to the criticisms of the outside world but, every protest counts. There are lives to be saved.



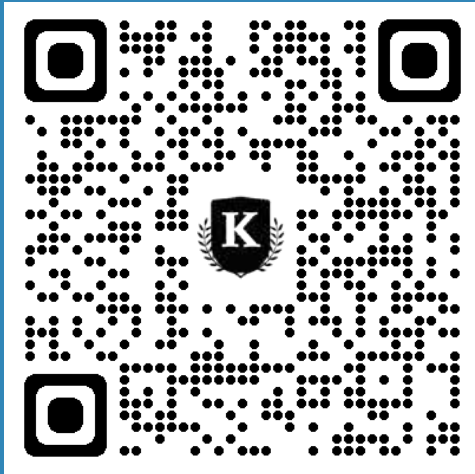


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THE HISTORY CORNER

Shane Daly

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

The Price sisters are two of the most famous female republicans in Irish history. Dolours is the more well-known of the two because of inflammatory comments she made about Gerry Adams and the death of Jean McConville in interviews before her death. The focus this month however – in a continuation of last month's article on hunger strikes – is on the strike the sisters went on in Brixton prison whilst incarcerated for the London bombings, as well as the effects that the strike and the force feeding the sisters endured had on their immediate and future lives.

In 1971, Dolours, together with Marian, joined the Provisional IRA. In 1972 Dolours joined an elite group within the IRA called 'The Unknowns' commanded by Pat McClure. The unknowns were tasked with various secretive activities and transported several accused traitors across the border into the Republic where they were 'disappeared'; some of whom have still not been discovered. Dolours claimed that she, Pat McClure, and a third unknown

The Price sisters

were tasked with killing Jean McConville, with the third unknown actually shooting her.

Dolours was in charge of the car bombing attacks in London on March 8, 1973, which injured over 200 people; and is believed to have contributed to the death of one person who suffered a fatal heart attack.

Dolours and Marian along with Gerry Kelly, Hugh Feeney and six others, were arrested as they were boarding a flight to Ireland on the day of the bombing. They were tried and convicted at the Great Hall in Winchester Castle on November 14, 1973. Although originally sentenced to life imprisonment, which was to run concurrently for each criminal charge, their sentence was eventually reduced to 20 years. The Price sisters served seven years for their part in the bombings.

Following the conviction and sentencing of the London bombers, all eight immediately announced they would go on hunger strike, in pursuit of a demand to be returned to Northern Ireland to serve out their sentences there. Not only would transfer to a jail in Northern Ireland bring the four hunger strikers closer to their families and to IRA comrades, but they would also qualify as special category prisoners, a status close to the classification of 'political prisoners'. This would mean that they would not have to do prison work, could wear their own clothes and mingle more or less freely with associates. The contrast to the strict, disciplined life that faced them in an English jail could not have been greater. Within days four of the prisoners dropped out, leaving the Price sisters, Dolours and Marian, and two of the men, Hugh Feeney and Gerry Kelly to pursue the



Marian Price, left, and Dolours Price

protest.

Famous Irish republican Thomas Ashe had gone on hunger strike in Mountjoy Jail in 1917 and was force fed. A contemporary of Ashe's, Eamon O'Dwyer later described to the Bureau of Military History what had happened to him during the forced-feeding process or 'artificial feeding' as it is referred to by the British authorities:

"Each man in turn was brought to a large room in which they had the usual operating chair. We were tied into this chair with bands around the legs and arms, a band around the body and also a band around the neck, and into each man's mouth an instrument was passed to keep it open. The forcible feeding outfit was brought along—a pint of milk with an egg broken into it, the pump and the tubing. The tubing was passed down through the mouth and into the stomach. I never had any fear of hunger striking and that was the first one, but I certainly did not like this pipe being passed down through my throat and I began to have a horror of it. I must admit that I was very much afraid of it, and often in years afterwards I woke up and felt this damn pipe or



Dolours (l) and Marian at civil rights demonstration in Belfast 1972

tube going down my neck like a snake. Every one of the crowd who suffered this vomited terribly. The days passed with this [force-feeding] as the only relief from the monotony of being held in the cell."

Two weeks into their hunger strike, the British authorities made the decision to force feed Dolours, Marian, Gerry and Hugh. Marion described her experience of this ordeal in detail:

"Four male prison officers tie you into the chair so tightly with sheets you can't struggle. You clench your teeth to try to keep your mouth closed

but they push a metal spring device around your jaw to prise it open. They force a wooden clamp with a hole in the middle into your mouth. Then, they insert a big rubber tube down that. They hold your head back. You can't move. They throw whatever they like into the food mixer; orange juice, soup or cartons of cream if they want to beef up the calories. They take jugs of this gruel from the food mixer and pour it into a funnel attached to the tube. The force-feeding takes fifteen minutes but it feels like forever. You're in control of nothing.

You're terrified the food will go down the wrong way and you won't be able to let them know because you can't speak or move. You're frightened you'll choke to death."

Dolours Price and her sister Marian, along with Hugh Feeney and Gerry Kelly, spent 205 days on hunger strike, 167 of which were punctuated by daily, and sometimes twice daily bouts of forced feeding. Feeney's and Kelly's prison protests attracted only a fraction of the public attention that the Price sisters received. The trauma of the force feeding often made hunger strikers vomit. The British authorities believed the sisters were throwing up for vanity reasons and continued to force feed them.

Both now suffering from anorexia and other ailments, Marion Price was released in 1980 and Dolours Price in 1981 on humanitarian grounds. After their release the sisters continued to struggle with anorexia for many years.

In 1983, Dolours married Irish actor Stephen Rae. They divorced in 2003. Throughout her life she suffered from depression and PTSD, as well as having a long-time addiction to alcohol and prescription drugs.

The more famous Irish hunger strikers are the ones who died. Particularly Bobby Sands and the nine men who followed him. In a way, those men and their legacies, as fighters and emblems, are easier to make sense of than Price's. Her story points to a more complicated experience, in which the traumas of war seep into people's emotional and mental fabric. Marian is still alive. Dolours died in 2013 from a toxic mix of prescribed medications at her home in Dublin.

Captain Cunningham's last stand

The Irish Civil War brought much misery to West Cork. As the first few months of 1923 played out, the conflict did not wane, with both sides keeping up the bitter fight. Free State forces swept through the area in large numbers to stamp out Republican activity and while many were jailed, many more went on the run, including the well-respected Captain of the IRA Clonakilty Company, Laurence 'Lar' Cunningham. **Pauline Murphy** recounts his story.

The son of a harness maker from 5 Boyle Street, Clonakilty, Laurence (or Lar) Cunningham worked at the bottling store of Deasy & Co Brewery in the town. In 1918 he joined the Irish Volunteers, becoming Captain of the

Clonakilty battalion of the Third Cork Brigade.

During the War of Independence he took part in various actions, including the attack on Rosscarbery and Clonakilty RIC Barracks and the attack on Ring Coastguard Station before

being captured by British forces and imprisoned until the truce in the summer of 1921.

Captain Cunningham opposed the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and when Civil War broke out he continued fighting for his Republican ideals.

When Free State forces arrived in Cork in August 1922, the 29-year-old Captain was forced to go on the run with many other Republican fighters. He managed to evade capture until the night of February 11, 1923 when he decided to make his way back to Clonakilty to visit a sick relative.

On this dangerous journey home Captain Cunningham

was accompanied by Jim 'Spud' Murphy, the legendary West Cork Republican who fought with Tom Barry's Flying Column at Kilmichael and Crossbarry.

Under the cover of darkness the two men trekked over hills and through fields until they arrived at Lyre crossroads and stopped for the night to break the journey at The Lyre Bar run by the Coghlan's, which was a known IRA safe house. The exhausted men were greeted with a warm fire, food and a bed but, little did they know, they had been spotted by the enemy, who sent a lorryload of Free State troops to the bar.

A fierce gunfight broke out

between the troops and the wanted men inside the pub. Knowing they were outnumbered, the IRA men made a dash for freedom but, as Captain Cunningham ran down the stairs, the strap of his rifle got caught on the bannister. This short delay was enough for the Free State troops to storm the pub and shoot him.

Spud Murphy had run ahead of Cunningham and, even though he was also shot, he made his escape and disappeared into the night (Murphy survived the war and later moved to Co. Louth where he worked for Customs and Excise in Dundalk).

When the soldiers ap-

proached, the wounded IRA Captain, who lay in a pool of blood on the floor of the pub, remarked to them: "We were caught napping!"

Captain Cunningham was first taken to Clonakilty Hospital but, because his wounds were so severe, he was sent to the Mercy Hospital in Cork city. He died there on February 15 and his remains are buried in Timoleague Abbey.

In the 1930s an iron cross was erected outside the Lyre Bar to mark the place of Captain Cunningham's last stand, one of many crosses scattered across West Cork that commemorate fallen fighters.

people Spotlight: THE MONTH OF LOVE

Walk with me



With more and more individuals turning to online dating, it has become very much the norm and, although it has its challenges, with over 300 million people worldwide now using dating apps, experts are predicting that within just a few years, 50 per cent of relationships will have begun this way. An assistant professor in Psychotherapy at DCU, Dr Ray O'Neill also works in private practice in Dublin and Beara. After leaving a longterm relationship in his early forties, Ray went on to meet his own husband online. Chatting to **Mary O'Brien**, he gives some insight into the 'minefield' that online dating can be and explains why going into it with hope in your heart but resilience in your spirit will give you a better chance at making a good match and meeting 'the one'.

According to Ray, while it is important to be resilient when taking this approach to dating, it's just as important to know when to step back from it to recover and build yourself back up before going online again.

"There is no doubt that it is a battlefield," says Ray "a place where you will get frustrated, you will get disappointed, you will get ignored and you will get hurt."

Research is showing that those who tend to be most successful on dating apps are those who are new to the experience.

"It's the people who go into it with some degree of naivety

or enthusiasm or just determination or a combination of all three and who determine to just be themselves who tend to be successful online," shares Ray.

"If you've been doing it for too long without a break and unsuccessfully, it's probably because you are a bit jaded and burnt out and after falling into using cliches, monosyllabic answers, emojis; your response pace has also perhaps slowed.

"There will be good dates and bad dates, there will be good experiences and bad experiences; it's about keeping yourself positive because positivity is what people will find most attractive in you."

He suggests having a wing person to help deal with the disappointments and give encouragement when needed. "Friends who meet you with a degree of hope rather than a degree of judgement are very important to have by your side.

"It's easy to get so caught up in it that you can't see the wood for the trees. We either shut down too quickly and start seeing red flags where there might be none or we don't see red flags where there are red flags and that's where having that other person who offers encouragement, support and another perspective, is really

Continued on next page...



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people Spotlight: THE MONTH OF LOVE

Walk with me .. cont'd from previous page

important.”

It's also advisable not to pin all your hopes on one person.

“It is a lottery so the more lines you put in, the better your odds are,” stresses Ray “and

that's why I would certainly encourage people to multi-date and not get fixated on one person: If that person actually turns up in real life and you have a few nice dates, then you can

think about making a commitment.”

“Rooting out the time wasters will always be a challenge. ‘You may find that they will sexualise the conversation quite quickly without even establishing if you are up for or into that,’ shares Ray. “They won't tell you much about themselves and, if they do, it will be unrealistic. They might also give abrupt answers or just answer with an emoji and be evasive about details.

“I find it so ironic that in a world where we have so many means through which to communicate, that our communication skills have collapsed. At the risk of sounding like a grumpy old man, an emoji just doesn't cut it; not for communication purposes and particularly in dating!”

“You need to ask questions that invite full answers: If you are getting full answers, then that person is interested but if someone isn't interested in spending three minutes writing a sentence, they are not going to be interested in a relationship and, if they answer with an emoji, then probably that's what the sex will be like too, and I don't mean ‘smiley face’!

“If you value yourself as somebody who deserves a romantic life, a personal life, a sexual life, then don't sell yourself short. Honestly, if someone can't answer a question like ‘what's your favourite film?’ you are not going to be able to negotiate the struggles of paying energy bills if you're living together in six years time!”

Finding a good match is always going to be a gamble so Ray recommends gathering as much data as possible before making the decision to go on that first date. Always keep in mind that what you're looking for are responses and not just reactions.

Having a brief phonecall before the first date is advisable. “It gives you a chance to assess that they are a real person but also to gather some data around their tone of voice, how they speak, what they speak about and so on,” explains Ray.

Keep it casual for the first meet-up. “No longer than between 25 and 45 minutes over a cup of coffee is a good guideline,” says Ray. “It can be hard to keep to it, especially if people have travelled a good distance, but, a bit like Christmas, it's the anticipation that is the best part, the date itself always tends to be anti-climatic.

“Desire needs space and time to thrive,” he continues. “It's important not to jump into bed with someone just because you feel you have an instant connection. There is always an

element of fantasy to desire and it's in the follow-up that this fantasy gets a chance to merge with reality.”

While over-sexualising the conversation or bringing up previous relationships is never a good idea on a first date, Ray says it's important not to be afraid of stepping into intimate or personal territory. “You can approach it by saying, ‘I hope it's ok to ask?’ or ‘you don't have to answer this question but I wondered if?’ or “maybe this is too much information but...”.

“I find it so ironic that in a world where we have so many means through which to communicate, that our communication skills have collapsed....an emoji just doesn't cut it; not for communication purposes and particularly in dating!”

For it to happen, a second date calls for curiosity and engagement on both sides. “Ask yourself: ‘Did they express curiosity about something in your life?’ ‘Did they remember details about your life and ask follow-up questions?’”

If key values and principles are crossed, compromised or unappreciated, then there should not be a second date. In this instance your wing person can be called on for their insight.

Terms such as ghosting, love bombing and catfishing are just a few that you need to familiarise yourself with in navigating this online territory.

“It used to take effort to ignore

someone,” says Ray. “Online now makes it all too easy for someone to just step away and ‘ghost’ you.”

While there is bound to be hurt, Ray's advice is to keep in mind at all times that this is a lottery, it's part of the game and ‘you’ deserve to find someone.”

Love bombing, where someone demonstrates excessive attention very early on, bombarding or harassing you with compliments, is something else to be wary of.

Love bombing can also be a warning sign of a cat fisher, someone with a fake online profile, usually looking to extort money.

“‘What's your favourite film?’ or ‘what book did you enjoy?’ or ‘have you seen Bad Sisters and what did you make of it?’ are all great questions that just allow a little bit of personality shine through, but ‘what was your most traumatic moment?’ or ‘I've had a huge fight with my daughter and she's not talking to me because I owe her €500’ are definite no-no's!” explains Ray.

“For some people catfishing is about power but the reality is that there is literally an industry built around it.”

People go online to date for all sorts of reasons – looking for sex, out of curiosity, to find friendship or a longterm relationship or to just waste time – and it's easy to get led astray in a world where a book is so often judged by its cover.

“It's good to have a multi-pronged approach and not to forget to go out into the real world,” advises Ray. “Whatever about socialising in pubs and clubs, joining voluntary groups or organisations that you have a passion for are really important. It isn't necessarily that you

will meet someone who you want to date but that you will meet someone who will know someone who might know someone who you may want to date!”

After becoming single in his forties when his relationship with a longterm partner broke down, Ray, now 51, found himself entering the world of online dating using a benchmark learned from experience. “The sudden death of my mother just reconfigured my life,” he shares. “I realised that what I wanted from a partner was someone who would hold my hand, give me a hug or just be there beside me.”

“Being older and a little bit wiser, I can share with you that kindness and generosity are much more attractive qualities in a person than physical appearance,” says Ray.

“All of us age, our weight changes, our hair changes, our skin changes; you have to look for something that's more durable than that; and so really look to see is there a connection from within, within you and within them...that's when a relationship starts formulating.

“We are looking to walk with someone and for someone to walk with us. It doesn't mean you have to carry each other, it doesn't mean you have to hold hands all the time, just that fundamentally you are going in the same direction.”

Finding a good match is always going to be a gamble so Ray recommends gathering as much data as possible before making the decision to go on that first date. Always keep in mind that what you're looking for are responses and not just reactions.



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Your something blue: What makes a 'Blue Book' wedding special?

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“Your wedding is the biggest day of your lives so having a stunning location to celebrate and wow your guests is a must; it will also serve as an amazing backdrop for the all-important photos that you will cherish forever. Blue Book properties are magnificent country houses, impeccably decorated and with gorgeous gardens so they really are the perfect location.

“Your special day needs an

extra special place. By their nature Blue Book properties like Fernhill are unique, with rich histories and traditions that can really add to the romance of an occasion. The period look adds charm to weddings and allows you to become part of the history and story of houses like Fernhill.

“The meal is one of the most recalled memories of every wedding; as such an integral part of the day it simply has to be the very best. Food is at the core of the Blue Book, with the very best of local produce at the heart its philosophy. Because each property is hand-selected, after numerous undercover visits, you can rest assured that your guests will experience fabulous food at Fernhill and that your wedding banquet will be talked about long after the celebrations.

“Blue Book properties represent the finest hotels in all of Ireland so you will know that they will do everything to create the very best day imaginable for you and your guests. Like many Blue Book Country Houses we are a family run business and we take pride in being able to provide exceptional service that is renowned throughout West Cork.”

Your wedding is the most special day of your life so make your ‘something blue’ a Blue Book property and relax knowing that it will be truly special indeed. For more information on hosting a Blue Book wedding at Fernhill email wedding@fernhillhousehotel.com, call 0238833258, see their Instagram @fernhillclon or visit www.fernhillhousehotel.com

For generations of brides having ‘something blue’ on their wedding day has been a lovely tradition, cherished and passed down from mother to daughter. This year the O’Neill family and team at Fernhill House Hotel in Clonakilty were celebrating their own ‘something blue’ after they were invited to join Ireland’s Blue Book. The Blue Book is renowned for being the premier collection of country houses in Ireland and has been synonymous with amazing weddings for decades. **Michael jnr**, one of the fourth generation of O’Neills at Fernhill, explains what makes a Blue Book wedding so special.



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people Spotlight: THE MONTH OF LOVE

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To be in with a chance of winning fill in the missing surnames of this famous literary Irish couple: **James _____ and Nora _____.**

Email the answer with your name and phone number and with 'Oriel Competition' in the subject line of email to info@westcorkpeople.ie. Entries must be in by Feb 13.

RECENT NUPTIALS



Alice and Liam taken at Dunmore House Hotel. Photographer: annagroniecka.com

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Getting married abroad

If either you or your partner is an Irish citizen and you plan to get married abroad, you will need to meet certain legal requirements to ensure your marriage is legally valid (legally recognised) when you return to Ireland. You may also need to bring certain documentation with you.

When you get married abroad, you must meet all the legal requirements of the country you are marrying in. These legal formalities are usually different to those in Ireland.

What are the rules for getting married abroad?

Before you get married abroad, you should contact the civil registration office in the country you will be marrying in to check you meet the legal requirements and to find out what document you require. Ireland's General Register Office has no involvement in marriages abroad.

Some countries will ask you for a Certificate of Freedom to Marry. This is sometimes called a:

- Civil Letter of Freedom
- Certificate de Coutume
- Certificate of Nulla Osta

As well as meeting the foreign legal requirements, you are also required by Irish law to have capacity to marry.

How to get a Certificate of Freedom to Marry?

You should start the application for a Certificate of Freedom to Marry online using the Department of Foreign Affairs' website. You will need to complete a questionnaire and make a payment online. This currently costs €66, including €60 for the certificate, and €6 for handling and postage.

After you complete the online questionnaire, you will get a checklist of all the supporting documents you need. You will also be asked to print one or more statutory declarations. A statutory declaration is a written statement that you must sign with a witness.

You will then be asked to finish your application by post. Your application is not complete until the Department gets your documents.

When should I apply?

You should submit your application at least 4 months before the date of your marriage.

If you submit your application 28 days or less before the date of your intended marriage, there is an additional fee of €60 per Irish applicant.

Applications to the following diplomatic missions and countries are not included in the

online payment system.

- Embassy Abuja
- Embassy Malawi
- Sudan
- South Sudan

When will I get my Certificate of Freedom to Marry?

In most cases, the Department will send your Certificate of Freedom to Marry directly to you. You should get it within 8 weeks of the date of the marriage.

Note: If you are getting married in Italy, the Department will send the Certificate of Freedom to Marry to the Irish embassy in Rome. The embassy will translate it and forward it to the address in Italy that you have specified in your questionnaire.

How do I ensure that my marriage is recognised in Ireland?

Marriages of Irish citizens abroad are registered in the country where they occur. The Irish General Register Office has no role in advising on or the registering of marriages of Irish citizens that take place abroad. Marriages that take place outside the State are not normally registered in Ireland.

Your marriage will only be recognised in Ireland if:

- It is entered on the civil

register of the country where the wedding took place

- All legal formalities have been followed

If you need to show evidence that you are married, your foreign marriage certificate will usually be accepted for official purposes in Ireland.

If your marriage takes place in an EU country, and your foreign marriage certificate is not in English, you can ask for a multilingual standard form (MSF), available in all EU languages, from the authorities of the EU country which issued

the public document.

If your marriage takes place in a non-EU country and the certificate is in a foreign language, you must provide an official translation or a translation from a recognised translation agency.

If you want a copy of your foreign marriage certificate, contact the civil registration authority in the country where you were married.

If you need further information about this topic or you have other questions, you can call a member of the local Citizens

Information Service in Bantry on 0818 07 8390. They will be happy to assist you and if necessary arrange an appointment for you.

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The offices are staffed from 10am -5pm from Monday to Thursday and on Friday from 10am -4pm. Alternatively you can email on bantry@citinfo.ie or log on to www.citizensinformation.ie



people Spotlight: **THE MONTH OF LOVE****Yours truly: Unique weddings at Kenmare Butter Market**

A unique wedding venue, Kenmare Butter Market, one of Ireland's foremost contemporary art exhibition spaces, provides a stunning and ever-changing visual background to nuptial celebrations.

Built in the mid-1800s, the former Butter Market was

converted to a dance hall in the 1960s and then to an exhibition and performance space in 2020. Steeped in history (and romance from its dancing days!), and located in the centre of Kenmare town, on both the Iveragh and Beara peninsulas, this bright, modern space gives you the versatility to create a day that will be memorable and special for you and all of your guests.

Up to 100 guests can be accommodated in the space and the kitchen team have a number of options available



to build a delicious menu for you and your guests.

Liz Byrne, wedding co-ordinator at Kenmare Butter Market will be happy to make an appointment to meet you and show you around the space. Liz can also assist you with recommendations of local suppliers for your special day. "Kenmare is truly a little gem," she says. "Couples getting married at Kenmare Butter Market, and their guests, will have great fun walking through the picturesque streets, stopping to take beautiful photos outside



all the colourful shops and restaurants. The town park, stone circle, or Kenmare Pier all provide superb backdrops for photographers."

Book an appointment for a personal tour of Kenmare Butter Market by emailing Liz on lizkenmarebuttermarket@gmail.com.



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people Spotlight: THE MONTH OF LOVE

Scaling new heights together

With a shared sense of adventure and love for the outdoors, Clonakilty native Clodagh Helen, 29, and Anthony Quigley, 34, from Bunninadden in County Sligo, found each other on the dating app Tinder in the summer of 2020, at the height of Covid restrictions. Love blossomed quickly in the outdoors between these kindred spirits and the couple now live together in Sligo.

Zoologist Clodagh has always been an outdoorsy person, with a big passion for nature and animals of all sorts; particularly birds in recent years. She works as a Project Officer with the Hen Harrier Programme, a project targeted specifically at farmers with land designated for the protection of breeding Hen Harrier.

While a horse riding accident and resulting severe spinal injury in 2018 should have prevented Clodagh from walking anywhere for a long time, a mere six months later, after working hard and with the support of her family, the determined hiker made an amazing recovery and set herself the challenge of climbing to the highest point in every county of Ireland within one year of breaking her back – a feat she inspiringly completed.

“The County Tops Challenge was the best type of rehabilitation I could have done,” she says. “Starting with the smaller hills involving very short walks, and building up to the highest, longer days out

allowed my body to strengthen slowly but consistently and progressively I think.”

Anthony spent 10 years working in Australia before moving home to Sligo in 2017, where he retrained in health-care. Not long before finding love with Clodagh, in 2019 Anthony found his passion for life in the hills, traversing from flat walks, to singular mountain hikes, to multi peaks, to mountain challenges to only last year completing the Tour du Mont Blanc. He now has the GR20 in his sight line.

Needless to say the couple’s first date did of course involve hiking boots and thereafter lots of long walks together in beautiful areas, setting the trend for the future of this relationship.

Although she describes herself as more of a ‘scenic hiker’ than Anthony; with his help, Clodagh is really enjoying taking on more challenging hikes.

“It is often on these longer, tougher days out in more remote wilderness areas that we have had the most spectacular experiences in nature; white-

tailed eagles in Kerry, dotterel in Leitrim, incredible sunsets from mountain summits and so on,” she shares.

As a result, Anthony is now also getting very good at identifying bird species, often pointing them out to the expert!

This shared passion makes its way into all of Clodagh and Anthony’s weekends away and holidays together, which always include at least a hike or two!

The couple have walked Carrigfadda Hill in the pitch dark together; sitting at the top and watching the sun rise over West Cork on a beautiful New Year’s Day morning.

While a weekend organised by Anthony, which included hiking the Glencoaghan Horse-shoe in Connemara, a flight to the Aran Islands (which had been on Clodagh’s bucket list) and a fabulous stay at Ballynahinch Castle, rates highly for a Clodagh when it comes to romantic gestures; simple things like Anthony carrying her bag on a long tiring hike, also means a lot.

For Anthony, the rock of support that Clodagh provides in whatever challenge he sets himself is an important part of their love story.

“I have come up with some crazy mountain challenges, one to mind is where I wanted to climb the four highest provincial peaks in under 24 hours. Rather than brushing the idea off, Clodagh supported me and aided me to dream it was possible. Coming to the time of the event, she supported me with having meals cooked, driving and more to achieve this challenge, which I find is very romantic!”

When they’re not scaling hills or mountains together, Clodagh enjoys spending time in her garden or taking photographs and Anthony turns his hand to farming.

This couple’s deep respect and admiration for each other has created a strong and healthy partnership.

And while Anthony’s year-long hoarding of Easter eggs and Clodagh’s habit of shouting out the name of a bird species mid conversation



Clodagh and Anthony at the summit of Rysy in the Tatra Mountains, the highest mountain in Poland (2501m).

could be regarded as annoying habits; they each accept the other for who they are, warts and all!

“Our relationship began during the pandemic, which I think was a great thing; we had plenty of time just the two of us without distractions to build a really strong foundation. By the time things were returning to ‘normal’ and we got really

busy in our own lives, we had great security in each other,” shares Clodagh.

“I think there is no rule book that anyone can follow, as we are all unique, but as long as you have respect everything else will fall into place,” says Anthony.

For now the future is very much a blank canvas, as Clodagh and Anthony both

firmly believe in living in the moment, but they do mention looking forward to a trekking trip to the Italian Dolomites later this year and no doubt Anthony may have his sights set on reaching higher altitude in the future with the support of his partner in hiking and love.

RECENT NUPTIALS



Sarah McCann and Niall Foley were married at The Maryborough in August 2022. Photographer: dermotsullivan.com

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people FOCUS ON SPRING HOMES

West Cork property market update



Estate Agent **Con O'Neill** of Sherry Fitzgerald O'Neill shares his knowledge of the West Cork property market.

The Sherry FitzGerald House Price Index recorded an increase of 5.7 per cent in the average value of second hand homes in 2022. This was a notable slowdown on the growth of 9.6 per cent in 2021 as the market recovered from COVID-19 restrictions.

Price growth is stronger outside of Dublin, with average values nationally excluding Dublin rising 6.4 per cent in 2022. These figures are in line with what we are seeing on the ground in West Cork and we expect the trend to continue in 2023 with a price increase of around 3 per cent anticipated.

Market breakdown:

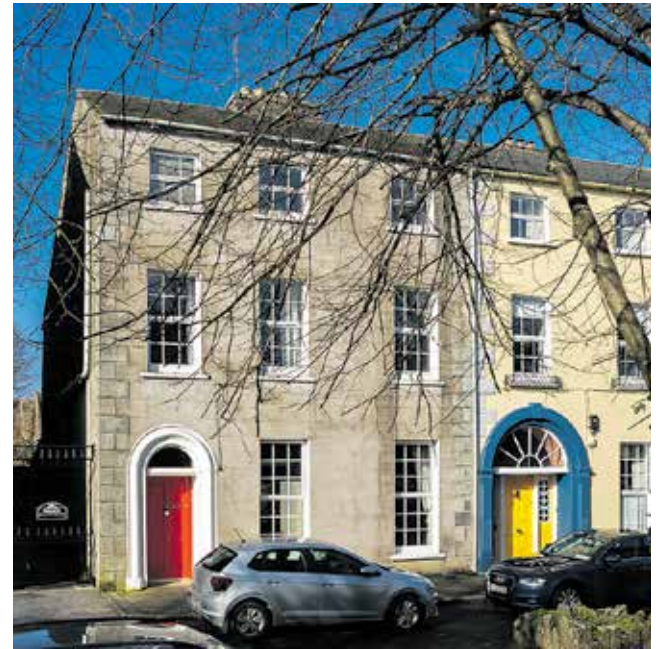
- Demand is particularly strong for modern or modernised detached houses with buyers paying a significant premium to purchase turn-key properties within walking distance of towns and villages. This segment of the market could be up as much as 15 per cent on 2021 prices and we expect the trend to continue into 2023. Demand is across the board with strong local buyers, people relocating either to work from home or retire and international buyers looking to secure these homes.
- Detached family homes in the countryside, within commuting distance of Cork, also saw strong price increases in 2022, with young families looking to base themselves outside of the

city.

- Another segment of the market with strong demand was luxury homes, with 2022 seeing the return of international buyers from both mainland Europe, UK and the US looking to purchase high-end homes, predominantly in coastal areas.
- New homes, where available, saw significant price increases of around 10 per cent to 15 cent in 2022 with first-time buyers looking to take advantage of the help-to-buy scheme and buyers looking to downsize being the main driver.
- The market for second-hand semi-detached homes and town houses was largely unchanged from 2021.
- Houses in need of renovation or significant redecoration have arguably reduced in price. Purchasers are put off even investigating renovating due to general negativity around build costs, and while prices are undoubtedly high, many get a pleasant surprise when they do price work.

The main factors that will affect the housing market into 2023:

- We expect issues around shortage of supply to continue to impact the market. The continuing rise in build costs has so far been largely offset by a rise in prices for new-builds currently under construction. It has, however, become increasingly high risk to start a large scale development and the lack of new schemes in the pipeline around West Cork will be a major conversation point in the year ahead.
- The introduction of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, which has recently been extended to include all vacant houses outside of towns, with up to €30,000 available for vacant homes and €50,000 for derelict properties, will hopefully encourage more people to take on these projects and bring these houses back to life.
- It is difficult to assess the impact of an increase in mortgage interest rates on the market. It is still cheaper to buy with a mortgage at the higher interest



18 Emmet Square which sold in August 2022

rate than to rent at present.

- The loosening of lending rules to allow borrowing at four times gross annual income for first-time buyers and fresh-start applicants will especially help single people to buy a home but may put further pressure on property prices.
- Unfortunately, it will be much of the same for the rental market. As has been the trend

for over a decade, the exodus of landlords from the rental market continued unabated in the year with just 13 per cent of purchases at Sherry FitzGerald made by investors. Comparatively, 36 per cent of all sales were investors selling their properties, signalling a huge disparity between those entering and exiting the market.



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people FOCUS ON SPRING HOMES

Cluttercore: Gen Z's revolt against millennial minimalism is grounded in Victorian excess

Have you heard maximalism is in and minimalism is out? Rooms bursting at the seams with clashing florals, colourful furniture and innumerable knick-knacks, this is what defines the new interiors trend cluttercore (or bricabracomania).

Some say it's a war between generation Z (born 1997-2012) and minimal millennials (born 1981-1996), symptomatic of bigger differences. Others say it's a pandemic response, where our domestic prisons became cuddly cocoons, stimulating our senses, connecting us with other people and places. But what really lays behind the choice to clutter or cull?



Fabrics and wallpapers by Sanderson

by **Vanessa Brown**
Course Leader MA Culture,
Style and Fashion,
Nottingham Trent University

THE CONVERSATION

Why do some people revel in collections of novelty egg-cups? Or have so many framed pictures you can barely see the (ferociously busy) wallpaper?

And why do those at the other end of the spectrum refuse to have even the essential stuff visible in the home, hiding it behind thousands of euros' of incognito cupboards?

One important reason for the clash between minimalism and maximalism is simple: the relentless pendulum swing of fashion. Whatever psychological or cultural rationale pundits may suggest, fashion is always about the love of what strikes us as new or different.

This struggle might seem new but it is just history repeating itself, encapsulated in the interior struggle between less and more that began between class-ridden Victorian commodity culture and modernism's seemingly healthy and egalitarian dream.

A lot of stuff

Victorians liked stuff that they could put on display. These things communicated their status through solid evidence of capital, connectedness, signs of exotic travel and colonial power. Think inherited antique cabinets and Chinese ivory animals. Then imagine the labour

required to not only create, but polish, dust, manage and maintain these myriad possessions.

But this deluge of stuff was made possible for more people as mass-produced commodities – especially those created from synthetic materials – became cheaper.

All this created a novel and lasting problem: how to choose and how to organise a world with so much aesthetic possibility – how to make things 'go together'. The 19th and 20th-century guardians of culture and the 'public good' were just as concerned about the spiritual chaos of too much clutter as modern organisational consultants like Marie Kondo.

In response, they set up design schools and educational showcases, like the Great Exhibition of 1851, the 1930

New York World's Fair and the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Very little stuff

The minimalist mantra 'less is more', courtesy of German art school the Bauhaus, was established in the 1920s. For some modernists, 'needless decoration' was a sign of an 'uncivilised' (read feminine and non-white) mind. They nevertheless also looked to 'primitive' cultures for bold aesthetics and authenticity superior to western excess.

Modernists believed that simplicity and elegant functionality, enabled by mass production and cost-effective new materials (like tubular steel and plywood), could promote social equality in interior design. They had a point. Without stuff, what working person can, realistic-



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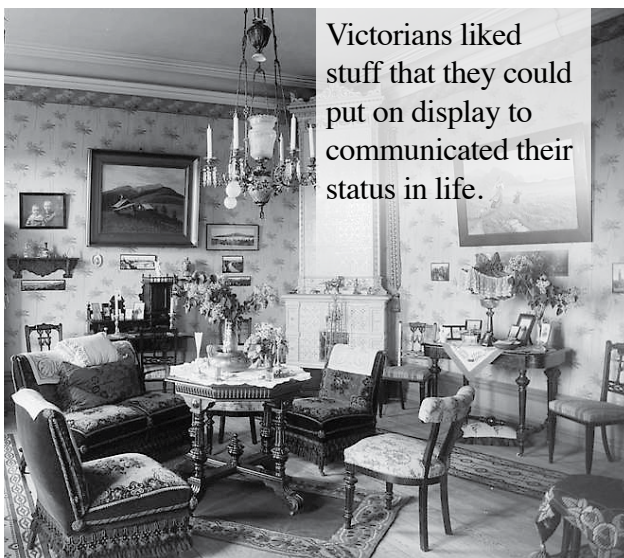
ly, keep 'curated' clutter looking cool (and clean)?

But, what about cosiness? That feeling, described in the 1990s as 'cocooning or providing a 'warm welcome' to guests?

A 1980s American study found that the homeliness desired in interiors was achieved by successive circles of stuff – from the white picket fence, to the wisteria on the exterior walls, the wallpaper, pictures and bookshelves lining the interior walls and then furniture arranged also in roughly circular formations.

These layers would then be overlain with decorations and texture, making symbolic entry points as well as enclosures. 'Homey' was aesthetically the total opposite of modern minimalism, whose 'functionality' was perceived as cold, unsympathetic and unwelcoming.

Despite this popular rejection, modernism was the postwar default for European 'good taste', seen in design HQs and high-end interiors magazines. But wasn't it all not just uncomfortable, but also a bit boring? And, unfortunately, every bit as unforgiving without a lot of cash and a team of cleaners?



Victorians liked stuff that they could put on display to communicated their status in life.

Modernism on the cheap is just depressing (see the concrete blocks of 1960s council flats). Sleek built-in cupboards cost a lot. And smooth, unadorned surfaces show every speck of dirt.

Rebelling against modernist mantras, 1980s design sought to put 'the fun back into function' for sophisticates. However, ordinary people were always buying fun stuff, from plastic pineapples to granny-chic knick knacks.

Nowadays, the 'safe' and default mainstream option is a broadly-defined 'modern' look

characterised by Ikea. But it's not really minimalist. This look encourages an accumulation of stuff that never quite functions or fits together and which still fills a room according to the ethos of homeliness – even though each object may 'look modern'.

It fails to tell a convincing story of the self or remain tidy, prompting further purchases of 'storage solutions'. Minimalists strip this back to a minimum of objects with a neutral palette. Fewer mistakes equals less chucking out. Less stuff equals



Modernists revolted against the interior excess of the Victorians, favouring sleek design with clean lines.

less to change when you tire of it.

But minimalism is more difficult than ever. We are powerless against the tides of half-wanted incoming consumer stuff – especially if you have children – which makes achieving minimalism all the more impressive. People who do achieve it frame their shots with care and they chuck a lot of stuff away.

Making a more elastic aesthetic look good is also difficult, maybe more difficult. Clutter lovers range from sub-pathological hoarders, to upper mid-

dle-class apers of aristocratic eclecticism, to ethical 'keepers'. An aesthetic mess can look like an accidental loss of human control, identity or hope. It takes a lot to make harmony out of all that potential noise – and keep it tidy.

Cluttercore is perfect for now, a vehicle to display the curated self, the 'interesting' and 'authentic' self so demanded by social media. And it hides behind the idea that anything goes, when in fact, maybe some things must.



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people FOCUS ON SPRING HOMES

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another room would have a similar effect.

Ceilings with light fittings tend to shrink a space. Lights are best located on walls, about 300mm below ceiling height and directed to shine up across the ceiling and down the walls. This spreads light over the surfaces, rather than concentrating it in a single direction, creating an illusion of size.

Standing and desktop lamps provide the same diversity of spread and reflection.

Using colour

Interior designers do follow guidelines based on studies of colour and light theory to create the appearance of more space, though these may be seen as subjective and relying on intuition.

Lighter colours, for instance, best reflect light and so create the appearance of space. Darker colours, decorative wallpapers and patterned fabrics shrink space and absorb light. Studies have shown lighter ceilings are perceived to be higher than darker ceilings.

Dark colours for floors can constrict a space. Deeply ornate textures and fabrics also shrink volume, as do exaggerated patterned carpets and rugs. Open and continuous flooring surfaces, like timber boards, engineered flooring, broadloom carpet and tiles, create an appearance of space.

Flexible space

You could reorganise to change the functions of the rooms. Think, for instance, are the bedrooms well placed, or should the living areas be relocated?

Generally, external views are best adopted for the daylight hours and so for the living and working areas. And bedrooms rely less on broad outside views.

Things that normally work for a single purpose can take on more functions, which aids in using a small space for many purposes. For instance, if you own the apartment, you could replace a normal brick or timber



dividing wall with a built-in cupboard which can face, back-to-back, into both rooms.

Using furniture

While there is limited research on the perceived spatial dimensions of furniture and its effect, studies do show the more furniture you put into a space, the smaller it appears. And most of us know the less 'stuff' we have in our homes the bigger they seem.

Fitted living room furniture with built-in side tables that hug the wall is better than having

large single units and isolated tables. TVs and sound systems incorporated into storage are more space-efficient than stand-alone units.

Big furniture, like settees and coffee tables, ornate bedheads and oversized loose chairs, also overcrowds space. It's not comfortable to have to walk around large pieces of furniture rather than through space.

The best types of furniture to use in small spaces are simple open-framed chairs and tables, furniture with light frames, steel or timber, and open backs.

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by **Kirsten Day**

*Course Director Interior
Architecture, Swinburne
University of Technology*

THE CONVERSATION

Research shows humans don't like being caged in, preferring to be in larger, more open spaces. And different factors – such as the shape of rooms, the colour of surfaces and the positioning and brightness of lighting – all influence how we perceive space.

These are the elements designers and architects consider when creating spaces. And there are several tips you can use yourself to make your apartment, or any living space, seem roomier.

Extending space

If your home has outside views, you should use these. By facing living areas and furniture towards the window or balcony, the outside landscape becomes an extension of the inside space, increasing the perception of the room's size.

Architects (including Frank Lloyd Wright in his famous work Fallingwater) have long used this tactic to draw the eye outside, as a contrast to smaller spaces with low ceilings. A window doesn't need to be large to create this effect, but some research has shown it needs to take up about 20 per cent of the wall to improve satisfaction with the interior space.

You can also place a mirror opposite that view, which will reflect the outside and contrive another illusory kind of 'outside'. A mirror's view into

DNG offers TY students a unique view into world of real estate

DNG is once again opening its (virtual) doors to transition year students who have their minds set on a career in Ireland's property market.

Registration is now open for DNG's interactive online work experience TY Programme, which will run from February 8-10. 500 students are expected to take part in the programme this year.

Participating students will be provided with a first hand understanding of working as an estate agent in Ireland, experiencing a day in the life through online auctions, virtual viewings, 3rd level college presentations, and an auctioneering and property services apprenticeship programme.

Before the transition to the online format, only 25 positions were available each year on DNG's programme. Utilising the online platform has greatly increased the opportunity to participate and provides students of all backgrounds and abilities with the opportunity to get involved. DNG has delivered its TY Programme to over 1,000 students across the country since 2021.

TY students, parents and teachers can find more information about DNG's TY programme and register to take part by visiting ty.dng.ie

people FOCUS ON SPRING HOMES

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Washing-Up Liquid, Non-Bio Laundry Detergent, and Fabric Conditioner and provide a fresh citrus fragrance.

The range is available in SuperValu stores and eco shops nationwide. Shoppers can bring their empty bottles of Tru Eco cleaning products to refill in-store at a cheaper cost. The

act of refilling prevents plastics from entering the waste stream while also saving people money.

Gabriel Leahy, Manager, Scally's SuperValu in Clonakilty says: "We all must do our bit for our environment. We are always seeking top quality, eco-friendly solutions for our customers. We are delighted to stock an

Irish made range that offers our customers a greener and healthier solution for cleaning their homes. Our Tru Eco refill station is busy, which is great to see! By refilling Tru Eco products, our customers are saving money and preventing plastic waste in our community. It's a win win for everyone."

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business, and reducing their plastic waste footprint, and environmental impact as well as lowering carbon emissions.

VivaGreen is recognised as a world leader in the research and development of biodegradable, chemical-free, plastic-free, and recycled products and is committed to producing environmentally friendly products of the highest quality. The award-winning company

has been nominated for the 2023 Guaranteed Irish Business Awards in three categories, taking place in March.

Follow VivaGreen on Instagram @vivagreen.ie for updates and competitions.

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Clonakilty SuperValu manager (Gabriel Leahy) with his colleague Violet.

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people Environment : Making a difference

New 'rivers' group springs up in Clonakilty

'Clochán Uisce', a new group just started in Clonakilty, is inviting anyone with an interest in our local rivers to meet to share memories, collect data, plan walks and promote these sometimes overlooked natural resources. The group is the Irish hub for the initiative 'Drinkable Rivers', an EU project to monitor the health of our rivers through regular testing and observation, and was borne out of a passion for the important role rivers can play in our communities and in our landscape.

The first river, Clochán Uisce, is looking towards is the Feagle.

The river Feagle rises in Ahaguilla, west of Clonakilty. It flows eastwards, passing Ballyvackey stone circle and Ahamilla and joins the town at Western Road. The 'Feale', as it's known to some locals, meets the sea at Croppy Quay and flows out into Clonakilty Bay, a special area of conservation. Its Irish name 'Foghal' translates to a 'backward current in tidal water' and at different times of year it becomes home to sea trout, otters and king fishers –

although in much smaller numbers than in recent history. The group will be hosting walks and cycles of the Feagle this spring and all are welcome. The aim will be to encourage people of all ages to get better acquainted with and enjoy the 'Feale'.

Clochán Uisce's next meeting will take place at 8, St Paul's Cl, Clonakilty on Saturday, February 4, 5pm and all are welcome. If you would like to join the mailing list or have knowledge you would like to share please email the group at clochanuisce@gmail.com.



All ages cycle along the river Feagle, Clonakilty, identifying insects.

Bird song

Nicholas Mitchell explains why it's not too early in the year to talk about bird song, normally associated with the dawn chorus.

Our resident birds have already started to sing. We humans mark the beginning of spring with the celebration of St Brigid on the first day of February. St Brigid's Day 'Lá Fhéile Bríde' is our festival of fertility, signalling

an end to the winter darkness and heralding a new season of hope and growth. Birds have no need of such festivals; they recognise the arrival of spring with the lengthening daylight and an innate urge to reproduce. With this comes a change in their behaviour. Our resident bird population need to find breeding territories and mates. Our summer visiting birds feel the same, but first they have an ingrained need to leave their wintering grounds and fly north to their breeding area. Whether resident or summer visitor, birds use song to help achieve their need to mate. Generally it is the males that sing, and they do so to proclaim a territory and to attract a mate.

Once a suitable territory has been found, one that will provide the birds with food and water, protection, and good

nesting sites, then the birds will sing to advertise to other birds of the same species that this plot is now claimed. Birds of other species are unlikely to be in competition for the same type of food or for similar nesting sites, so the song is not directed at them and different species will coexist in the same area. Birds also use their song to 'show off' to, and hopefully attract, the opposite sex. As already stated, singing is generally performed by the male of the species. One notable exception to this is the Robin.

We humans have a larynx, an impressive instrument in its own right, but birds have a syrinx. This is positioned closer to the lungs and has two bronchial tubes instead of one, which allows most birds to sing with two pitches at the same time and independently of each



Song Thrush (male - *Turdus philomenos*) and Robin.
Pics: Nicholas Mitchell



itself when singing. Like a jazz singer, it sings in short bursts of freeform effortless song.

Wren: Can sing all year but mainly March to July, in scrub, shrub layer of woodland, overgrown grassland and reeds, often low down. Its song is very loud and fast and has an old-fashioned football rattle in it.

Chaffinch: Sings from February to September in scrub, woodland, farmland, parks and gardens on exposed perches, normally above us. Its song is a rapid set of repeated notes ending in a flourish "tia dia".

Start by learning the songs of these common birds and then expand your repertoire when the summer visitors start arriving. Have fun and enjoy nature.

other. As a result, birds can have a range and variety of notes that would have an opera singer weeping with jealousy. If you have ever heard a Skylark sing whilst hovering high in the sky, sometimes for ten minutes or more, you will also realise that birds can both inhale and exhale while singing.

Who is singing that song?

The dawn chorus is when bird song reaches a crescendo, but if you have ever heard a bird singing and wanted to identify that bird by its song, then now is the time to start learning. The birds are already starting to sing now and, most crucially, they can be seen. Trees only start coming into leaf in March with the Elder and finish in May with the Ash. This leaves a lengthy period when birds are singing and some or all of the branches are bare; perfect for finding and identifying the bird that is singing. Going out to find and identify by sight the bird that is singing is by far the best way to learn, but here are a few pointers to some of our common resident birds:

Great Tit: Sings from January

to June, sometimes later, in scrub, woodland, parks and gardens, and not so much in the open. It sounds like "teacherteacherteacher".

Blue Tit: Can sing all year but mainly February to August, in scrub, woodland, parks and gardens, found on branches picking for insects. Its song is a high pitch tremolo ending in a lower pitched trill, like he's telling a joke and then laughing.

Long-tailed Tit: Vocal all year round in woodland, parks and gardens, always moving in restless foraging parties. Listen for a sort of high pitched Morse code and harsh rippling "tsurp".

Blackbird: Found in scrub, woodland, farmland, parks and gardens. Its song has a melodic, low pitched fluting quality with rambling phrases.

Song thrush: Found in scrub, woodland, farmland, parks and gardens. "The wise old Song Thrush always says everything twice". Its song is similar in quality and tempo to the Blackbird, but it repeats phrases.

Robin: Very territorial, it sings all year round in scrub, woodland, parks and gardens on any perch and generally shows



Branch News

Upcoming outings being held by the Branch are:

Sunday, February 12

Kinsale Marsh

Sunday, March 5

Timoleague

Visit our website www.birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie for more information about these events. To receive news and reminders about our events join our mailing list by sending an email to mailinglist@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie. For more information about the Branch, contact Fiona O'Neill at secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie. Facebook @BirdWatchIrelandWestCork Twitter @BWIWestCork

STORIES OF THE River Bandon

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Tour will return at 2pm
€10 contribution towards bus rental

Local Authority Waters Programme

An Roinn Tithiochta, Rialtais Aitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

beag

people Environment : Making a difference

Funding for locally led biodiversity projects doubled

A doubling of funding for the Local Biodiversity Action Fund to €3 million for 2023 means Local Authorities can now apply to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for funding to deliver more local biodiversity projects.

First launched in 2018, the Local Biodiversity Action Fund offers funding to help Local Authorities achieve actions identified in the National Biodiversity Action Plan, recognising the important role they play in addressing the biodiversity emergency. This funding stream enables the development of projects that address biodiversity loss in Local Authority areas by helping to create new habitats, restoring existing ones and by tackling invasive alien species.

The scheme, operated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, has proven hugely popular, with 109 projects funded in 2022. A wide variety of projects were financed including in the areas of Wetland Restoration, Bird Surveys, Dune restoration, Biodiversity Awareness

and Invasive Alien Species.

Examples of projects that received funding in 2022 include:

- A survey of South Dublin County to identify and map the distribution of wetlands in the region and develop a Wetland Inventory Database with GIS map.

- A survey to establish a detailed picture of the distribution of breeding Swifts in 49 localities across Louth to allow decision-makers to effectively manage for Swifts at site level.

- A project to implement best practices in the protection and restoration of sand dune habitats designated within Natura 2000 sites in County Kerry.

- Low Carbon Town: a project in Laois that aims to plant three small, dense native woodland habitats on school campuses and another at Laois Education Centre as an educational resource for teachers as part of new a Biodiversity Demonstration site

- A Quagga Mussel project which saw 9 Local Authorities alongside a team from UCD to improve our understanding of the ecology of this new invasive species in Ireland.

SOCIAL
DEMOCRACY

Holly Cairns TD

A proposed deal between Coillte and a UK based investment fund has become a major political issue, and rightly so. I have received many emails and messages from people who oppose the deal, there is a strong online campaign and there was a protest outside the Dáil recently. All of these actions show the public's frustration and desire for a new approach to forestry.

While the deal itself is bad enough, it is also symptomatic of the government's failed forestry policies which have seen record low rates of afforestation and an over-dependence on monocultures. Since being elected as a TD, I have pushed

Sustainable approach to forestry needed to benefit rural Ireland

for the development of forestry in a sustainable way that supports both biodiversity and a strong commercial sector to meet our national demand for timber.

The proposed partnership would see €25 million from the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund being used to support a private investment firm. Coillte will do all the heavy lifting by sourcing tens of thousands of acres in rural Ireland, planting trees and managing the forests – but private international investors will reap the rewards. This is a lucrative, secure, low-risk investment, which the Government will be subsidising through forestry grant schemes and tax incentives.

In addition, an international investment fund backed by millions in public money will push ordinary people out of the market, making it harder for current farmers to develop their holdings and for prospective farmers to establish themselves.

This approach is replicating the disastrous model in the housing market. Private investors being given free rein

to make massive profits off the backs of the Irish people, while pricing families out of the market. The evidence of this failing approach is visible all around us in Dublin, Cork, and other cities. Now the government is exporting this problem to rural areas.

The government should instead be focused on the major issues restricting the development of a rich and varied stock of forestry.

National afforestation rates have plummeted under this government. The Programme for Government sets out a target of 8,000 hectares of new forests per year, but only 2,000 hectares are being planted.

The forestry licensing system is plagued with delays and backlogs, while the incentives for farmers to plant trees are far less competitive than other schemes. Between 2015 and 2020 the number of farmers participating in new afforestation fell by almost 90 percent. In essence, government policy is disincentivising farmers from engaging in afforestation.

There is a glaring need for

a planting programme that encourages sustainable forestry in a balanced way. We can have both biodiversity and commercial forestry. Rewilding and biodiversity strategies should encourage farmers to convert portions of agricultural land to native forestry, especially on watercourses, allowing for the establishment of wildlife corridors. Our construction and craft industries need timber, but unfortunately we are relying on importing materials rather than investing in a robust Irish sector that will provide jobs in rural areas.

While speaking on this issue in the Dáil, I have again urged the government to change its failing approach to forestry, to invest in family farms and local companies, not international investment funds. There is incredible potential to improve our biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

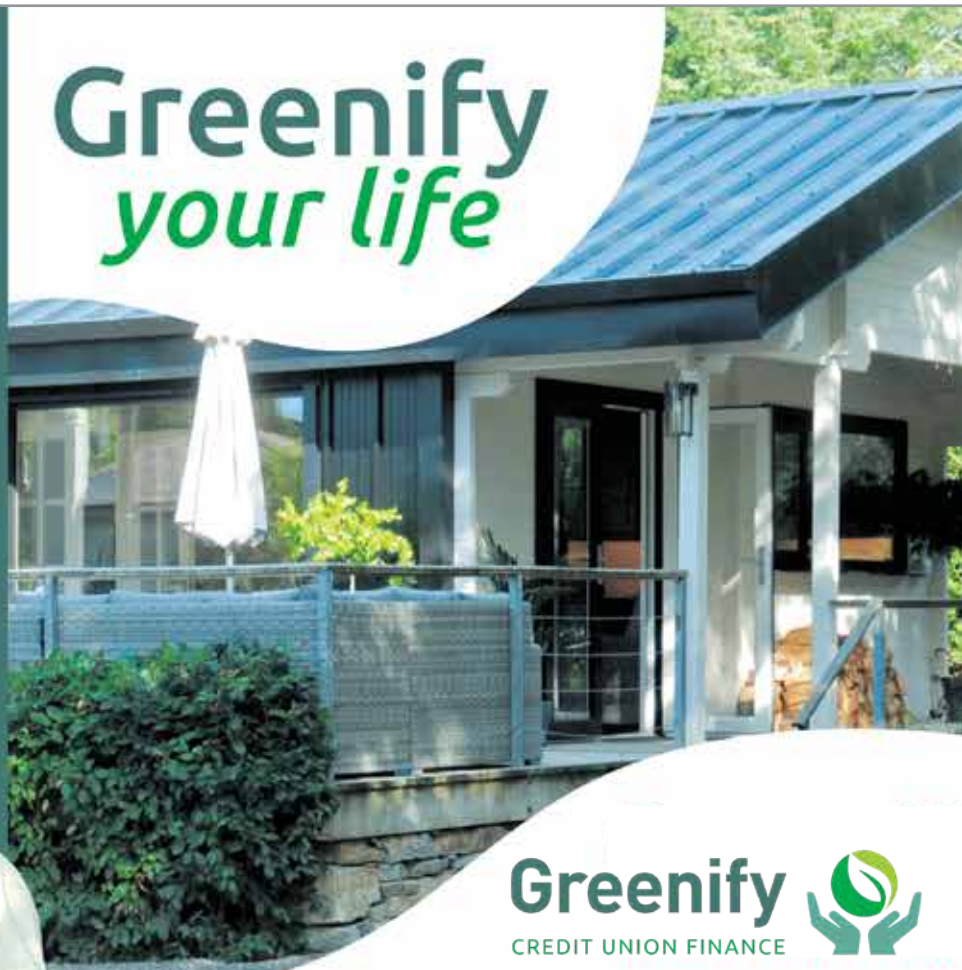
Ordinary people and farming organisations are calling for a sustainable forestry policy focused on rural communities. I hope the government will listen.

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people Environment : Making a difference

Schools embark on Climate Literacy Course

Cork County Council has teamed up with social enterprise Education for Sustainability to deliver a 10-week climate literacy course to eight secondary schools in the county. The weekly interactive course sessions are fun and solution focused, encouraging students to learn through game-based activities.

The Climate Literacy programme encourages students to connect the dots between the environment and their everyday lives by providing workshops,

teacher training, teaching resources and lesson plans. Topics covered include climate change, sustainable development, climate justice, plastic pollution, fast fashion, biodiversity loss, sustainable transport, food, soil and taking action.

The participating schools are Bandon Grammar, Carrigaline Community School, CBS Middleton, Edmund Rice College Carrigaline, Scoil Mhuire Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh, St Mary's Charleville, St Mary's Middleton and Kinsale Community

School.

Diane O'Shea from Kinsale Community School outlined the benefits of the course "The Climate Literacy Course has been very interactive, informative and enjoyable for the students. It has provided them with the opportunity to engage with a range of environmental issues from fast fashion to biodiversity. It has provided the students with the knowledge to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions with regard to actions that may affect

our climate. It is imperative that our young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle the environmental challenges of the 21st century. This course has provided our young people with the opportunity to think critically about environmental issues. I believe that it is essential to develop students' capacity to think critically about environmental issues in order to reduce eco-anxiety and develop a culture of agency and empowerment."



1st year students from Kinsale Community School Katie Crowley, Aoife Sheehan and Jer O'Brien
Photo Darragh Kane

Embracing secondhand fashion



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant



The world of fashion and style is an inclusive one, and now more than ever before, we are being exposed to the new and exciting trend of re-inventing secondhand clothes. Once frowned upon, now encouraged and celebrated, secondhand clothes reflect a changing mindset in a time

where climate change and waste is to the forefront. This does not mean that we look any less stylish; what it does mean is that the days of wearing something once or twice is no longer cool. Secondhand is a sustainable way to enjoy fashion, without the guilt associated with loads of unworn clothes in

your closet. Gather up what you don't wear, what doesn't fit or that section of 'maybe someday' clothes and do yourself a massive favour (an act of kindness) – let them go!

The psychology behind holding onto things that you no longer use or need is a fascinating topic and has very little to do with living in the here and now but everything to do with the guilt of having made a mistake and splurged on impractical, unwearable bits. 'I can't waste money by throwing or giving it away' goes around and around in your head. Well, I say, enough with that punishing and defeatist attitude... say hello to a new way of looking at it: 'I deserve to only have beautiful things in my wardrobe that make me feel and look great'.

Clothing is an identification tool that can determine the symbolic boundaries between people, conveying nonverbal clues about your personality, background and your financial status. Yet a recent study found that 85 per cent of women (in particular) have clothes in their wardrobe that don't fit or were never worn.

Most people store clothes in three different sizes, with the expectation that their weight will fluctuate. The smallest sizes are kept because women are ever-hopeful; so long as they keep the 'thin clothes' there is the motivation to change. Does discarding a coat or a pair of jeans that are two sizes

too small mean that we are admitting failure? Would we rather live with the continual discomfort of looking at them? Rearranging them every time we look for something is a waste of time and much needed mental energy; they are in fact a burden.

There are financial reasons for hanging on to clothes too. Every purchase is an investment; we are aware of its monetary value and we expect to it enough times to get our money's worth. If we discard it we perceive it as a loss of economic value; that we are declaring it as worthless to us and therefore somehow we have failed as a consumer. This guilt at creating rubbish is compounded now that we are living in such an environmentally conscious society. Believe it or not, we can convince ourselves that it is socially responsible to limit rubbish by holding on to things!

better, clearer and more focused about what you like, don't like, and actually need.

The new wave of charity shop shopping, encouraged by London's Fashion week, really enables you to be more imaginative about the way that you wear things, which is inspiring. A lot of fashion has been previously unavailable (financially) to a certain type of person but charity shops have made it all inclusive and a form of activism that has really taken hold over the last few years. There is tremendous joy in finding unique, affordable clothes and reinventing them to suit your identity.

We are now shying away from real throwaway fashion as we look for quality and repeat wearability only. Fast fashion is on a downward trend and I can't see that changing anytime soon. The trend where influencers have to wear a different outfit for every photo is now being

A lot of fashion has been previously unavailable (financially) to a certain type of person but charity shops have made it all inclusive and a form of activism that has really taken hold over the last few years.

Our wardrobes express our sense of identity but our identity evolves over time, as life experiences change us or as we age. So yes, there will always be a personal connection to an item of clothing – how you felt when you bought it, what was going on in your life and how wearing it made you feel. But what's on your hangers should reflect who you are now, what you want to achieve in life and sometimes, how you feel in the moment. This is a great time of the year to free up some space; the benefit is always that you feel

frowned upon and those who re-visit outfits are celebrated for promoting the concept! The last few years have caused all of us to stand back and reassess our lives, what we want but more importantly what we need... and most of us now realise that less is more. Yes, of course support your local boutiques but stop buying the 'trash' in-between and pass on what you no longer use. Give it away with a light heart in the hope that it will bring joy to someone else.

BANDON

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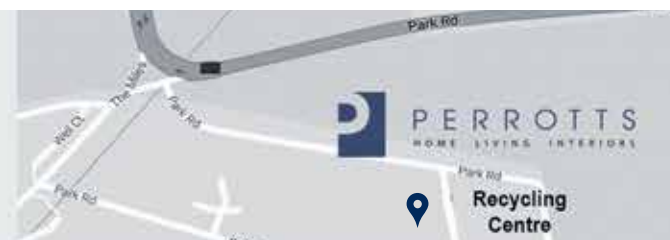
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people Food, Health & Lifestyle



DIY FITNESS

Tania Presutti

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

By the time you are reading this, January will have passed and left a blazing trail of 'new me's' in the gyms, on the roads and in the sport clubs. If you are someone with a New Year's resolution involving a healthier, fitter life, read on for more tips and tricks to stick to in order to reach your goals. If you're just here by chance or curiosity, your time will likely be rewarded too.

Let's take it from the top. You've made a New Year's resolution to lose weight and start exercising and live a healthier life. You might even have committed to a 'dry' January. If you've been consistent

Keeping consistency for weight loss

with your training, eaten pretty healthily and dropped the alcohol for a month, you are bound to get results. How much and for how long is a different story.

There are three hurdles which can stall weight loss or the feeling of progress.

Quite often the body will react to changes initially, which shows in a noticeable weight drop. If you have started exercising and cutting out unnecessary calories, you are in a caloric deficit, which means you burn more calories than you consume, so you are losing weight.

It's basic math and, most of the time, this is exactly what happens. However losing weight is not a linear journey for most people. At some point your body gets used to the lower caloric intake and will slow metabolism to preserve the nourishment. While we are very much living in a time and place in the world where starvation is very rare, our bodies are built for a different time and place where running out of food is an option and therefore must be conserved efficiently.

Secondly, if you are suffering from longterm stress, the weight loss could stall due to rising levels of cortisol, which affects metabolism, increases appetite and often sends cravings for fast energy fixes such as sugar, fast food and chocolate.

In this scenario the usual 'calories in - calories out' math doesn't work anymore, unless we're talking extremes, which should be avoided at all cost, since this can damage your health. In extreme cases this can mean fatigue, menstruation issues for women, hair loss, damage to nail and teeth and loss of muscles.

The third obstacle, which can mess up even the best diet or exercise plan, is lack of sleep. In a lab study for weight loss between people who get 8.5 hours of sleep versus 5.5 hours, the results were remarkable in that while both groups lost the same amount of weight (ca.3kg); the big difference was that people who got 8.5 hours of sleep lost 1.4kg of fat vs 0.6kg of fat for 5.5 hours, of the 3kg dropped for the two weeks the lab study lasted. Considering that one of the kilos lost is most likely water weight, 1.4kg of fat loss is a very good outcome.

Equally important as the quality of the weight loss, the group who lacked sleep had a higher production of the hormone ghrelin.

Ghrelin is the hormone which signals to the brain that the stomach is empty and it's time to eat. In other words it controls the feeling of hunger. Lack of sleep makes the production of ghrelin higher than normal and makes you feel more hungry,

which can lead to eating more.

And as if this wasn't enough bad news about lack of sleep, your muscles won't repair or grow as well on a few hours of sleep at night. You can train as much as you want, but without proper sleep, you won't see the best results.

What can we do to stay on track for weight loss and a better health journey?

If sleep and stress are under control, then it might just be your body stonewalling the weight loss because it got used to your diet and exercise. A way to trick the body is to switch up the form of exercise. Introducing HIIT (High intensity Interval training) is a good way to do this. If your training already incorporates lots of cardio with high heart rate zones, you can add weightlifting to your regime. Muscles burn more calories than fat.

If stress is a big obstacle, the general advice is to take care of your mental wellbeing first. If the standstill adds to your stress, the advice is to cut down on your training sessions and/or intensity and try not to be too hard on yourself regarding diet. This is of course a very difficult situation, as changing training and diet plans can add to a feeling of stress in itself. So try first and foremost to yourself grace in this period. If the situation which causes you stress

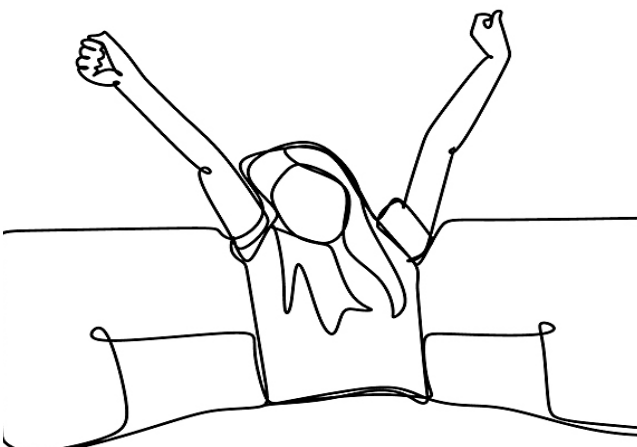
can be resolved this will be your best solution. If it's something outside of your control, you can work on accepting this and try to find ways to minimise the stress. Or simply accept that your weight loss will be slow in this period, but keep training for all the other reasons, rather than just to lose weight: Being active, if you run/walk/bike outside – enjoy the closeness to nature – learning new movement patterns, becoming good at your sport, enjoying increased serotonin production (feel good hormone).

For lack of sleep there are many roads to take. If you exercise in the evening, try to find time to do it earlier on. For some people the endorphins/serotonin from exercising can interfere with their sleep. If you're watching TV or looking at screens get into the habit of shutting them off at least an

hour before bedtime. Also you can try to avoid caffeinated drinks from the afternoon on.

Regardless of what obstacle you are facing, don't give up. Losing weight and implementing healthier lifestyle choices isn't a linear process from A to B. It can be a very winding road, and sometimes you feel like you're running around in circles, are stuck in the mud or flying high on a summer breeze. And it's all part of the journey. So stick with your goal, adjust when you have to, be flexible but consistent and don't forget to enjoy the journey. You will reach your goal and if you've found the road positive and fulfilling, rather than restrictive and tough, you are most likely to succeed in the longterm.

For questions, comments, a like or a follow or idea on a topic; find me on Instagram @trainwithadane



From winter into spring with Brigit



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

This month we are celebrating the first public holiday in honour of Brigit. This is indeed fitting as she remains a beacon in legends and lore. She is seen as both a goddess and a saint and, while these terms evoke different meanings for people, we can all agree that they indicate a woman of power, constancy and goodness. In pre-Christian times, she was the daughter of Dagda, as well as the triple goddess of healing and midwifery, poetry, and smith-craft. Her father Dagda was preeminent among Irish ancestral gods, being the god of life and death, seasons, agriculture, fertility, magic, and Druidry.

In her Christian manifestation she is the daughter of a pagan chieftain and his Christian servant-woman and was born at sunrise on the threshold of the dairy. She established a monastery in Kildare and was renowned for her hospitality. Her feast day is February 1 or Imbolc, the first day of the agricultural year. Imbolc means,

'in the belly' and captures the burgeoning fertility that is evident in February. The cow in calf, the ewe in lamb, the seed emerging over ground all attest to the sleep of winter being over and that the time has now come to nurture and develop this increasing growth.

However, today I am more interested in Brigit as a symbol of liminality. Her birth on the threshold of the dairy and at the dawning of the day represents the cusp, that point where one thing changes to another, night to day, inside to outside, pre Christian to Christian, dark to light, winter to spring. She is the personification of this tension, that point where one dimension begins to change to another, where one is neither here nor there. Psychologically, it is the process of transitioning across boundaries and borders but being on the threshold you are still betwixt and between.

This process is especially relevant in serious illness such as cancer, diabetes, stroke and in 'Liminality: a major category

of the experience of cancer illness', Little et al discuss how understanding liminality is important in understanding the journey of the patient undergoing cancer treatment. After all their previous world has disappeared with the diagnosis but they can never say they have crossed the threshold and moved beyond it, as there is always the fear of the cancer returning. The patient with a diagnosis of cancer/stroke/diabetes now lives in world similar to that of our forefathers where ill health and death were ever present and daily health was seen as a gift from the gods.

Today we do not regard illness as part and parcel of life, as we trust medicine, and the pharmaceutical industry, to solve our illnesses and allow us to live unscathed in our daily life. To receive a diagnosis of a life-changing illness means we have to leave our previous way of structuring our identity, our time, and our social circle (where serious illness rarely intrudes) and enter a new way that

is divorced from everything we have experienced. Worse, we do not see the outcome, we live in a state of ambiguity, never really crossing the threshold. This not only happens to the patient but also to the family and community. To engage with this liminality, this ambiguity, it is important to accept it and to choose how to deal with it. Brigit by hanging her cloak on a sunbeam, turning water into beer, offering her belt to the poor woman seeking help, gives glimpses of esoteric knowledge as well as hospitality and generosity. Brigit's hospitality and generosity lives on in the hospitality and generosity that is the hallmark of families and communities when a neighbour, friend, relative or stranger is in this state of betwixt and between. At Imbolc, when we make the Brigit's cross, we need to thank her for serving as role model in her generosity. The putting out of the brat Bríd on the eve of Imbolc is also helpful, as it connects us with an ancestral tradition and using the

brat during the year may serve to comfort.

By keeping the perpetual flame alight in her monastery, not only does she show constancy but she joins the pre-Christian with the Christian and shows there can be hope and continuity in the midst of change. This flame tells us that love continues, never dies and only needs care to blossom. Other steps that can be taken to enrich this period of being neither in nor out is keeping a journal. This can be record of the highs and the lows, the hope and despair, the fear, and the courage, and most importantly, the thanks for the gifts received and given.

Yes, Brigit is indeed a figure that can still give us hope in these ever-changing times and perhaps, a journey to Ballyvourney on February 10 to celebrate Munster's Brigit, St Gobnait, would be a potent way to connect with our heritage and give thanks for women such as these.



A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

We grew kohlrabi for the first time last year and I'm happy to report they are no problem at all to grow. These extraordinary purple, and sometimes green, knobbly turnip-like vegetables have a crown of upright leaves poking out around them and look very healthy, both to look at and to eat. We now have about forty to consume. Luckily they hold well, so not too much pressure, but all the same I have made myself a list of ideas so that we can get through them – roasted, stir fried, gratins, fritters and salads....

Kohlrabi translates from German as 'cabbage turnip', which is pretty apt, although they don't have a strong cabbage flavour. They are crunchy, juicy and crisp, so ideal for salads where both the bulb and the leaves can be used

After a month of what can only be described as rank weather – cold, wet and very

A winter slaw to brighten up your dinner table

muddy, a crispy salad is always a treat for the immune system and, in this case, it's also going to give our final red cabbage a good home.

Our cabbage patch is emptying out rapidly, with some extra help from the birds. It had been protected by a bird cage but when one of the Christmas storms caved in one end we stupidly took it down. This had the brief advantage of easy access to the sprouts but it also gave great access to the hungry birds who've had themselves a party and decimated the once healthy cabbages and kales. Fortunately the birds aren't attracted to red cabbages so they were left there, like lonely purple orbs.

Winter salads and slaws can be made from a variety of seasonal vegetables that grow here. Cabbages – white, green or red, carrots, turnips, celeriac, fennel, kohlrabi...they all enjoy being sliced/grated and dressed. Add to whatever melange you decide upon – toasted nuts and seeds for extra crunch and protein and maybe chopped apples or pears for a little crisp sweetness and you'll have a nutritious life-enhancing bowl to chomp your way through whilst we wait for the spring to arrive!

Here's a recipe for a slaw incorporating both kohlrabi and red cabbage but it's really just a guide. Use whatever vegetables that you have at hand but pay attention to the preparation tricks (salting the veg etc) and the dressing and you're guaranteed to be pleased with the result.

Winter Slaw

Ingredients:

- Quarter head of red cabbage
- 1 small kohlrabi
- Handful kale or kohlrabi leaves
- 1 head fennel
- 1 red onion
- 1tsp sugar
- 2tbs white balsamic or white wine vinegar
- 1tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 crisp apple or pear
- 75g toasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped
- 75mls olive oil
- 75mls rape seed or sunflower oil
- salt

Method:

Trim the fennel, then cut in half lengthwise. Remove some of the core by cutting a v out of the base then slice the fennel finely. Put the fennel into a bowl and sprinkle with half a tsp salt.



Toss to mix well then leave aside for 15 minutes. The fennel will sweat and soften. Tip the fennel onto a clean, dry t-towel, pat dry then roll up and give a little squeeze.

Remove the leaves from the kohlrabi – if they are still on it. If the leaves are in good condition roll them up into a cigar shape then slice into skinny ribbons. Peel the kohlrabi bulb and slice thinly. Stack the slices then cut into matchsticks. If you prefer you could grate the kohlrabi but I think the matchsticks add a better crunch.

Peel the red onion, cut it in half then slice finely. Sprinkle over a little salt, give it a rub to separate the rings. Put the sugar and vinegar into a bowl, stir to dissolve then add in the sliced

onion and mix well. Leave aside to soften

Remove the core of the red cabbage by cutting out a V at the stem then slice finely.

Wash the apple or pear, remove the core and dice finely – there's no need to peel the fruit.

Reserve the juice from the onion then put the onion into the salad bowl together with the dried fennel, sliced cabbage, julienned kohlrabi and diced apple or pear.

Make the vinaigrette in a small bowl. Whisk the onion juice and Dijon together then slowly drizzle in the oils whisking continuously to emulsify. Taste to check, if it needs brightening up add a little more vinegar and/or salt.

Pour the vinaigrette over the

vegetables then toss everything together and scatter the hazelnuts over the top.

Here's to more daylight, Roll on spring!

Karen
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Timoleague
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www.lettercollum.ie
0238846251

PS: There are a few places free on the gluten-free baking class on February 11, so if you would like to know how to make the best g/f bread, sweet and savoury pastry, muffins, cakes etc give me a shout. Includes a large lunch!



MENTAL HEALTH & MINDFULNESS

Susan O'Regan

Susan O'Regan, Msc Mindfulness Studies teaches compassion-based mindfulness. She is a teacher member of the Mindfulness Teachers Association of Ireland (MTAI) and The Mindfulness Association.

Giving ourselves some space for reflection and contemplation is vital to attune and attend holistically to the needs of the body, mind, and spirit. Slowing down and being mindful can help us to notice the signs that our body

Ease into Springtime

is giving us, cues that we may not pick up on when life is too busy or fast paced. I have been spending much of the month of January resting and deepening my personal meditation practice as well as resourcing myself with new mindfulness teacher training and peer support. I find myself moving very slowly through what I'm experiencing as an everlasting, even luxurious January, aware that this is not the case for all of us.

This time, for me, however, is a precious gift. This returning ability to rest my mind in a resting body is so welcome. It feels like a time of self-acceptance and letting go; the body is ready to settle and soften again, and I am following its lead, accepting that the pace of returning is slow. I'm following an intuitive need to rest as much as I can and genuinely appreciating it, remembering that not so long ago this ability to rest eluded me, my body felt solid and tight, as if I was constantly on red alert, hyper vigilant all the time, waiting for something to

happen. I am eternally grateful for the skills of mindfulness and self-compassion, always there to assist my own necessarily slow, step by step, at times very painful, journey, in this case through grief and trauma. Now and then I imagine how much more difficult this process would be without mindful self-compassion.

Everyone has grief and trauma in their lives to some extent. What makes it so difficult for us to accept that these processes take time and that the body and mind need to rest? Why do we resist or dismiss rest so much? It might be good to reflect on your own relationship with rest for a moment. Because of strong work ethics and a culture that still glorifies being busy we might feel obliged to justify why we "deserve" to rest, as if rest somehow needs to be earned. Or we may have thoughts like, "what if someone sees me doing nothing?" Not alone can there be a sense of shame in what others might think but there's a deeper layer, what we think of

ourselves. We can be our own harshest critic.

There may also be shame in needing or wanting to rest in the first place. Life events can change us; maybe we're not as able now for things that came easily to us before. This shame can be very subtle so to bring consciousness and curiosity to these thought patterns and feelings is a wonderful place to begin. What would it be like to meet these minds and bodies of ours with self-compassion? To give ourselves a break? And learn to notice any automatic tendency to judge ourselves and instead offer an even greater dose of self-compassion. Far too often we motivate ourselves by self-shaming which does nothing to improve our health and only makes us feel bad about ourselves.

Self-compassion is proven to be a more powerful motivator than shame and there is a strong link between self-compassion and our mental as well as physical health. When we are having difficulties or struggling

in life, and this applies to all of us at various points, we need to pay ourselves some kind attention and learn to encourage ourselves gently. When we begin treating ourselves kindly, we're beginning the process of dismantling self-criticism and reducing shame. The starting point is learning to be still, present, learning to be here now, learning to bring awareness to our minds and bodies, noticing. If we are always ahead or behind in our minds, it's not so easy to notice how we really are in this moment. The more we accept ourselves just as we are, in this moment, the more we can evolve and adapt to change.

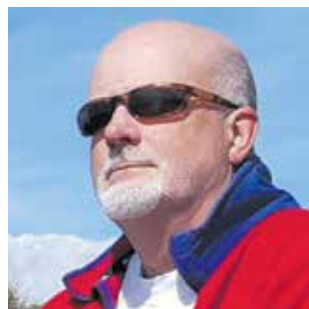
Before I trained in mindfulness, I used to push through life and recall that I could not even vocalise the word suffering. I had a strong aversion to the word itself. Compassion-based mindfulness offers us the skills and the voice to face the ups and downs of life. We can learn to soothe and heal our own wounds with kindness. The acceptance that life has many joys but that

we all suffer too can soften us and invite an openness to new possibilities and ways of being. I love this quote by poet and writer Mark Nepo, "We are born in the corridor of aliveness between the song of life and the pain of life and it's up to us what music will we sing".

Please get in touch for a chat with me if you are at all curious about how to begin a mindfulness meditation practice to slow down, settle your mind and rest. Drop-in compassion-based mindfulness sessions at Myross Wood House, Leap (CECAS.ie) on Tuesday mornings from 10-11am. €10. All welcome.

I am planning some new mindfulness and self-compassion workshops at Myross Wood for Spring, please keep an eye on my facebook page or feel free to just give me a call. www.mindhaven.ie Phone: 087 2700572 email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com or follow my facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/susanoreganmindfulness

people Food, Health & Lifestyle



THE DNA OF WEST CORK PEOPLE

Mark Grace

Mark Grace is a genetic genealogist and family historian at Ballynoe House, Ardfield, Co. Cork

Maximising your online presence

As one of your New Year resolutions, you may have decided to get back into family history. One of the reasons you may not have been so involved of late (except where life in general gets in the way) is that you were not making much progress. You can help yourself in finding DNA connections and like-minded researchers with a few simple steps. There are my 'Top Ten Genealogical Hits' for promoting your profile in 2023.

1. If you got a DNA test kit for Christmas, don't forget to send it back.

2. If you are on Ancestry or 23andMe (or tested elsewhere) download your zipped DNA file and copy it for free to secure databases on MyHeritage, GEDmatch, LivingDNA and FamilyTreeDNA. GEDmatch is key to sharing since it is the only database that takes uploads for every testing company, of which there are now over 30.

3. Add your GEDmatch number to your Ancestry and MyHeritage profiles. Check your membership profiles are up-to-date with some key basic information such as your place of origin, age range, and

willingness to collaborate. Consider including your email address and use the 'links' icon in your profile (Ancestry) to share other sites where you may have relevant information (perhaps a Wiki tree or personal webpage with genealogical histories).

4. Try to push out your family tree to four or five generations (all your 2x greats), supported by data sources such as BMD (Birth, Marriage, Death) and census records. Ensure all have some basic data such as birth and death years (even if approximate) as well as the general place of the birth/death, where known. A county or country will do. Don't leave them blank as 'names only' get lost in context, especially when dealing with Irish names. Avoid the temptation of copying others unless you are sure their research is correct. I appreciate some may not know the father of a child, but if you have DNA tested then it is helpful if you don't leave the person blank but put in "NPE" (Not the Parent Expected). This helps differentiate between a tree that is work in progress from one that is highlighting an area where DNA matching may help.

5. If your DNA data is on MyHeritage, download a new autocluster file for your matches. You'll be surprised

how much it changes. Add a three-monthly reminder to your electronic calendar and don't forget to add comments for all the top matches in your most important clusters to help you find shared ancestry the next time you download the file. These might only be a shared segment, common geography, or perhaps noting some family surnames in common.

6. If on Ancestry and DNA tested, make sure you have assigned Parent one and Parent two to the correct parent. This is becoming increasingly important for those of us researching West Cork ancestry, as it is becoming much clearer in a complex research area which connections are purely maternal, purely paternal, or a mixture of both due to the frequent intermarriage of local families.

7. On Ancestry, check you have properly activated ThruLines and assigned your DNA test to yourself. Also, make sure you are set as the 'home person' for your tree. Any other set-up for your family can confuse both researchers and the automatic algorithms.

8. Check your messages and respond to them on all the platforms you use. Remember, if you are no longer paying for a subscription and you have DNA tested, you can still

log-in and check your matches and messages. Say you will respond to messages in your profile so that researchers can prioritise contacting you over the majority who never respond.

9. If you are open to collaboration, serious about research, and on any testing website, if you have no private reason, drop your membership pseudonym/alias and change it to your real name. It helps make connections more than you think.

10. If you have tested with MyHeritage, check all your DNA settings to allow your match details to be displayed on their chromosome browser.

It doesn't take a lot to make research considerably easier for everyone. I wish you a successful research year in 2023. By the time you read this, the first results from the Christmas DNA test kits will be arriving. It always provides new surprises and hopefully some answers to mysteries we all have in our ancestry.

Comments, questions, and issues that can be answered as part of future articles can be emailed to DNAmatching-projects@gmail.com or follow my West Cork DNA projects on Facebook blog "My Irish Genealogy & DNA."



Emer O'Sullivan

MA, MSocSc, MSW, MIACP, MAC, HDip Relationship Studies

Counsellor Emer will help you to come to terms with any concerns and help you set about making positive changes in your life.

Life Coach Emer will help you to examine your life, evaluate what you want, and check the direction in which you are heading.

Emer is an accredited counsellor with the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, and a member of the Association for Coaching. She has worked for many years as a Family Support Social Worker in the community.

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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.

What constitutes a perfect recall? In my book, it's when you can call your dog and despite many distractions, she chooses to come to you because you're the best, most trusted friend, and

Getting a perfect recall

coming back to you is always fun.

Yes, it's important to make the recall a game. You call, she returns to you with a smile on her face and oodles of enthusiasm so that you, too, are laughing and completely engaged. She then gets praise, treats, and the opportunity to run away to repeat the performance all over again!

But where do you start? Let me consult my puppy training notes because practising the recall is exactly where I am in Saffron's education. Before allowing your puppy off lead, there are a few criteria that have to be met.

I've been training Saffron from the very moment she came into my life. It's like having a clean slate to write on to show her what I want. She's a very willing participant because she adores treats, cuddles, praise and fun. She has no idea that I'm training her in the basic obedience commands because

as far as she's concerned we're playing a game. It only lasts for a few minutes so she never gets a chance to get too bored or tired.

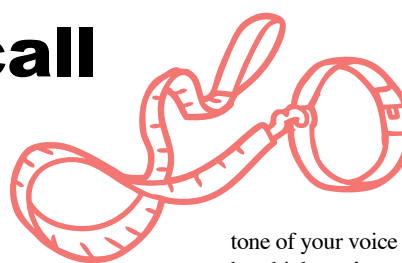
The most important thing is to get your puppy to focus on you with undivided attention at home. So place her on a lead, get her used to her name and to make eye contact with you when you talk to her. Praise her! Get enthusiastic over her accomplishments. She will then perform for you any time and any place. So keep telling her you think she's a star when she does what you ask and try to ignore the naughty things as much as possible.

Once she's listening to you, then start calling her to you and have great treats for her, huge praise and cuddles. After a while, your puppy should be racing to you, tail wagging and an expectant look on her face – so don't disappoint her!

The next step is to call her when she's in your garden. But,

she has to be looking at you, not involved in her own game or sniffing. Stand at the door, call her while bringing a treat out of your pocket when she returns at speed. When she always does this automatically, even anticipating your call, then you can move to the next step.

This is the hardest because you both have to trust each other and the practice beforehand needs to be producing perfect results. Once she's in the countryside and you let her off lead the first time, then pay close attention. Let her loose in a safe place with no cars and preferably an enclosed field. Once she realises she's free she may race off in excitement but try not to panic. If she stops to look back, praise her while you walk up closer. If she chooses to run again, let



her. Don't shout in panic because the tone of your voice will make her think you're angry with her and she'll be less likely to return to you!

Once she's had some fun, a puppy will generally return to check in with you. If she starts to run back, call her anyway and produce a handful of treats which you give her one after the other. While she's eating them, you can reach up gently with your other hand to hold her by her harness. If you're brave enough, let her run off again. That's part of the fun – that you don't always curtail the action!

You might also consider using a whistle for the recall. I've successfully trained all my dogs to return to a specific whistle tone. It stops me screeching in fright if my dog goes running off further than I want her to. The tone of the whistle is completely neutral rather than a panicky or

angry voice!

The wisdom of using the whistle was reinforced for me only last week. Saffron is getting braver as she runs free. First of all, it was just down the road a bit. She would then look back. I'd whistle, get excited and she'd fly back. Now she asks permission to go into a field and would happily run on the other side of the bank, returning at the double. But, the other day, she jumped onto a bank, saw a couple of crows strutting in a field and took off after them. At first, I panicked and was inclined to shout. Instead I blew my whistle. Saffron stopped, looked over, and, realising how far from me she had travelled, she raced back and jumped into my arms. I'm not sure who was more relieved!

However, she got loads of treats with praise and cuddles. I put her on the lead and decided to follow the sensible maxim: 'to quit while I was ahead' – and we walked home!



HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

Last winter, very few people came to Organico for cough and cold medicines or supplements. It was a really noticeable phenomenon. We were in the middle of a viral pandemic but the usual viral infections were nearly completely absent. We had virtually zero requests for flu medicines all winter, and even within our team we had a lot less illness-related absences than we would expect.

This winter, we seem to have all been hit again with respiratory conditions leading to coughs and chesty conditions. Many people coming through the doors have had Covid (or a severe flu) over the holiday period, and many of them are still struggling with an ongoing or recurring cough. For some families it seems to be a relentless cycle that goes on and on.

So how do you get out of a loop of recurring illness?

In an ideal world, we would rest and nourish ourselves till we were well again. But we seem to always be under pressure to get back into the fray as quickly as possible – it's just one of the pressures of modern life.

I certainly try to take every opportunity to rest more generally in mid winter. I try to get more sleep and reduce things I know aren't good for me, such as sugar and caffeine – because

without enough sleep and good nutrition it's a challenge to stay on top of my busy schedule. I'm also getting back into swimming in the sea, which I know is really good for me but had let slide due to a bout of Covid.

However, sometimes life happens and something gets through even the best defences.

One of the most effective ways to get support for our immunity if we get run down is through the use of nutritional supplements, but the number of different options can be very confusing so this month I'm going to focus on one particular supplement called Zell Oxygen Immunokomplex by Dr Wolz. Immunokomplex isn't a new product but it has had a surge of popularity over the last three years and if you wanted to take one thing to boost immunity then this is a great option.

Immunokomplex is a liquid supplement that I think of as a multi-vitamin for immunity. What makes it different to most multivitamins is that all the nutrients are pre-digested by the yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, which makes them incredibly easy for our body to absorb.

Over the last number of years we have had excellent feedback about the ability of Immunokomplex to interrupt a pattern of recurring or ongoing ill

health. Specifically, last autumn a former staff member and her husband both had a cough that lasted for more than six weeks. She came in for a tonic and took home the Immunokomplex. She came in last week to tell us they found it really benefited them, so much so that they carried on taking a maintenance dose ever since. She has had a lot of health challenges in the last number of years, and has a busy life, so this was good feedback. It gives a definite energy boost which can be very welcome if you've been having a challenging time.

What we see and hear on the shop floor is also supported by science. One of the key ingredients in Zell Oxygen Immunokomplex is beta-glucans, which are a type of carbohydrate that is found in certain types of mushrooms and yeast. A study published in the Journal of Leukocyte Biology found that Beta-glucans have a beneficial effect on the immune system by activating certain immune cells such as macrophages and natural killer cells. Additionally, a systematic review and meta-analysis published in the Journal of Medicinal Food found that beta-glucans can help to reduce the duration and severity of colds and flu.

In addition to beta-glucans, Zell Oxygen Immunokomplex

also contains a variety of other immune-supporting ingredients such as Vitamin C, Zinc, and Selenium, as well as a broad range of vitamins and valuable extracts which provide many phytonutrients essential for healthy immunity. The fruit and vegetable extracts are from orange, grapefruit, lemon, pear, sea buckthorn, aronia, cranberry, rose-hip, bilberry, elder, blackcurrant, apple juice concentrate, carrot, beetroot, Jerusalem artichoke, tomato extract with lycopene. These ingredients work together to provide comprehensive support for our immune system, and give a significant boost of antioxidants, which we know are essential for protecting us from free radicals that cause ill health.

Zell Oxygen Immunokomplex is a concentrate, so you dilute 20-30 ml (2-3 tablespoons) per day with 200 ml water or juice and take it during or after a meal. We recommend taking it with apple juice. If you have particular needs in the area of immunity, it seems to be a good idea to take a course of 3 bottles to experience the full benefit. If you'd like more information, call into Organico and have a chat with our experienced team.

In other news – this month we are releasing a series of short films we made last year on some of our local organic producers – check out our Instagram or Facebook for more info. We would LOVE to hear what you think of them, and what you think about the importance of local Organic food production in general.

Organico Shop Deli and Bakery is open from 9-6pm Monday - Saturday, on Glengarriff Road in Bantry. Call us on 027 51391; email us on info@organico.ie and buy online from us on www.organico.ie.



Inaugural Bantry Memory Café provides space to meet, chat and find information

The first Bantry Memory Café, a space for anyone affected by dementia in the West Cork area, was held in the library in the Maritime Hotel on Wednesday, February 1. Going forward in 2023, it will take place on the first Wednesday of every month, from 11am to 1pm, in the same location.

Bantry Memory Café provides a warm, welcoming and relaxed place to meet others also living with dementia or cognitive impairments, their

family and friends, as well as health and social care professionals. There is free tea and coffee, some useful information and an opportunity to meet and chat with others. Input and feedback is welcomed.

According to Café Coordinator Juliette O'Donoghue, "We intend the cafe to be a very warm and welcoming space for those affected by dementia. You can have a cup of tea, chat to others and get useful information from health and social care

professionals all in the same place."

Bantry Memory Café is run in partnership by the Family Carers and Older Persons initiative at Local Link, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the HSE (Bantry Primary Care Team, Bantry General Hospital and Cork South Community Work Department), Bantry Age Friendly Dementia Sub-group and other volunteers.

Bantry Memory Café is a member of the Irish Dementia

Cafe Network. The Irish Dementia Cafe Network is a network of dementia cafes around Ireland, each of which is run according to a set of shared principles and guidelines. To find out more, go to www.dementiacafe.ie.

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact: Juliette O'Donoghue on 087 9103036 or bantrymemorycafe@gmail.com.

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Spring Beauty Edit

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.

KEVIN.MURPHY BLOW.
DRY WASH & RINSE

An all-new extension of the brand's renowned BLOW.DRY collection, Wash & Rinse work together as a pre-styling regimen to help reduce styling friction before drying the hair, making the hair less vulner-

able to damage regardless of your natural texture. The first step, BLOW.DRY.WASH, is a sulphate-free repairing and nourishing hair wash that hydrates and strengthens the hair using Hydrolysed Pea Protein and Wood Bark Complex. The second step, BLOW.DRY.RINSE, is a nourishing and repairing conditioner that forms a protective layer on the hair that guards against colour loss and environmental stressors. KEVIN.MURPHY's Anti-Breakage Technology works in both products to hydrate and protect strands against heat damage. Available in all Irish KEVIN.MURPHY salons from the 7th of February and online www.kevinmurphystore.ie €31.00 (250ml) each, and €9.00 (40ml).

L'OCCITANE Lavender
CBD Range

New from L'OCCITANE the Lavender CBD Range comprises of an expertly blended body care formula of Hemp and CBD with Provençal Lavender to instantly calm and relax mind and body when you need it most. Boasting aromatherapy benefits of lavender AOP essential oil and anti-inflammatory active



CBD isolate, the Lavender CBD collection formula eases away the physical and mental stresses of everyday life, helping you to feel relaxed on a deep level. There are five products in the range to choose from, with prices starting at €17.50 - Multi-Tasking Mist, Body Massage Oil, Shower Gel, Hand & Foot Cream, and Bi-Phase Body Milk Spray, a beautiful skin softening, ultra-hydrating body milk spray that has two phases for double benefits; phase one is the initial milk emulsion which provides instant moisture, and phase two is aquatic which provides a soothing and comforting sensation, €29, available online from www.loccitane.com and stockists nationwide.

IRAYE Radiance Firming
Serum

IRAYE are delighted to announce the launch of their award-winning and industry-first, lymphatic drainage boosting skincare into Harvey Nichols in Dublin. With over 20 years of scientific research, the innovative skincare collection boosts skin function, delivering long lasting radiance. Among the collection, IRAYE Radiance Firming Serum is a multi-action formulation that visibly firms, brightens, and contours the skin. Patent-pending Lymphactive™ Complex supports the lymphatic system to purify the skin, boost skin function, and protect skin structure from damaging inflammation and toxins. Improved microcirculation, immune response and nutrient uptake create a more radiant appearance and an optimal environment for Radiance Firming Serum's high concentration of active ingredients to achieve maximum efficacy. Clinically tested results delivered in four weeks of product use saw skin appear visibly brighter, smoother, firmer, and more sculpted. 91% agreed skin looked fresh, brighter, and detoxified while 83% agreed skin feels more elastic. Available in store and online from www.harveynichols.com 30ml Bottle €110.

REN Perfect Canvas Smooth,
Prep & Plump Essence

New from REN, Smooth, Prep & Plump Essence is proven to boost the benefits of skincare, and clinically proven to help strengthen the skin barrier and protect against pollution. Powered by a synergetic trio of post biotic bio-ferments and potent antioxidants, this simple, yet transformative step elevates the everyday by optimising the absorption of the products you use on top of it. A bio-fermented microbial extract instantly plumps skin with hydration, boosts brightness and reduces the signs of redness. Bio-Fermented Hyaluronic Acid from wheat and Polyglutamic Acid from sugar cane help to reinforce the skin barrier and smooth skin texture. Marrubium Extract helps to protect against pollutants and Niacinamide helps to brighten and even skin tone. A smoothing facial essence that creates a perfect canvas that's perfectly plumped, protected, and prepped for the day ahead, €39 available online www.renskincare.ie and stockists nationwide.

Aveeno Soothing Bath Soak
Oat Sachets

Helping skin to feel comfortable and balanced, Aveeno Soothing Bath Soak is the latest addition to the Aveeno family. The Bath Soak Oat Sachets are made with 100% natural colloidal oat, a long-recognised ingredient that helps to naturally relieve and soothe itchy sensation. Available in a box of eight sachets, simply stir a sachet into the water thoroughly for a warm, comfortable bath that calms irritable skin and soothes your body. Use warm not hot water for bathing as hot water can cause dryness as it strips the skin of natural oils. Soak for 15-30 minutes. Do not rinse off, pat your skin dry to keep a thin layer on the skin, leaving skin feeling nourished, comforted, soft, and smooth. Suitable for dry, very dry, sensitive, and even eczema prone skin, €13.99 available in pharmacies nationwide.

Ella & Jo The Miracle Mask

Miracle Mask Hydrating and Plumping Facial Treatment is an intense hydrating mask that delivers exceptional skin plumping, hydration, and firming. Designed to level up any

skincare routine, it is packed with hydrating, protecting and nourishing ingredients to reveal brighter, hydrated, and healthier looking skin. Containing a wonderful blend of multi-layered Hyaluronic Acids to hydrate and plump the targeted area to increase elasticity - Squalene a peptide rich ingredient strengthens the skin barrier and prevents water loss for maximum moisture while Glycerin pulls moisture up from the lower levels of the skin to the upper, helping to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and essentially allowing the skin to help moisturise itself. A skincare must have for everyone's skincare collection, €26 available online www.ellaandjo.ie and stockists nationwide.

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Christopher Minhall
BSc Hons Osteopathic Medicine, BSc Hons Biology
CRANIAL OSTEOPATH

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OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Michelle Kingston, Vice President of Network Ireland West Cork, Guest speaker Caroline O'Driscoll, Deloitte Ireland and a Co-Founder of IWish and Anne Marie Kingston, President of Network Ireland West Cork at the January event 'Get out of your comfort zone' in the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen.

people Food, Health & Lifestyle

Allow three months to get your body ready for pregnancy



Amanda Roe

Trauma therapist
& Mind coach

Let's look at why such a timeframe is required? When a baby girl is born her ovaries contain about 400,000 eggs. These eggs are stored in the ovaries until puberty when follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) signals the selection and growth of between 10-20 follicles each month. Each of these follicles contain a potential egg. Most commonly, only one follicle a month becomes the biggest and the other follicles die off; however in the case of fraternal twins two follicles continue to grow at

this stage.

A follicle's life cycle is approximately 85 days when it will either ovulate and release the egg into the fallopian tubes or will die and be reabsorbed. Lack of energy or deficiencies in nutrients, blood, lipids, proteins and carbs can affect the eggs growth and maturation during these 85 days.



A follicle produces oestrogen, with larger follicles producing more than a smaller one. If oestrogen levels are high enough the pituitary gland will release luteinising hormone (LH) to trigger ovulation and a secretion of cervical mucus that will nourish and protect sperm from the hostile acidic environment of the vagina. This mucus promotes the transportation of

sperm from the vagina to the uterus, filters abnormal sperm and supports its survival for five to seven days.

After ovulation, the follicle transforms into a corpus luteum with progesterone production beginning roughly 24 hours after ovulation.

The size of the corpus luteum is determined by the size of the follicle prior to ovulation, with a larger corpus luteum producing more progesterone than a smaller one.

Progesterone increases body temperature and has several important functions, including thickening the uterus lining, propelling the egg along the fallopian tube, aiding implantation, enlarging the breasts and maintaining the pregnancy.

In fact after conception progesterone from the corpus luteum will maintain a pregnancy for up to 10 weeks when the placenta is large enough to take over progesterone production.

Allowing three months preparation time for a fresh cycle will give your body time to recruit and mature eggs and their follicles before ovulation;

however please be aware that if you have irregular cycles, are not ovulating, or have recently come off the contraceptive pill, it may take longer than three months to get pregnant.

Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to treat fertility and gynaecological issues. If you are thinking of starting a family, have been trying to conceive for some time

or are about to start IVF, then acupuncture is worth considering.

Whilst there is a genetic component to egg quality, the environment that the eggs are matured and recruited in prior to IVF egg collection matters; and three months of acupuncture and Chinese herbs will optimise egg quality.

Amanda Roe is a Clinical Hyp-

noterapist and Acupuncturist. She uses a range of holistic therapies including guidance around food to improve fertility, emotional and mental health and support natural recovery from trauma, eating disorders and other mind/body illness. For more information or to book a session visit www.roehealth.ie or call/text Amanda on: 087 633 1898.

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END OF LIFE MATTERS

Melissa Murphy

End of life Doula Melissa Murphy, a companion, guide and resource supporting our community in end of life matters.

It's been a number of years since I've visited this place. Most say they wouldn't wish to be in a care home, fearing even the prospect of it, but this one has always seemed quiet, relatively intimate, spotless as far as facilities go – and I've been inside many. I'm relieved to see some familiar and attentive staff are still here post-pandemic. A huge fair play to them, I think, having worked in one myself once, lasting only a year as a long term care social worker.

I find Dave in a sitting room adjacent to the large picture window. It's immediately clear he's just savoured a striking winter sunset over Berehaven – the harbour that lies between Bere Island and mainland Castletownbere. The

setting is another unique asset of this facility. At his request, the lights are off in the room so as to appreciate the illuminating evening sky before us. This is my first time meeting him since our brief video call yesterday; organised with the support of his primary carer. He's handsome, stylishly and comfortably dressed from top to toe, wide eyed. He takes my hand, holds it for a couple of moments, pats it. He's non-verbal due to years of a serious progressive illness, but his energy feels large in the room; generous and welcoming. I imagine he's had a particularly long couple of days. He's with a palliative care nurse.

I pause; apologising for any interruption; offering to wait until they've finished their conversation. “No” they both insist and it feels immediately clear that this unplanned meeting has been perfectly orchestrated. Introductions are made and roles are mutually introduced. I'm mindful that the name and role of the end of life doula is still relatively new. “I don't wish to step on anyone's toes” I begin, “and I've a pretty good idea of what you do,” I say to the nurse. I offer that I've worked in healthcare and hospice in the past; familiar with the many hats their team wear and territory, (quite literally) the community they serve. I offer that I'm primarily a presence, as directed by Dave, and can help to fill in any gaps as an added emotional support and resource. Dave nods and offers two thumbs up and the nurse says she has heard of an end of life doula

and is only delighted to be meeting and collaborating. We exchange contact information affirming that we're both here to support Dave holistically. She, with symptom management, and I, with accompaniment during his end of life processes. The three of us have come together during a time of major transition – this being Dave's first time in a care home for a week of caregiver respite. Every so often during our time together, a few facility staff come in, and we share a chuckle or sigh. Understandably, as the room grows darker, they offer to put on lights for us. Dave gestures “no” with shakes of his head and thank yous are expressed with assurance that the natural light is preferred by their new patient. I imagine we are quite the picture – the three of us sitting in the near dark! And yet there is a radiant orange glow on the nearby horizon. All things considered, it's a tranquil moment of understanding and reverence. As the palliative nurse prepares to leave, I understand that she had stayed on to meet me, or perhaps at the request of Dave. It feels precious to collaborate in community, feeling this is what it takes to best support a dying person. This has been named by Dave and is what brings us here: more physical pain, trouble swallowing and breathing, a desire to be witnessed, heard and known.

“I'll show you my room if I can find it,” he tells me – all communication is via his eyes, hand gestures and especially via typing, then sharing on his mobile phone. For me, there is a palpable humility in slowing down to meet him where he is. I'm keenly aware of the countless things I'd like to ask him about; aware of his rich and colourful life as an artistic, comedic performer; a lover of poetry and story, of clowning. His introduction to me via text was to “warn” me that his “sense of humour is quite intact”. I share what I'm feeling, though aware that his physical condition is such that he can feel easily fatigued. He suggests emailing me his bio. “Perfect idea,” I say, continuing to follow his lead. He admits he is starting to feel quite tired but wants to try to engage a bit longer. I ask about his first night and full day in the care home; how he is now. I also acknowledge his wish to plan a living

wake: “Soon” he clarifies and highlights how he envisions it to be (for anyone unfamiliar, a living wake is really just what it sounds like: an event for anyone wishing to take part in a celebration of their own life with those they love before death). As he shares more about this, I perceive his laser-focused motions. Eyeglasses moving from forehead back to eyes again, manoeuvring his mobile phone with the celestial-designed pop socket that so brilliantly aids in gripping his phone. There is also a necessity to be ever-mindful of his seat; elevating his electric wheelchair up and down as he sees fit. There is much he can do. I gently remind myself not to help; he will ask if it's needed. A flow of emotion arises; a connection made in the context of this topic he's invited: the living wake. A release of grief...perhaps somewhere in between “I'm dying and until I die...” I exhale. We pause for some time with all that is. I reach for his hand sensing this might be ok as he had reached for mine when I'd arrived. I close my eyes for a moment and slightly lower my head; being with these palpable moments.

To describe this or any other aspect of our time together as ‘a privilege’ feels inadequate. We've just met and I'm humbled by his trust and the faith expressed in our visit.

After a time, he shares that he feels finished and soon after makes his way back to the sitting room where we began; perhaps to be in that natural light as the evening draws in or to give himself space from his single room. Before I depart, he presents me with a voucher to a (favourite) local artisan food shop. I see he has already written on the certificate: “To Melissa from Dave”. “Can I pay you in pies?” he has typed on his phone. I express joy in this surprise, while remembering his initial introduction – humour intact indeed.

Dave gave permission to share his story

To learn more or to connect with Melissa, email her at starsbeyondourskin@gmail.com or visit www.starsbeyondourskin.com. She also welcomes your questions or ideas for future columns.

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'Spring Self Care' Workshops now available on our website

Solace self-aware workshop

by Joyce O'Sullivan,
Solace Holistic Centre



Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin' is traditionally translated as 'There's no place like home but the literal translation is actually 'There's no hearth like your own hearth'.

As we move from winter to spring, life starts to blossom and unfold once more. During this time we may start to open our windows and do a bit of spring cleaning in our own hearths; we may also become more aware of our emotional hearts, our wants and needs and how we live in our body.

Our emotional heart is a part of us which needs to be

nourished on a continuous basis. One of our heart's core needs is to feel at home within ourselves. As part of this movement from Winter to Spring, Solace will hold a supportive and grounding Self-aware Workshop in March. Facilitated by myself, the focus of the workshop is to show you how to connect with your own emotional heart, and to be at home in your own body by increasing your self-awareness.

The Self-aware Workshop begins on March 3 and runs for four weeks on Fridays morning from 10 - 12pm, €150.

To further support you this

year, we are also running 'The Four Seasons Workshops'. The first is our Spring Workshop on Saturday March 25, from 10-12pm, €40. The Spring Workshop will incorporate a breath-work session and self care tips facilitated by Sarah Forristal and myself. Each Seasons Workshop is booked individually, and we are now taking bookings for spring.

All our upcoming workshops are available to book online on our website www.solaceholisticcentre.com or contact us on 087 9510554 to book. Spaces are limited so booking is essential.



Eoin Roe
Chiropractic

Four ways hypothyroidism affects gut health

through. When somebody has low thyroid function this can slow down significantly.

Due to the slow transit time, there is an increase in fermentation of food in the large intestine and this disrupts the balance of bacteria in your gut regardless of how healthy your diet may be.

Gallbladder function

Bile is stored in the gallbladder and, when you eat fatty foods, bile is released by the contraction of the gallbladder to help aid with digestion of fats. With low thyroid function contraction of the gall bladder is reduced. As a result, the bile becomes thicker, and is known as sludge, which is a precursor to gall stones forming.

Common signs that your gallbladder may not be functioning well are an inability to eat fatty meals or take supplements like fish oil; you can also experience bloating, indigestion or nausea especially after fatty foods.

Leaky gut

Your gut is an interesting organ in that it must allow nutrients and other things your body needs to pass through but at the same time make sure that unwanted things stay out. This is maintained by proteins that keep the integrity of the gut wall and are known as 'tight junctions'. When there is inflammation in the gut these junctions break down, leading to gastrointestinal permeability, commonly referred to as 'leaky gut'.



A result of leaky gut (gastrointestinal inflammation) is that by-products from bacteria can then enter the blood stream and cause systemic inflammation and can even bind to immune cells, causing further inflammation in the thyroid gland.

Microbiome (balance of bacteria in the gut)

Studies have shown that people with Hashimotos have a microbiome that is completely different to those who don't have this issue. It can become a vicious cycle in which an unhealthy balance of your microbiome triggers further autoimmune disease and poor gut function promoting an unhealthy microbiome because of the low thyroid function.

Additionally, a poor microbiome also causes a loss of oral tolerance which causes a person to start developing sensitivities to foods to which they previously had no reactions.

Another factor for those with low thyroid function is that

muscles but also by by-products from bacteria in your gut.

So, for efficient conversion of thyroid hormones, you need a healthy gut microbiome. This is why it is so important to eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables every day which will help you to have a healthy microbiome.

So how do you improve the connection between your gut and thyroid gland?

The first thing to check is that you are not in a low thyroid state: This is routinely done with a blood test to check your TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) levels. If this is high you may need to take thyroid hormone medication.

The second is to find out if you have Hashimoto's by having your antibody levels to

TPO and Tg checked, as this indicates if an autoimmune condition exists. If so, it is important to manage this so that you can maintain gut health.

Thirdly, there are often complex mechanisms at play and a whole-body approach is required to successfully manage these conditions; just taking a probiotic or some digestive enzymes will not address the underlying autoimmunity nor address the autoimmune triggers that can make thyroid issues worse.

Eoin Roe is a Chiropractor and Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner based at Roe Health in Skibbereen. If you would like to get in touch or learn more, please look at our website www.roehealth.ie.

Thyroid hormones affect your basal metabolic rate: How fast cells function in the body and the health of your stomach, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, small and large intestine are all related to your thyroid function.


There is an intimate bidirectional relationship with thyroid function affecting the gut and the gut also affecting thyroid function.

The most common cause of low thyroid function (hypothyroidism) is an autoimmune condition called Hashimotos, which attacks and destroys the thyroid gland if left unmanaged. The good news is that Hashimotos and other autoimmune conditions can respond well to changes in diet.

If you have been diagnosed with low thyroid function, this can impact your gastrointestinal health in a number of ways.

Constipation – Intestinal motility

Food is moved through your gut by muscles contracting in sequence to push the food



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Dunmanway couple bring light to their community

Over the Christmas period huge crowds came to visit the Christmas lighting display at the home of Michael and Chrissie O'Mahony in Kilbarry West, Dunmanway. The couple love when regular visitors can pick out new additions and, as usual, there were lots of new items to admire this year. The display was a real treat for adults and children alike.

The funds raised this year, a total of €7,650, were divided between Co-Action, Dunmanway, the West Cork Palliative Care Service and the COPE Foundation. The support and encouragement received from all over West Cork and beyond

was phenomenal and for this Michael and Chrissie are very grateful.

On January 20, a presentation dance was held in the Parkway Hotel, where a night of music and dancing was enjoyed by a huge number of supporters; many who attended said that the dance is going from strength to strength and they look forward to the night every year. Music on the night was supplied by Finbarr, Chloe and Emma Dennehy and Teddy Crowley, with a special guest appearance from Molly O'Connell, a Glór Tíre contestant from Co. Tipperary.

Michael and Chrissie were very proud to be in a position, due to the huge generosity, help

and support of their family, friends, supporters and neighbours to present a cheque to Co-Action and COPE Foundation for €2,350 each, and a cheque to the West Cork Palliative Care team for €2,950.

Representatives from each charity who attended on the night were very grateful to receive the funds and all said that the money will be put to maximum use to help and support the West Cork Community. Michael and Chrissie are sincerely grateful to everyone who supported both the lights display and the presentation dance.



Front L-R: Pauline Farr, West Cork Palliative Care, Enid Chambers, Co Action, Michael O'Mahony, Siobhan Horgan and Julieanne Foley, COPE.

Back L-R: Bendy Carroll, Reggie Chambers, Chrissie O'Mahony and Oliver Hennessy.

Photo: George Maguire



ASTROLOGY

Kate Arbon

Kate Arbon is an astrologer, writer and spiritual teacher. Living in West Cork for over 20 years she gives personal consultations locally and internationally using traditional natal and Horary astrology.
email: astro@katearbon.com
www.katearbon.com

February Sun Signs

This is a quiet month in astrological terms. That doesn't mean nothing is happening, it's just that things are running along without the speed bumps, potholes and diversions we experience in previous months.

February brings Imbolc which is the first cross-quarter day of the year and heralds the spring season. It's a sign of new beginnings and marks the point halfway between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. Astrologically it occurs on February 4 this year, but we usually celebrate the event on February 1 as St Brigid's day.

There are several other reasons to celebrate and enjoy the early February season. We start the month with no planet retrograde and this continues until late April. Without any resistance

or looking backwards, we can focus on the path ahead as life unfolds at a manageable pace.

The main stars this month are Venus in Pisces joined with Neptune giving St Valentine's day an extra dose of romance; and Saturn, as it connects with the Sun mid-month, brings a level of realism to the situation.

The Full Moon on the 5th in Leo is a great time to think big and embrace an unexpected new idea or plan as the wild card planet Uranus puts a spark into this Moon phase. It could bring a few surprises to the surface that allow for greater self-expression. It is also a moment when both the love planets Venus and Mars are in a challenging square aspect which can add a touch of edgy energy over these couple of days. The need to get your

feelings across could become a passionate outburst or a heartfelt disclosure.

Venus is the planet of love and connection, affection and sharing. Pisces is the most mystical and otherworldly sign. It brings a creative, intuitive approach to life without being too hung up on the practicalities. Neptune is the planet of our spiritual yearnings and the desire to reach for a better place. So we can let go of the demands of everyday tasks and dream a little when Venus joins with Neptune on the 15th and in the few days beforehand the sense of romance is heightened as we feel the desire to merge with something, or someone lovely, and let go of our boundaries for a while. It can feel like anything is possible, and maybe it is!

On the following day, February 16, the Sun catches up with Saturn and this combination can indicate a moment of maturity and wisdom. This can be a time when we can see things more clearly, and make more responsible, thoughtful decisions. It is a great time to set realistic goals and make plans for the future.

Venus moves into the next sign Aries, with the New Moon phase on the 20th. This brings a change of energy. The carefree dreamy fantasy focussed version of Venus now becomes a more determined independent and assertive force. If your dreams did not manifest through simply wishing for them this is the time to start taking action. Be more direct with the people or situations you want to be connected with. This New Moon in Pisces

can be the moment to put the hopes and desires on the front burner and make it happen.

The month ends just before Venus joins with Jupiter on March 2. These two are the most positive planets of the bunch and it's a bit of a celebratory mood with this combination. This is a great time to do things in style, and you can be optimistic about the outcome of any venture you embark on. Be prepared to start the month of March on a high note.

February has a Full Moon in 17 degrees Leo on the 5th at 6.28pm and a New Moon in two degrees Pisces on the 20th at 7.05am



Aries: You want to make your dreams a reality and any attempt to put into practice your hopes and ambitions will pay dividends this month. Your tendency to compromise and settle for less than you are capable of can be a problem. Tension results when you ignore

your desires for achievement or acknowledgement. This Full Moon brings you a very creative phase so allow yourself time to be playful with any new ideas and inspiration you experience. You may then find that you're actually on course, full steam ahead, for getting to where you want to be.



Taurus: Your feelings and sense of security may find you seeking seclusion for a time or losing yourself in memories. Events make it difficult to make good decisions concerning your life direction. However, it's a good time to make some changes so you can reach

new levels. The Full Moon shines on your home and private life, which could be very rewarding now. Circumstances may urge you to make a greater effort. But don't overdo things or try to go too far too fast. Despite appearances things are working with, rather than against you, so don't get overwhelmed. Let things take their natural course.



Gemini: The next two weeks are the perfect time to act on any impulses to better yourself. Take up a study course, make a journey, or just mix with people who are culturally different to you. A career opportunity or the chance to impress someone of importance is likely

during this Full Moon phase. Giving extra attention to details and keeping up with everyday business could be time-consuming but the small things also contribute to the longer-term plan. Feeling good about yourself and what you are doing with your time ensures an improved sense of well-being.



Cancer: This month is a time for getting down to business. Start by stripping away and discarding non-essential items, memories and old habits. It's a good time to put the past behind you as you're likely to be less sentimental during the next weeks. Keep

moving onwards, concentrating on the important things. Use your imagination and follow your intuition as you focus on your goals and ambitions around the Full Moon. The drive to improve your finances and material security is strong now and you could find some welcome inspiration for a new direction or possibility you hadn't previously considered.



Leo: You want to assert yourself and take the lead now. You may not always get full support from others as you tend to create resistance in those around you. Some may even find you unusually overbearing, as your enthusiasm runs counter to whatever is wanted

by them. Your basic energy and vital principles are strong around the Full Moon so you will soon manage to charm even the most obstinate. Your desire to get out and about to express yourself could find you enjoying an extra busy social scene later this month.



Virgo: You're sorting through the experiences of the last several months, separating the precious from the worthless, salvaging what you can. These next two weeks are a time of self-examination. You want to get things right and contribute something worthwhile.

You are happy to take on new opportunities now. Make time to talk things through and you may find sincere understanding coming from friends or co-workers. The needed support will be offered if they see your true intention is to be helpful and give something of yourself. Taking care of your needs both spiritually and physically is a balancing act you can achieve now.



Libra: Your attention will be on improving and making the best of the current situation in the next week. Try to bring an unusual twist or insight to anything you have to accomplish now. During the Full Moon phase, you can reap rewards from past efforts. There

is strong support and goodwill from those around you. Remember though that not everyone is ready to make the required changes at the same time as you. Your vision is probably further-reaching than theirs and includes the broader issues. After the 15th you will see your creativity increase and have an enhanced sense of enjoyment.



Scorpio: You've created a solid base to build on in recent weeks so now decide how you can make it work to your benefit. You know what your limits are and it's time to move forward. Now you can see what was holding you back. This next phase marks a

welcome end to so much self-questioning and uncertain feelings. Emotional issues may not be your priority as you approach this Full Moon so if you encounter a cold shoulder, don't be surprised. Misunderstandings can be the result of having a different agenda but the later part of the month will see improved communications.



Sagittarius: The coming Full Moon is the culmination of energies from the past two weeks so now you can push on toward whatever goals you have in mind. Whilst you have the right mood compelling you, it's a good time to adopt a new approach. You want to

improve your position and are willing to take advice or seek extra knowledge. There may be additional details, communications or travelling to attend to but keep your focus on the bigger picture. Backed up by so much strong energy you are likely to feel an incredible drive to accomplish and achieve in life.



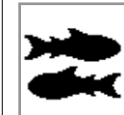
Capricorn: You find yourself thinking about your needs concerning the others in your life and how much time you have to offer them. Consider how much your physical needs and personal resources are already tied up. You'll need a balance so no one

feels overly indebted. This Full Moon you'll have the courage to do some serious mental or physical housecleaning. Throw out any useless things you've been hoarding and make some space in your life. The burst of freedom will do you good and make it easier to keep things in perspective.



Aquarius: With the Sun in your sign and this Month's Full Moon focus on your house of relationships it's no surprise that you want to take a fresh look at your close associations. You're inclined to let go of anything you believe to be holding you

back or simply uninspiring. Find a balance between the individual or personal concerns and any desire you have to be of help or service. Doubts fade into the background as a new sense of self, a more assertive personal style and a more dynamic approach to life will emerge now. Your relationships need to reflect this energy so everyone gets a good deal.



Pisces: This month is a time of change. You have been considering your foundations, responsibilities and basic security needs. Your practical sense is enhanced and you can make difficult decisions affecting your material welfare. What you willingly sacrifice

now will be more than repaid with an increased ability to make your dreams a reality later. The Full Moon will intensify any effort on your part to improve your health, diet, and physical condition. Being of service to others or taking on extra responsibilities this month will prove to have been an investment in your future in the long run.

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Kate Arbon

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A West Cork hug

Touring around West Cork with his mobile sauna, **Donie Mc Auliffe** has been hearing from many of his customers how the sauna is a great pick-me-up and comfort during cold weather. Chatting to one of his regular customers, a Denmark native, about 'hygge' got him thinking on the Irish version of this philosophy and, as we face into another couple of months of dreary winterish weather conditions, Donie chats to some West Cork businesses who can help us embrace this cosy Danish philosophy – West Cork style!

According to Danish lady, Sonia Brzuchalska, creator of Luibh Skincare, who frequents The Balmy Barrel sauna in Dereenatra Pier near Schull, the concept of 'hygge' is about being together with others. "It's about enjoying the company of others in a cosy and warm setting – this applies especially during winter when it's cold outside and all you want to do is sit inside with some friends or family, a cup of tea in your hand with the fire roaring," she shares.

Although there is no direct translation in English, the Danish word 'hygge' is all about wellbeing and contentment. It can be traced back as far as the 16th century to the word 'hugga' meaning to comfort or console, or in English 'hug'.

According to Gaelic language scholar Manchan Magan the closest linguistic relation in Irish would be 'Cluthar' which means cosy, comfortable and also nicely warm. The discovery of a plethora of megalithic saunas or sweathouses clustered around the Leitrim/Cavan area indicate that there was an ancient inclination to gather in hot houses during the winter. So the proliferation of saunas and hot tubs that we have seen during the pandemic are perhaps not that new after all.

One man that was well-positioned in these times is Skibbereen-based John Karanauskas of Luxury Hot Tubs. John and his team have been building and hiring saunas and hot tubs since 2014, but received a big increase in orders after the onset of Covid-19 with the increase in people's savings. John hails from Lithuania where they know a thing or two about keeping warm during inclement weather. His contacts back home ensured that he had access to the finest wood on the market during the supply crisis that ensued.

Another West Cork business designed to warm your bones is Wild Atlantic Seaweed Baths owned by Ballylickey's Owen Boyden. Owen has handpicked beautiful locations all over the west coast of Ireland, including Ballydonegan Beach in Al-



Revel coffee bar in Clonakilty is a cosy place to gather and enjoy locally roasted Red Strand Coffee.

lihes, Rocky Bay in Nohoval, Dunmore near Clonakilty and Snave Pier in Ballylickey. Here on certain dates you will find a dozen repurposed whiskey barrels waiting for you at the water's edge. Inside these scenically-located barrels is piping hot seawater and hand-harvested, organic seaweed that is rich in iodine and essential minerals. This form of bathing has a long tradition in Enniscrone, Co.Sligo and Ballyunion, Co.Kerry but is new to these shores.

A big part of 'hygge' is comfort food, something West Cork is certainly not short of with its plethora of small artisan food companies. Clonakilty-based 'Mella's Fudge' has become a runaway success after Mella spent years 'tinkering' in her kitchen to perfect her recipe. "We find the fudge is most popular during the colder months when people like to sit down with a cup of tea or coffee in a cosy setting in front of the fire or warm place and have a bar or share a bag of fudge, the flavour is personal, but the effect is complete satisfaction," she says.

For the more health-conscious, Niamh O'Reilly's 'Hungry Crow' chocolate fits the bill. She has bewitched West Cork since 2015 with her healthy chocolate creations, all made using an 85 per cent cacao couverture chocolate and free from dairy, grains, refined sug-



Mella's crumbly salted fudge.

ars and gluten. Niamh's inspiration for the Hungry Crow shop experience is "walking into a nice welcoming hug, where a cup of Fionn's hot chocolate will warm the heart and where Niamh's chocolate creations will make your tummy sing with joy and set you straight on the road to bliss."

Shane Kelliher from Red Strand Coffee has been in the pick-me-up business for over 10 years. "Most of my coffee is sold in the farmers markets of West Cork and it gives people a great boost during a cold winter's day. Coffee gives people a chance to commune and socialise in a healthy manner...there's a reason so many more people



Sauna enthusiasts at West Cork Sauna on Red Strand

are now frequenting coffee shops instead of pubs!"

Of course music and song has always been integral to the Irish winter. There is a theory that perhaps the reason the Irish are such fine singers and storytellers is perhaps a consequence of living on a wet rock in the North Atlantic where it's a good day when it doesn't rain between showers; and we would have been driven stone mad if these talents weren't developed. There's nothing quite like enjoying a hot whiskey whilst listening to the music session that happens at O'Donovan's of Fisher's Cross every Thursday night. It is essentially an open acoustic session where you could be treated to country, trad or opera music at any given moment. A very broad age range is catered for, from teens to octogenarians. Elsewhere in West Cork another fine music session that specialises in unaccompanied, traditional singing happens on the first Friday of every month at William O'Briens Corner Bar in Skibbereen. A guest singer sings a dozen or so songs of their choice and this is interspersed with songs, stories or recitations from anyone who wishes. A similar format, but with instruments added can be found at the 'Scoraiocht' night in The Irish Whip bar in Ballydehob on the last Friday of the month.

So whatever your cosy...be it a sauna, cup of coffee with friends or a song by the fire, taking the time to enjoy the West Cork version of this Danish philosophy might just bring you through the winter at a better pace.

Instagram @westcorksauna
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people Food, Health & Lifestyle

Learn to knit and reap the rewards

Arts and crafts have seen a surge in popularity in recent years. Picking up an old craft or diving into a new one is a productive way to pass the time or to practice mindfulness. Here are some reasons you should try knitting in 2023.



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You don't have to be artistic or 'good with your hands' to be a good knitter – it just takes practice. It's easy to learn the basic stitches and build your skills from there. After a year or two of regular knitting you could be producing beautiful nordic-style jumpers!

Knitting patterns are usually graded from beginner to expert, and wool shop owners give excellent guidance. There are lots of how-to videos on pattern designers' websites, YouTube and Instagram, as well as local classes. Check out Olga's Own Craft Studio for classes in Ballinspittle.

Knitting can introduce you to a whole new community, especially good if you're feeling lonely. Many local libraries have welcoming 'knit & natter' groups, there are online communities where people swap



ideas and tips and, again, Olga runs regular adult and teenage workshops in craft and knitting at her shop in Ballinspittle.

Because it is a repetitive activity, knitting is very calming. Try to build it into your daily routine and set aside some time, as little half an hour, each day. If your mind is buzzing after a busy or trying day, knit before bedtime to wind yourself down

or shift you away from negative or intrusive thoughts...and away from your phone! The more often you do this the quicker your brain will recognise that it's time to relax.

Knitting is a sustainable craft with very little waste. Although some initial investment is required for the pattern, wool and needles – it takes weeks, if not months, to knit a patterned



jumper so cost per hour of entertainment is peanuts.

A handmade item carries a lot more value than a mass produced one, not just for the beautiful materials used but for the love and time invested in making it. Share that love by making unique gift items for your friends and family.

people FOCUS: SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER

Dunmanway school wins national design challenge

Two primary schools, one in West Cork and one in Kilkenny, have been named the winners of a national design competition that used 3D printing to respond to sustainability challenges within their schools.

Togher National School in Dunmanway and St. Colman's National School in Clara, Kilkenny were named the winners of 'Manufacturing a Healthy Future' – a 3D printing design challenge. The competition was initiated by I-Form, the SFI Research Centre for Advanced Manufacturing, and Stryker, a leading global medical technology company. The project, supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Manufacturing, challenged young pupils to fix or improve something in their own classroom or school, using 3D printing as a creative design tool.

I-Form, headquartered at University College Dublin, and Stryker, which has manufacturing operations in Cork and Limerick, have been working with primary school teachers throughout 2022 and 2021 to empower them with the skills to bring manufacturing technology into the classroom. The three-year programme is also running in schools in France and Estonia

and will run throughout 2023.

Over two years of the European-funded project, highlights to date include:

- 116 teachers across three countries have been trained on how to design and print using a 3D printer.
- 3,000 primary school children in three countries have taken part in a design challenge.
- In Ireland, 47 teachers and 1,000 pupils have taken part in the programme.

The Senior Room in Togher National School in Cork designed a handy solution to key storage in the classroom, with their 'Key holders' project; while 'The Elves' in 2nd Class in St Colman's, Kilkenny, focused on bringing old board games back to life by replacing missing pieces. Both schools were awarded a €1,000 technology package for their school, along with gift vouchers for the children and a tour of the Stryker facility in Cork.

Second place prizes were also awarded to Scoil Dean Cussen in Limerick and Ballinagree National School in Cork.

3D printing (known in industry as additive manufacturing) is a key enabling technology of Industry 4.0 – a term used to signify the new era of industrial production, encompassing advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, and the Internet of Things. 'Manufacturing a Healthy Future' is an innova-

tive programme that recognises that teachers are key influencers of the next generation but sometimes lack access to information and technology around the newest areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and manufacturing.

Principal of Togher National School, Helen O'Connell, said: "'Manufacturing a Healthy Future' is a fantastic project and I would recommend it to all teachers. 3D printing provides children with the ability to

design and create their own unique objects - this helps foster their creativity and imagination in a fun way. 3D printing also exposes children to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and can inspire them to pursue careers in those areas in the future."

Dr. Triona Kennedy, Senior Research Manager, Stryker, said: "At Stryker, our mission is to make healthcare better and that is only possible through people. In partnership with

I-Form at University College Dublin, we are connecting with young people who are the future in healthcare. Our team of engineers, scientists and designers at Stryker have been so impressed with each entry to the design challenge from primary schools. The future is in great hands."

Prof. Denis Dowling, Director, I-Form, said: "We were delighted to see so many young people involved in this innovative EIT Manufacturing programme. An imaginative,

creative approach to problem-solving is a key skill highly sought by industry and will be a critical factor in enhancing Europe's manufacturing competitiveness in the decades ahead. As the manufacturing sector evolves, we hope to inspire young people to prepare now for the jobs of the future, and also to provide key support to teachers, who are crucial influencers of students."



Students from 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes, pictured at the announcement that Togher National School in Dunmanway was named among the winners of 'Manufacturing a Healthy Future' – a 3D printing design challenge. Picture: Michael O'Sullivan /OSM PHOTO

people FOCUS: SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER



CHILD BEHAVIOR

Sarah Murray

Sarah Murray is a Paediatric Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA). Her practice is based in county Cork but she works online supporting many families. Sarah specialises in early intervention for infants and young children, with almost a decade of experience working alongside families of children with developmental delays, autism, and intellectual disability. A child behavioural consultant, Sarah helps families and schools to address challenging behaviour in a positive manner using evidence-based intervention strategies.

From birth, children typically spend the majority of their time with their caregivers. Essentially, it is all they've ever known, and so when this changes, it can be overwhelming. When young children do enter into an unfamiliar space, or are placed with unfamiliar adults absent their caregiver, and adding on top of this, having to say goodbye to the safety of their caregivers, it can be a lot on both parent and child. It's a really tricky thing for our small children to do.

Anxiety when separating from a caregiver is a healthy and normal stage of development for infants, and it is a sign of a secure bond. We typically see this fear response emerge

When separating children from caregivers becomes an issue (Part 1)

at about seven months of age, and persisting through to about twelve to eighteen months of age. At three years of age, children begin to get used to the prospect of separating from their caregivers for a period of time, but the anxiety can still persist for some children. When separation anxiety does not begin to diminish with age, persists long past toddlerhood into mid to late childhood, and remains a barrier to overall learning and development, then you may be dealing with a mental health diagnosis — separation anxiety disorder (SAD). About three to four per cent of children suffer from this condition. Separation anxiety may not become apparent until the time comes to go to a child minders, creche or preschool. However, this anxiety would have been present long before this time, but did not escalate to extreme levels until the time came to go to such places.

Separation anxiety does not always appear as an overtly scared, worried, or anxious child. Oftentimes, it can present as upset, anger, aggression and a fight response to this massive stress. Young children typically show separation anxiety through behaviour as opposed to verbalisations. You may see elopement as children attempt to bolt from the place to which they must now go, or towards the arms of their caregiver as they make an attempt to leave their child. I've seen cases where children vomit and urinate with



upset, throw tables and have aggressive outbursts, have huge school refusal in the mornings and claw their caregiver whilst clinging to them. When things have become this extreme for children, despite a young age, things require professional assistance.

Separation anxiety that persists past toddlerhood and beyond what can be perceived as within the range of healthy and developmentally appropriate anxiety, can be attributed to a range of different factors. Typically, shy and introverted personality types can be more prone to suffer with separation anxiety. Research has shown that a family history of depression and anxiety can leave children at increased risk for separation anxiety. When children are being bullied, this can lead to the development of separation anxiety. Stress factors such as a recent death in the family, a big move to a new house or school, and parental divorce/separation can

also lend to the development of separation anxiety. Then throw COVID-19 into the mix!

However, one of the most important variables identified in children with separation anxiety, and that which is not highlighted enough, is parental separation anxiety. It is only natural that when you have a child who is overly anxious at the prospect of separating from you, that you of course want to take this anxiety away and make your child feel better. You may begin to avoid and minimise situations where you must part from your child and so, parent behaviours and responses to their child's anxiety become shaped pretty well by their child's anxious behaviour. Things like delaying preschool, opting not to start off in creche settings, getting take-out instead of hiring a babysitter and hitting the town, all mean more time spent with caregivers, further solidifying closeness and time spent with caregivers, and avoiding a separation, which invariably lend well to

separation anxiety persisting.

Sometimes, even without a child who is predisposed to separation anxiety, caregivers can have their own separation anxiety present. This is extremely common. It can be really tough for parents to drop their child off somewhere without them, to say goodbye

and to separate from their child that they've spent so much time with since birth. This is another very important factor which can create separation anxiety in children.

No matter the cause, there are many ways to address separation anxiety. I will look at this in next month's issue.

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Paediatric Behaviour Analyst
B.A Psych, MSc ABA, BCBA, M.Ps.S.I

Sarah has worked with children with developmental delays, speech and language delays, developmental disabilities, autism, premature infants, and children with various medical needs and other learning needs.



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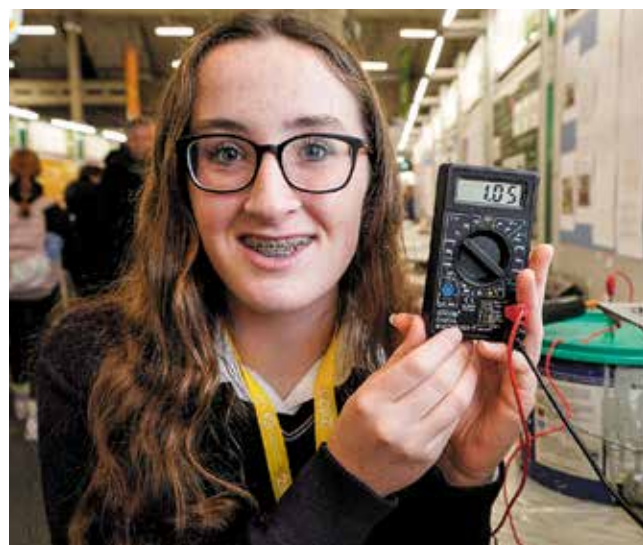
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West Cork students at the 2023 BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition



Ava Scarlett from Skibbereen Community School and her project 'Constructing a Microbial Fuel Cell to Investigate the Electrical Power Output of Copious Organic Waste Samples'



Michael Crowley from Árdcoil Uí Urmoltaigh, Bandon, with his project 'Nematodes as possible bio indicators of the health of Irish freshwater bodies'






Coláiste Íde

All Irish Boarding School for Girls
Meánscoil Ián Ghaelach do Chailíní

OPEN DAY

25TH OF MARCH 2023

10.00am - 4.00pm

Coláiste Íde, Baile an Ghoilín,
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people FOCUS: SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER

St. Joseph's Girls NS: Kindness and love for learning nurtured

St. Joseph's
Girls' National School Clonakilty
023 8833050 • info@stjosephsclon.com
www.stjosephsclon.com



JUNIOR INFANT Enrolment 2023

**We are now taking enrolments for
our Junior Infant class 2023.**

**Enrolment Forms can be downloaded
from our school website or we will post
an enrolment form directly to you.**

**Please call our office on 023 8833050
to arrange a time to visit the school
with your daughter.**

**St Joseph's GNS, Convent Road, Clonakilty
Co Cork, P85AX90**

The ethos of St. Joseph's Girls NS is to nurture an enthusiasm for learning, a thirst for knowledge and help create many happy memories for all its pupils. Kindness and respect are at the heart of the school.

Students at St. Joseph's love to engage with the school's projects and initiatives. The school's active school committee runs the weekly 'Wake up and Shake up' where they lead the school each Wednesday morning in dance routines to music. The student council has regular meetings and has run art competitions as well as brought in initiatives such as, 'No uniform Friday' on the last Friday of the month. All committee members are now experts in using the school's PA system to announce their activities! St Joseph's has been a participating school in the Creative School's Initiative. The school is a former winner of the National School Photography award and Positive Primary Programme, with both the school and winning student receiving an array of wonderful prizes.

There are many extracurricular



activities for children at St. Joseph's to enjoy: French, Drama, Feis Maitiu, Debating, Carol singing, Choir, Coding, Robotics, Swimming, Table Tennis, Yoga, Violin, Tennis, Chess Club, Lego Club, First Lego League, GAA, Rugby, Camogie, Hockey, Cycling, walking bus Heritage experiences, Multicultural Celebrations, Zumba, Sports Day, St. Patrick's Day Parade, Junior Entrepreneur Programme, Easons Spelling Bee, Credit Union Table Quiz and many more.

The new Principal, Conor Mulcahy, and the staff of the school are committed to excellent teaching and providing positive learning experiences for the pupils every day.

All parents contribute to this thriving school and the open two way communication that exists enriches this connection. The school is grateful to its parent community these past few years in particular for supporting staff to maintain a safe school for all its children. There is also a wonderfully active Parents Association that is always keen for new parents to join. They fundraise for important resources and activities for the school and they organize many events such as grandparent's day, communion celebration, graduation mass. New parents and junior infants welcome morning and the Christmas fair.

St. Joseph's Girls NS places

the child at the heart of all it does. The wide range of musical, creative and sporting activities on offer to ensure each child thrives with her individual strengths. The school has large playgrounds and makes use of the all-weather hockey pitch and tennis courts adjacent to the school. St. Joseph's fosters an inclusive environment with over 20 different nationalities attending the school. The school is within walking distance of Clonakilty town and the gates open at 8.40am with a large safe carpark for parents to use at drop-off and collection times. Sherpa offers onsite afterschool care as well as holiday clubs.

The school has just been granted permission to open a dedicated ASD unit and intends to in September 2023. There will be an exciting building project in the school over the next 12 months. The Department of Education has agreed to build a lift to the upper floors of the school to make the school more accessible to individuals with mobility issues. The experienced Special Education Teachers and Special Needs Assistants support students with a range of needs. Close collaboration with NEPS- National Educational Psychological Service and the NCSE- National Council for Special Education- ensures that children's needs are identified and supported.

Timoleague NS: Providing a nurturing educational environment for all children

Perched on the Timoleague Estuary, Timoleague National School – a mixed school of 180 pupils with an enthusiastic staff of 11 teachers and four SNAs – offers a nurturing environment for all pupils. It's a happy and friendly school where the focus is on the children and their learning.

The Special Educational Needs department ensures all children reach their full potential and, in an effort to develop intellectual physical, emotional,

cultural, moral and spiritual well-being, Timoleague NS constantly endeavours to provide best practice in education for all pupils, delivering a broad and balanced educational experience within a caring community, where pupils are encouraged to recognise their talents and achieve their full potential.

The school's Catholic ethos is characterised by its caring spirit, commitment to pupil and teacher wellbeing and the provision of a wide variety of opportunities

for students and staff. There is great support from the Board of Management and Parents' Association and, working closely with parents, the school is very proud of its varied and regular home-school links.

At the heart of the Timoleague community, the school's annual Celebration Days at the end of June prove very popular with past and present parents and pupils, grandparents, neighbours and friends of the school. Very active on social media, the

school also regularly updates its website, keeping everyone informed of its activities.

The flags flying proudly outside the school and the interior walls adorned with plaques and certificates reflect the passions and achievements of the pupils and staff throughout the years. Timoleague NS is very proud to be officially recognised as an An Taisce Green School, Active School, Health Promoting School, Digital School of Distinction, GIY School; with multiple Muintir na Tíre School Garden awards and an Amber Flag for mental wellbeing. The school is also a Young Environmentalist Awards recipient. After taking part in the Junior Entrepreneur Project (JEP), the school had its products recognised.

It has a close relationship with many local clubs and organisations including Argideen Rangers, Ibane Gaels, Cork Sports Partnership, Bandon Athletics Club, Jog 4 All, Sciath na Scol Chorcaí, Clonakilty RFC and Wild Atlantic Sports. Most recent accolades include being Sciath na Scol Cailíní Football 2022 winners, Bandon Soccer League winners and Cork City Sports athletic victories.

Joining forces with Timoleague Tidy Towns,

Timoleague NS has established a GIY Community Classroom known as Timoleague Education Garden. The aim of this project is to develop an educational space for adults and children, and more importantly to build a community social hub.

The school is also a recognised Creative School with links to local artists: A recent school initiative was BLAST – Bringing Live Arts to Students and Teachers. There are annual school nativities and plays, as well as taking part in Feis Maitiú, a drama festival in Cork. Timoleague NS has exhibited in the RDS and has been presented with Primary Science Fair plaques from the BT Young Scientist & Tech-

nology exhibition. The school is a STEM awards recipient and a most recent Department of Education Inspectorate report stated that, "Pupils also demonstrated an appreciation of how their learning in Science enabled them to make more informed responses to issues in their wider environment." The school's varied STEM projects have been recognised by Science Foundation Ireland and the Cork County Council Environment Department.

Please feel free to contact the school principal, Norma Harte, at office@timoleaguens.com for any enrolment or general enquiries as well as the school website at www.timoleaguens.com.



Timoleague
National School

For enquiries contact Principal
Norma Harte at office@timoleaguens.com
www.timoleaguens.com

- Green School
- Active School
- Digital School
- STEM School
- GIY School
- Junior Entrepreneur Programme & much more!



people FOCUS: SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER

Derryclough N.S:

A small school with a big heart

Derryclough N.S. is a small but vibrant school, catering for boys and girls. It welcomes, cherishes and respects children of all abilities and from all backgrounds and traditions; and prides itself on its kindness to children and their families, and its caring, inclusive, diverse and supportive school community.

Derryclough believes in a rounded education for children and makes full use of the school's space and resources to provide learning experiences that are tailored to suit children's individual needs. There is something for everyone in Derryclough! As well as all academic subjects, there is weekly baking sessions; walking in the locality in fine weather; art and music; and the school has taken a number of projects to the RDS Science Fair. As part of the PE curriculum, pupils do gymnastics in Skibbereen Sports

Centre and swimming lessons in Baltimore Pool. There is also a wonderful outdoor space to play in, with a playing field, basketball court, a basket swing that is loved by all, and a 'forest' that is the location of many adventures! Pupils also really enjoy gardening and are involved in the Incredible Edibles initiative every year.

Teachers make very good use of technology to enhance the children's educational experiences; there are laptops for all senior children and younger children have the use of iPads. The older children often take their laptops home to do online homework tasks or research projects. Technology also plays an important role in supporting children with additional needs. The school has a state-of-the-art Clevertouch interactive screen for each classroom, which is a superb aid to education.

Derryclough N.S. has a very

homely and friendly atmosphere and the door is always open for parents to visit and chat. Classes start at 9.10am, with drop-off from 9am. Infants finish at 1.50pm and the rest of the school at 2.50pm. Last year the school started an 'Infants' Hour'; this is where parents volunteer to supervise the Infants when they finish at 1.50pm for an hour until the older children finish at 2.50pm – a great support for families who have children at both pick-up times.

Drinagh Community Preschool is now based in Derryclough N.S. Having both preschool and school working side-by-side in the same premises is a great asset to the community.

Derryclough is now open for enrolment and an Enrolment Week is taking place from Tuesday February 7 to Friday February 10, with forms and packs available in school. If you



have any questions or would like to discuss the possibility of enrolling please feel free to call Principal Teresa Holland on 028 30328 or 086 3623904 to make an arrangement to visit. The school is also happy to chat with you outside of school hours if that is more suitable. email: derrycloughns@gmail.com. Follow on Facebook or visit derrycloughns.weebly.com.



DERRYCLOUGH N.S.

OPEN FOR

ENROLMENT!

We are a friendly, caring & inclusive school

Central Location in Drimoleague / Drinagh Parish
(12 minutes to Skibbereen, 17 minutes to Dunmanway)



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ENROLMENT WEEK FEBRUARY 7TH - 10TH

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derrycloughns.weebly.com

Extra-Curricular Activities include:

- Science Blast
- Nature walks
- Weekly Cookery Sessions
- Gardening & lots more!

Open: 9.10am - 2.50pm. Drop off from 9am.
After School Supervision for Infants from 1.50pm to 2.50pm

Preschool on site:
Drinagh Community Preschool



Knockskeagh N.S: A sense of place and belonging for all

The hub of its surrounding community, Knockskeagh National School includes the children, parents, Board of Management, staff and wider community.

A co-ed school with an enrolment of 220 children, Knockskeagh School has an ethos of inclusivity where every child is valued and their differences celebrated. As well as eight single-stream classes, the school has four special classes; one for children with moderate general learning disabilities and complex needs, and three ASD classes.

A spirit of collegiality, cooperation and collaboration forms a key part of the school ethos. In recent years, the school has received numerous awards including six Active Flags, Junior Entrepreneur Programme

Awards, four Amber Flags, Digital School of Distinction, the GAA Five-Star Award and five European Blue Star Awards. The school also has ten Discover Primary Science & Maths Awards and is currently applying for its eighth Green Schools Flag.

A wide variety of sporting activities are explored, both in-school and with the aid of outside professional coaches. Sports enjoyed by all children include Gaelic football, hurling, rugby, soccer, athletics, table-tennis, taekwondo, gymnastics, swimming, orienteering and dance. The annual school show is always something not to be missed. All classes play an important role in the overall production, which showcases the children's amazing acting, singing and dancing talents.

The school has a very active Parents Association where all parents are welcome. Over the last number of years, the Parents Association has been a huge support to the school, in particular by helping the school embrace IT, by providing a fully-equipped computer room and several class sets of iPads.

To help parents balance work and home, the school has a breakfast club, which accepts children from 8.15am and an after-school club, which runs from 2-5pm.

A sense of place and belonging is palpable in Knockskeagh, a school which takes great pride in celebrating difference, celebrating learning and celebrating children.





Knockskeagh National School

Scoil Náisiúnta Chnoc Sceach

ENROLMENT/OPEN DAY

Thursday

February 9TH

2023

11.00a.m. – 1.30p.m.

PHONE: 023 8838070
EMAIL: cnocsceachns@gmail.com

Breakfast
Club

After-School
Club

WWW.KNOCKSKEAGHNS.IE












Rathbarry National School is now
ENROLLING FOR SEPTEMBER 2023
Please contact the school **before February 28th 2023.**
t: 023/8840651 e: rathbarryns20@gmail.com
www.rathbarryns.com





Sherkin Island
Winners



**Gurraneasig
National School**
Kilbrittain, P72 YP78
(023) 884 9700
secretary@gurraneasigns.com

Enrolment Open Day
Tuesday 14th February 2023
at 2.30pm... All welcome.
Check out the video at:
www.gurraneasigns.com/parents/pupil-enrolment



St. Mary's Primary School
Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire

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Scoil Naomh Bhríde Union Hall

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for September 2023**

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SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER

Brains in gear as Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile victorious in first round of Credit Union quiz

On January 30, 46 teams from 20 schools across Cork competed in the first knock-out round of the 2023 Credit Union School Quiz. The event, organised by First South Credit Union, took place in the Cork International Hotel and questions covered a wide range of topics including geography, history, music, literature and sport.

In the under 11 category, it was a team from Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile (Kinsale) that came out victorious, while it was Our Lady of Lourdes in Ballinlough who topped the under 13 category.

Speaking about the quiz, George Cantwell, CEO of First South Credit said "We are delighted to have the quiz back this year and to see so many schools 'getting their brains in gear' for this year's quiz. It's a fantastic opportunity for schools in the area to nurture a culture of partnership among students".

In the last quiz held in 2019, a team from Belgooly made it all the way to the national final which unfortunately never took place due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

"We will be cheering on the eight students progressing to the next round and regardless of the outcome, we are all proud of them here at First South Credit Union".

These two winning teams-of-four will now progress to the regional knockout stage in early March with hopes of making it all the way through to the Grand Final at the RDS, Dublin in April 2023. Here they will pitted in a nerve-racking battle of the wits against a number of other formidable teams of four. All teams will have their eye on the prize with a total of €4,000 up for grabs for the overall winning schools.



The A category winners Rory O'Connell, Steve Barlow, Jack Collins and Cushla O'Reilly representing Gaelscoil Chionn tSáile (Kinsale). All pics: Colm Loughed



Niamh McKewin, Samuel Gibson, Katie O'Sullivan and Katelyn Collins from Kilbrittain National School 4th and 5th Class



Emily Rust, Lauren Hurley, Sinead Healy and Emma O'Leary (Ballinspittle NS)

people FOCUS: SCHOOLS AROUND THE CORNER

Ardfield N.S: Wellbeing of children looked after with active and engaged learning

Ardfield NS is a growing co-ed, catholic, rural school, situated ten minutes from the heart of Clonakilty and five minutes from the Red Strand beach. The school is located close to St. James GAA hall, Ardfield Tennis Club and playground, all of which are wonderful facilities that are invaluable to the students.

The school has a vibrant, caring and energetic staff who pride themselves on their relationships with the children and their families, as well as an active and engaged Parents Association and Board of Management along with the wider school community.

The school has expanded in recent years and now boasts three new state-of-the-art classrooms and three new support rooms, in addition to the existing building.

There is an onsite Montessori school called Bright Beginnings which caters for children from two-and-a-half years. There is also an after school service available for infants.

The outdoor facilities include a large grass football pitch, a lighthouse playscape, sandpit, willow den and tunnels, an outdoor classroom and a two



tarmac yards.

Ardfield NS works hard to ensure that the children in their care receive a child-centred, holistic and well-rounded education that not only includes a high standard of academic achievement but also develops pupils' artistic, sporting, social and civic abilities in a kind and caring environment.

Infants enjoy thematic learning following the Aistear learning-through-play curriculum. This has proven to be highly engaging, educational and enjoyable for the children.

The children in the school enjoy learning musical instruments, coding, care of their environment and local historical heritage from visiting experts who regularly engage with the

school, facilitating field trips to beaches, habitats and historical sites.

Children are afforded the opportunity to participate in local art, essay writing competitions, quizzes, chess tournaments, Sci-ath na Scol and other sporting competitions, as well as national initiatives such as Science Blast, Junior Entrepreneur programs and Teacher and Artist Partnership schemes.

The school has been awarded The Science and Maths School of Excellence award for 12 consecutive years and all classes engage in Science week, Maths week, Engineering Week and Space week.

Last year Ardfield NS became the All Ireland Concern primary debating winners 2022



which was a fantastic experience and achievement for a rural school.

In recent years the school has earned and maintained its Active flag status and activities such as tennis, swimming, yoga, dance, orienteering, rugby, GAA football, soccer, gymnastics, dance and cycle training are offered at various times during the year.

As well as achieving five Green flags for its care of the environment the school is currently engaged in creating a biodiversity garden beside its 'bug hotel' and frog filled pond.

ARDFIELD NATIONAL SCHOOL

ENROLMENT DAY

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 22ND
2.00 - 4.00PM

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LARGE OUTDOOR AREA & FOOTBALL PITCH

NEW EXTENSION

MONTESSORI ON SITE - FROM 2 1/2 YEARS

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The wellbeing of the students is of paramount importance to the school and last year, through engaging in a myriad of wellbeing initiatives and hosting Well-being Month the school was lucky enough to be awarded the Amber Flag for wellbeing, for dedication to, and promotion of positive mental health amongst

pupils and staff.

Ardfield National school is renowned for their commitment to meeting the individual needs of each of their pupils and equipping them with the skills to flourish, learn and grow in a warm, caring and encouraging environment.

Castledonovan N.S: Small country school promotes individuality in each child

Castledonovan National School is a small, inclusive, country school, ideally located between Bantry, Dunmanway and Drimoleague. The school currently has two class teachers, one full-time special education teacher and

two special needs assistants. In addition, throughout the school year, they welcome a variety of visiting instructors who offer new and varied experiences for the pupils. Their active Parent Association help to make these activities possible.

A wide range of teaching techniques are utilised, delivering a first-class education, whilst fostering self-expression and promoting individuality in each child. They take part in a wide range of initiatives and projects and have received

many awards.

Details of all their achievements are showcased on the school's Facebook page and website, www.castledonovanns.scoilnet.ie.

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contacting the school.

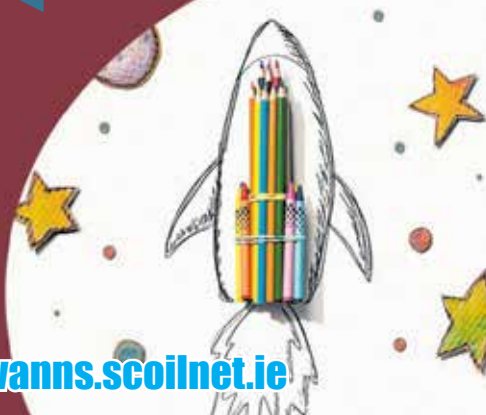
P: 028 31844

E: castledonovanns@gmail.com

**Open Evening will be
held on 23rd February
at 7pm. All welcome.**

www.castledonovanns.scoilnet.ie

Small school, big opportunities



people Arts & Entertainment

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK

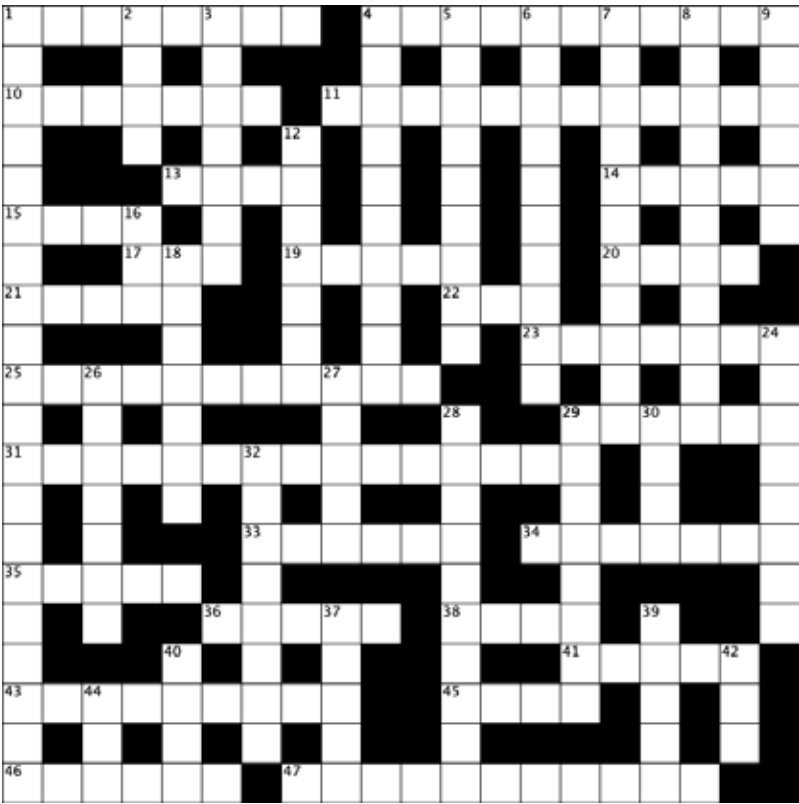


The West Cork Chevals rode 30 horses from Drimloeague to Drinagh on St. Stephens Day and raised €6197 for Enable Ireland. Pictured presenting the cheque to staff at the Enable Ireland's Lavanagh Centre in Curraheen were Aylene Hurley, Dylan Lawlor, Kevin Hurley, Grainne Hurley, Katlyn Hurley, Martin o'Sullivan, Angela Lawlor and Abbie Lawlor (4) from the West Cork Chevals. Picture. John Allen



Colouring Corner

In the news Crossword



- ACROSS**

 - 1 Google parent company (8)
 - 4 Curvy punctuation (11)
 - 10 Arcade game (7)
 - 11 Female state of being single (12)
 - 13 We're restyling a vessel (4)
 - 14 A name for the God of the Old Testament (5)
 - 15 and 3 down. Member of US acting family now up on gun charges (4,7)
 - 17 A layer of apprehension (3)
 - 19 Condition of many fences (5)
 - 20 Bears false witness (4)
 - 21 Oasis, refuge (5)
 - 22 Man seen in zeppelins? (3)
 - 23 Home of baby blooms (7)
 - 25 Common denominators of Fatima and Knock (11)
 - 29 Hostess with many fans (6)
 - 31 Drug aka crystal meth (15)
 - 33 Mafia code of silence (6)
 - 34 Italian sounding cocktail (7)
 - 35 Ancient raiders (5)
 - 36 French location of tragic WWI battles (5)
 - 38 Hawaiian performing art that inspired 80's craze (4)
 - 41 All-in total (5)
 - 43 Bad mood caused by sick joke? (3,6)
 - 45 Japanese brew (4)
 - 46 Lines at the movie? (6)
 - 47 Late founding member of The Byrds (5,6)
- DOWN**

 - 1 Hilly area in eastern USA (11,9)
 - 2 Jobless wanderer (4)
 - 3 See 15 across.
 - 4 Census figure (10)
 - 5 Turncoats see danger anyhow (9)
 - 6 Fussy fault-finding (3-7)
 - 7 Designer of Bewley's café windows (5,6)
 - 8 Clairvoyants (11)
 - 9 Novelist _____ Sheldon (6)
 - 12 Art from a folder (7)
 - 16 Beret-sporting Marxist (3)
 - 18 Plead, beg (7)
 - 24 Young thoroughbred racehorse (8)
 - 26 Argyle or paisley (7)
 - 27 Not just stout (5)
 - 28 Understood and shared feelings (10)
 - 29 Bring about, create (8)
 - 30 Tranquil scene (4)
 - 32 Formal customs, as in NI (8)
 - 37 West Side Story part (5)
 - 39 Employ tradesman to get to the bottom (5)
 - 40 Zodiac delineation, point (4)
 - 42 Wood used for archery bows (3)
 - 44 Sea god of Irish myth (3)

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

					7	9		
		4		6			8	
	6		5					
		6		8			4	1
		1				5		
				5	1	7	2	8
		7	9					
8	4			2				
					3			

#99163 Difficulty: hard

					8			
								6
	9			4		3	2	
3						8		
			7	6		1		9
5				3				4
8	4		6					
		7				4		3
				2			6	

#117441 Difficulty: moderate

Across: 1. alphabet; 4. parentheses; 10. pinball; 11. spinstertroop; 13. ewer; 14. Yabba Dabba; 15. Alec; 17. hen; 19. gated; 20. liar; 21. haven; 22. ell; 23. nursery; 25. apparitions; 29. Gettysburg; 31. methamphetamine; 33. omelette; 34. bellini; 35. Norse; 36. Sonne; 38. hula; 41. tally; 43. ill humour; 45. sake; 46. script; 47. David Crosby
Down: 1. Appalachia; 2. hobnob; 3. Baldwin; 4. population; 5. renegades; 6. nit-picking; 7. Harry Clarke; 8. soothsayers; 9. Sidney; 12. origami; 16. che; 18. entreat; 24. yearning; 26. pattern; 27. obese; 28. empathised; 29. generate; 30. idyl; 32. protocol; 37. Maria; 39. plumb; 40. cusp; 42. yew; 44. lit

Dulle Griet: reflections on Breughel's painted fire



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.

Luminous green lichen sheathes the alder, like an exoskeleton of armoured plates and horns. Diamonds of water drip from the straggle of branches, wavering towards me as I look through the window pane. These past two months have been, for me, a time of poetry, of both writing it and reading it, and it is with some effort that I pull myself toward the more analytical task of writing about art. So forgive me if I enter this task via the first ten lines of a poem:

If the world ran out of fire / I would hold it in my pen / Like Breughel's Mad Griet / Scared in the Flemish haze / Sword glinting in the spider's harp / A compression of sounds floating through organic hell / Whose eyebrows seat incalculable birds / And into whose mouth / Float the debris / Of infernal humanity's wounds...

The imagery in this poem ('A Rain of Blood', published in my book, 'Insomnia's Gates') refers to a painting by Pieter Breughel the Elder, from 1563, titled 'Dulle Griet' (Mad Meg). It is a painting which has haunted me ever since I first saw it in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, in 1997.

As an object the painting has undergone a journey worthy of a novel. It was looted by Swedish troops in 1648, from the collection of Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor, re-emerged in Stockholm in 1800, and was subsequently discovered by Fritz Mayer van den Bergh in 1897 at an auction in Cologne. It now resides in the Fritz Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp, Belgium.

The painting depicts Dulle Griet, armoured, with sword

in one hand and treasure in the other, storming, with an army of women, the mouth of hell. The women, in peasant dress, are fighting Bosch-inspired, hybrid creatures, part animal, part human, against a fire-lit landscape where devils can be seen dancing and where a giant spider plays a harp as it emerges from an egg.

The composition is constructed like an envelope, with four main triangular sections, countered and enriched by a dizzying array of curvilinear rhythms, all set to a palette of red, black, yellow ochre and white. There are hardly any vertical or horizontal lines, meaning everything is tipped. The depth of field is shallow, the action omnidirectional, the neutral colours allowing the yellow ochres and crimsons to glow. The brilliance of the composition, its imaginative fire, is what makes it so powerful.

There is much speculation, however, over the meaning of the work. When viewed in the context of contemporaneous Flemish literature it reads as an allegory about "noisy and boisterous women", reflecting, perhaps, a wider male anxiety about women with power. According to one Flemish proverb, "One woman makes a din, two women a lot of trouble, three an annual market, four a quarrel, five an army, and against six the Devil himself has no weapon". In another popular proverb we appear to find the source of Breughel's theme: "She could plunder in front of hell and return unscathed."

Dulle Griet (Mad Meg) would appear, in the historical context, therefore, to be a subject of caution, ridicule and mockery. This reading is reinforced by Breughel's well-documented use of proverbs for other works of the period, including the painting, 'Netherlandish Proverbs' (1559), and fits with a wider cultural practice of illustrating



'Dulle Griet' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. 1563. Oil-on-panel. 115x161 cm

pithy sayings.

'Mad Meg', it appears, is no Joan of Arc, but a subject of satire for a culture which burned women at the stake for revealing any kind of strength or knowledge. There is a flip-side, however, a certain ambiguity and ambivalence, both in the painting and in its possible literary sources. There is, firstly, some ambiguity in the proverbs, which may indicate either folly, courage or both. 'Mad Meg', herself is depicted as a powerful figure, hinging diagonally on the fulcrum of the composition. In the midst of chaos and conflict there she is, whom they call the mad one, armed and armoured, holding the treasures of humanity against the fires of hell. She is a plain, peasant woman, yet she alone in the scene exudes

human strength. This is what has always struck me; that the satirised anti-heroine may become, in a heartbeat, the heroine, a female saviour of humanity, a force of strength in the midst of breakdown and disorder.

Ultimately Dulle Griet is, for me, an emblem of war, of order striving against chaos, of good versus evil. For this reason Breughel's painted fires have once more entered my poetry:

That is the footprint of Europe, amidst cupolas / And spires, bronze patinas and stained glass churches / It wavers with the beauty of a winter landscape, / Paints itself into states of ineffable grace / Then steps into the darkness. Its embers are flaring / In the East, like in the burning landscape of Breughel's / Dulle Griet, in which 'Mad Meg'

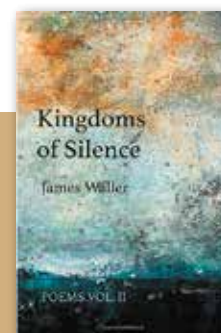
storms the gates of hell, Sword in one hand, a hoard of gold and silver in the other / I always wondered why they called her the mad one.

On its journey from studio and palace to gallery and auction house, through all the vicissitudes of war, Dulle Griet, has survived, both as a painting

and an idea, as a fictional anti-heroine - come heroine, as a fragile painting on panel, defying destruction. To have come, unscathed, through what it depicts is yet another irony of its singular existence.

Book Launch

James Waller will be launching 'Kingdoms of Silence' (2023) and 'Insomnia's Gates' (2021), two books of poetry which collate his first six collections written between 2005-2008. The launch will be held in the intimate environs of Molly's Cafe on Saturday February 18 from 3-5pm, where light refreshments will be provided. There will be an introduction and a short reading from the two books. Signed copies will be available at a special launch price. All welcome.



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people Arts & Entertainment

Spirit of the past at Gallery Asna

An exhibition of photography by Richard Winfield, inspired by his fascination with ancient woodlands and derelict stone buildings and how they invoke the spirit of the past, takes place in Gallery Asna, Clonakilty this month.

Woodlands are rich sources of folklore and tradition. From our island's earliest times, trees have been entwined in Irish folklore and given their names to our towns: Rosscarbery is derived from 'the wood of the pilgrims' and Youghal from 'yew wood'.

Woodlands are also places of great peace and beauty, filled with a variety of interesting, twisted and sometimes sinister shapes that change with the seasons and provide a rich source of imagery.

Derelict stone buildings meanwhile provoke questions such as who lived there and why they were abandoned. On his travels around the county, Winfield has seen many such houses that have fallen into disrepair. "I am attracted to old stone farmhouses and have witnessed some falling apart within years" he says. "I am sure that eventually these once fine buildings will be covered by the earth and disappear forever."

Just as houses fall into the earth, so eventually do trees.

Perhaps everything has a finite lifetime, whether living or inanimate. The work shown in this exhibition is based on Winfield's imagination that the two scenarios are linked; images of trees in ancient West Cork woodlands on which the artist has superimposed ghostly pictures of buildings as fading spirits of the past to give an impression of what might have been. It doesn't propose to answer any questions but to provoke thought.

This promises to be a very exciting show. Spirit of the Past exhibition opens on Saturday February 4 at 5.30pm and runs until February 25. Gallery open daily 11am to 5pm.



Concert in Union Hall



St. Barrahane's Church Festival of Music, now in its 41st year, and the National String Quartet Foundation present Spero Quartet on Friday February 17 at Myross Church of Ireland, Union Hall, 8 pm with Jennifer Murphy and Brigid Leman, violins, Ali Comerford, viola and Yseult Cooper Stockdale, cello. The programme includes one of

Haydn's most popular quartets, his Fifts Quartet; Dvořák's 'Slavonic' Quartet, which is full of melody and Bohemian folk spirit and the award-winning contemporary composer Deirdre Gribbin with her work 'Hearing your genes evolve'. A concert not to be missed!

Tickets €15: online with Eventbrite; Thornhill Electrical, Skibbereen; at the door on the

night; text/call: 086 2264797; www.barrahanemusic.ie

The concert is supported by: The Arts Council; RTÉ lyric fm; Cork County Council; National String Quartet Foundation; Fields of Skibbereen; Charles McCarthy, Real Estate.

West Cork Creates Spring Exhibition in exciting new Union Hall venue

For the past 12 years, the annual West Cork Creates Exhibition has showcased the best of the region's arts and crafts, from a diverse range of disciplines, in the O'Driscoll Building in Skibbereen. While that building is no longer available, the exhibition has been offered the use of a new dedicated arts space in Union Hall.

Cnoc Buí, near the harbour in Union Hall, is the brainchild of Paul and Aileen Finucane who, as owners of the building, aim for it to become a centre for visual, dramatic

and performing arts, while also serving as a multi-use community centre.

The WCC committee will present a Spring Exhibition from April 1-15, where 27 invited visual artists will showcase their amazing work and talent. This will give the committee an insight into the use of the space ahead of planning future events.

A second, longer, Summer WCC Exhibition will take place from August 5- 27.

The WCC committee is hugely grateful to Paul and Aileen Finucane for opening

their doors to the exhibitions this year. It is an exciting new initiative that all are looking forward to with great enthusiasm.

The Spring Exhibition 2023, curated by West Cork Creates committee member and artist Lesley Cox, will run from Saturday April 1 until Saturday April 15, with an opening reception on April 1.

The deadline for submissions for West Cork Creates Summer Exhibition closes on Sunday March 5. See westcorkcreates.com/participate

Glengarriff launches story competition to bring village 'seal' mascot to life

Glengarriff has big plans to make one of their very own seals into a mascot for the village.

'Sandy' the seal lives on our shores and now wants to share her adventures and bring her story to life. She is a brave, fearless soul full of courage and kindness and quite a personality. She has many adventures to share, which have unfolded on the waves, on the walkways and which have been whispered by the wind.

If you feel excited and in-

trigued about Sandy's adventures and want to be part of creating her story, then please share your ideas.

The Glengarriff Community Development Group is inviting all storytellers to share 500-1000 (max) words about the adventures of Sandy. One of these stories will then be selected to be developed with the writer with the intention of creating an illustrated storybook. This narrative will form the beginning of a journey to introduce Sandy through various

mediums, which will become part of the story of Glengarriff.

All interested storytellers should submit their ideas with a small summary about themselves to glengtda@gmail.com by March 10, 2023. The storyteller selected will then be invited by the Glengarriff Community Development Group to develop their ideas further and, at that stage, a fee will be agreed.

This is an exciting opportunity, very much in its infancy, which will be developed col-

laboratively. While ideas may overlap, only one story can be selected based on imaginative content and style and quality of writing. Selection will be by a judging panel from the Glengarriff Community Development Group who reserve the right to confer with others in the selection of the piece and to only select a submission if the judges agree there is a suitable submission to introduce Sandy to the World!

Every effort will be made to notify storytellers by March 31.

CLONAKILTY PARKCINEMA

PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH

KNOCK AT THE CABIN

THE FABLEMANS

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MOVIES THIS MONTH

West Cork artists release song in honour of Brigid

Acclaimed singer-songwriters Victoria Keating and Aine O’Gorman have just released a song, on February 1, in honour of Brigid, the female patron saint of Ireland. The West Cork artists said they are thrilled to be releasing it on the first year that Brigid will be officially acknowledged with a national holiday. The first in a trilogy, the song is called ‘Brigid Part 1: Becoming’.

Victoria Keating has toured and recorded extensively with Christy Moore and Declan Sinnott and has also carved a name for herself as a solo artist: Four of her songs have been on the “Radio 1 Recommends”

playlist. She is currently recording her debut album; a concept album with Brian Casey.

Aine O’Gorman has released five singles and has had a huge emotional reaction both here and internationally. Her last song ‘These Empty Rooms’ made the top five of the year’s best tracks on three different radio shows.

In March 2017 the bodies of 796 babies and children were found in a septic tank on the grounds of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home. Victoria and Aine wrote ‘The Poor Ground’ as a response to this and released it on Irish Radio to huge success and impact.

Christy Moore said of this collaboration, “The Poor Ground” “beautiful... terrible... the beauty holds me there as the horror unfolds... a tour de force”.

Victoria and Aine are talented artists in their own right, but together, they create magic. Their voices together are spell-binding. They write and sing from the heart making every live performance a wonderful experience. They are passionate about performing, writing and bringing live music to as many spaces as possible with grace, kindness and lots of humour.



Songwriters Aine O’Gorman (l) and Victoria Keating pictured on Dunworley beach in flower crowns created by Alice Halliday. Pic: Pat O’Doyne

Artists in residence at Uillinn



Still from ‘Wheel of Dreams’, a film by Toma McCullim, made with Traveller girls from West Cork Traveller Centre, Jessie McCarthy Adair and Rosie McCarthy Adair on their father’s horse Princess.

Cork County Council and Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre are delighted to announce two partnership residencies for 2023, taking place in April and May.

Toma McCullim has been awarded the Cork County Council / Uillinn Artist Residency for 2023. Taking place from 4 April to 1 May, this residency supports artists seeking opportunities to research and develop their practice and to engage with Uillinn, local and diverse communities and the general public. The award includes a studio space for four weeks at Uillinn and a stipend of €2,500.

During her residency, Toma will continue her work with Traveller women and says: “This residency is about unsettling the culture space. It asks the building to go on a journey. I am inviting in Traveller women to create with me a place of imagination. This is a fire which Buffers and Beoirs meet and whiden. This is

a crossroads, a meeting place, an intersection. This is a cooking pot. This is a withy bender. This is a ferment of ideas.”

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Danny Collins welcomed the announcement, saying: “Toma McCullim is an exceptionally talented artist and we look forward to seeing the outcomes of her work with members of the Traveller Community in West Cork. Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre continues to deliver high quality and inclusive arts experiences across the large West Cork area, supporting artists and contributing to the vibrant creative infrastructure of County Cork.”

Toma McCullim is an ‘activist’ - an activist artist. Her work is powered by a strong belief in social justice and environmental ecology. Her participatory practice empowers her collaborators in the amplification of their own authentic voice. As an anthropologist of art, she is interested in

the fundamental question: ‘What does art do?’ Her work stimulates a call to action for creative change making.

Meanwhile Sharon Dipity has been awarded the Bealtaine Cork County Council / Uillinn Artist Residency for 2023.

Taking place from 3 May to 3 June and organised in association with Age & Opportunity’s nationwide Bealtaine Festival which celebrates the arts and creativity as we age, this residency supports artists seeking opportunities to research and develop their practice and to engage with Uillinn, local communities and the general public. The award includes a studio space for four weeks at Uillinn and a stipend of €2,500.

Sharon’s project is called The Line has Two Sides and she will share her work with the public via several events over the course of the residency including a Bealtaine event at Uillinn towards the end of the residency

Happy St Brigid's Day

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period.

She says ‘My ambition for this residency is to develop the drawn line through mark-making, movement, and word using different parts of my body to draw and move with. I particularly want to look at creating movement with an older body with its various limitations and old injuries and to embrace and transcend these limitations to

create my own fluid vocabulary of movement and gesture.’

Mayor Collins also welcomed this announcement: “Bealtaine, a nationwide festival supporting creativity as we age, is a vital part of Cork County Council’s creative calendar each year. Sharon Dipity has a wealth of experience whilst bringing a fresh approach to her work, and I have no doubt this residency

will be a huge benefit to the arts in West Cork and the county as a whole.”

Sharon Dipity is a multi-disciplinary visual artist. She holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Scenography from UCE, Birmingham and a BA Honours Degree in Textiles from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

people Arts & Entertainment

A museum from the heart of the West Cork community

The ‘Museum of Birds and Beasts’, a new exhibition by Tess Leak and Sharon Whooley, that records local stories and cures from some of West Cork’s older generation that may otherwise be lost, is now on at the LHQ gallery at Cork County Hall, Carrigrohane Road where it will run until Friday, February 24, 2023.

A collaboration with master basket maker Joe Hogan, the Museum of Country Life, Castlebar, the National Folklore Collection and the residents of five community hospitals in West Cork – Castle-townbere, Dunmanway, Schull and Skibbereen Community Hospitals and St. Joseph’s Unit in Bantry General Hospital – the exhibition explores the folklore and artefacts from these remarkable national collections to draw

on participants’ experiences of working and living in connection with the natural world.

The exhibition includes local stories and cures, photographs from the National Folklore Collection, artefacts from the Museum of Country Life and handmade nests by Joe Hogan. The artists visited the hospitals with items from the national collections; everything from donkey collars and horse blankets to ‘sugán’ ropes. These evocative, beautifully-crafted objects sparked many lively conversations and the resulting collection of stories form the heart of the ‘Museum of Birds and Beasts’.

“I have lots of stories. Some of them could be a bit true. I was seven or eight when I started milking cows. My mother was a grand singer and when she was milking, she’d sing like a lark. The Banks of my Old Lovely Lee. When I was 17, the first job I had was for a farmer in Cork. The first thing I had to do each morning was to milk thirteen cows and one morning I could only find twelve. So I brought in twelve cows and stalled them up. There was a



Pics: Clare Keogh

passage in the middle of the stall where we’d put a big bucket with the milk from the first two cows and so on. The farmer used to have a little sheepdog and he came into the passage and stuck his tail into the milk and struck off. Before we had the 12 cows milked, here the sheepdog comes into the yard, the calf sucking the sheepdog’s tail and the cow following the calf. That’s a true enough story!” James Connolly

“An old cure for sore throat and quinsy was fresh cow dung in a white cloth around the throat. I know one man and the doctor came to him and there he was sitting with the white cloth and cow dung around his neck when the doctor came in!” Eileen O’Mahony

“If my father wasn’t there, we would hang his coat behind the cow on the stand of the stall. She would get the smell and think it was my father that

was milking her and would give milk more easily. When we finished milking the cows, we would make the sign of the cross on their backs.” Margaret Kelly

“Our museum-form projects become sites of inclusion, gathering a community’s collective and unique experiences,” share Tess Leak and Sharon Whooley. “A museum should work in its capacity to reveal the humanity of individuals... In museums

we have History, but what we need are stories.” Orhan Pamuk.

LHQ Gallery is open from 9am-5.30pm, Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays. The Museum of Birds and Beasts project is delivered through the Arts for Health Partnership Programme in West Cork.

The project was funded by an Arts Council of Ireland Arts Participation Award.

Les SalAmandas release debut album

There is a lot to be said about how fate or destiny, or whatever you want to call it, can take people in many different, surprising, and life-changing directions. For instance, if Colyne Laverriere hadn’t asked her mother for one more chance to stay in Ireland, and if her search for a paying job hadn’t taken her to Ballydehob, then she would surely never have met Julie O’Sullivan, a Ballydehob resident and aspiring songwriter.

In November 2017, Colyne moved to Ireland from France (“to learn English”), fancied Galway as a stop-off point, but within weeks realised that “€400 doesn’t get you very far”. An au pair job came up, and by the end of the year, she had settled in the West Cork town. Meanwhile, Julie had applied to Dublin-based BIMM for a place on a songwriting course but was side-tracked by the news of a similar one much closer to home in Cork (“so I took that and ended up staying”). As 2018 rolled by, both Colyne and Julie started working in the town’s café, Budds, which is where destiny provides another twist to this story.

“At the end of a work shift, after we had cleared up,” begins Colyne, “Julie put on some music and we both started



singing. Then Julie told me she was a songwriter, and I told her that I also wrote songs, which was an absolute lie. A few days later, Julie came over to my house with a bottle of wine - a great call! - and from that night onwards we started writing songs.” The first attempt to put words to music was, says Julie, “a very personal poem that Colyne had to translate and explain every emotion of it. It’s about her mum and is now a song called Rejane. It was a great evening, we just spent hours chatting about everything.”

From that point onwards, Colyne and Julie, under the collective name of Les SalAmandas, slowly but surely continued to build up a collection of songs that are, says Julie, “mostly about us and our lives. Also, they’re a narrative of the last four years, since we first met, and signposts as to how we have grown as people. We would talk for hours and get ideas from that...”

“The songs reflect our own experiences, yes,” agrees Colyne, albeit with an advisory note, “but at the same time they’re very general in that

people in their 20s are going through similar things such as relationships, failed ones, new ones, old ones, coming out of something and starting something new, struggling with mental health and trying to become a certain kind of person.”

Whatever the subject matter, the songs on Les SalAmandas’ debut album, *There’s a Sea Between Us*, tell equally compelling, emotionally charged tales. The eleven tracks – unadorned indie/folk gems bolstered by engaging melodies and watertight harmonies – were crafted over the past three years by performances at Ballydehob’s acclaimed Levis Corner House pub/music venue and (in 2022) at festivals such as Body & Soul, Coughlans Live, Doolin Folk Festival, and Vantastival. Between then and now, Julie and Colyne have shared stages with Irish music luminaries such as Paul Noonan (of BellX1), Wallis Bird, Mick Flannery, and Gemma Hayes.

The idea for an album evolved over time, they say. Throughout the pandemic, remote working and recording with multi-award-winning Canadian producer Daniel Ledwell (who has worked with Mick Flannery, Ben Caplan, and Jenn Grant) took place, the outcome of which included Les

SalAmandas’ first two singles, *Now is the Time*, and *Mouldy*.

Cue the force of destiny once more. In what was surely a bolt from the blue, it was suggested that in order to finish the album within a reasonable time, Julie and Colyne should meet with Daniel at his residential studios in Lake Echo, Nova Scotia, and off they headed.

Just over one year later (with a surprise but justified nomination in the Best Emerging Artist category in RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards 2022), the arrival of *There’s a Sea Between Us*

is due to the organic chemistry of the songwriting, the tenacity and talent of Les SalAmandas, and the people who crowdfunded it into existence. Julie and Colyne are especially grateful to the community of Ballydehob – “from the first time we performed at all there was so much support,” says Julie. “Everyone was delighted to see us just trying” – and to their respective families and friends.

Les SalAmandas’ debut album, *There’s a Sea Between Us*, is out February 14.

Storyland seeking scripts

RTÉ and Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland have announced increased investment in the award-winning short drama series *Storyland*.

Designed to create opportunities for new talent to pitch, develop and produce drama for our screens, *Storyland* has acted as an invaluable springboard for Irish writing, directing, producing, and acting talent throughout the island of Ireland to develop their careers.

In 2022, for the first time, *Storyland* short dramas were broadcast on RTÉ2 as well as RTÉ Player, providing a wider platform for new drama talent and increased funding for these

original Irish drama commissions.

Storyland is seeking to commission eight scripts, working closely with script writers and producers on their development. Writers from the worlds of television, film, theatre, advertising, literature, documentary, and journalism are being sought, whether or not they have written for television or film before.

Of the eight dramas developed, three single dramas of 25 minutes duration will be commissioned for production.

Deadline for Entry is February 24, 2023. See rte.ie/tv/programmes/storyland

West Cork Music announces lineup for Spring Concerts

West Cork Music is delighted to announce its Spring Concert Series. Over four Sundays in February and March, St Brendan's Church in Bantry will welcome top-class soloists and quartets.

On Sunday 12 February at 3pm, violinists Paul Ezergailis and Siobhán Doyle, violinists Ruth Gibson and Cian Ó Dúill, and cellists Brian O'Kane

and Aoife Burke perform Bach, Mozart, Telemann and Brahms.

On Sunday 26 February, in collaboration with the Ortús Chamber Music Festival, the Marmen Quartet perform Mozart, Janáček and Beethoven.

On Sunday 12 March, violinist Maxim Rysanov, violist Nikita Borisov-Glebsky and cellist Dóra Kokas make their concert series debut with a programme of Beethoven, Mozart

and Tabakova.

The series concludes on 26 March with the Callino Quartet who will perform music by Haydn, Helena Winkelman, Ian Wilson and Ravel.

Tickets will be available at the door, online at westcorkmusic.ie/concert-series/programme/ or by ringing the West Cork Music office at 027 52788.

west | cork | music

Concert Series

St Brendan's Church, Bantry

SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Sunday
12 February
3pm

Works by Bach,
Mozart, Brahms
and more

MARMEN QUARTET

Sunday
26 February
3pm

Works by Mozart,
Janáček and
Beethoven



Tickets on door, from www.westcorkmusic.ie or 027 52788

US indie neo-folk duo celebrate their tour finale at DeBarras



US indie folk act Damsel, have announced their 'New to You' Ireland 2023 tour dates. This rebooking of their postponed November 2020 tour will include six shows across the country, in Dublin, Kilkenny, Ballydehob, Clonakilty, and Waterford as well as a song writing seminar at the University of Limerick.

On finally reaching their fans in Ireland, Mugan says "Without a doubt, some of my most memorable and gratifying musical experiences, whether on stage or in the audience, have been in Ireland - I simply cannot wait to return! Damsel is

so happy to be playing DeBarras's Clonakilty as the finale of our 'New to You' Ireland tour 2023."

Damsel's sophomore album, 'New to You', is an appropriate title for this tour as it is the band's first visit to Ireland together - and it was also recorded (at Miner Street Studio in Philadelphia in early 2021) just after the duo was scheduled to be performing live in Ireland.

"We had already chosen a new direction in sound production for our second album, but when the pandemic hit the pause button on our recording schedule timeline we were

forced (the whole world was!) to slow down and find new ways to be creative," explains Beth Meyers of their process during 2020. "It was truly a gift to be able to focus on this project at a time when we didn't know when we would play live again."

These 11 new songs by the neo-folk duo are filled with captivating lyrics and orchestrated textures written and performed by band members, Beth Meyers (vocals, viola, banjo, ukulele, percussion, piano and electric bass) and Monica Mugan (vocals, acoustic guitar, ukulele and French horn) with added

textures from Florent Ghys (upright bass), Jason Treuting (drums and percussion) and Dan Trueman (hardanger fiddle). 'New to You' is rich with personality and whimsy, unapologetically inviting listeners into a sonic space without ready labels.

Damsel will be touring the acoustic duo version of 'New to You' and will be highlighting a few songs from their debut album, 'Just Sit So' as well. Don't miss the duo, live at DeBarras Folk Club, Clonakilty, March 9. Tickets €15 available at debarra.ie

people Motoring



CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

A car for tech-savvy drivers

some lukewarm water on the windscreen.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that any time I used the air conditioning to heat up the interior of the car or windscreen, it didn't affect my range.

Nissan were the first car company to produce an affordable electric car but the range in the Leaf was poor. However, I have seen some Leaf cars still being used as taxis in Dublin City. Now Nissan are in with the big hitters in the electric car sector and their Ariya will be competing with the likes of the Hyundai Ioniq5, Kia EV6, Volkswagen ID.5 and the Skoda Enya.

It's a truly massive car with lots of extra leg space available for front seat passengers. At times I felt like Nissan could have put in a bench seat in the front, it was that spacious. There is also plenty of leg and head room for three well-built adults in the back seat. Nissan refer to their Ariya as a coupe-cross-over, and the body of the car

certainly has a futuristic look to it.

Also for front seat passengers there is a sliding divider which also acts as an arm rest. The boot is huge, but sadly as is common with all electric cars, no spare wheel is provided.

Inside the dash is dominated by an easy-to-use infotainment screen. And while I liked the old-style button for the radio volume control, the touch-sensitive buttons with haptic feedback on the dash for the A/C controls took a bit of getting used to.

The Ariya is the most technically-advanced Nissan to date and the company say it has been specially designed to meet the needs of tech-savvy customers. I was just happy that my i-phone worked. Seriously, the most innovative item was the rear-view mirror, where you get a brilliant view of who is driving behind you thanks to a rear-view camera. You can almost see the whites of the drivers' eyes, it's that good.

The two questions I always get asked when driving an electric car is the price and the range. Prices start just five euro short of 49k, while as usual the range will depend on the battery size.

With a 63kWh battery you should get up to 403 kilometres and with an 87kWh battery the range should be around 530 ki-

lometres. Now the Government are talking about plans to have quick charging points every 60 kilometre on main roads.

Seamus Morgan Nissan MD for Ireland said at launch of Ariya: "The pricing that we have achieved is extremely competitive for a car of this quality. This is the EV customers have been waiting for and our pricing

and grade options allow them to make the switch to electric driving without compromise."

Prices start at €48,995, then it will depend on the battery size and model you opt for and don't forget there is no Government grant for electric cars priced over 50k. Road tax is €120. It's a lovely quiet motor with a high driving position.



When you turn on the air conditioning in most electric cars, you will see your estimated range drop alarmingly. If you don't leave the A/C on for very long the range will quickly revert to something like it was previously.

I drove the new Nissan Ariya electric car during the recent cold spell and needed the hot air in the mornings to clear the windscreen, after first pouring

people Farming

FARMING
IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

In association
with



For a while there it felt like the mist just wouldn't go away and that the rain was never going to stop. I went digging for information on how wet it had been and discovered that from September up until January 26, Sherkin island has recorded 799mm of rainfall. The rainfall recorded at the Sherkin island weather station was 1,069mm. I reckon we could see a few dry spells ahead later in the year at the rate rain has fallen over the

A wet start to 2023

last few months. One of the positives of getting that level of moisture is the time of year it arrived at, so we can be thankful for small blessings.

Grazing

On farm the next few weeks will see grazing begin and, while calving is kicking off on a lot of West Cork farms, I'm hoping there won't be much stirring until closer to the start of March. Getting the yearling heifers trained to on-off grazing will be my priority. They'll get out to grass for a few hours and will be brought back in by night. It takes a small bit of time but in the long run it pays off. There are a number of cows that were not in calf who will stay out full-time. In other years, these would have been fed ration from late autumn or into the winter for finishing. But given the cost of ration and the volume a suckler cow would eat, it just doesn't stack up financially.

Hedges

Another job on the cards will be both hedge planting and a small bit of hedge laying as part of the ACRES scheme. I can't commence this until I get notification that I was accepted into the scheme so it looks like much of this work will be completed in autumn 2023 instead. The window



for planting these is ideally November to March, as this is when bare root plants are dormant. Maybe given the amount of rain, it might not be any harm that planting was held off on.

Forestry

Speaking of planting, there has been much news lately about a deal between Coillte, Ireland's semi-state manager of forestry and investment fund, Gresham house.

According to Coillte, "The 'Irish Strategic Forestry Fund' will provide up to €200m capital needed to create new forests, making a significant

contribution to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The fund will also acquire existing forest assets and, when fully deployed, will represent a portfolio of approximately 12,000 hectares of new and existing forests."

Like many others, I'm uncomfortable with the deal. Similar types of investments in housing look to have made it much more difficult for a generation to own their own home. It's a deal that's leaving a sour taste on the ground and could hang in the memory for a while even if it never actually comes to fruition.

It would put you thinking



though. If an investment company sees an opportunity in buying land in order to draw Government premiums for 15 years, are farmers missing a trick? Farmers already own the land and would be eligible for 20 years of premiums. Plus, in the case of family farms, the land and timber remain their asset after the grant-aided period has

elapsed. Naturally, there's pros and cons, but it may suit those who have no successor who is interested in farming but still would like to maintain a family connection to the land. It would probably need some creative thinking to consider a co-op type approach, but the challenge of trying to reach consensus makes forming this idea a reality.

Aspiring young scientist from Bandon wins Farm Safety Award

A Bandon student has claimed the ABP Farm Safety Award at the 2023 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) with his innovative project, 'Investigation of a prototype tool belt to prevent musculoskeletal injuries in vets'. John Buckley from Hamilton High School in Bandon impressed judges with his innovative and forward-thinking project, which aims to reduce repetitive stress disorders in vets, namely reducing shoulder pain and injuries through a new design for a vet's tool belt. John entered his project in the intermediate age group, open to third and fourth year students.

During the course of his project, John carried out research which revealed

shoulder issues in 59 percent of 114 vets surveyed. The unnatural motion of removing tools from a standard vet's belt, located around the waist, particularly in the course of repetitive tasks such as TB testing, is a likely contributor to shoulder pain and injuries in vets. John's newly designed vet tool belt, which is located around the thigh, will allow for minimised shoulder and arm movements, ensuring a quicker and more ergonomic action when reaching for the belt.

John field tested his new belt with a local veterinary clinic, who reported it was "much easier to use", "definitely minimises shoulder movement", and that they "will continue to use the belt from now on". Aodhán McEn-

tee, a specialist physiotherapist, believes John's belt may reduce the risk of rotator cuff overuse injuries.

For the ninth consecutive year, ABP Food Group has sponsored the Farm Safety category, which year-on-year has produced groundbreaking projects from students across the country. The area of farm safety is a priority for ABP, and it is an issue that is still prevalent in Ireland today. In 2022, 12 people in the farming sector were killed in work-related accidents according to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), accounting for 46 percent of all Irish workplace related deaths during the year.

Amie Coonan from ABP's Agricultural Team, said: "On behalf of ABP, I would like to sincerely congratulate John on

his innovative project, which has deservedly been recognised with this year's Farm Safety Award. He has demonstrated true innovation and creativity in his impressive project and should be very proud of this accomplishment.

I would like to thank all of the entrants who put forward projects this year. It has been truly inspiring to witness the amazing things that Ireland's young people are capable of, and it has been very impressive to see how many of them are interested in seeking solutions for a major societal issue like farm safety."

The BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition is one of the largest and longest-running STEM events in the world.



Amie Coonan from ABP's Agricultural Team, with John Buckley, winner of the ABP Farm Safety Award at BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2023

people Farming

A West Cork Farming Life: Christopher Thomas, Kealkil

Interview by
Tommy Moyles

From a non-farming background, Christopher Thomas developed an interest in farming at a young age and, despite not owning any land, he now runs two farms with his wife Martha and their three children.

Describe the farm and what's going on at the moment?

We're milking 50 cows, supplying milk to Drinagh co-op, on one leased block of 70 acres at Letterlickey a bit east of Bantry town. We just had a clear TB test and the cows have just started calving. There's also a suckler herd on rented ground in Inchigeelagh but everything is wintered on the farm at Letterlickey. Home is Kealkil; that's where I'm originally from, so there are two farms rented and we're living between them.

We went into dairy in 2020 because I wanted to get more time at home. I was working away from home at water

pumps and filtration and when you're away a lot and then doing the few jobs with the sucklers late in the evening, you get to see no one. The children are only young once and that was my reason, that and a big interest in farming. If you want to stay home in farming, the only way you're going to do it is if you're milking a cow really, which you'll have a steady income from. When you're renting a farm, you can't make too many mistakes, so it keeps you on your toes. I have a really good relationship with the land owner and the experience has been good so far.

We also got off to a good start as we were awarded an AHI Cellcheck award in 2021 for the low cell count of the milk.

You're not from a farm originally, Christopher, where did the interest in cows come from and how did you go about getting on the farming ladder?

My grandparents on both sides were farmers. The Thomas side were dairy farmers, milking about 24 cows; my mother's side were in suckler. My grandfather on my mother's side left me a cow when he died... I was only eight or nine at the time but I developed a fierce interest.

It was all about finding a way to farm after that; and even though I had no land, I was going to get there eventually.

How did you go about finding land?

I was a carpenter by trade for a good number of years and worked a lot with farmers. My wife Martha's father is a farmer and I used to help him out when we started going out. I also did some driving for contractors. Eventually a piece of land came up in Inchigeelagh in 2015 and, as Martha had the Green Cert done, we said we'd take it. She had a few cows in her father's herd so we were able to transfer them over and we brought in a few more. That's where it started then.

After that, I was on the chase all the time to take more ground, so I did the Green Cert by night in Macroom. I was always checking property ads to see if there was anywhere local for lease so when I spotted the place here I made an inquiry to the auctioneer. It was January 2020; I'd say it was one of the wettest days of the year but we came out for a look anyway and decided to lease it then.



Christopher Thomas and his son Oisin, in their milking parlour on the farm they lease at Letterlickey, Bantry.

Did you have to do much to the farm in order to supply milk?

In the advertisement it said there was an eight-unit parlour here but it hadn't been used for a few years. We had to get a new bulk tank but, after that, there was just a bit of refitting and re-lining of the parlour needed. After the lease was agreed, I set about getting a loan from the Credit Union and bought the cows.

I bought calved cows the first year, which I was lucky to get, as they all came from one herd; from a farmer who had to reduce numbers as he lost land he was leasing. He was very fair to

me and it was great to have all the cows from the same source. We started milking on April 7 and we had the first milk cheque in May 2020. It was a mad start back. Getting the herd number up and going was the hardest part because it was during the first Covid lockdown and trying to do all that paper work was tricky.

How have you managed with the wet winter?

The weather since December hasn't really upset me because I'm in since the last day of October; it gets too wet around here and you'd end up poaching

the ground. I'd rather get a few dry days towards the end of January when I can start to creep out the calved cows in a group of four or five together. We suffer more in a wet year but we've got three good years so far so hopefully they'll stay coming. The farm is typical of around here, there's good earthy soil for most of it with some black soil in parts. But that was the ground that kept me out of trouble last year because it kept growing grass when other parts had burnt up. Regardless of the weather, where I am, the grass will be plenty all year long.

Clonakilty's 'MyGug' claims top AgTech prize for innovative digester system that converts food waste into a natural gas

MyGug, a start-up company based in Clonakilty, has been announced as one of the two winners of University College Dublin's (UCD) second annual accelerator programme dedicated to early-stage AgTech and Agri-food start-ups with global potential.

The focus of the 12-week intensive AgTechUCD Accelerator Programme is on fast tracking the business development and leadership skills of participants and to provide them with the support and guidance

needed to accelerate their start-ups in Ireland and internationally.

Following a final pitching event, held at UCD Lyons Farm, in front of a judging panel, MyGug was named the AIB and Yield Lab AgTech Start-up 2023 and received a €10k prize.

MyGug has developed a micro-scale anaerobic digester that turns food waste into a green renewable energy source, suitable for homes, schools and small food businesses. The efficient egg-shaped MyGug digester system, which is aesthetically



Pictured at UCD Lyons Farm is Fiona Kelleher, co-founder and COO, MyGug. Photograph Nick Bradshaw

pleasing, converts food waste into a natural gas suitable for cooking and a liquid fertiliser, suitable for use in gardens. The automated system also produces data via an app and dashboard that is valuable to customers for supporting and learning more about the efficacy of sustainability practices.

The company was founded by Kieran Coffey and Fiona Kelleher who completed the programme.

Fiona Kelleher, co-founder and COO, MyGug said, "I am thrilled that MyGug has named the AIB and Yield Lab AgTech Start-up 2023 following the completion of the AgTechUCD

Agccelerator Programme."

She added, "Every year a third of food intended for human consumption is lost or wasted. This food waste can be diverted from landfills and harnessed to create renewable energy. Our ambition at MyGug is to empower our customers to become agents of positive change by using our technology to create renewable energy from their food waste, in the form of natural gas suitable for cooking and a liquid fertiliser suitable for use in their gardens, all year round."

She concluded, "We are currently selling MyGug digesters to customers in Ireland, as well as exporting to the UK and to mainland Europe. We are planning to raise €1 million in seed funding later this year to expand our manufacturing base in West Cork and to accelerate company growth and sales in Ireland and also internationally."

MyGug has been supported to date with funding from LEO Cork North and West and Enterprise Ireland.

A second start-up OptaHaul, based in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, was named the Ornuu AgTech One to Watch 2023

and received a €10k prize. OptaHaul has developed the first route optimisation software solution designed specifically and exclusively for the dairy milk transportation industry to reduce transport costs, increase resource efficiency and remove greenhouse gas emissions from farm to plant milk transport.

Niamh Collins, Director, AgTechUCD Innovation Centre, said, "I would like to congratulate MyGug and OptaHaul, both with significant global ambitions, as winners of our second AgTechUCD Accelerator Programme. The aim of this programme is to support the commercial development of the participating start-ups by helping them to increase their marketplace visibility, to attract new customers and investors and to forge new partnerships."

AgTechUCD, based at UCD Lyons Farm and part of NovaUCD, is focused on accelerating the launch and scaling of AgTech and FoodTech start-ups in Ireland and has been funded through the Regional Enterprise Development Fund administered by Enterprise Ireland.

people Gardening

Gardening in February

In February, as the days lengthen and the summer bounty of bloom, fragrance and delicious produce from the garden beckons, the garden generally comes to life. Whether you are a complete novice or a

seasoned gardener, the pleasure and satisfaction you achieve is unrivalled.

Jobs for the month

Prepare seed beds where weather and soil conditions permit.

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**GARDENING**

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden
Centre

Secure your seed potatoes while still in stock and, if you haven't already done so, put seed potatoes sprouting.

Protect apricots, nectarines and peaches while in blossom. Cover on nights where frost is forecast with jute sacking or frost protection fleece and remove during the day to facilitate access to pollinating insects.

Net fruit and vegetable crops against bird damage.

Snowdrops can be divided in the green. Plant potted snowdrops. These are generally more successfully moved and planted 'in the green' than in the dormant, dry bulb state. Label any choice, named varieties with a robust weather-proof label.

Wisteria

Prune shoots back to two buds before the end of the month, removing any damaged and unwanted branches. New wisterias are planted in a south or west wall. Keep well watered during dry weather and feed during March or April with a good



organic fertiliser.

Feed container-grown plants with a liquid seaweed-based fertiliser at seven-to-14-day intervals during the active growing season.

Ornamental Grass

Cut back deciduous grasses during the month. Evergreen grasses can be tidied up by removing any dead material.

Lawns

Turf can be laid but avoid wet or frosty weather. Trim or edge up lawn edges as soon as you get a chance. Prepare seed beds for new lawns for an April sowing.

Houseplants, Conservatory, Greenhouse

Cacti and clivia need to be kept dormant until March. Keep an eye on all frost-tender plants, covering over with newspaper or frost-protection fleece on nights where frost is forecast. You can also provide some background heat with a thermostatically-controlled fan heater.

Cyclamen

Water from the base, avoiding any water getting onto the crown, flowers or foliage. When

your cyclamen are dry, put in a saucer or bucket for 20 to 30 minutes, discarding any excess water. Keep cyclamen in a cool, bright place and don't put outside until all risk of frost is over.

Indoor Azaleas

Keep in a cool place but frost-free, watering regularly with rainwater.

Indoor Forced Bulbs

Hyacinths, narcissi and early crocus that have finished flowering can be placed outside in a sheltered position.

Early Colour in Pots and Containers

Heathers, vinca, ivies and potted spring bulbs will provide early colour in containers. Camellias are an excellent choice for containers. Use fresh compost when planting and an acid, ericaceous compost for plants such as camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons and heathers. Add and mix a little slow-release fertiliser prior to planting.

Continue Planting

Continue planting of trees, shrubs, hedging, shelter trees, fruit trees and roses where weather and soil conditions

permit). Protect all newly-planted items against rabbit, hare and deer damage. Damage at an early stage can result in significant fatalities or stunted growth so do take precautions immediately! Stake larger trees securely.

Try to get established trees and shrubs moved before the end of February, mulching heavily after planting to conserve moisture.

Weed Control

Keep weeds under control before they get established and go to flower and seed. An early vigilance will reap dividends later. A heavy mulch, once the area is first totally cleared of weeds, will eliminate a high proportion of weeds that may emerge during the season. If you have a large area to be covered, it is worth ordering some bulk bark mulch from one of the local suppliers.

Start Dahlias

Start Dahlias back into growth in a cool, frost-free indoor area in moist compost. They can then be hardened-off and planted in their summer flowering quarters at end of May/early June. Begonias can be started into growth now too.

Vegetable Garden

Sow peas under cover. Prepare a runner bean trench about 60cm wide, adding well-composted farmyard or stable manure into the trench. Give spring cabbage a dressing of organic fertiliser now to give them a post-winter boost.

Green-fingered Cork community groups wanted for Bloom

Bord Bia is inviting green-fingered community groups and amateur gardeners from Cork the opportunity to design and deliver a postcard garden at Bord Bia Bloom 2023. These small, but perfectly formed, miniature garden spaces offer garden clubs, community groups, schools and charitable organisations a unique green canvas to tell a story and showcase their creative talents at one of Ireland's most loved festivals. Bord Bia Bloom takes place once again in the Phoenix Park, Dublin from June 1-5, 2023.

A previous postcard garden from West Cork included 'A sense of place. His heartland – Lennox Robinson' – Ballineen Enniskeane Heritage Group.

The postcard gardens at Bord Bia Bloom offer a rich

tapestry of local storytelling brought to life through the use of plants and creative garden designs. The 3m x 2m plots have explored a range of themes through the years including mental health, the environment, local history and characters, and charitable endeavours. Last year, St. Mary's Community Gardening Group in Clondalkin were awarded 'Best in Show' for their postcard garden which explored the concept of a sensory garden featuring nature-based crafting in order to inspire pupils, teachers and parents to reconnect with nature.

For more information on the Postcard Gardens and to download an application form, visit BordBiaBloom.com. The closing date for applications is March 1, 2023.

The Week-end Garden Centre
by John Hosford We are signposted off the main routes into West Cork.
Signs @Clonakilly Junction (Gaggins) & Ross Oil (Whites Gates) off N71 Bandon-Clonakilly road.
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john@hosfordsgardencentre.ie Follow us on Twitter & Facebook for regular updates, news & advice, opening hours. **ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED.**

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people Gardening

Fruit Hill celebrates 30 years of helping people make the move to organic

Already the shop of choice for Ireland's organic producers and gardeners, more and more conventional farmers are turning to Fruit Hill farm – Ireland's specialist for environmentally-friendly house, farm and garden supplies – to help them make the switch to organic. With over 2000 new applicants to the Organic Farming Scheme indicating that Ireland is in a good position to hit its target of 7.5 per cent of agricultural land being used for organic farming by the end of 2027, it is inevitable that there will be even greater demand for the type of high quality organic products stocked by this West Cork-based online shop, which celebrates 30 years in business this year. Boasting an excellent selection of seeds and propagation equipment, soil and plant food and high quality tools and equipment, with business owner Elmer Koomans' background in organic food production and an experienced team of 18 behind him, **Mary O'Brien** shares how Fruit Hill is well-equipped to support the high numbers of our West Cork farmers already signed up to the Organic Farming Scheme.

Fruit Hill Farm is the leading supplier of organic grass seed, clovers and cereals in Ireland. The company supplies organic oat seed to farmers who grow for Flahavan's and trials of Fruit Hill's variety rich grass seed mixtures by some of West Cork's conventional farmers have been going exceptionally well. "They're very happy with the results," shares Elmer. "There is an increase in milk production, a decrease in vet bills, the grasses need less input and are proving to be more resilient in wet and drought conditions."

"We are improving our range of variety rich grass seed mixes all the time so we have a sheep pasture mix coming in this year."

He does point out that due to organic nitrogen in the soil only becoming available to plants once the soil warms up, the organic grass seed mixes are slower to get going in the spring.

The introduction of clovers in organic swards is crucial for nitrogen fixing.

Elmer is available to interpret farmers' soil analysis results with them and offers advice without charge.

Fruit Hill Farm was started by Manfred and Edite Wandel from their home in 1993. Manfred and Edite were organic pioneers in the eighties and have done excellent work sourcing and supplying quality products for small and large organic growers. As an organic grower since 1989, Elmer was already a customer of Fruit Hill for years before joining the business as a sales manager in 2012. His experience in farming, organic food production and his in-depth knowledge of soil health has been of huge benefit to the growth of the business: He made new contact with larger growers and commercial farmers and, in 2015, Fruit Hill Farm moved to a larger premises



in Colomane, between Dri-moleague and Bantry.

After years of working side by side building a successful business together, in July 2021 on Manfred's retirement, Elmer took over the reins, securing Fruit Hill's future and continued growth.

What started out as a printed catalogue 30 years ago with a small selection of tools and products like chicken pellets and seaweed dust is now online and stocks a wide range organic vegetable, microgreen, herb and flower open-pollinated seeds, as well as an excellent selection of blight-resistant seed potato varieties, composts, fertilisers and soil conditioners, products that can help with pests or disease and quality hand tools and propagation equipment, many which are unique to Fruit Hill. "People might be surprised to hear that one particular tool we are selling a lot of is the scythe," shares Elmer. "More and more people are now switching from using strimmers to this more traditional tool, which is efficient and environmentally-friendly. Our Austrian scythe has a lovely light ash handle and is very easy to use once you master the technique."

While it's still too early for gardeners to start planting out, thoughts are turning to growing healthy and productive plants. New to Fruit Hill this year are mycorrhizal fungi products. "With our changing climate and more extreme weather conditions, products like the mycorrhizal fungi are excellent for helping to make the soil and plants more resilient to pests and disease," says Elmer. "If the soil is not alive and healthy, you will attract so many more problems."

Also, if you haven't done so already it is worth investing in some quality organic mulch or a fabric ground cover to protect

the soil and keep weeds at bay.

As we head into seed potato season, Elmer recommends blight-resistant varieties Vita-bella, Connect and Carolus for their flavour and yield but there are lots more to choose from on the website. "Many people plant potatoes too early, in mid March," says Elmer. "The ground outside is too cold in Spring and there is still a risk of frost so the crop won't thrive. The beginning or middle of April when the ground has warmed up is the best time to plant potatoes for a good crop."

For anyone new to growing potatoes, Fruit Hill farm stocks

large 30 and 40 litre containers, which are perfect for starting out.

Whatever your growing requirements, Fruit Hill Farm prides itself on offering a high quality customer service and product and is ready to help you make the right choice for your own needs and the environment.

To celebrate 30 years of successful business Fruit Hill Farm will be running a number of special offers and giveaways over the next few months so keep an eye on their social media or sign up for their newsletter for more details.

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people Sport

High hopes for Ardfield's soccer star

Matthew Hurley looks at the remarkable rise of Ardfield native and soccer prospect John O'Donovan. The first year Arts student in UCC is training with the Cork City senior squad in preparation for the new League of Ireland season, starting on February 17, when they play Bohemians at Turners Cross.

O'Donovan, who plays in the defence, was part of the recent Rebel Army squads in three pre-season friendlies where they beat UCC (2-0) and Treaty United (3-0), before narrowly losing to Dundalk (1-0). This is ideal preparation for a player who always had great potential.

"I've been coming up through the U15s, U17s and U19s for the past few years and I've been loving it," O'Donovan explains.

"The standard is very good with them, in fairness; just seeing players move on as well to bigger and better clubs, like Mark (O'Mahony) who recently joined Brighton. It's great to be playing with players that have top class quality.

"It's another step up altogether, but hopefully it will benefit me in any situation, like with my strength and my on-the-ball possession traits."

It all began in the West Cork Schoolboys League in his home parish, Ardfield.

"I started playing with Ardfield when I was about six or seven and I came up the ranks with them. There's Sean O'Reilly, Hugh O'Reilly and Johnny Lawless who were all there to help me get through.

"Then with the West Cork team, I went to the Galway Cup and the Kennedy Cup. That's where I got noticed by Corinthians up in Cork."

College Corinthians AFC are a well renowned club in Cork for nurturing exciting talents such



as O'Donovan or other standout performers in the regional leagues all over the county.

"I played only four or five months with them and then I got onto the Cork City U15 team. It's all thanks to Ardfield FC from where it began. Over in Carrigroh in the home pitch, there was nothing better," O'Donovan says.

Ardfield have had their own successes in the last year, winning the Carbery junior AFC and gaining promotion to the county premier JFC in Gaelic football. With O'Donovan's brilliant performances though, it epitomises that the area isn't just steeped in sport success revolved around GAA.

"Ardfield are a great team to have around the locality. They bring in brilliant players from Rosscarbery and Ardfield, it's a great team to go for. It's well run by Hugh and all the lads. They just keep it going, the training was top quality as well," O'Donovan explains.

Even his friends back home are wishing John all the very best in his recent successes: Whether it's getting a game for Cork City or producing a great

performance.

"Every time I play a game with the first team, I have heaps of texts on Instagram from all the lads. They're great to keep in touch and keep backing you.

"It helps me because you get a buzz when one of the lads contacts you. They see you come on for 45 minutes or say well done on starting. It's great they're backing me up," O'Donovan says.

He has come up through the West Cork schoolboys league all the way to the biggest soccer club in the county. The changes have been evident, but the Ardfield man is enjoying the challenge.

"There was always a change. I

pushed myself no matter what it was. With Ardfield, it was a great level and I wanted to push on even more.

"With West Cork, we were playing squads that had very good players, a lot of teams in the Kennedy Cup were brilliant. That was another step up altogether," O'Donovan adds.

"Then Corinthians was brilliant as well because they were the team to go to at the time. The Cork league is absolutely fantastic for bringing up young players. I just tried to push on myself and get better. You could go to a team lower down but then you try to get above them and that was my aim."

It isn't just the soccer that John has had on his busy schedule. Currently studying in UCC, after successfully completing the Leaving Cert in Clonakilty Community College, O'Donovan is set, just in case things don't work out in future years.

"I've been enjoying the course in fairness. I was just happy to get the Leaving Cert out of the way really, that was my main focus. Once I had that done, I could focus on my soccer more because I always knew that I had the leaving cert if I wanted to go back to college anytime just in case soccer didn't work out. Whatever happens, happens. I'll always have college to fall back on, which is good."

O'Donovan attended Clonakilty Community College up until 2022 and the pride that the school has in their past pupil's amazing achievements is clear

in their school congratulations to him on Instagram when he was named FAI International schools player of the year recently.

"It was great for the Community College to show the amount of talent is there, whether it's football, hurling, rugby or soccer. It's a great school for sport. It's getting better every year too, which is great to see."

Playing in West Cork was fantastic for John but playing with Cork City was something that was always a dream of his.

"I would've been going to the matches all the way up with Ardfield. You don't realise until you're there how good it is. After the Treaty match, there were a load of young kids coming up and asking for pictures and signatures. It was enjoyable.

"I liked it because you'd never think you'd be in that position a couple of years ago. It is really cool to play with them. It's a great step up and hopefully I'll be pushing on soon," the defender adds.

The senior manager for the City this year is legendary former player Colin Healy. Healy has been in conversation with O'Donovan along with other players and making them feel welcome in a League of Ireland set up.

"He works with the team really to try and meet everyone and if you want to go to him and ask him any questions, he's always there to answer. I've been enjoying being in with the first team and the feedback Colin has been giving me is I've been doing very well. It's been an enjoyable few weeks, we'll see what happens next," says the Ardfield man.

Last year, O'Donovan was even picked for the Republic of Ireland U18 schoolboys' side in the Centenary Shield last year. It was a tournament comprising of the U18s of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. John came out of the tournament with a lot of praise and even won an award.

"I've been up and down with trials in the U16/U17 squads and last year I was picked for the U18 Ireland schools.

"That was a huge step up really, it's just a completely different level. Unfortunately, we lost in

the final to Wales, but I came out of it winning player of the year which I was absolutely delighted with. I have a nice old plaque at home. It was enjoyable."

Mark O'Mahony's recent move from City to English Premier League club Brighton and Hove Albion delights O'Donovan.

Even players such as 18-year-old Meath man Evan Ferguson have massively impressed for the south English club having recently been plucked from the League of Ireland.

These success stories give the Ardfield youngster belief.

"It gives me huge confidence in fairness. I've been playing with Mark for the past few years and seeing him signing for Brighton, you'd be thrilled for him. It just shows that the work he puts in is rewarded," O'Donovan explains.

"Alex Healy-Byrne going to Burnley too, he's a great friend of mine. It pushes you on more then, to give you a boost. I'd love to be going over as well. It's a great thing for the team seeing the talent coming out of Cork City.

"That would make scouts come over and watch Cork and any team in Ireland as well with Evan Ferguson doing so well. The amount of Irish players going across the water is brilliant to see."

The question posed to John about his dream Premier League move yielded an interesting response.

"I support Chelsea, so I suppose I'll have to stick with them," he laughs.

"That's a huge step up but that would be the dream."

O'Donovan has already had a good start to 2023, but with the League season starting this month, he has high aspirations.

"The hope for this year would be to get a few first team games under my belt. It would be hard to start but I'd love a few games, which would be great really. Even for clubs over in England to see that I have a few senior appearances.

"I'm working hard in pre-season now so hopefully I'll get a break into the team. That would be a great thing," he concludes.

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PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

O, most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, Fruitful Vine, Splendor of Heaven. Blessed Mother of the Son of God, assist me in this my necessity. O, Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein you are my mother. O, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to secure me in my necessity (make request). There are none that can withstand your power. O, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee (say 3 times). Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands (say 3 times). Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine. Amen. This prayer must be said for three days after which the favour will be granted and the prayer must be published. A. O'D.

MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus In the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask for this special one(mention favour). Take it Dear Heart Of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will be your favour not mine. Amen. Say the above prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. A. O'D.

ST. JUDE'S NOVENA

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and revered throughout the whole world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us. St. Jude worker of miracles pray for us. St. Jude, helper of the hopeless pray for us. Say this prayer nine times daily and by the end of the 8th day, your prayers will be answered. Say it for nine days. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thanks St. Jude. A. O'D.

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special one(mention favour). Take it Dear Heart Of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will be your favour not mine. Amen. Say the above prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. D.O'S.

MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus In the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask for this special one(mention favour). Take it Dear Heart Of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will be your favour not mine. Amen. Say the above prayer for 3 days,

promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. K.C.

MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus In the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask for this special one(mention favour). Take it Dear Heart Of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will be your favour not mine. Amen. Say the above prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. K.D.

UNFAILING PRAYER TO ST ANTHONY

O Holy St. Anthony, gentlest of Saints, your love for God and Charity for His creatures, made you worthy, when on earth, to possess miraculous powers. Encouraged by this thought, I implore you to obtain for me (request). O gentle and loving St. Anthony, whose heart was ever full of human sympathy, whisper my petition into the ears of the sweet Infant Jesus, who loved to be folded in your arms; and the gratitude of my heart will ever be yours. Amen. A. O'D.

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