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Santa and his elves were excited to welcome the first visitors to The Polar Express in Clonakilty, which has returned bigger and more magical than ever before! www.modelvillage.ie

Inspiring CEF award winners acknowledged for positive impact on the environment

West Cork is well-represented at this year's Cork Environmental Forum Awards, which shine a light on the wonderful activism, commitment and work being done across the sectors in Cork County to support our environment.

The Outstanding Individual category award went to a young Kinsale teenager, Lilian Gleave, who has also just received a Climate Ambassador Award from An Taisce. A student at Kinsale Community College, Lilian's main passion is fighting fast fashion through awareness and education. Lilian is Chairperson of her Green-Schools Committee, Ambassador for Water and Let's Fix Fashion, Delegate to the National Youth Assembly on Climate, and so much

more. In May, she participated in the National Climate Stakeholder Forum and won first place in the Young Reporters for the Environment Competition.

The Community and Voluntary Award went to Carbery Housing Association, specifically for its 'RED WoLF' project. The association, based in West Cork, has for many years worked on the pressing need for sustainable living solutions. Through this innovative project it was able to retrofit houses, troubled by inefficient heating systems, helping to generate substantial financial savings for tenants but also significantly reduce carbon emissions, contributing to the fight against climate change.

A commendation was also given under this category to Bandon

Environmental Action Group, an exemplar example of a local group taking action to protect and restore biodiversity in collaboration with the wider community. Having taken the time to develop a comprehensive and professional Biodiversity Action Plan in place for the town that is being overseen and most importantly implemented.

Other winners included My Goodness vegan food business in the Business and Commercial Category; Lennon Taylor and the Kinship Project, an artistic collaboration supported by the City Council Arts Office and the Creative Ireland Climate Action Fund under the Public Sector category; and Cork Repair Café in the Circular Economy category.

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Little people can change the world

On the heels of International Dwarfism Awareness Day (October 25) and as we approach 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' (IDPWD) celebrated on December 3, **Mary O'Brien** meets with Róisín White, mother of Lia, an eight-year-old child with achondroplasia and Pauline Cotter, (67), who has the same condition. They share their stories and how the world as we know it could be more accessible for and accepting of little people.

Lia White is a typical eight-year-old; confident, bright and inquisitive, she goes to school and loves princesses, drawing and singing. Her family and friends are her world and she is loved and happy. But while Lia might act like any other fun-loving child, as her peers around her grow taller, Lia's challenges grow bigger, because while today we're taught to celebrate difference, the world still has to catch up, particularly when it comes to rare conditions like dwarfism. Lia, who lives in Ardfield

in Clonakilty, has achondroplasia, the most common dwarfism-related condition – estimated to occur in approximately one in every 26,000 births – that results in abnormal cartilage formation, which means she has shorter arms and legs. The average height of an adult with dwarfism is just over four feet. Eighty per cent of people with the condition are born to average height people, such as Lia's parents, Róisín and Kevin White. Aside from the physical barriers like being unable to reach door handles, light switches and toilets, people with dwarfism and other disabilities unfortunately continue to face stereotyping, stigma, and discrimination. While it's never ok to point and stare and the use of the word 'midget' to a little person is very offensive, Lia's mum Róisín says it's normal for children to be curious and direct and she welcomes questions about Lia's condition. "I want a parent to approach me and ask me how to explain it to their own child," she shares.

"Knowledge makes us all better people and it's really important to me to help make the community and world Lia is growing up in more understanding and accepting of difference."

Not too far away in Schull, Pauline Cotter is a 67-year-old woman with the same condition as Lia. Although little in stature at 4ft 3in, Pauline is one of West Cork's biggest, best-loved personalities, hugely respected and appreciated for her contribution to her local community, particularly in youth circles. While her childhood couldn't have been more different from Lia's – Pauline grew up in the Good Shepherd Convent orphanage in Cork, a place that also housed an asylum and laundry where hundreds of women and children were held against their will – because of her condition Pauline has already lived through many of the challenges and barriers that Lia will face unless the world becomes a better and fairer place for people with disability.

Pauline

As director and founder of the Fastnet Film Festival, an annual event that has helped to shape Schull and place it on the International stage over the past 15 years, Pauline Cotter is a remarkable woman, her achievements particularly inspiring because

of her tough beginnings.

Born in 1956, Pauline spent the first four years of her life in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home. Taken from her mother – also a dwarf – at the age of four, Pauline still has a clear picture in her mind of the day when the "big bald man

in the big black taxi" came to take her away. She spent the next 12 years of her life in an orphanage, starved of love and kindness. "It's only in hindsight that you realise what normality is," she says. "The orphanage was enclosed so I didn't know any different when I was in

there." While she doesn't want to dwell on that period of her life, Pauline does recall how the children were split into groups, each under the leadership of a nun, in order to discourage friendships. "If you got too friendly with someone, you'd be moved to another group," she says.

Once a year, Pauline's mother, who she describes as "an extraordinary woman who had a very difficult life but someone who I didn't have a mother-daughter relationship with" would travel up in a taxi from Ballydehob with her brother, using the money she had saved, and take Pauline out to dinner. "There came a time when I didn't want her to visit me anymore," shares Pauline. "It was hard enough being a dwarf but two of us out together in public was very difficult for the teenage me."

Pauline was sent "outside" to school when the government took over the running of the orphanage from the nuns and in the ensuing years she was fortunate to be taken under the wing of a kindhearted gym teacher at her secondary school. "People can be cruel, especially back then when there was no education around disability but, rather than exclude me, Nollaig got me to run the sports competitions in school," she shares. When Pauline reached 16 and was allowed out of the orphanage at weekends, the same teacher and her boyfriend would collect and take her out for the day. When they got married and had a child, Pauline became the babysitter for Vivienne Jnr. "The Nathans became the closest thing to family I knew," she shares "and are still very close friends."

A bright student but told by the orphanage that they didn't send people like her to college, Pauline applied for a job in what was then known as the Irish Permanent Building Society (now Permanent TSB), where she stayed for seven years, becoming the assistant supervisor in the mortgage department. "Eddie O'Flynn was the manager there at the time, an extraordinarily kind man," shares Pauline.

the lot she'd been handed in life, Pauline resigned from her job and spent a year hitchhiking around Ireland on her own, sleeping in ditches when she had to and talking her way out of more than one terrible situation. "I think I was saying to life 'come on show me your worst'" she says "until one day I reached a place of acceptance."

She remembers that day very clearly. "I was staying in a

Pauline was sent "outside" to school when the government took over the running of the orphanage from the nuns and in the ensuing years she was fortunate to be taken under the wing of a kindhearted gym teacher at her secondary school. "People can be cruel, especially back then when there was no education around disability but, rather than exclude me, Nollaig got me to run the sports competitions in school," she shares.

She moved from the hostel on the grounds of the orphanage (supposed to ease the transition from the orphanage into the 'outside' world) into a bedsit before moving into a flat with three other girls. "I was never so terrified in my life," she recalls. "Moving from living with hundreds into a place on my own with strangers walking up and down the stairs."

It was a difficult stage in Pauline's life. While she made many good friends, she found that she couldn't cope with being different. "I was drinking a lot, going to parties, staying out late. During that time, while I could laugh and drink off being different, I couldn't accept it."

Frustrated and angry with

friend's room in Waterford. The sunlight was streaming into the room and I just had this revelation that I was alright, it was all going to be alright," she shares. "In that moment I remember thinking 'I'm 4ft 3 and there is nothing I can do about it, so make the best of it.'"

With that acceptance Pauline was able to move forward with her life. She got her job back in the Irish Permanent, staying there until she moved to Ballydehob in her late 20s to look after her mother after she suffered a serious fall. Her mother eventually moved to Mount Carmel Nursing Home in Clonakilty.

A few years later Pauline had a loving relationship with a taller-than-average height man and



L-R: Ray O'Neill, Niamh Moloney, Olivia Hanafin, Con O'Neill



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Pauline Cotter in her specially adapted home in Schull.

their son, Alan, an ‘average’ size baby, was born in 1988. Unfortunately Pauline’s partner wasn’t as accepting of her dwarfism as she thought and the relationship ended. “As beautiful and strong a man as he was, he wasn’t as strong as I thought he was,” she shares without bitterness.

Pauline moved in with her uncle Peter and for the next 18 months – until she was awarded a council house across the road – baby Alan slept at the end of her bed.

Over the years, Pauline and her son have both come up against ignorance and discrimination because of her dwarfism.

However, throughout it all Pauline has remained strong. “It’s a rare situation where I would back down,” says the spirited woman. “I’m little enough, I can’t understand why people would try to belittle me further.”

She has taught her own son that while there is difference all over the world, the most important thing is how you

With her great sense of fun, and warm, straight-talking personality, Pauline is a people-magnet. Her friends, she admits, are her anchor, who have helped to ground her through the hard times. “Initially your personality grows to shield yourself but eventually it becomes natural to you,” she shares.

react to it.

When Alan was young, Pauline remembers one incident that took place in the queue at a supermarket in West Cork when a little girl pointed at her and said ‘look mom there’s a dwarf’. The little girl’s mother reacted by slapping the child. “I had to respond,” says Pauline “so I went over and said to the little girl ‘you are right, I am a dwarf’ and I looked at her mother and said ‘you are wrong, sort out your own inadequacies’.”

The incident stirred something in Pauline. She felt the need to change the narrative on disability with the youth in

her own community, so she got involved with the local youth group in Ballydehob. “The kids would ask questions about my dwarfism and I answered them. It wasn’t just about me, it was important for Alan’s integration in the community,” she shares.

Pauline moved to Schull over 20 years ago and today she lives in a specially-adapted house, gifted to her by friends for the remainder of her lifetime, with her dog, a Toy Terrier Russian breed called Rasputin. Like Pauline, he’s little, but large in personality.

“I’ve led a fairly nomadic life and this is the first place I

Continued on next page...

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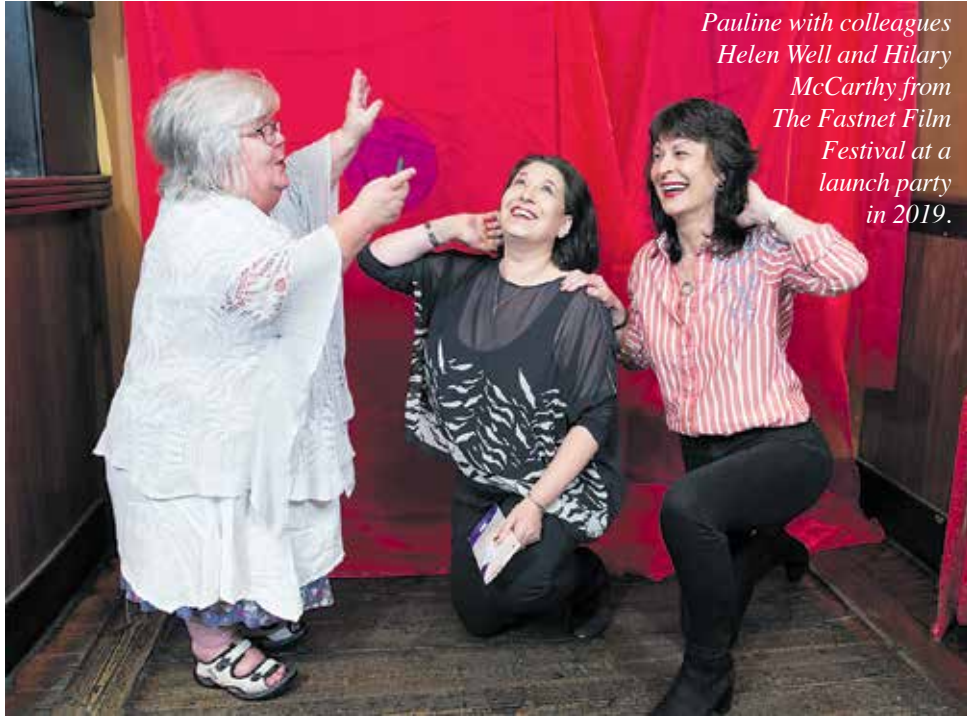
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Pauline..... cont'd from previous page



Pauline with colleagues Helen Well and Hilary McCarthy from The Fastnet Film Festival at a launch party in 2019.

feel I can really call home," she shares, pointing out the adjustable countertops in the kitchen and lower-than-average handles on the windows and doors.

A gift from her late uncle Peter on his passing offered Pauline the opportunity to open a business in Schull called '@ Your Leisure', a games cafe and pool hall for the young people of the area, which she ran with her friend Marion

O'Brien for eight years. These were the best years of Pauline's life and it was during this time that the seed of an idea for a film festival was planted. "The downturn was coming, Schull was dying as a village and I knew we had to do something that would involve the young people of the area and all the creatives we are so fortunate to have in our community," she explains.

Pauline called a meeting and a great number of people turned up including Maurice and Maria Seezer, the late Colin Vearncombe, Chris O'Dell, Helen Wells and Hilary McCarthy. "There were so many local people moving in film circles so that's how the festival was born," explains Pauline.

With the creative support behind it, Pauline was tasked with finding the finance to get

the festival up and running. The little boy she had babysat all those years ago, Vivienne Jnr, was now an astute business man and he agreed to make the first donation, which was matched by business man Benny McCabe. An introduction to Michael and Kathleen Barry of Corona brought their important sponsorship on board and with the support of Bill and Judy Bollinger, Pauline had the makings of a short film festival. That very first year, well-known directors Jim Sheridan and Jack Gold got involved and since then there have been contributions from many other reputable and Oscar-winning directors in the film industry. Pauline is hugely grateful to Schull village and the festival's patrons, sponsors and volun-

teers without whose support she says the Fastnet Film Festival would not have succeeded.

Today Pauline has taken on the mantle of Director of Hospitality and she is one of the advisors to the current committee, headed by CEO Tom McCarthy. "He's pedantic but brilliant," she says laughing.

With her great sense of fun, and warm, straight-talking personality, Pauline is a people-magnet. Her friends, she admits, are her anchor, who have helped to ground her through the hard times.

"Initially your personality grows to shield yourself but eventually it becomes natural to you," she shares.

She would like to thank all those extraordinary people who befriended and helped mould

her into the 'little' fighter she is today.

Pauline has travelled all over the world with friends and while she has had to undergo spinal surgery in recent years and arthritis in her spine and hip now means she's currently on a lot of pain medication, her hope is that one day in the not-too-distant future she will be well enough to visit her son who runs a business in Peru.

Her advice to little Lia is to find friends she can trust and who love her for who she is, be it magical or musical, whatever wonderful qualities she has.

"Never let your mind or anyone else tell you that you can't do something" says Pauline, "because anything is possible."

Lia

Standing at 100cm (3ft 2in) high, Lia White, age eight, has achondroplasia, a rare dwarfism-related condition which affects the growth of cartilage in her arms and legs and means she is shorter than her younger six-year-old sister; her two-and-half-year-old brother already stands at her shoulder. While Lia's parents, Róisín and Kevin White, have brought their eldest daughter up to be strong and confident and accept her difference, as

Lia gets older, this difference is becoming more noticeable to her and also to others.

"We're very open about her condition and at home we talk about difference being great but, as her friends at school grow taller, she has been noticing more recently that she is the only person in school who is like her," shares Róisín.

Each year the family travel to the Little People of Ireland Convention so Lia can meet other people who are little.

Dwarfism is not an intellectual disability or a disease and Lia does not have any serious physical complications due to her condition so the White's live a regular life just like other families; but an incident at a local playground during the summer, where a younger child commented and pointed at Lia, brought home the challenges that lie ahead for the little girl. Afterwards Róisín made contact with the child's mother who was very kind and



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Lia White with disability activist Sinéad Burke

Lia.... cont'd from previous page



Lia with her siblings and parents Róisín and Kevin White.

receptive and promised to have a conversation with her child about little people and difference. Unfortunately comments, innocent or otherwise, are something that Lia will have to deal with more and more herself as she gets older.

"Achondroplasia doesn't impact on our daily lives but we still have the challenge of protecting Lia from the ignorance that's out there," shares Róisín. "She's only eight and in a cocoon right now so we know that we have to give her the tools to deal with situations like these herself in the future. It worries me much more than any health issues she might face."

Róisín believes that change can start with just one person. "If I can change just one child's perception on the playground or through this article, then I feel I've done something important for Lia," she says.

Lia was born without any complications following a straightforward pregnancy. While achondroplasia was suspected by the doctor when she was born, it was a very difficult four months for the couple before they received a formal diagnosis.

"She was the most beautiful newborn," shares Róisín. "It was never Lia who scared us... she was such an easy baby, to feed and to sleep. It was the world and the medical professionals, the negativity, that scared us. If it wasn't such a battle for disability acceptance, everything would be fine."

"I remember other parents saying to us that in the future when Lia is older it will just be a part of your life, she'll live an 'average' life just like everybody else."

As a baby, Lia's greatest difficulties were with gross motor skill development. She didn't walk until she was over

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"I remember other parents saying to us that in the future when Lia is older it will just be a part of your life, she'll live an 'average' life just like everybody else."

two and she had to have a lot of physiotherapy. Her speech was also delayed, as the fluid built up in the smaller-than-normal tubes in her ears, which affected her hearing. This was corrected and Lia now wears hearing aids; these aren't noticeable and she will possibly outgrow them in the future. She doesn't have any problems with her speech today.

She has smaller bones and a larger head than her peers, which puts pressure on her spine and joints. This, as well as sleep apnea, has been very tiring for the little girl. "She's stronger now," shares her mum "and she has outgrown the sleep apnea, but she has to walk and run twice the distance of average-sized people." Lia has a flamingo pink wheelchair to help her with longer distances.

The West Cork Child Development Service and Enable Ireland have always provided great support. Róisín and Kevin were also in contact with disability activist Sinead Burke, whose parents set up the Little People of Ireland, from the early months of Lia's life.

Lia attends Ardfield NS where she has a specially-adapted seat so she can sit at a table with all her peers. She also has access to an SNA. Door handles and toilets are difficult for her to access but

otherwise she's very independent.

"I do worry that she might have to carry around a step with her for the rest of her life," says Róisín. "It wouldn't take much for an architect or engineer to place things like ATMs, toilets and door handles just a bit lower to make them more accessible for Lia and other people like her."

If we fail to adjust the built environment, from housing and transport, to schools and banks, life will always be more difficult for little people and others with disabilities.

"Ardfield NS has been fantastic," says Róisín, who has been raising awareness about Lia's condition through the school.

Lia is bright and funny and has lots of friends. She loves art and maths and would like to be a singer when she's older. Her parents know there will be challenges ahead but their hope is that by having the conversation about dwarfism now the world will become more accepting of disability and Lia will be loved for who she is.

"If I could pick one word to describe Lia it would be loving," says Róisín. "She wears her heart on her sleeve and wants to give everybody her love. I just hope she gets that back from the world."

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Letter to the Editor

Hi to all the team at the West Cork People

Our family has been visiting west Cork and staying in Clonakilty for many years. We have young and older children and they all just love Clon and west Cork. We were there last week for mid term and I picked up the November copy of the West Cork People.

It's still here on my desk in Leinster House and I dip in every day. So I just wanted to send a message to say well done on producing such a wonderful local newspaper. Every page is of interest; Travellers, Gaza, climate change, local history, biodiversity. The paper has it all!

At a time when many local and regional titles are struggling both with content and to stay relevant in a time of profound change in media and at a time when we need honest and robust sources of news and information, it is so refreshing to pick up a newspaper of such quality.

Wishing you all continued success with the paper and we can't wait till our next holiday in beautiful Clonakilty.

Is mise
Malcolm
Malcolm Noonan TD
Minister of State
Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform
Leinster House

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the December issue of West Cork People.

It's hard to believe that Christmas is almost upon us but the lights are up in towns and villages all over West Cork and Christmas shopping has definitely started. It's been a whirlwind year, marking a 20-year milestone for the paper, culminating in our largest-ever Christmas issue thanks to you, our advertisers, contributors and readers all over West Cork. People have been taking the time to contact us to say how much they enjoy the paper, with even our Minister of State for Heritage Malcolm Noonan writing to us last month, and we'd like to take this opportunity to say how much we appreciate your feedback and support. We get great pleasure out of putting together the paper every month, particularly as it showcases all the amazing people and businesses that make West Cork such a special place to live in such a rapidly changing world.

This Christmas more than ever we all need to think more sustainably: Support all our shops, makers and producers throughout West Cork, create less waste and hand out kindness. Please consider supporting a charity like St Vincent de Paul this Christmas and if you have space at your table think about inviting someone who is on their own.

This month's issue is bursting with our carefully-curated gift choices for all the family from shops all over West Cork. We also have lots of book recommendations, all available in local bookshops. Please Support Local this Christmas.

Also inside this issue you'll find our usual eclectic mix of news, views and interviews. As we approach 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities', I chat with Róisín White, mother of Lia, an eight-year-old child with achondroplasia and Pauline Cotter, (67), who has the same condition. They share their stories and how the world could be a more accessible place for little people. Kieran brings us all the way into the hot desert of Jordan where there is a blossom of Irishness growing and, closer to home, in entertainment, Lauren chats with up-and-coming star Rachael Lavelle, who has just released her debut album 'Big Dreams'.

Once more, sincere thanks to everyone who makes West Cork People possible. We look forward to bringing you the 'best free read in West Cork' again in 2024.

Wishing you all health, happiness and most importantly peace this Christmas and in the coming year.

I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary



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SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Holly Cairns TD

In just under 200 days time, the boxes will have been emptied, the votes will have been counted and we will know the final result of the 2024 Local

Elections.

The results of which will have a huge impact on our local communities in West Cork.

While national politics dominates the headlines, it is local politics which shape so much of our daily lives.

Our County Council plans our communities; they support our economy; they protect our environment. They cover everything from tree-planting to footpaths, from playgrounds to recycling centres, from safe school routes to litter enforcement. The work of Councils underpins the sustainability of

our communities.

Every five years every resident in Ireland gets to vote on the local issues that are important to them. They get a chance to set Councils' priorities and send people to our local Councils who will stand up for their interests and put their communities first.

West Cork needs local councillors who are driven by a vision of a fairer, more equal society.

And the Social Democrats will be putting forward candidates who will do just that.

Isobel Towse was recently selected to run for the party in the Skibbereen - West Cork local election area, and we will have more candidates selected across West Cork in the coming weeks.

Each candidate we select will be one who is honest, prin-

ciple, and committed to the Social Democrats' progressive policies in areas like health, housing, public services and the environment.

Our single biggest aim is to improve public services. It is public services that drive equality, promote sustainability, reduce costs for businesses and families, and provide a fair chance for everyone.

It's exciting to see candidates coming forward who are interested in effecting the kind of change that people around West Cork are ready for.

Like me, they want to see an end to the old style of politics that has held Ireland back from reaching our full potential.

In 2019, I ran for the local elections in Bantry. We were a grassroots campaign from a new party with none of the money and people power that

comes along with the bigger more established parties. From the beginning, I was completely written off as a candidate. But knocking on doors during the Repeal campaign and throughout my local election campaign made something very clear to me – so many people across West Cork were dying for change. They were looking for an alternative to the same old parish pump politics.

On the day of the election count, I lost by one vote. When a recount was called, I ultimately won the council seat by a single vote.

It goes to show the impact of that one person can have on the outcome of an election.

So I'd like to ask everyone to think about how they can impact the next local elections in June.

I would encourage anyone who is passionate about issues

in their local area, and wants to see a better and fairer future for West Cork to get involved over the coming weeks and months.


Every single voter registered, door knocked on, leaflet dropped, or conversation had, could be the deciding vote which gives your community a representative you can be proud of.

Every one of us has the power to make a real, substantial difference to our local areas in the upcoming election.

To help build the communities we want to see.

It will be an exciting few months ahead and I cannot be more optimistic for the future of West Cork!


So please do, get involved and get in touch at holly.cairns@oir.ie



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Funding available for protection of Cork's heritage

Cork County Council is inviting owners and custodians to apply for funding to safeguard protected structures and archaeological monuments in County Cork. Three funding streams have been announced for 2024, including the Community Monuments Fund, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, and the Historic Structures Fund.

Under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, successful applicants can receive grants of up to €15,000 for small-scale works to repair and preserve their historic properties. These grants relate to protected structures and properties located within Architectural Conser-

vation Areas and a range of different properties and projects are awarded funding each year. The 2023 scheme supported 17 different projects, ranging from churches and thatched houses to country houses, town houses and retail premises.

The Historic Structures Fund will focus on conservation projects that deliver a major community benefit and successful applicants may receive up to €200,000 for their project. The scheme also offers funding for vernacular structures and for historic shopfronts.

The Community Monuments Fund will enable conservation works to be carried out on archaeological monuments which

are deemed to be significant and in need of support. It aims to build resilience in monuments to enable them to withstand the effects of climate change, to encourage access to monuments and to improve their presentation. The Scheme has three streams of funding, all of which offer up to 100 per cent of eligible costs. The Community Monuments Fund, for example, which has been operating annually since its establishment in 2020, has seen an investment of over nine hundred thousand euro (€911K) for 17 different archaeological sites in County Cork.

The deadline for submission of completed applications is 4pm

on Thursday, January 18, 2024 in respect of the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund, and the later date of Wednesday, January 31 2024 (4pm) in respect of the Community Monuments Fund 2024. Applications can be made by emailing corkheritage@corkcoco.ie or a hard copy may be submitted to the Built Heritage Investment Scheme or Historic Structures Fund or Community Monuments Fund, Cork County Council, Heritage and Conservation Office, Floor 3, Planning Department, County Hall, Cork. For information and application forms, visit www.corkcoco.ie



BEDA seeks to revive Ballineen-Enniskeane Station House

The Ballineen-Enniskeane Station House, a testament to West Cork's railway heritage and a cherished landmark that closed its doors in 1961, is set to undergo a transformative renovation to become a vibrant community hub once again. A new project by Ballineen-Enniskeane Development Association (BEDA) aims to revive the Station House and preserve its heritage, making it a central space for cultural events, workshops and community activities.

The Station House has weathered decades of changing seasons and time has taken its toll, particularly on the roof,

which bears the scars of neglect and demands prompt repair.

While BEDA is calling for donations and sponsorship, the group explains that this restoration project is not just about bricks and mortar but is also a commitment to building a vibrant community for future generations: "By reviving the Station House, we can create a space that promotes connections, celebrates our heritage and supports local initiatives. Help us breathe new life into our beloved landmark."

Donate at www.idonate.ie/crowdfunder/stationhouserestoration or see Facebook @ BEDAStationHouse

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Taking the road less travelled

Running from a troubled childhood and the confines of a life governed by societal conformity and institutional religion drove Graham – now known by his spiritual name ‘Gyan’ meaning wise – Ordish to run away from home at the age of 16 and set up camp in a cave in the English countryside. The ensuing years were spent taking all kinds of drugs and travelling through every county in England, squatting, picking fruit, doing odd jobs and setting up food kitchens along the way at the famous small free music festivals of the seventies. Some time in his twenties, on finding the teachings of the controversial guru – also described as cult leader – Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho, Gyan’s search finally came to a standstill. Today living as a guest on a 70-acre woodland estate in Ballydehob in an old converted German firetruck, where he practices the ‘active meditation’ techniques developed by Osho, Gyan, 69, shares with **Mary O’Brien** why, despite the controversy surrounding the Indian guru, he is still a loyal follower.

Considered one of the most controversial spiritual leaders to have emerged from India in the twentieth century, Osho was a vocal critic of mainstream religions and political ideologies. Famous for his contentious teachings around sexual, emotional, spiritual, and institutional liberation, as well as his intense charisma and humour, today his books are available in more than 60 languages and the Osho International Foundation (OIF) runs stress management seminars for corporate clients.

Many of you will have seen the Netflix documentary series ‘Wild Wild Country’ about Osho and his orange-clad

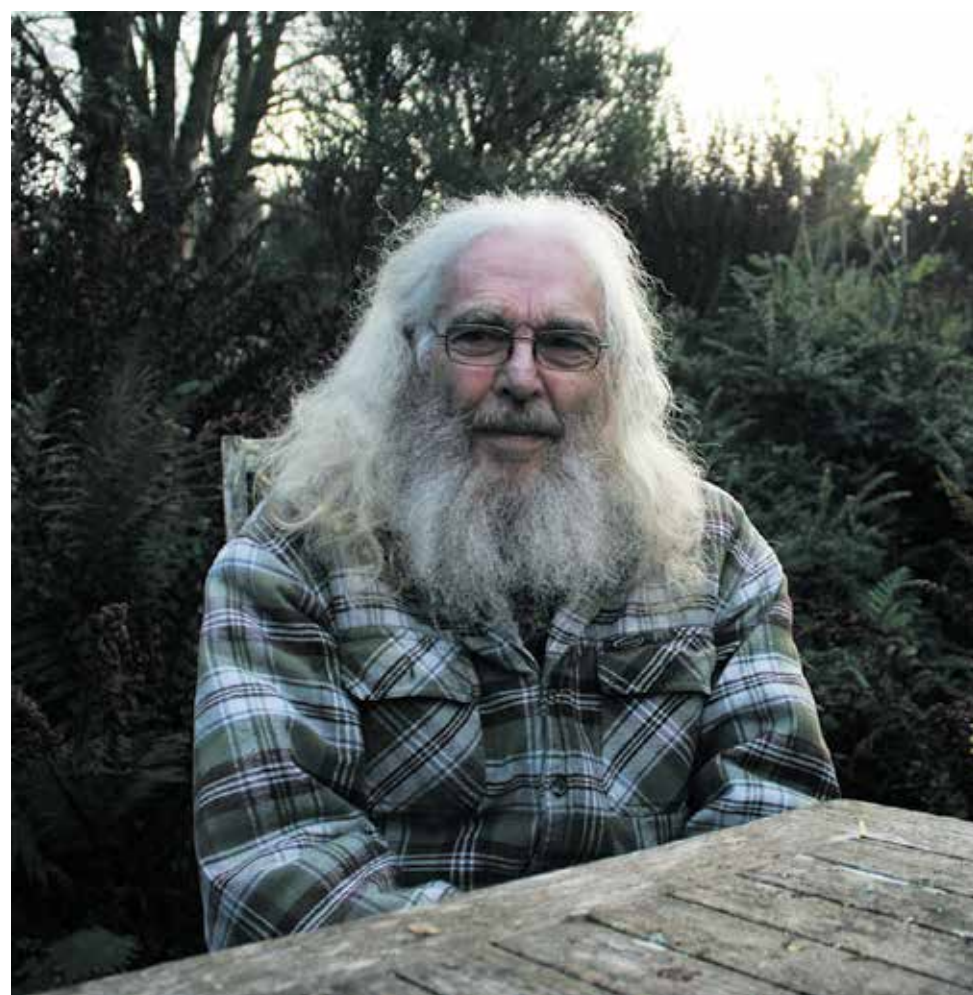
followers or neo-sannyasins who built a utopian city in the Oregon desert. Although he never lived in this closed community that initiated a national scandal in the States, Gyan did visit briefly with his partner and young children in the early eighties. While he didn’t see much of the leader apart from his Rolls-Royce ‘drive-by’ ceremony, he says it was important for him “just to be in Osho’s presence”.

According to the teachings of Osho every human being has the capacity for enlightenment and, even though his own behaviour and refusal to take anything seriously was at odds with traditional images of en-

lightened individuals, this was explained as “a technique for transformation” to push people “beyond the mind”. The most famous of his active meditation techniques ‘dynamic meditation’ is still being practiced today. It consists of a series of fast intense breathing, cathartic movements and sounds – just letting it all out – followed by silence and is described as “a way to break old, ingrained patterns in the body-mind that keep one imprisoned in the past”.

There was lots of this type of meditation and ecstatic dance practiced at the ranch, with Osho up on stage encouraging his followers to let it all out.

“If you want to see a cult,



you’ll see a cult,” says Gyan, who watched the documentary with a friend. “My belief now is that it was the people around Osho and their behaviour and egos that created the problems.

“He taught that people should accept themselves unconditionally,” continues Gyan.

Gyan’s first introduction to his spiritual leader happened in his early 20s when he was

living in a caravan trying to wean himself off hallucinogenics. A friend arrived dressed in the orange garb of Osho,

Continued on next page...

Write for rights



December is upon us and it’s the time of year that Amnesty launches its campaign to get the support and attention for ten people, whose stories are shared publicly, in the hopes that a massive response by Amnesty and non-Amnesty members worldwide will see some justice for them and the causes they are fighting for. The following are three examples, in brief, of human rights activists being, at best ignored, at worse imprisoned or facing imprisonment, for their activities.

Uncle Palai and Uncle Paul

Like many indigenous people Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul, leaders of Guda Maluyilgal Nation, Northern Australia, are intensely aware of the effect of climate change and the threat it poses to their way of life. They accuse the Australian Government of taking insufficient action on climate change that will impact their communities

and ask, in a petition, that the Torres Strait island communities be protected. That the Australian government take the threat posed to all life on earth by climate change is treated seriously, and act upon it.

Rita Karasartova

In Kyrgyzstan, a human rights defender, Rita Karasartova, an expert in civic government was arrested in October 2022, along with 26 others. Their ‘crime’ was for opposing a new border agreement with Uzbekistan by the Kyrgyzstan government, which risked Uzbekistan taking control of a freshwater reservoir, impacting on a region where water is scarce. For this, Rita has been charged

with attempting to “violently overthrow the government” and faces up to 15 years in prison.

Chaima Issa

Chaima Issa, a political activist in Tunisia, was one of the first to publicly oppose the Tunisian President Kais Saied when he suspended parliament in July 2021. He dismissed the Prime Minister and seized control of the country citing emergency powers. and since then human rights and freedom of expression are under attack.

For attending a meeting with Tunisian opposition figures and foreign diplomats to discuss the political situations Chaima was arrested on February 2023 and spent four months in prison.

She has been banned from travelling abroad or “appearing in public places”. She is also facing the threat of serving 10 years in prison for criticising the government on a radio show.

These are just three of the ten cases chosen for the ‘Write for Rights’ campaign this year. There is no doubt that climate change activists in many countries around the world are threatened with imprisonment and sometimes death. There is no doubt that there are too many countries in the world who deny their citizens the right to peacefully protest or to shine a light on oppressive regimes.

If you would like to support Uncle Palai and Uncle Paul, Rita Karasartova, Chaima Issa and the seven others in this campaign, do go to Amnesty International Ireland and sign the petition online.

The world feels very fractured right now. So I will leave you with the words of Peter Benenson, founder of Amnesty International:

“It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness”



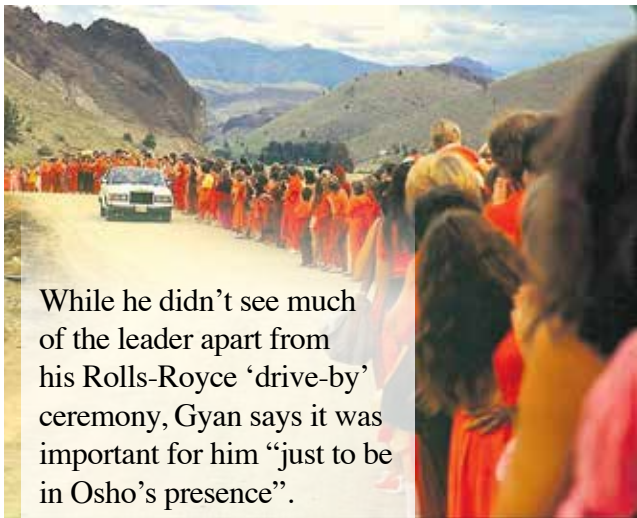
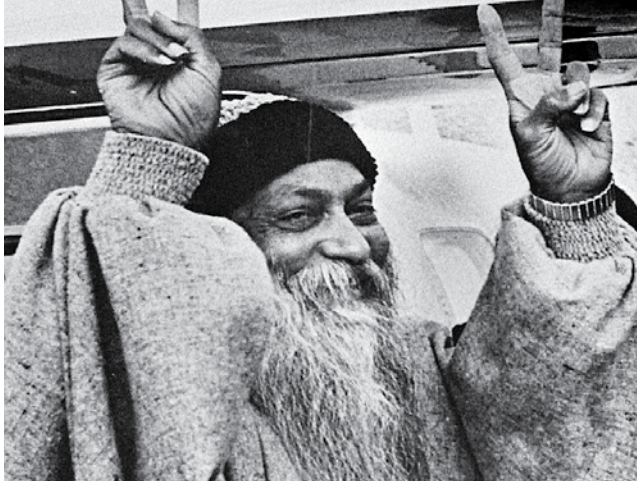
leaving a photograph and one of his books behind. Gyan, like so many other of Osho's followers, shares how he simply "just fell in love" with the charismatic Indian guru.

Soon afterwards, Gyan met his partner Barbara and, after becoming pregnant with their firstborn and coming into a small amount of money, the couple moved from the caravan into a rundown house surrounded by an abandoned strip mine between Darby and Nottingham.

After their first child was born, Barbara was offered the opportunity to drive a minicab in London, a city she was well-acquainted with, so the couple relocated to a squat there where Gyan became a stay-at-home dad. "It was unheard of back then but I loved it," he shares. They were also approved as foster parents – in the squat. It's estimated that somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people reclaimed and squatted in empty rundown dwellings, many of which were due to be demolished, in London in the 1970s.

By the time their second daughter was born in 1980, Gyan was working as a driving instructor. When their youngest child was 18 months, the couple decided to combine

*The controversial guru – also described as cult leader – Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho.
Pic: Marcel Antonisse via Wikimedia Commons*



While he didn't see much of the leader apart from his Rolls-Royce 'drive-by' ceremony, Gyan says it was important for him "just to be in Osho's presence".

*An Osho drive-by ceremony in the Oregon desert.
Pic: Samvado Gunnar Kossatz, Attribution, via Wikimedia Commons*

a visit to Barbara's sister in Northern Canada with a trip to Osho's ranch in Wasco County, Oregon. "We drove 13,000 miles in 11 weeks to get there," shares Gyan, remembering how they had to shed their orange sannyasin garb in order to get across the border. The materialistic experience – Osho was famed for his ownership of 93 Rolls Royce's – caused Gyan's devotion in Osho to waver and turned Barbara completely away from the movement. "In the intervening years, I almost sat on the fence," shares Gyan, who says he cried at the memories the Netflix documentary stirred in him more recently. "Back then I knew I still loved Osho but I didn't understand what was happening. The egos surrounding him caused everything to collapse."

In the years that followed, Gyan and Barbara separated and after a brief sojourn working in Countryside Management and becoming involved with environment action groups, Gyan became something of a guru himself, for a long time welcoming people and their questions at his home in York, where he shared his learnings gleaned along his spiritual path.

Osho's tenth commandment teaches 'Do not search. That which is, is. Stop and see.'

"If you're truthful to yourself, your path will appear," shares Gyan. Today Gyan prefers isolation, his path leading him to the countryside of West Cork.

"It's so easy to miss yourself this lifetime," he says. "I am who I am."

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There is nothing like Christmas in Cork County.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year from Cork County Council



Senator Tim Lombard
Bandon Constituency Office
open Monday to Friday

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☎ 023 882 9409
✉ tim.lombard@oir.ie
🗳 @voteTimLombard

I would like to wish all my constituents a very Happy Christmas & New Year. Thank you for your support and I look forward to working for you in 2023.

Back to Heir Island in the fifties

Heir Island in the early 1950s has left a store of memories in my mind, which I will never forget. There was no electricity, no running water; the people were poor in a monetary sense, yet there was richness in their lives. The only sounds were the sounds of nature – the lapping of waves on the strands, the knocking of oars in the row boats, the calling of seagulls, the lonely cry of the curlew, the crying of seals and the roar of the wind on stormy nights.



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.

My grandparents lived in what could be called the island village on the western side of the island, popularly known as 'Paris'. From the door one could see the Mizen Peninsula to the north with Mount Gabriel, the highest peak, looking down on the bay studded with islands and rocks. If you looked south there was Sherkin Island, and beyond it rose Cape Clear like a hump-backed whale. Beyond it the Fastnet; as night fell, the lighthouse threw out beams of light. I often counted the seconds between each flash.

My grandmother, a small, smiling woman, seemed to be

always busy. She spent much of the day in the kitchen preparing meals, baking cakes and washing clothes. I can visualise clearly the open fire, the crane on which hung the bastible pot, the kettle, the skillet, the pan; near the fire was the bellows wheel. She made delicious cakes – brown wholemeal cakes, currant cakes, soda bread. The fuel was coal or turf, and also 'brosna' (dried sticks) or 'buaithreáin' (boorawns – dried cow pats). Water had to be drawn from the well. Getting fresh water was often a problem in dry summers, as there were no deep wells on the island. The nearest well was 'Tobar na mBan' (The Women's Well) at the edge of the strand by the Bridge. In summer time the spring reduced to a trickle, so the women had to queue for their turn. I can still picture them – Lizzie, Nora, Maggie 'Jimmy', Maggie 'Merchant', (her people had a shop), Lou Cahalane (my grandmother). The pace of life was slow; there was plenty of time to chat. The people lived close to nature, depended on the cycles of nature, the ebb and flow of the tide.

All the families had small farms, enough for a cow or two. They were, to a large degree, self-sufficient. In the small 'gardens' they grew potatoes and vegetables – turnips, cabbage, onions etc. The ground was well fertilised by seaweed, which

was gathered on the strands or cut from the rocks. They depended mostly on fishing for their livelihood. Lobster fishing was their main enterprise; for a hundred years they had fished all along the south-west coast of Cork from the Mizen Head down the coast as far away as Dunmore East, Co. Waterford. Their boats were 'open yawls' about twenty-five feet long, powered by sail and oars. When I was growing up they had changed to engine motored boats. I can still recall the names of the boats – the 'Mary Joseph', 'The Pride of Toe Head', 'The Sally Brown', 'The Heber', 'Colleen', 'St. Nicholas', 'Wild Wave', 'Primrose', and later, the 'Béal Bán' and 'Béal Bóime'.

There was only shop on the island at that stage situated on the eastern end. I looked forward to visits to the shop with my grandmother. The shop, owned by Charlie O'Neill, had its own distinctive smell – a mixture of fresh bread, paraffin oil, sweets and so on. Lou, my grandmother, always bought me a treat. The range of sweets was limited – Cadbury's plain chocolate, Rollos, Smarties, Crunchies and the old boiled sweets – Bull's Eyes, Clove Rocks, Butterscotch and so on. We always met some of the island women in the shop and on the journey to and fro. We usually bought a gallon of oil to

fuel the oil lamps and the Tilly lights.

One visit to the shop I remember clearly. On this occasion I was accompanied by Denis McCarthy, a neighbour of the Pyburns, my grandmother's family. We were skipping along quite happily when I was struck by a blow on my forehead. Denis, who was carrying a gallon of oil, had struck me accidentally with the tin. All I can recall after that is the blood flowing down my face and seeing my uncle Eddie running down the Bán field in our direction. I don't recall how the wound was treated or the blood staunching. The mark made by the oil gallon is still visible in the middle of my forehead so it must have been a deep cut.

Another memory is the day I went fishing for 'connor' with my uncle Jack off the rocks in the Dún, the rugged western end of the island. First we dug lugworms in the muddy 'slob' when the tide was out. Then, carrying a bamboo rod, line and a can of lugworms, we walked to the Dún, with its high cliffs. Scrambling down the rocks, I remember that we caught at least half a dozen 'connor'. It was later in life that I discovered that the usual name for this fish is wrasse.

The most exciting day was

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Cork County Council

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FIANNA FAIL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Mick's House



when we went to Skibbereen to welcome home Auntie Katie from New York. Katie, my grandmother's sister, had emigrated in the 1920s and had married a local man, Paddy Scanlan. They settled in Staten Island and raised a family of four. This was her first visit home since she had emigrated. Accompanied by her husband, they had crossed the Atlantic in a liner, 'The Queen Mary'. To go to Skibbereen, the nearest town, was an adventure in itself. After crossing by boat to Cunnamore on the mainland, we travelled to town in Jimmy Newman's hackney car. This must have been one of my first visits to Skibbereen. I can recall few details of the day, except how different the clothes were that Auntie Katie wore, Jimmy Newman singing as he drove and the stop at Minihane's Bar for a drink.

Christmas

On Heir Island most families 'fattened' a pig which was killed before Christmas, pieces of fresh pork being shared with neighbours. Most housewives kept a flock of geese and/or turkeys, which were sold before Christmas and provided welcome cash for the Christmas purchases. Many families had sons 'steamboating' (working in the Irish, or more usually, the British merchant navy); these frequently returned to be with their families at Christmas. Every family had relations in America and 'the American letter' which was sure to contain not only good wishes but also a present of money, often a substantial sum, was eagerly awaited.

Some members of the family always went to 'town' (Skibbereen) a few days before Christmas 'to bring home the Christmas'. They made their Christmas purchases of meat, fruit, sweet cake, barm brack, candles, tobacco, whiskey and porter, toys and sweets for the children, new clothes and household items. Shop-

keepers made presents to their customers, a 'Christmas box' of seasonal dainties.

Christmas Eve was a day of great excitement, especially for the children who helped decorate the house, but without holly, as it does not grow on the island. The traditional Christmas Eve dinner on Heir and indeed in many parts of West Cork consisted of 'stockfish' (usually dried ling) with onion sauce and potatoes. As darkness fell, the candles were lit, the big one in the kitchen being lit by the youngest child. The lighting of the candle was accompanied by the wish, 'Go mbeirimid beo ar an am seo arís' – may we all be alive this time next year. The rich Christmas cake was for the evening tea. Punch was made and bottles of porter were opened if a neighbour called.

The children hung their stockings by the fire or at the foot of the bed and were hastened to bed with warnings that Santa Claus wouldn't call with his presents if they were up late. There was something magical about Christmas night. The island was dotted with lights flickering in every window. Looking across Roaringwater Bay one could see the little dots of light in the homes on Sherkin and Cape Clear; to the north lights brightened the windows on the Skeams islands and on the Mizen Head peninsula.

The first of three successive Masses started in Lisheen Church on the mainland at seven o'clock. This necessitated rising as early as four, often in the black darkness, rowing to Cunnamore, walking the two to three miles to the Church, returning on foot to their boats and rowing back to the island, landing at the pier, at 'Lean

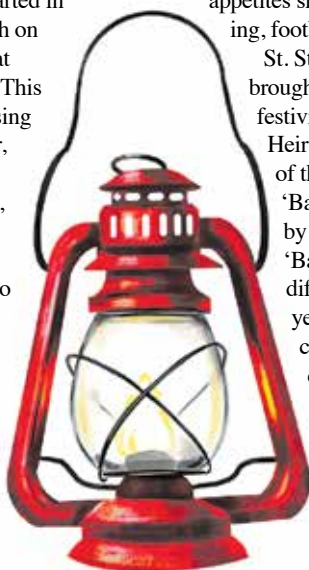
Gamhan pier or at the Reen, depending on what part of the island one lived. If the early morning was calm and moonlit, it helped a lot. If the night was dark the people carried lanterns as they walked towards the strand. Islanders speak of watching the lights of the lanterns moving towards the shore along the winding boreens.

In most parts of the country, Christmas Day was very much a family festival and a quiet Christmas was the norm. On Heir, however, all the young men and women, repaired to the 'Trá Bán' strand after returning from Mass and early breakfast. If the weather was fine, they spent the day dancing and singing on the grassy bank above the strand. The island set was danced to the music of accordion and mouth-organ; all the favourite songs were sung.

The men competed in races, long jump and weight-throwing. A football tournament was played, with four teams competing, a team representing the four 'townlands' of the island, Heir Island West (Paris), the Midlands, Heir Island East and the Reen. Tired and happy, they returned to their homes about four o'clock when Christmas dinner was eaten, the biggest and most elaborate meal of the year. The housewife, who hadn't joined in the frolics at the Trá Bán, took pride in setting a generous table before appetites sharpened by dancing, football and athletics.

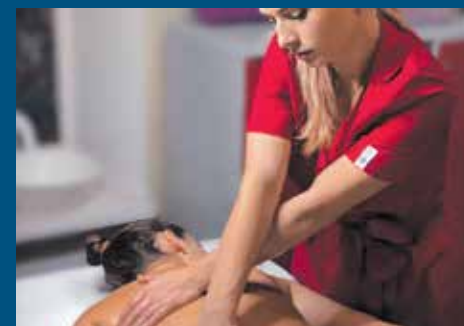
St. Stephen's night brought the Christmas festivities to a climax on Heir. This was the night of the big party or 'Ball' as it was called by the islanders. The 'Ball' was held in a different house each year. Money was collected to buy drink and food, the men contributing ten shillings and the women a half-crown.

Continued on next page...



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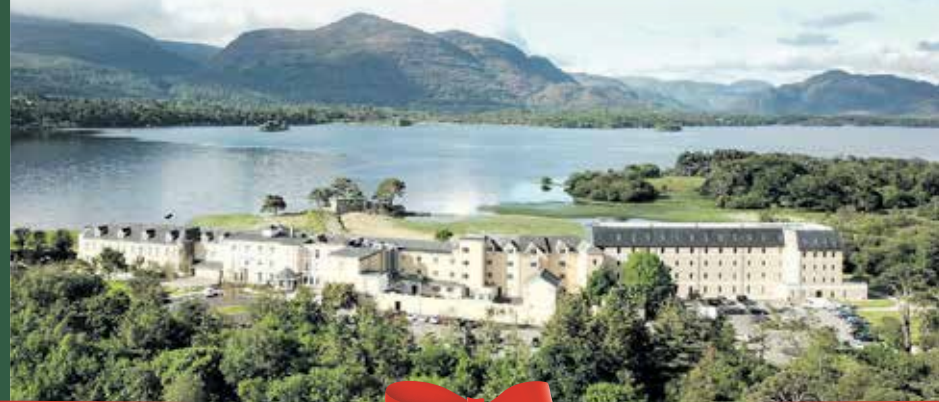
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Dúchas talk on traditional Irish Christmas rituals

The November Dúchas Clonakilty Heritage talk on Thursday, November 30, at the Clonakilty GAA Pavilion will have a seasonal theme.

Starting at 8pm, the talk is entitled, 'Back to the Beginning: The Magic and Rituals of Christmas', and will be delivered by Shane Lehane, archaeologist and Course Director of Cultural and Heritage

Studies at Cork College of Further Education and Training. A €5 (cash), entry fee applies on the night.

Shane Lehane has lectured in archaeology, folklore, history, and the arts for over 30 years and is noted for delivering dynamic, illustrated and entertaining lectures on a variety of topics relating to Irish custom, tradition and belief.

He is a resident folklorist and

very popular contributor on the RTE 'Today Show' expounding many different aspects of Irish folk custom. He is also an archaeologist and has worked for many years as a demonstrator in the Department of Celtic Civilisation, and has written several books – among them 'Honey and Beekeeping in Ancient Ireland' and 'The Skellig Lists'.

Heir Island in the fifties .. cont'd from previous page

Those home from sea, usually contributed more as they had more cash. In the evening they sailed or motored to Baltimore to purchase the stout – a few half tierces – in Salter's Bar. Some bottles of whiskey, wine for the ladies and minerals for the children were also bought.

A long night of dancing, singing, fun and jollity followed. The porter and the punch broke down inhibitions. They danced the island set and other dances. Song followed song as the islanders loved to sing. The cock was crowing before the party broke up and they fell into bed happy and exhausted.

Today the island is lonelier, with a permanent population of about twenty. All the old people are gone – John Denis, Nell, John Murphy, Neilly O'Donovan, Jack Pyburn, Lizzie Minihane, to name a few. Only a few of the natives still live there. They share the island with people who have settled there and the many holiday homes, which are occupied only in the summer. The old way of living is gone. The donkeys have been replaced by old cars, while most of the inhabitants have cars on the mainland in Cunnamore. Fifty years ago there were no televisions and no modern conveniences. The only phone was in the shop.

When I think of Heir Island my mind is full of pictures – the dresser in the kitchen, carriage moss drying on the 'Bán' fields, the tidal pools filling and emptying, the perpetual sound of the sea, the dusty roads in summer, the sea pinks swaying in the sea breeze, the mounds of tarred nets and lobster pots, the boreens redolent with the fresh smell of honeysuckle and meadowsweet, the seals crying on 'Carraig a Róinte', the golden sand of the 'Trá Bán' and 'Tráig-Mhór', the sea holly, the women chatting on the 'Rock' by Maggie Jimmy's house and the musky smell of wormwood scenting the air. It was a world of boats, of unbelievable light, of seagulls and herons and oystercatchers.

And then on August Monday all the islanders sailed to Baltimore Regatta. A day out, when the islanders met their friends from the other islands. For the young ones – sweets, balloons, candyfloss, the three-card trick men, Paddy 'Piady' the stuntman, balancing a ladder on his chin, lying on a bed of nails; the lobster boats under full sail racing in the harbour and the six-oar 'gig' race, with keen rivalry between the teams – Ardralla, Ringaroga, Union Hall, Myross and Glandore. And then in the evening, heading back to Heir,

the voices raised in song, their worries and hardships forgotten for this wonderful communal outing.

In rough weather the men gathered at O'Neill's 'chamber' (outhouse) or stood in the shelter by Mick's gable wall and discussed the fishing, the local gossip. The women met at 'Tobar na mBan' or at the communal water pump when they went to fill their white enamel buckets. On winter nights people went 'scoraíochting', gathered in a neighbour's house. The night was passed with yarns, ghost stories, weather lore, superstitions, tales of yore. It was here that local news was exchanged. The door was always open or at least unlocked. Everyone felt welcome and a visitor never had to knock; they just walked in. Some nights they played cards.

In those days people lived according to nature's rhythms. Time was not connected to clocks or calendars, as much as to the sun, the tide and the seasons in an ever-changing 'present' that was cyclical and ageless. The prodigious changes of the late 20th century had not yet occurred. The past was as familiar to them as their present, as familiar to them, as it is alien and remote to us.

Nevin calls for reform of Vacant Home Tax

In the face of a mounting housing crisis, Labour's Evie Nevin is issuing a rallying call for immediate action to address the ineffective policies surrounding the vacant home tax in West Cork. With only 3,000 properties subjected to the tax, Nevin asserts that this is a mere drop in the ocean compared to the colossal scale of vacancy and dereliction plaguing our communities.

"The figures reveal a stark reality," Nevin declares. "The vacant home tax was intended to reinvigorate unused properties, yet with only 3,000 affected out of a potential 166,752 vacant homes, it is a woeful failure."

Anecdotal evidence paints a vivid picture of empty homes, scattered across West Cork, representing lost opportunities for families and communities. Local Property Tax returns indicate a staggering 57,206 vacant properties nationwide, while Census estimates soar to

166,752, excluding seasonal holiday homes. In Cork South West alone, 4,380 dwellings stand vacant, underscoring the gravity of the issue.

The heart of the problem lies in the government's lacklustre approach, characterised by short-term thinking rather than effective action. Labour is demanding an urgent review of the vacant home tax exemptions, advocating for more impactful measures to bring these homes back into circulation.

To tackle the broader nationwide issue, Labour has called for an amplified Vacant Homes Tax, featuring a €2,000 minimum charge. The aim is to prompt a thorough examination of the existing exemptions list, propelling transformative change within the housing market.

However, Nevin acknowledges that local authorities are grappling with this crisis with insufficient resources. "Local authorities need both the fund-

ing and authority to combat the vacancy crisis effectively," she insists.

One glaring issue is the lack of a centralised government database for vacant properties nationwide. Nevin questions, "How can the government ensure tax compliance without accurate data?" To address this, Labour urges the government to collate data effectively and empower Vacant Housing Officers in local authorities to take decisive action, potentially through Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) proceedings.

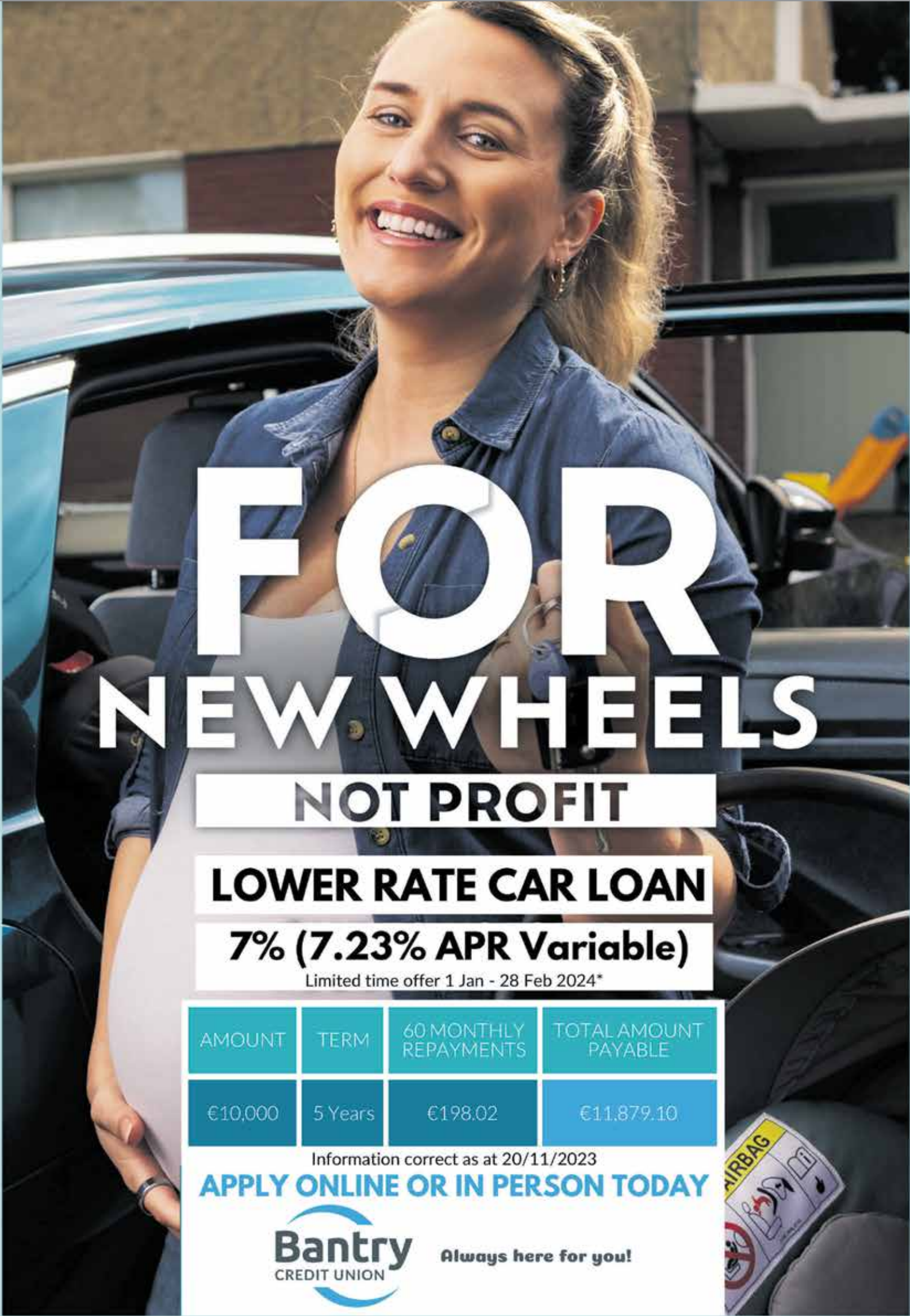
Nevin concludes, "We're at a critical juncture. Urgent measures are needed to transform West Cork's housing landscape, and Labour is leading the charge for meaningful change. It's time to put these vacant properties back where they belong—in the hands of families in West Cork who need them the most."

Evie Nevin

Clonakilty – Dunmanway – Skibbereen

Wishing all the people of West Cork a very happy holiday season.

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HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

Jordan had been on my radar for years, as a place I was keen on exploring. It's a country teeming with history and biblical landmarks. It has borders on the Red Sea, an ocean teeming with a kaleidoscope of colourful life, and the Dead Sea where nothing can live because of the insanely high levels of salt. Its history is ancient and mysterious: You can walk in the footsteps of biblical figures such as Jesus, Moses, Lot. Whether your experience is purely historical or you're engaging on a pilgrimage of sorts, you can't help but be awed. The ancient city of Petra is indeed one of the wonders of the world and their deserts are, much to my delightful surprise, breathtaking. Perhaps its greatest asset are the people – warm,

honest, kind, genuine and, as we learnt, if you are Irish, so very welcoming.

We had booked a trip to Jordan long before the deadly Israeli assault on Gaza began. The war has left its mark there. What was evident was that high season (because November to February you don't suffer the intense heat) was more like low season. Many venues reported the drop in tourists being as much as 50 per cent. Was there reason to be concerned? There are times in Jordan you are literally a stone's throw away from the West Bank, Israel and occupied Palestine. Even as I write today, there is no guarantee that the Arab nations won't be pulled into a regional conflict. America has targeted and destroyed sites in Syria. Israel and Hezbollah have been firing rockets at each other, to and from Lebanon. Even during our visit, there was a rocket fired from Yemen into Israel (it was intercepted and destroyed). Perhaps these are small splinter groups acting independently, but once national boundaries become porous, there's no guarantees that one's national sovereignty will be respected. Remember it was Israel's war

cry that they had the right to defend themselves. This defence has since taken the form of an invasion of Gaza, and blanket bombing of Gaza, so who's to say more 'invasions' won't occur?

It was within this framework that our journey began. I was curious about how Jordanian's see the war and how they perceive the west. As much as I wanted to observe the historical sites and simply be a tourist, I set out to understand the viewpoints of Jordanians and so I sought out their opinions along our way.

Jordan for a start is an extremely safe place to visit. Crime is low and respect is high. And though their society is not as affluent as Europe, the standard of life is good. I saw only one unfortunate beggar there. When you compare that to just Dublin alone, it makes you think about the societal chasm that has developed in Ireland – something you just don't see in Jordan. We wondered whether Jordanian cars possessed indicators or was it just an option? But once you understood the 'rules' of their roads, driving became relatively easy as long as you

did it in the day. In the rural areas, you won't find street lights and their roads have large amounts of speed bumps and many potholes that creep up on you without warning. Like any European destination, online accommodation was as per normal – plentiful, and easy to find. Not so much local eateries. If you want to avoid tourist hotels, then it's more of a challenge to find a place to eat. Perhaps the best place we ate was a tiny family restaurant – literally in a family home. While your meal is cooked, the family and children come to greet and chat to you. Nothing was forced. You can be as engaging or reticent as you wish. We found it interesting to ask our female host about religion and life for women in Jordanian society. It certainly is a world where perhaps like pre-1950's Europe, religion plays a more lived and expansive role in their lives. Will secularism become an element of future Arab/Muslim societies? It does seem very ingrained into the fabric of society but not in any forced way. Educated women like our host, simply believe in the tenets of their religion and can choose to follow it or not. Most do. Children have expo-

sure to religion classes early in life not unlike the catechism many of readers my age and older would have received. For now, they wear it easy and make it part of their lives.

The Jordan river is synonymous with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Though Jordan is an overwhelmingly Muslim country, these sites remain sacred. Jesus after all is seen as their third most important prophet and not just a part of Christian culture. Today the river Jordan symbolises the ills of the world. It's no longer a mighty river, more like a large stream – the result of climate change. The guide at the site told us the 50-degree heat is not uncommon these days during the summer. Sadly, across from this holy site, is another reminder of humanity's dysfunction: Barbed wire, and towers hoisting the Israeli flag, menacingly peer down on it. It's tantalising close – too close say some Jordanians, believing it a temptation for the ever-expanding Israel. Perhaps the war has provoked such emotions. Within the area, there are a plethora of churches; Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian and Muslim mosques – highlighting the

religious significance of the site. The Jordanian guide somewhat insightfully suggested why have all the denominations when one holy shrine would be enough and unify all. There is something in that. From here you can look over to the hills of Jerusalem, look out at the deserts where Jesus wandered for forty days and nights, see the distant outline of Jericho and the waters that begin their journey in the Sea of Galilee. The Holy Land does not simply sit neatly in modern borders. It is ever present in the region at large.

Within forty minutes drive, lies a place that is every childhood fantasy – the Dead Sea. Does every child not marvel at the stories of floating effortlessly on water? It certainly captured my imagination as a child and my excitement was palatable. The place itself is framed by a rocky, barren shoreline. On the northern side a few fancy hotels have wrapped themselves around the shore but for the most part this vast lake, (It's actually not a 'sea'), is natural and naked. If you don't use a hotel to access the shoreline, then one has to amble down a rocky incline to



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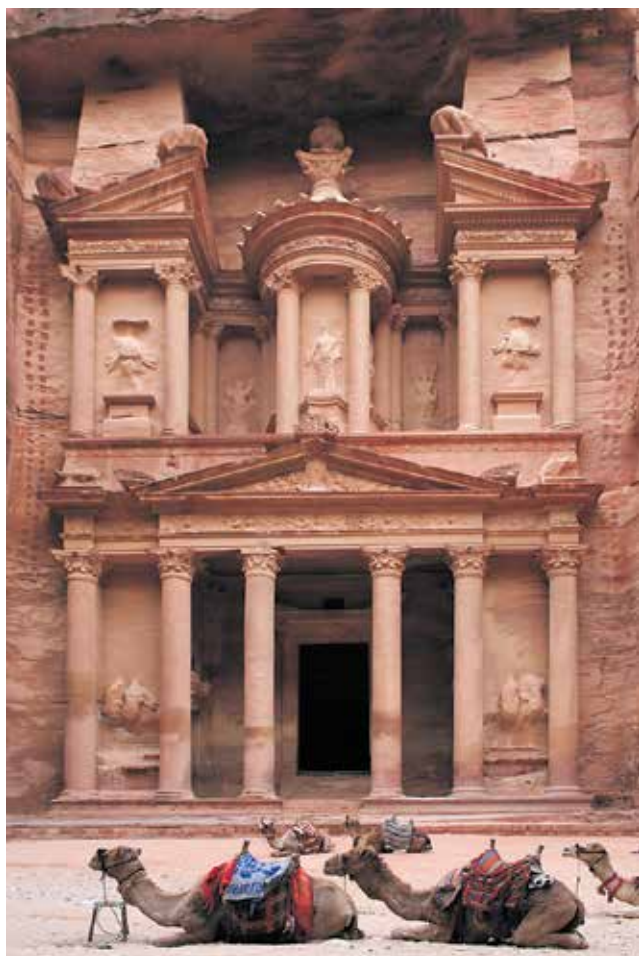
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the lake's edges. And yes – it is truly magic. You cannot sink. Such is the quantity of salt that one can simply float. Do not get the water in your eye or throat; the sting is terrible. Twenty to thirty minutes is the recommended limit. You pay a local a few dollars for water and a hose and that's your shower!

The drive south is spectacular and there are three roads to choose from, each going through desert regions. I was expecting just rocky barren banality but was met with wonder. They have vast mountains of sandstone that are weathered by wind and sand, carving out eye-catching shapes. There are famous deserts such as Wadi Rum, where the Laurence of Arabia film was filmed. This is a landscape of rich fine red sands and mountain stacks that stand scattered in the region. Many choose to camp in tourist accommodation, or you can hire someone to take you on a desert safari. It's mesmeric in its own right and a complete contrast to our green isle.

You can't go to Jordan without a visit to Petra. It was created by the Nabataeans in the third century BC. How did people, with such rudimentary tools and knowledge manage to carve out the most exquisite temples, and facades from these



mountainous rocks. Anyone who saw the Indiana Jones movie will understand its draw. High up on in this mountain area in a remote land, the architects of this yesterday world,

created a warren of beautiful architecture. The Romans and Persians thought so and built their own architectural gems on to this ancient kingdom. It's a massive site that needs

exploring. If I had to make one criticism, it was sad to see how harshly treated the poor beasts of burden were: donkeys, camels, and horses – touting tourists about, often left without water. This can be avoided, and conversations were had, with minimum effect I'm afraid. But be aware, if you buy anything within, it will have come in on a grossly overburdened and neglected animal. Choose to bring your own food and water if you're principled about such matters.

And so to the war. Everywhere we went, we entreated the people to speak on Gaza. Most of the responses were what you'd expect – human ones – hurt, tears, anger, heartbreak. There were rare occasions, when Israel's right to remain in the Middle East was questioned. Is Israel so blind as to not realise their acts are hardening more hearts? Others professed disillusionment with Europe, with America, at the lack of any action by their own government that is controlled by a monarchy. But they were unified in acknowledging Ireland. It's strange that a part of the world I knew very little about, know more of us. The people understand our long association with the freedom of small nations. They are certainly clued

into the voices of dissent emerging from Ireland – from our politicians to our people. Across the border, an Israeli minister, Amichi Eilyahu, declared on radio that the Gazans can flee

'to Ireland or the deserts'. Here in the deserts of Jordan, there is a blossom of Irishness growing amongst the Jordanians. Who would have thought it?



Wishing all of the constituents in Cork South West a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

As always my offices in Clonakilty and Bandon are available to you for any assistance you may need.

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Independent candidate Barry O'Mahony aiming to connect County Hall with people on the ground in West Cork



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Independent Candidate for Cork County Council

As the 2024 County Council elections draw nearer, Independent candidate Barry O'Mahony is eager to bring a new way of doing things to local government. Inspired to get involved in politics after years of advocacy for a solution to a sewage leak that devastated the village he grew up in, and over twenty years of involvement in community groups – ranging from community radio to special needs groups – he believes that the main issue that faces West Cork is a disconnect between County Hall and the people on the ground.

Explaining his platform, O'Mahony said, "When Town Councils were abolished, we lost the level of democracy that was closest to the people. Unfortunately, the centralisation of power did not stop there, with more and more resources being pulled out of regions like West Cork, and centralised in County Hall or Leinster House." He continued "Undoing this power grab will take years, but it starts

with elected representatives being more present and available. My number one promise in this campaign is that I will not be the councillor that only shows up when there's the smell of an election in the air; I will be on the road all year, every year of my term, listening to people's concerns".

One of the key points that the Clonakilty native has stressed is the need for greater joined-up-thinking in council decisions. He cites numerous examples of failures in planning; one example being in Skibbereen: "Just look at North Street. For years now, it has been absolutely choked with traffic, and yet massive development was undertaken in Gortnaclohy without any road to link the area back to the N71."

"Then you've got minor problems that could easily be addressed with just a bit of cop-on. Western Road in Clonakilty was resurfaced after the completion of the Páirc Thiar estate – a development which the council has every right to be proud of – but

the crew were never directed to repair the crumbling surface and road-markings on the roundabout less than 100 metres away. It's things like that which make you wonder if the decision-makers even talk to the crews on the ground."

Referring to his numerous runs with Uisce Éireann on behalf of Shannonvale as "the straw that broke the camel's back", O'Mahony also takes aim at the agency for housing delays in Clonakilty and Dunmanway due to treatment facility inadequacies, and the threat to Rosscarbery's tourist economy from potential contamination at nearby beaches.

As well as strong views on large infrastructural issues, he also speaks of his desire to see community centres getting greater – and easier – access to funding. As a member of Lisavaird Community Association, and teaching martial arts in halls throughout West Cork, O'Mahony acknowledges the important role these facilities play in keeping communities

alive. "These halls are vital to small communities, providing people with a place to get to know their neighbours; to build trust and form bonds that give people a sense of pride in their locality. Groups that use these halls are crucial to the fabric of our society. These facilities require major investment for their upkeep, but many halls just aren't getting that."

To address persistent challenges such as littering, roads, and flooding, he says "I will demand the employment of significantly more outdoor staff. We can no longer accept the situation where overworked skeleton crews struggle to keep up, while the council executive takes umbrage and goes on the offensive whenever challenged on the matter."

More information on Barry O'Mahony's campaign can be found on his website www.barryomahony.ie and he can be reached at contact@barryomahony.ie or 023 8868 123.

Only a radical change of direction can address the deepening housing crisis says Clare O'Callaghan

Sinn Féin election candidate for Cork South West Clare O'Callaghan has said that only a radical change of direction can address the deepening housing crises. The Cork South West constituency candidate said that this can only happen with a general election and a change of Government. The comments were made as Sinn Féin published their detailed alternative budget document and the text of a Private Members Motion on the housing budget that was debated in the Dail last week.

O'Callaghan said: "Fine Gael have been in Government for 12 years. Fianna Fáil have been propping them up for seven. During all of that time the housing crisis has gone from bad to worse.

"Both parties have been in a formal coalition for three and a half years. During that time house prices have increased by 28 per cent costing the average buyer €70,000 more. New rents have gone up 25 per cent costing almost €4,000 more per year.

"Adult, child and pensioner homelessness are all at record highs with no sign of the upward trend changing any time soon.

"Meanwhile year after year the Government are failing to deliver on their already inadequate social and affordable housing targets.

"Sinn Féin is launching, as we

do every year, our detailed alternative budget on housing. This year it also includes a section on the Government's failure to date and on why Budget 2024 was a missed opportunity to tackle the ever-deepening housing and homelessness crisis.

"The focus of our alternative budget is delivering affordable homes. We made provision for an additional €1.4bn of Government capital expenditure and €300m Approved Housing Body borrowing to deliver 21,000 social, affordable rental and affordable purchase homes next year.

"Our document also sets out how we believe a Sinn Féin Government would deliver this ambitious target in a single year, by increasing investment, cutting red tape, using more vacant and derelict homes and new building technologies, and redirecting building workers to where they are needed most, the delivery of affordable homes.

"We have also set out an emergency response to the escalating homelessness crisis with a specific measure to end homelessness for the over 55s in a single year and dramatically reduce children homelessness through the delivery of 1000 addition social homes using emergency planning and procurement powers and new building technologies. We would also

double the delivery of housing first tenancies for single people in emergency accommodation to 500.

"Once again Sinn Féin's alternative budget stands up for renters outlining what a real renter's tax relief looks like alongside a three-year ban on rent increases.

"Our alternative budget also sets out how to improve the quality of our existing housing stock, how to address the housing needs of Travellers and people with disabilities, how to rise to the challenge of climate change, how to deliver 100 per cent redress to all those impacted by building defects and defective block and how to properly resource our planning system.

"Sinn Féin used our Private Members' time to ensure that there is a real debate between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gaels status quo housing budget and what a budget for change in housing, offered by Sinn Féin looks like.

"Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have had all the time the needed to tackle the housing crisis. They have failed. It is time for a change of Government and a change of housing plan so that finally we can start to undo the damage of decades of bad Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael housing policy."



Nollaig Shona

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a Merry Christmas
and a Healthy and
Prosperous 2024

Clare O'Callaghan
Sinn Féin Representative
Cork South West

☎ 085 7358801
✉ clareocallaghansf@gmail.com

Skibbereen section of West Cork Greenway to be explored



Nick Perrin AECOM Regional Director, Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn, Valerie O'Sullivan Chief Executive, Cork County Council and Eoin O'Cathain, ROD Director .


The first phase of the development of the West Cork Greenways Project is to be progressed with the announcement of the appointment of technical advisors by Cork County Council for the Skibbereen Sections. The project is being developed by the Council as part of its ongoing commitment to developing greenways across the county, aligning with the Government's National Development Plan 2021-2030.

Funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland and valued at €3.8m, the project presents a unique opportunity to develop safe and attractive greenways in West Cork. This appointment of Consultant AECOM-ROD Alliance will take the project from concept and feasibility through to the statutory process. It is proposed that all routes will originate in Skibbereen, and connect to the communities of Baltimore, Schull and Drimoleague, if deemed feasible.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn welcomed the announcement of the contract, "The development of the West Cork Greenway project will offer a safe and enjoyable Active Travel route for local communities along its route once complete. It would provide a more cost-effective alternative to the private car for commuting and has the potential to attract domestic and international visitors to come, explore, and stay in this extraordinarily scenic and much loved part of our county."

Chief Executive of Cork County Council, Valerie O'Sullivan added, "This project forms part of an overall vision and strategy for the development of an integrated network of active travel routes, greenways and blueways, as outdoor recreational amenities, for the region. We look forward to working with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the AECOM-ROD Alliance to develop this exciting project for West Cork."

Over the next five years and subject to funding being made available by Government, the project will be progressed through the various stages, including feasibility, route option selection, public consultations and ultimately the statutory process.



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Michael McCARTHY

Your Sinn Féin 2024
Local Election candidate
- Skibbereen West Cork LEA

Wishing the people of Clonakilty, Skibbereen & Dunmanway, and surrounding areas, a **Happy Christmas**

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Innovation in medical history: From the clockwork saw to AI-supported surgeries

"The tools and technologies we've deployed are really the first few drops of water in the vast ocean of what AI can do."
Fei-Fei Li

This week the students in my school are learning about innovation in history, in particular medical history. Citizens school is aptly named, as it is the citizens of the school who are at the heart of literally every aspect of what happens here. We are not referred to as 'teachers' but as 'mentors', not only in lessons but also through life. The aim is to future-proof our students for the world that is ahead of them, a world where it is estimated that 80 per cent of the jobs they will have a career in have not even been invented yet. It is on this basis that the school decided to write its own curriculum – Citizens Future Framework. As part of the curriculum we have certain tenets that need to be met; the school's ethos is woven into all subjects. For example, empathy and innovation are two of the main categories that the school insists are instilled across all age levels and subjects: Every Wednesday there is a school

assembly that everyone attends, the students listening and taking part in a presentation on the selected school ethos topic each week. The aim is not for the mentors to present but for the students to lead. This week the topic was innovation and my Year Seven class held the assembly, covering the innovation of medical instruments from the 1800s to present day. Students researched the development of surgical methods and were completely flabbergasted that instruments like the clockwork saw were used by surgeons to amputate infected limbs. They researched and presented a beautiful presentation on Robert Liston 'The Fastest Knife in the West-End' and were delighted to tell the school that he was able to remove someone's leg with his own special knife known as 'The Liston Knife' in under 30 seconds. They detailed the innovation in a short period of time, from the brutality of the clockwork saw to the speed of Robert Liston. The audience was astounded to learn that during all of these surgeries there was no anaesthetic or pain-killers! Meaning Liston became a superstar, as speed was of the utmost importance, to limit time under the knife and reduce pain for the patient or you might say victim.

The next step in innovation came from Joseph Lister. He was the first person to realise germs existed and he formulated a germ theory. It was because of Lister that surgeons and hospitals began to clean instruments, wash their surgical clothing and sanitise equipment. This led to the death toll in hospitals plummeting. Surgical deaths and infections dropped to a percentage of what they were previously. He is credited with saving the lives of millions of people and the famous antiseptic mouthwash Listerine is named in his honour. After Lister, came the introduction of proper sanitisation in hospitals, and updated clothing, equipment and professional care. Prior to Lister, operations were done in the homes of the patient. It was even seen as a luxury to have a surgeon perform an operation in your kitchen or living room, as it was expensive and therefore only something the extremely wealthy could afford. Operations were done in garages, sheds and barns and there are medical reports of rats and maggots being swept away and removed from buildings prior to surgery. We have Lister to thank for the sanitised conditions in our hospitals in 2023.

In 2023, with Artificial Intelligence and the powerhouse that



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.

ChatGPT has become, it was inevitable that AI would become integrated into surgery. The power of the human mind coupled with modern technology has the potential to shape healthcare as we know it. The integration of AI in surgery is advancing surgical and procedural medicine to tremendous levels of sophistication. Artificial intelligence can be broadly defined as "the study of algorithms that enable machines to reason and perform cognitive functions including problem-solving, object and word recognition and decision-making." Functions like problem-solving, object and word recognition, and decision-making are all integral parts of the surgical process. By training machines to perform these functions, surgical procedures can aid and advance the skills of human surgeons.

Elon Musk is most famous for creating the Electric car company Tesla. However, one of his other companies 'Neuralink' is a neurotechnology company that's building an implantable, brain-computer interface capable of translating thought into action. It hopes to solve paralysis in patients by translating their thoughts into moving limbs with the help of the surgically-inserted chip. The operation to implant the chip into the brain is so complex that it needs to be done by a robot. The threads of

the neuralink implant are so fine that they can't be inserted by the human hand. The robot has been designed to reliably and efficiently insert these threads exactly where they need to be.

AI and virtual surgery make it possible for the best surgeons in the world to operate on people in different countries without leaving their home country. For example, in America it is possible for the best heart surgeons in the world to log into a system and operate on a patient in Ireland through the medium of robotic arms, controlled by the surgeon in the States and acted out in real time in Ireland. An incredible innovation. In the span of 200 years the advancement from the clockwork saw to AI surgeries is truly amazing. The next 200 years of innovation in the medical industry are almost incomprehensible. Anything is possible. AI has already taken over education and just last week Citizens school purchased the educational friendly version of ChatGPT called 'School Hack' – this is a revolutionary app and website that allows students to research and submit work through the platform. The platform helps them to answer questions and also vets the work that they have submitted to see if what they have written and submitted is original or if it is plagiarised. It's similar to the 'Turnitin' system used in universities all over the world. When I was in UCC 'Turnitin' would allow you to submit your assignment and then give you and the lecturer a percentage of how much of the work was original. This mitigated cheating and simply copying pages of work from the internet. School Hack does something similar while also safeguarding students by not allowing any 'Haram' questions and in turn the students cannot receive any inappropriate answers. The whole school staff is encouraged to use it to plan lessons and prepare for classes which cuts down on work and creates a better work life balance. This is the very beginning: It is exciting to see the possibilities of AI technology and the potential it has to reinvent education.




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Forty years of Candlelight



Innishannon's forgotten children

Alice Taylor recalls how when she first came to Innishannon in 1961 no local said that they were 'going up Skevanish' road, instead referring to it as 'Charter School' road, which created an awareness that there was once a Charter School up that road in the village.

The Innishannon Charter School was erected in 1752 on ground behind the Church of Ireland rectory. Years later the school went into private ownership and became known as Prospect House.

A charter for the establishment of these schools in Ireland was granted by George II in 1733, with the aim being to 'civilise and educate the Irish natives'. Admission to these schools was not confined to any particular church, however when applying for places for their children, Catholic parents were told that the children would be educated in the Protestant religion if they were taken into the care of the Society who ran the school. In 1808 when a Mr J Corneille, Secretary to the Board of Education, visited the Innishannon Charter School, his report stated that of the 44 children in the school, 17 were Protestant and the rest Catholic. The children were admitted at a very young age, generally from the age of six to fourteen, but some of these schools also had nurseries for younger children.

At the school "the children were brought up in virtue and instructed in husbandry and housewifery, or in trades or manufactures or other manual occupation for which the Society was to provide all the essential equipment and materials and also appropriate books. The children were to be encouraged by the provision of clothes and lodgings as necessary until they were considered fit to be put out to trade and services".

This year marks the publication of the 40th Innishannon Candlelight and the concluding instalment in the series, as, after four decades of wonderful collaboration, Alice Taylor and Mary Nolan O'Brien are hoping to hand over the torch to someone with a connection to Innishannon willing to keep the flame going.

Over the years the Candlelight has providing funding for a number of worthy projects in the local community, including a trio of sculptures, the final of which will be dedicated to the memory of The Charter School Children. The 40th publication of the Candlelight contains its usual mixture of heartwarming memories and tales, including the story **Alice Taylor** wrote about Innishannon's Charter School, which she has kindly given West Cork People permission to print.

There are conflicting reports as to the living conditions in these Charter Schools. But they somehow bring to mind images of harsh orphanage conditions and Oliver Twist treatment.

Between 1733 to 1830, 58 Charter Schools were built in Ireland and run by the church and government for the education of Irish children. Over that hundred years many of our children were educated in these schools until the National School System was set up in 1830. When the children left the Charter School they went out to work in trades, houses and on farms in the surrounding countryside and their descendants are undoubtedly a substantial part of our population.

Back in 1991, a comprehensive and well-researched article about the Charter School Children, written by Finbarr Carroll of Ballinacurra, who then worked in the Department of Education in Dublin, appeared in Candlelight. Then in 2000, a John Millar, an architect who lived in Virginia, USA, and whose house had been designed by Peter Harrison, the architect of the Charter Schools, visited Innishannon. John Millar identified the location of our original Charter School. He left a postcard showing a photograph of

his house and his telephone number and, amazingly, when I rang that number recently, assuming that over twenty years later all the codes would have been changed, he answered the phone.

Nowhere in Ireland is there a commemoration of these children. They are the forgotten children, not only of Innishannon, but of Ireland.

Over the last forty years, a child lit a symbolic candle for our Candlelight magazine each Christmas. So maybe it is fitting that the closing chapter in this series of Candlelight should be to erect a sculpture to commemorate the forgotten Charter School Children.

The proposed site for this sculpture is the little garden corner in the angle between Skevanish road and main road, outside the Old Rectory wall, behind which the Charter School once stood. During the necessary legal site investigation, we discovered to our surprise that this little corner was still the property of the Frewen estate, who agreed to sign it over for the proposed sculpture, with a request that we erect a plaque stating that the site was donated by them. At that time, all this legal untangling was undertaken by the late

P.J. O'Driscoll and Veronica Neville, to whom we are very grateful

Don Cronin designed and sculpted both Billy the Blacksmith and The Horse and Rider sculptures in Innishannon. However, as Don no longer undertakes such projects, to complete the trio he recommended Sean McCarthy, who has sculpted Christy Ring and President Clinton. After much discussion with Sean, it was decided not to have a sad depiction, because children, no matter how tough the circumstances, still look forward with hope. So a sculpture of a young lad releasing a bird to freedom was the final choice. The model for our Charter School child is Tadgh, son of Michelle and Tom of Rohu's Country Market.

The Charter School Children sculpture will stand at the Charter School corner facing Dromkeen wood and the historic bleach field, where so long ago many of them had worked. It will be a commemoration and salutation to those long gone children who, over two hundred years ago, were educated behind those walls. And also a tribute to all of you who, over the last forty years, supported Candlelight.

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FARMING

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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



West Cork hosted an international conference on agroforestry in Bantry in mid-November. The Irish Agroforestry Forum hosted the event titled 'Farmer-led Climate Adaptation and Mitigation. Why and how trees on farms can help' and attendees heard that farmers have committed to planting over 400,000 trees under the ACRES tree planting measure. Updating the conference on the farmer interest in ACRES measures involving trees, Eugene Curran from DAFM said there was great uptake, with 3,200 farmers choosing to plant 409,800 trees in the tree-planting measure. 2,053,789 metres of new hedgerows are to be planted, 100,387 trees will be planted in riparian buffer zones and 121 applicants committed to planting 36.7ha as a tree belt for ammonia capture. A further 1,546 applicants chose to plant a traditional orchard (10 trees).

He also gave a briefing on the progress and lessons learned from the initial agroforestry scheme. Introduced in 2015 with a target of having 200ha of newly-created agroforestry by 2020, it received 106 applications with a

potential 260ha between them. To date, over 50ha has been planted and 23 farmers are in receipt of payment.

For those unfamiliar with the practice, agroforestry is a collective name for land-use practices where trees are combined with crops and/or animals on the same unit of land. Its most common forms are silvopastoral systems mixing trees and grass or silvoarable systems where trees and crops are grown side by side.

The lessons learned from the early adapters of the scheme, a number of whom are West Cork based, could be divided into financial and practical. Establishment grants weren't sufficient enough to cover costs and the premium duration wasn't long enough to attract people in. In response to this the new agroforestry scheme FT8, has seen the grant rate for establishing agroforestry increasing from €5,620/ha to €8,555 and the annual premium rising from €645/ha to €975 and duration of the payments have doubled from five to ten years.

The conference also heard that while Ireland has the lowest forest cover in the EU, when it comes to overall tree crown cover it has the fourth highest. Gerry Lawson of European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF) said they had developed an index which they called the Zero Tree Index and ranked the countries depending on their level of tree cover. Advances in satellite imagery meant the tree crown cover of countries outside of forests and urban areas could be measured more accurately. Portugal ranked highest in the index at 48 per cent, while Romania at 82.5 per cent had the least amount of land under tree. Thanks to a large number of trees and hedgerows outside of forest the figure for Ireland stood at 59.1 per cent.

"We came up with an index looking at measuring all different sorts of agricultural land use and, on that we superimposed another data set, which shows the percentage tree crown cover. So, you can now look at the tree crown cover on agricultural land outside the forest and urban areas. It's quite a useful index

because having a huge forest cover isn't everything. You need trees outside the forest to provide all the environmental benefits and landscape diversity they provide."

One of the standout speakers at the event was Jack Nolan, Senior Inspector and Head of the Organics Division in the Department of Agriculture, Food. He was presenting on organics, but before he got to that, he spoke of what is expected of farmers by society in general. They get praise at times but in the climate debate they are often scapegoated and he mentioned something that I often think about. Is farming expected to do most of the heavy lifting in terms of emissions so others within society can continue as they are?

Ok, given my occupation I might be biased in saying that, but I'm confident that when it comes to reaching the sectoral targets for reducing emissions, agriculture will be the sector that, if it doesn't reach the set target, will be sector to come closest to doing so.

A combination of politics and economics will see that happen but a lot of work has been done to date also. The CSO recently released figures that show that in 2022 total fertiliser sales decreased by 18 per cent to 1.4 million tonnes. Nitrogen content was down 14 per cent at 343,193 tonnes, and phosphorus content fell by 26 per cent to 34,240 tonnes. Lime sales increased to 1.4 million tonnes, which is the highest in that period.

The figures were released for the period 2000-2022 and fertiliser sales were at their highest of the time period in 2000 at 1.7 million tonnes. They were at their lowest in 2009 at 1.2 million tonnes before reaching 1.7 million tonnes again in 2018 and in 2021. This was followed by an 18 per cent decrease to 1.4 million tonnes in 2022.

Eighteen per cent is a big drop in one of the areas within farming that is one of the bigger sources of emissions. Sometimes farmers get so caught up in projecting the image that we don't like change, that we don't notice that things have changed.



Fellow competitors, officials and supporters gathered at the Brewery Bar in Clonakilty to acknowledge All Ireland and European Ploughing title holder Jer Coakley. (L to R) Caroline Jennings, Kieran Keohane (director N.P.A.), Jer Coakley and Denis Keohane N.P.A.

Pic: Gearóid Holland



Seán and Fiona Deasy, with daughters Mia and Gemma, were winners of the the 2023 Carbery Milk Quality Award. Seán is farming just outside Timoleague, about a mile from the sea, on land that his grandfather bought 100 years ago. He's the third generation to farm it; his grandfather Daniel Deasy, who had emigrated to America and was home on holidays went to an auction to buy a plough for his brother, and came home with the farm!

Photo: Don MacMonagle



Hazel Hurley with her artist's portrayal of proceedings at the International Agroforestry Conference in Bantry.

FARMING

Change starts with us

Minister Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine chats farming and politics with Tommy Moyles

Many of our readers may not know that you're a farmer. Could you tell us a little about your home farm?

Myself and my husband Mark run a beef and sheep farm near Geashill, Tullamore in County Offaly. We have farmed organically for the last ten years, and we are delighted with how it has gone for us over that time. We have four children who enjoy helping around the farm when time allows. We also keep some horses and hens.

How did you get into politics? Somewhat by chance! During the 2016 general election I came across the Green Party manifesto and liked what I read. It aligned with many of my own views and beliefs and aspired to a future I could identify with. So, I joined the Party and became active, and was appointed the Spokesperson on Agriculture later that year. The Green Party and agriculture are often seen as incompatible, but I have used my time in the role as Spokesperson, and now Minister, to show that this is not the case. I see myself as supporting farmers who want to change, who want to do things differently, and I've had the opportunity to visit and meet with many fantastic farmers across the country who are doing just that. We are acutely aware of the challenges the farming sector faces, and the need for Government to help farmers to become resilient into the future. I've worked hard to bring forward supports and schemes to secure farming for the next generation.



Have you any advice for those considering entering politics?

My advice is very simple – get involved and get active. Speak up for what you believe in, build allegiances and see if you can effect change. It is never too early or too late. Four years after I got involved, I was appointed a government minister and now I am in a position to not only influence, but to change and direct government policy. If you believe strongly in something and want to see action – there is no better person than yourself to bring about change.

What has been the highlight of your time in office so far?

The highlight for me has been playing a role in putting together the Programme for Government in 2020 which contained many core Green Party policies, not just in agriculture, but across the board; and seeing so many of those commitments come to pass in policy, and funding announcements over the last three years. Of course, there is still a lot more work to be done to complete the Programme for Government, and we are aware that the work must continue that work to bring about the change we aspire to.

What has been the biggest challenge while in office?

I often think perfection can be the enemy of the good in trying to bring about change. Sometimes it has been hard to bring everybody onboard in implementing some changes or

achieving progress, as for some, unless the policy is perfect – it is wrong. However, I hope we have become better at explaining why politics, and being in coalition Government is the art of the compromise, and as the saying goes "Done is better than perfect".

What is being done to deliver a market premium for organic produce?

The organic market in Europe and in Ireland has been growing over the past number of decades, and continues to grow. So, we have been working incredibly hard to create larger domestic and international markets for our organic produce. Before I took on this role – Ireland had never undertaken an organic trade mission before. We have now completed three, and we will continue to increase our presence at organic trade shows across Europe.

The domestic market is also important, and your readers may have heard adverts on the radio and podcasts recently urging consumers to purchase more organic food. I have been working hard on securing new markets and broadening the appeal of organic food domestically.

The Government will also play its part and I have worked with my colleague Minister Ossian Smyth who is responsible for public procurement to put in a requirement for 10 per cent organic produce into all public contracts for food from next year.

You spoke recently at the Irish Agroforestry Forum conference in Bantry: Is agroforestry something for all farmers to consider?

The benefits of Agroforestry are many and varied. I see Agroforestry playing an important role in improving the farming enterprise and in integrating trees more closely to traditional farm-

ing systems. It can play a hugely significant role in addressing many the challenges we face in agriculture and indeed in the wider environment, be it climate change, biodiversity, air quality or water quality. We have a budget of €1.3 billion behind the new Forestry Programme and under that new Programme we are paying farmers who wish to do agroforestry an attractive,

tax-free annual premium for ten years, as well as covering the cost of planting the trees. Farmers retain their BISS payments on all forestry, and agroforestry is also eligible for organic payments too, something I worked on to deliver. It is worth noting that agroforestry is also an option available under the new reconstitution scheme for ash dieback.



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#EmbraceChristmas

Embrace FARM, Ireland's charitable support network for farm families impacted by sudden injury and loss, has launched a festive jumper that will not only spread Christmas cheer around the farms of Ireland, but will also help raise essential funds to support the charity's important work.

The Embrace FARM Christmas jumper, which features a charming scene of Santa driving a tractor, is perfect for the farmer or farming enthusiast in your life – regardless of age or size! The uni-sex jumper comes in sizes ranging from Small to Extra-Large and has a discreet Embrace FARM logo on the cuff to remind you of the support you are providing. Each jumper costs €45 with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to Embrace FARM. The jumpers can be purchased at www.embracefarm.com.



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FARMING

Bandon's Coleman family among winners at Milk Awards

The Coleman family, from Bandon, supplying Barryroe Co-op, was crowned winner of the Adoption of Technologies Award at the 2023 NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards in November.

Michael Coleman, a fourth-generation farmer, lives with his wife Majella and his children Louise, James, and Cian. Chris and Nora, Michael's parents, reside nearby. The Coleman family has a long history of farming; Michael worked the land with his father and grandfather before taking over the farm in 1999. He envisions a future where he can pass on the land to one of his children, carrying on this legacy.

The awards were announced at a special ceremony held in Ballymaloe House, where a total of 14 farming families from seven counties, representing 14 dairy co-operatives, were acknowledged for excellence in dairy farming and milk production.

Following nomination from their respective co-operative, each finalist participated in an intensive judging process examining a broad range of criteria including environmental management, animal health and welfare, farm infrastructure and hygiene, soil and grassland management and technical performance, among other core indicators.

The Macnamara family from Hospital, Co. Limerick were crowned overall winners at the awards ceremony.

This year's judging panel included Karina Pierce, Professor of Dairy Production in University College Dublin School of Agriculture and Food Science, Dr Patrick Wall, Professor of Public Health at University College Dublin and Dr David Gleeson of Teagasc.

Other West Cork finalists were: Collins Farm nominated by Lisavaird; Dullea Farm nominated by Bandon Co-op; Kingston Farm nominated by Drinagh.



Michael Coleman with wife Majella, parents Chris and Nora and children Louise, James, and Cian.



Micheal Dullea with his wife Martina and son Ciaran on the family farm in Keelnameela, Enniskeane.



Kevin and Liz Collins on their family farm in Carhoovauler, Ballineen with their two young children, Ellen and Tommy.

Innishannon farmer completes Diploma in Corporate Direction

Vanessa Kiely-O'Connor from Innishannon was one of 24 farmer directors and business leaders within Irish co-operatives who completed the Diploma in Corporate Direction provided by UCC and ICOS Skillnet, the Continuing Professional Development and training arm of the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society.

The diploma programme, which runs every two years, was first offered in 2013. It had to be temporarily deferred during the

pandemic and was re-initiated last year.

The programme is designed to improve and support the capabilities of directors and managers in the area of corporate governance and in a rapidly changing agri-business environment. It has a new and specific focus on sustainability across all modules this year.

Billy Goodburn, Head of Learning and Development for ICOS Skillnet, said: "The key aim of the Diploma in Corpo-

rate Direction is to support and develop the leadership capabilities of directors and management within Ireland's co-operative food companies. This is geared towards strategic direction and corporate governance for overall organisational success."

Vanessa Kiely-O'Connor, Innishannon, of Bandon Co-op, pictured with her son Fintan at the UCC conferring ceremony. Picture: Alf Harvey



As Christmas approaches SVP estimates over a quarter of a million requests for help this year

Thanks to the generous support of the Irish public the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) has provided €332 million worth of direct assistance to those who have sought its help over the past ten years.

With calls for help already at almost 200,000 to date this year the Society expects calls at the end of this year to well exceed last year's record 230,000 calls. Last year, over 8,400 families and individuals were contacted and supported by SVP volunteers in Cork and Kerry alone. This year's Annual Appeal is focused on providing help to struggling parents who wonder how they will provide a Happy Christmas for their families. The campaign is entitled 'The Wonder of Christmas' and subtitled 'Will we have Christmas at all'.

The Clonakilty branch has been working with people in need in the local community for over 160 years and the

work done by the organisation and its members has never been so important as now, when people are under such severe financial and psychological stress due to the economic uncertainty caused by the rise in the cost of living.

If you are struggling to keep a roof over your head, how do you choose between a decent dinner and a warm house? What do you sacrifice to buy your children those precious gifts when you don't know what you are facing into over the next number of months?

"According to the latest CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions there are over 670,000 people at risk of poverty in Ireland, almost 875,000 people were experiencing enforced deprivation and going without essentials and over 265,000 live in consistent poverty, shared Rose McGowan, SVP.

"Despite the additional cost-of-living support payments

The Clonakilty branch has been working with people in need in the local community for over 160 years and the work done by the organisation and its members has never been so important as now, when people are under such severe financial and psychological stress due to the economic uncertainty caused by the rise in the cost of living.

made by the Government, there are many people who continue to struggle to meet basic family expenses. This

struggle becomes even more difficult on special occasions such as Christmas.

"Those hardest hit will include one parent-families, low-income workers; households on fixed social welfare incomes; low-income households in rural areas; people with disabilities and their carers. That is why we are seeking donations to help families pay for food, heat their homes and ensure their children get a decent Christmas."

The Society of St Vincent de Paul provides practical financial support and advice, assistance with grants for fuel and a short-term safety net for those who fall outside the welfare state. It also provides social housing to the over-50s at affordable prices: There are 24 housing units in three locations around Clonakilty town.

There is also an Education Grant scheme provided by the Society to which people can apply for financial assistance to



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It is only through the generous donations and fundraising efforts of the people of Clonakilty and the surrounding areas throughout the year and in particular during the annual appeal in December that makes

it possible for Clonakilty SVP to support so many people and families through the different assistance programmes mentioned above.

To donate to the Clonakilty branch, keep an eye out for local collections or go to svp.ie/clonakiltyappeal23.

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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Christmas arrives at CECAS as it celebrates host of achievements since inception

This year sees the return of the popular annual Christmas Market at CECAS in Myross Wood House in Leap on Sunday, December 3. Running from 11am-3.30pm, the market will boast over 50 stalls offering crafts, food, beverages, plants, vintage items, and more. There will be

a complimentary shuttle service from Leap Church to Myross where shoppers will also have the opportunity to explore the Courtyard Collective shop and The Very Thing antiques for one-of-a-kind and locally crafted gifts.

CECAS, the Centre of Excellence for Climate Action

and Sustainability established at Myross Wood House in Leap in response to the dual threat of the climate and biodiversity crisis, is celebrating two years of growth and impact since being established in August 2021.

Run and managed by Green Skibbereen CLG, the centre is a hub for environmental awareness, community engagement, and sustainability initiatives; achieving significant milestones since its inception and becoming a focal point for positive change in the community.

In 2022 alone, CECAS has demonstrated its commitment to fostering a sustainable future through the following achievements:

Diverse events programme: CECAS hosted a total of 36 unique events throughout the year, ranging from educational workshops and community forums to interactive exhibitions and classical concerts. These events brought together diverse audiences, fostering a deeper understanding of climate action and sustainability practices.

Positive community engagement: In 2022 over 7,500 people have visited CECAS, each contributing to the vibrant community that has formed around the centre. This influx of interest underscores the growing demand for spaces dedicated to climate action, biodiversity and sustainability for the community.

Supporting local creativity:

CECAS has provided a platform for local artists and sole traders by renting out 13 distinct workspaces within its premises, as well as two pop-up shops and a series of monthly markets. This initiative not only supports the local creative economy but also aligns with the centre's commitment to sustainable business practices.

Community volunteers: Over 80 local individuals have volunteered their time and expertise with CECAS, actively participating in various initiatives and projects. This strong community engagement highlights the grassroots support for CECAS's mission and the collective desire to contribute to positive environmental change and the results can be seen in the community garden and in the ongoing work to restore Myross Wood as a native Irish woodland.

Education and learning: As well as hosting a wide range of third party courses and workshops for family carers, farmers, community organisations and retired people, in 2023, the first in-house education programme was delivered, an 'Introduction to Biodiversity', with an expanded CECAS learning programme planned for 2024.

Reducing carbon footprint: Green Skibbereen installed a low-carbon hot water heating system at CECAS utilising a grant received from the Community Centres Invest-



ment Fund, thus reducing the building's dependence on fossil fuels. A grant was also secured to restore the ancient woodland at Myross, which included the planting of 1000 native trees.

Trish Lavelle, Chair of the Board of Green Skibbereen and Manager of CECAS, expressed gratitude for the community's support and engagement: "In just over two years, CECAS has evolved into a dynamic hub where ideas, creativity, and community spirit converge and thrive. We are immensely

proud of the milestones we've achieved and the positive impact we've had on our community's commitment to climate action and sustainability. We are also extremely grateful for the support of our local community. We plan to build on this in 2024."

www.cecass.ie

Pictured are community members and volunteers attending 'Apple Fest' event at CECAS, October 2023.

CECAS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
for CLIMATE ACTION & SUSTAINABILITY
at MYROSS WOOD HOUSE

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**CECAS, Myross Wood House,
Leap, Co. Cork, P81 Y192**

International documentary series takes a fresh perspective on peatlands



Presenter Cormac Ó hÁdhmaill.

Rúin in Portach (Secrets in the Peat), a three-part series, which explores the magnificent peatlands in Ireland and around the globe, broadcast on TG4 in November. If you missed it, you catch up on TG4 Player.

Peatlands cover just three per cent of our planet but store more carbon than all the forests of the world combined. In the fight against climate change could they be our silent saviours? This series 'Rúin na bPortach' takes a fresh perspective on the bogs and peatlands of Ireland and the world – the role they play in the delicate balance of the world's ecosystem, how they have influenced history, and indeed culture with their sometimes overlooked

wild and distinct beauty.

Presenter Cormac Ó hÁdhmaill takes us on a journey from the boreal peatlands of Canada, to the expansive peat plains of Finland and the beautiful bogs of home. We meet people who are seeing pharmaceutical breakthroughs using our native bog plants, as well as those who care for Scotland's Red Stag in the peaty uplands of the Outer Hebrides, and discover how changes to the peat industry are affecting people's way of living.

Episode one looks at the cultural influence of boglands on the art and music of Scotland and Ireland. Professor Matthijs Schouten tells us about how visiting Ireland in the 1970s prompted him to start a campaign to save Irish bogs,

having seen the impact of the Dutch peat industry on the already low-lying land of the Netherlands. Annemarie Ní Churraínn tells us about how bogs and landscape inspire her poetry, as Cormac meets with her in Donegal's stunning Poison Glen. We see some of the unusual wildlife of boglands, and Cormac travels to Finland where he meets people who believe peat should be considered a renewable resource. Stiofán Mac Lochlainn a farmer in Co. Donegal, Art Agnew Chairman Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Writer John Connell, Jonny Dillon Associate Archivist, the National Folklore Collection, UCD/Carlannaí are also in the first episode of Rúin na bPortach that will air next Wednesday.

In the second episode, Cormac uncovers the layers of history preserved by peat. In the National Museum of Ireland Eamonn Ned Kelly speaks about the fascinating human remains found preserved in time in our bogs and what they can tell us about a time before our history books began. We meet Professor Helen Sheridan who has been studying with her team the medicinal benefits of a variety of plants found on bogs, and which have been used as folk cures for generations. We also meet Miriam Ryan – Oldcroghan Man Walking Tour, Prof. Séamas Caulfield Archaeologist, Mayo's Céide Fields, Martin Downes Professor Emeritus, Biology, Maynooth University and Sophie

Whym's Research Assistant in the second episode of Rúin na bPortach. In Canada an indigenous First Nations' community are handed back the reigns as they are tasked with being a key part in an innovative peatlands research centre.

In episode three, we meet some of the world's leading experts in bogland science and restoration. Cormac meets with Irish researchers who are using 19th century maps to identify areas of bogland that could potentially be restored to active living bog. Eugene Dunbar Local Activist, Cloncrow Bog and Mícheál Callaghan, Development Officer, Community Wetlands Forum are part of epi-

Continued on next page...

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

The advantages of installing a solar PV system on a ground mount



When it comes to setting up a solar photovoltaic (PV) system, one of the most important decisions you'll have to make is whether to install the panels on your roof or on the ground. While roof installations are more common, there are a variety of advantages to opting for a ground installation instead explains **Kieran Fitzgibbon**, Solar Consultant at Prosolar, an SEAI approved solar installer based in Kenmare.

First and foremost, the advantage of a ground-mounted solar PV system is that it can be oriented to capture the maximum amount of sunlight. Rooftop solar panels are often limited by the orientation and pitch of the roof, which can impact their efficiency. With a ground installation, you're free to position the panels in a way that optimises their exposure to the sun. Additionally, ground-mounted systems are easier to maintain and repair, as they're more accessible than rooftop systems. With the increase of stormy weather in our changing Irish seasons, rooftop installations can be tricky from a safety standpoint. A ground installation is much less likely to incur delays due to weather factors.

As our team at Prosolar are experienced in technical problem solving, we have designed our own ground mount solution using ground screws to secure our structure to the ground. Most ground mount installations require pouring a

concrete base in the field which is less desirable and more costly. We want to ensure that your ground installation blends in with the existing landscaping, for a more aesthetically pleasing option. However, if it is required for your installation, we also have options for mounting on existing or newly poured concrete bases.

Finally, a possible future-proofing advantage to a ground-mounted solar PV system is that it can be scaled up more easily than a rooftop system. This is because there's typically more available space on the ground than on a roof. As your energy needs grow, you can simply add more panels to your ground installation. Prosolar can tailor the system to your requirements and give you advice for your specific situation.

Whether you are opting for a roof or ground mounted system, now is a great time to invest in a solar PV system with savings of up to €4k and finance available! At Prosolar we offer friendly and technical

guidance to help make your grant application and solar install as smooth as possible. Get up to €2,400 in savings with an SEAI grant and enjoy 0 per cent VAT on both the installation and panels. By installing solar for your home or business, you could significantly reduce your electricity bills by up to 80 per cent with a battery system. Solar energy is free, and once the initial installation cost is recovered, you can enjoy long-term savings on your energy expenses.

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Peatlands .. cont'd from previous page

sode three of Rúin na bPortach. In Canada world expert in bog restoration Dr. Line Rochefort explains her methods of replanting sphagnum. And we meet a Wildfire Research Scientist who explains how healthy peatlands quell the spread of potentially

devastating fires.

Presenter Cormac Ó hÁdhmaill said; "It's arguable that a series of three one-hour programmes does not give enough time to reflect the huge importance of bogs in the archaeology, history, culture and

psyche of Ireland. In making this series, we did go some way towards that goal. I looked at bodies ritually buried in bogs, customs and practices associated with bogs, what science can reveal about how bogs grow and develop and the life found

within them. And I also learned to appreciate in a deep visceral way how important bogs are in mitigating some of the excesses of modern life and the existential threats we face. But nothing is ever simple. When I stood on a bog in Finland ripped apart

for fuel and left a brown lifeless desert, I was nearly brought to tears at what we were doing to the environment, putting short-term gains ahead of long-term security of the Earth. But when I spoke, both to those cutting turf for personal use and those

harvesting it on an industrial scale, I was struck by the economic arguments driving these practices and, though necessary, how difficult it will be to bring them to an end. I was given lots to think about in this series and so too will viewers."

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

The exploration of butterflies at Kilcoe Studios

This time of year we may find the odd Peacock or Tortoiseshell butterfly flutter into our warm rooms, possibly thinking the warmth signals spring. These butterflies typically migrate to Ireland each year. However, while a small native population breeds here, they generally don't survive our cold winters, except for the few that find warm spots in our houses. The breeding, migratory and feeding habits of our native butterflies are different for each one and entering into the world of each of them is like getting to know a new friend. Having that little bit of knowledge gets you knowing just enough to open your eyes and have a richer appreciation of them. This summer was the first time that **Sonia Caldwell** was able to really look at them with a little more understanding having just completed her research for the Kilcoe Studios 2024 calendar.

KILCOE STUDIOS
Heritage & Nature PRINTS & CRAFT
2024 Calendar
Irish Butterflies and Food Plants

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For Craft Workshops in early 2024 see our website: www.kilcoestudios.com



I recall on an early summer day seeing a blue butterfly flitting around a holly bush and I now know this was not simply by chance – it was the Holly Blue butterfly and it was there for the purpose of laying its eggs on the holly bush so the caterpillars could feed on the holly leaves. It will survive the winter in pupa form to emerge in the spring as an adult butterfly – so keep an eye out for these when gathering holly this Christmas.

Another Blue butterfly I saw this summer flitting amongst the yellow bird's-foot trefoil was the Common blue. It was in quite a wild area in south west Kerry, a place where the wild flowers are let grow and thus provide the right habitats for

this and other rarer butterflies.

In Ireland, we have 35 butterfly species with a wide variety of colours, patterns and sizes ranging from 15mm to 80mm wingspan. The collection of images in our 2024 Calendar feature the common larvae food plants of 12 different Irish butterflies. Many of these will also be found across Europe with numbers being monitored everywhere, as many are in decline, due largely to the predominant issue of habitat loss.

We see butterflies flitting from flower to flower each summer as they feed off the nectar. A lot of butterflies will feed off the nectar from a broad variety of both native and cultivated flowers and of course need a source of these to survive. However, crucially what I focused on in my images for the calendar were the plants that they lay their eggs on, and in this case they are much more particular with their choice. In many cases, as you can read with each image, some butterflies will only lay their eggs on one plant, like for example the Devil's-bit Scabious or Buckthorn, while some will stick to one family like the mustard family or Docks and Sorrels. When the eggs hatch out into caterpillars they then feed on that plant and that plant alone. If the plant cannot survive in a habitat, then



neither will the butterfly. One thing stands out – they are all native plants and many are dismissed as commonplace weeds.

Doing the research for our Calendar each year has become an important part of my own personal education on our native wild plants and what they bring to us, our biodiversity and the countryside. Like myself, many people really can't take in a full scientific run down on all the details of a plant or insect but with just a little bit of knowledge we can open our eyes and introduce ourselves to a new friend!

2024 in Kilcoe Studios

Since moving into our premises in Ballydehob we have been using our base to both promote our native wild plants and to support what needs to be a more sustainable way of living, which includes promoting our heritage crafts. Information about past

projects and dates of upcoming workshops will be published on the website around Christmas and also on Instagram in January. Alternatively, send us an email at events@kilcoestudios.com and we'd be happy to send on information to you.

Sewing and Dressmaking with Tamsin Blackburn – early February (Wednesday evenings).

Knitting skills exchange and Fair isle knitting with Susan Nares – early February weekend.

Rush basketry with Sonia Caldwell – March weekend.

Cothú – a weekend of foraging events – May.

Christmas foraging walk

- Saturday December 9 in Rineen Woods at 1pm, 2.15pm and 3.30pm. Sonia Caldwell will host a walk in the woods to identify native winter trees and foliage and will demonstrate ways to use them for Christmas decorations like wreathes, swags and other displays as well as children's art. Booking essential on events@kilcoestudios.com or 0870667871. Children welcome. €10 - 20 per person and ALL FUNDS will go toward the The Red Cross to help war torn areas - either by cash on the day or by link when you book.

Four images taken in Cork win attention in 'Love Your Coast'

Clean Coasts recently announced the winning photographers of the 14th edition of the 'Love Your Coast' photography competition. With a prize fund of €6,000, the competition has attracted hundreds of photographers all around Ireland this year, receiving a record number of over 1,300 entries.

Stephen Dunbar, with his 'Humpback Feeding', captured in Broadhaven Bay, Co. Mayo won the 'Photographer of the Year' title and first place in the Wildlife and the Coast category.

'Sturgeon Moon' taken by Karol Ryan in Ballycotton came first in the Coastal Heritage category. About the image Karol commented: "Capturing the image of a sturgeon full moon rising over Ballycotton lighthouse was a meticulously planned endeavour. Equipped with a 200-600mm lens on a Sony A7riii camera, I sought to encompass the entire island within the frame, opting for a focal length of 374mm. My first attempt at this shot the month before was clouded over, so I was delighted to have ideal conditions during this visit to Ballycotton and the



'Emerald Jewel', taken in Sovereign Island near Kinsale

moon gracefully emerged on the horizon during the serene blue hour. However, what truly made this shot unique was the careful consideration given to timing the shutter release. The deliberate aim was to capture the flash of the lighthouse beacon, adding a dynamic and enchanting element to the final image."

Derek Bolton, with his 'Emerald Jewel', taken in Sovereign Island near Kinsale, won the first prize in the Underwater category. The picture portrays a jewel anemone, a species

that thrives in areas of strong currents that have low light. This particular jewel was taken at a depth of 20m hiding inside an underwater swim through. Derek commented his picture: "Photographing jewels is always challenging as they like to cling flat to rock or cave wall surfaces making it very difficult to achieve a desirable camera angle when shooting. This image is taken using a compact camera approximately 5mm from the jewel itself and a torch to create the upright effect."



'Sunbathing Babes' shot at Seal Island, Glengarriff.

Another West Cork entry titled 'Norther Gannets Gathering' by Tadhg O'Connell, taken in Bull Rock (just off Dursey Island), was also shortlisted among the top 10 in the Coastal Heritage Category. Tadhg said: "We watched the gannets soar and then made our way to the arch underneath the Bull Rock

which is associated with folklore and legend and is purported to be the 'Gateway to the Underworld' but that's a story for next year's competition."

Finally, Ailish Treviss, with 'Sunbathing Babes' shot at Seal Island, Glengarriff, was shortlisted in the top 10 of the Wildlife and the Coast Category. Ailish

said: "One beautiful, sunny morning this summer, when on a boat trip over to Garnish Island, we sailed past Seal Island and I was blessed to get this shot of these two harbour seals. They were quite content catching some sun-rays along with the rest of their pod whilst watching the boat go by."

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Penguins on thin ice



THE ANIMAL WORLD

Dr. Jeremy A. Dorman

Dr Dorman is a zoologist and teacher living in West Cork.

Climate change can have a devastating effect on animals that have spent thousands or millions of years adapting to a particular lifestyle. In Ireland, the weather is always changeable – an early spring might encourage birds to nest too soon, only for their chicks to be killed off by snow in April. Our birds can usually try again, but there are some animals whose lives are already so precarious that any changes to their environment will be disastrous.

In 2022, record low sea ice extent in the Bellingshausen Sea, west Antarctica, led to the catastrophic breeding failure of emperor penguins. The ice melted before the immature birds had time to grow their waterproof adult plumage, and thousands died. Picture fat fluffy chicks, the type beloved by children and animators, floundering helplessly in freezing water.

Colonies of emperor penguins have been lost before due to local changes in sea ice duration and distribution, but this disaster – four colonies wiped out – is the first recorded breeding failure clearly linked to large scale contractions of sea ice. Emperor penguins need the solid, flat expanses of ice that builds up around the edges of islands and ice shelves in the Antarctic winter; they are too clumsy to do much climbing, and the farther they are from the sea, the harder it is to get food for their chicks. So if the sea ice continues to disappear, so will the emperor penguins. It is feared that the total population, estimated at 595,000 in 2012, will halve before 2052, with the most northerly colonies being lost entirely.

The emperor penguin is the largest of the seventeen penguin species, one of only four that lives on the Antarctic mainland (the others being the Adélie, the gentoo and the chinstrap). It is

also the only one that breeds in winter, and so it has to survive the very harshest of weather conditions. Apsley Cherry-Garrard, a member of Captain Scott's ill-fated 1910-1913 Terra Nova expedition, wrote: "I do not believe anybody on Earth has a worse time than an emperor penguin".

They grow to a height of over three feet, and only ostriches and the other large flightless birds are heavier. As well as size, they are distinguished from their close relative the king penguin by the colour of the ear patch – yellow in the emperor, orange in the king.

Emperor penguins come ashore in April – autumn in Antarctica – after three months feeding at sea. They waddle or skate on their bellies across the ice to their breeding grounds, often a distance of over 100 km, and find a mate, not usually the same one as before. In late May or early June, the female lays her single egg, which is transferred very carefully to the male, who keeps it balanced on top of his feet, pressed against his bald brood patch and covered by loose skin and feathers. (If the egg is dropped onto the ice, it invariably dies.) The female then shuffles back to the sea to feed, leaving her partner to guard the egg for 65 days or more. In all that time, he doesn't eat.

In late May or early June, the female lays her single egg, which is transferred very carefully to the male, who keeps it balanced on top of his feet, pressed against his bald brood patch and covered by loose skin and feathers. (If the egg is dropped onto the ice, it invariably dies.) The female then shuffles back to the sea to feed, leaving her partner to guard the egg for 65 days or more. In all that time, he doesn't eat.

Temperatures get down to minus 40 degrees (Celsius and Fahrenheit) and howling blizzards make it a freezing hell. But he and hundreds of other fathers stand huddled together to keep as warm as they can, with just one purpose – to hatch their eggs, and so pass on their DNA.

Can you imagine walking from, say, Skibbereen to Cork, in minus 40 degrees and 140 kph wind, then standing in one place for over two months in those conditions, with no food?

When the chick hatches, in August, the male feeds it with a regurgitated fluid produced in his oesophagus, a substance high in protein and fat. This will keep the chick alive for a week.



If the mother doesn't return by then with a stomach full of food, the chick dies and all that effort will have been for nothing. When she does get back, the male, weakened by cold and starvation, then has to trudge all the way to the sea and go looking for food himself.

Emperor penguins have predators to contend with too. Southern giant petrels, like ferocious fulmars with six-foot wingspans, eat the penguin chicks if they can, and leopard seals and orcas wait for them in the water. Their greatest threat, however, comes from us.

Anthropogenic climate

depths of winter to collect penguin eggs for research. Cherry-Garrard named his classic 1922 book, *The Worst Journey in the World*, after that excursion. Patrick Keohane was one of the men who, the following year, found the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers, who had died on their way back from the South Pole.

Now tourists, who blight so many of the world's beauty spots, have begun to invade the last pristine landscape on earth. Even unintentionally, a crowd of humans will disturb a penguin colony; they might bring diseases, their helicopters upset the chicks, and think of the horror of an oil spill. There have already been accidents – an Argentine supply ship sank in 1989, spilling 640,000 litres of oil into the Antarctic sea. The cruise ship *MS Explorer* hit an iceberg and sank in 2007.

At the other end of the globe, climate change is endangering polar bears – they hunt seals from sea ice; when the ice is gone, what will they do? Humans are suffering too – we think this endless rain is bad; in the South Pacific, entire nations such as Kiribati and Tuvalu are disappearing.

These places seem an awfully long way away – how can our actions possibly affect them? But remember the insecticide DDT? Outlawed in most western nations by the 1980s, it is still being found in the fatty tissues of Adélie penguins thousands of miles from where it was originally sprayed. And uninhabited Henderson Island in the Pacific, one of the remotest places on earth, is also one of the most affected by plastic pollution.

Some people don't care about penguins or polar bears; to them, I have nothing polite to say. Many couldn't find Kiribati or Henderson, let alone the

luted, the seas filled with fish not plastic, hundreds of years ago?

The Earth has suffered many natural calamities in its 4,600,000,000 year history, but apart from the extinctions at the end of the Cretaceous Period, it has never experienced such rapid change as it has since the Industrial Revolution. Some animals can adapt to environmental pressures – there is evidence that emperor penguin colonies, having failed one year, learn to move farther inland the following year. But though behavioural adaptations might help them for a while, physiological changes – adapting to warmer air and sea temperatures – take hundreds of years. Penguins, and all the other animals whose lives we are destroying, don't have that long.

So think about those fluffy penguin chicks as you sit in your overheated office, or cut the grass you only cut a week before, or use a power hose to clean the car when a sponge would do, or drive several miles for a plastic cup of coffee because you are such a victim of fashion, or so lazy, you can't make coffee yourself. You might say: "Why should I care about the environment when the Chinese and the Indians and the next door neighbours don't." There is only one answer to that – because it is the right thing to do.



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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

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Encouraging signs from Curlew Conservation Programme but efforts will take time

The final year of a dedicated conservation programme for one of Ireland's most threatened breeding birds has seen the largest number of young Curlew fledged into the wild since the programme began in 2017.

The Annual Report from the Curlew Conservation Programme (CCP), a partnership between the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, documents forty-two chicks reaching fledging stage in 2023, up from nineteen in 2022. This represents an increase of 221% in the number of chicks fledged. A total of thirty-eight breeding pairs were confirmed breeding in the nine geographical areas where the programme operated around the country, with another ten pairs considered 'possible' breeders. Nationally, there are just 100 breeding pairs remaining in Ireland.

Responding to the report findings, Minister for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform Malcolm Noonan TD said: "Our history, culture and communities have such a deep connection with this precious species and its unique call, heard for centuries on our meadows and wetlands. The work pioneered by the Curlew Conservation Programme



over the past seven years shows that there are practical conservation efforts that we can take to stave off extinction of the Curlew. It also shows that we need to ramp these efforts up significantly, while also addressing wider land use changes. We will be announcing detailed plans to do just this in the very near future, building on the solid foundations that the Curlew Conservation Programme has provided.

"I would like to thank the programme teams for all of their work on the programme over the past seven years, which equips us with so many useful insights," the Minister added. "A key success of the programme has been the engagement with farmers, landowners and local communities, who are central to all of our conservation efforts."

Clochán Uisce: From the river to the sea

There is something magical about travelling a river from source to sea. The process of paddling a river from its headwaters to the ocean immerses you in our connection and interdependence to all things on this planet. The journey, which can be difficult and challenging, also requires a little problem-solving and thought along the way.

Perhaps it's because when you travel a river source to sea our journey mirrors that of the river. Starting off small and unsure, crystal clear and pure with intention for the journey

that lies ahead, ourselves and the river both gaining momentum and strength as we travel downstream, overcoming obstacles persevering onwards, drop by drop, until we reach the sea in all its magnificence and enormity, where we once again become a drop in a vast world in a never-ending cycle.

There are so many lessons one can learn from travelling a river. So many ways of seeing the world from a different perspective. Perhaps there is teaching in its energies if we open our hearts and minds to its endless cyclical journeys.

'From the river to the sea' is a slogan that has been chanted around the world recently by people who are horrified by the destruction and massive loss of life inflicted on the innocent people caught up in the war between Israel and Hamas. Although this slogan is a rallying cry to some and contentious insult to others, maybe it could be thought of by all as a euphemism for new beginnings with an end goal for lasting peace.

Just like a paddler's journey, from source to sea is made up of obstacles and difficulties; it's also made up of the friendships

that are solidified along the way, the kindness of strangers, the helping hands, the supporters rallying and rooting for a cause that is bigger than all of us. And last of all the rediscovery of the goodness of humanity.

The call 'from the river to the sea' could be used by all as a new way forward as all have a right to live freely on the land from the river to the sea.

Clochán Uisce meets each month and all are welcome. Find on Instagram or email clochanuisce@gmail.com.

Generating power on your roof



RETROFIT

Xavier Dubuisson

Xavier Dubuisson is an engineer with 25 years experience in the field of sustainable energy in Ireland and internationally. The founder and CEO at RetroKit, a start-up dedicated to upscaling home energy upgrades with innovative digital solutions and one of the partners in the CHERIS project. Xavier has many years of experience helping homeowners make the right decisions when upgrading or building low energy homes.

People often ask me how I ended up living in West Cork. When I arrived in Ireland in 2001, I had moved from Belgium where I was working in a consultancy promoting sustainable energy. I joined the Renewable Energy Information Office, which was based Shinagh House in Bandon, and my job was to develop and provide information about solar energy. In those days, solar energy was almost unheard of in Ireland and you'd see the odd solar panel (to heat water in those days) on the roofs of a few committed pioneers. I know it's taken over 20 years

but it is really satisfying to see that solar panels (now mostly to produce electricity) are becoming so popular. The recent news that solar panels will be made available to every school in Ireland is very welcome.

So let's take a closer look at what solar panels are and how they work. For this article I'll focus on solar voltaic panels (to produce electricity).

Solar panels are an eco-friendly way to produce electricity. They don't produce greenhouse gasses or air pollutants, which helps combat climate change and reduces your carbon footprint. While the initial cost of installing solar panels is quite an investment, they can significantly reduce your electricity bills in the long run.

You can think of them as little power generators on your roof. Solar panels contain solar cells made of semiconductor materials, usually silicon. When sunlight hits these cells, it excites the electrons, creating a flow of electricity. This flow of electricity is in the form of direct current (DC) energy. An inverter then converts this DC electricity into alternating current (AC), which is what powers most of our homes.

The electricity generated by these panels can power your home appliances, lights and so on – whatever electrical load is on at the time. If you produce more energy than you use in the home, the excess can be diverted to heat your hot water in your immersion or to charge an electric car if you have one. If there is any surplus left, it can now be sold back to the grid.

You then need to think about whether your house is suitable for solar panels – there are a few things to consider:

South-facing roofs tend to receive the most sunlight, so if

you have a roof that faces south and has minimal shading from trees or other buildings, that could be an ideal location. Also, consider the angle of the roof; a pitch of around 30-40 degrees is usually optimal for solar panel installation in Ireland.

In our own situation, we didn't have enough roof space that was facing south so we chose to put our panels in the garden propped up at the correct angle and facing south. If you have some ground space (or possibly a flat roof) with no shading this might be an option to consider. It's a good idea to consult with a solar panel installer or expert who can assess your specific location for the best placement.

The cost of solar panels vary depending on a few things, such as the size of the system, the quality of the panels, installation fees, and any additional equipment needed like inverters or batteries. As a rough idea, for a semi-detached three-bedroom house, the end cost to the homeowner would be approximately €6,000. The solar panels could cost approx €8,400 minus the grant available from SEAI of €2,400. Since March of this year there is no VAT charged on solar panels. With the savings you make on your electricity you'd have the panels paid back within six to seven years (depending on electricity prices). This system would save you approx 1,400 kg of CO₂ a year.

SEAI Grants

Grants for solar PV panels up to a maximum of are available to all homeowners including private landlords

Your home must be built and occupied before December 31, 2020.

For all details see the SEAI's website: www.seai.ie



The aim of CHERIS (Community Home Energy Renovation Information Service) is to help homeowners here in West Cork to decarbonise and reduce the energy used in their homes. As part of the project housing stock in the area was analysed, showing an average BER grade C3. However, a quarter of homes have a rating of E or worse, and only 4.9 per cent achieve the B2 or above grade required as per the national Climate Action Plan target.

Over the last couple of months, Ludgate Hub, RetroKit and The Wheel have been busy preparing for their free online information clinics. The aim of the clinics is to provide impartial information for people to make informed decisions and empower them to realise their home energy upgrades. CHERIS was delighted to complete its first round of clinics over three days last week. The final round of clinics will be held this week at the Ludgate Hub.

At the clinics, local community members were provided with guidance, helping them to make informed decisions to get started in making energy savings and reducing their carbon footprint. CHERIS provided information on grants, a list of local installers, and some tips to save energy, in order to ensure this service is for everyone, whether they are eligible for a fully-funded energy upgrade, want to tackle their house step by step or simply want to pick up some energy saving tips.

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference



GROUNDED

MEP Grace O'Sullivan

This month I was reminiscing with my friends over glass milk bottles and the little birds that would come and peck through the lid to get to the cream below. I couldn't help but feel like, since then, we have been duped by the mass production of plastic and the false promise of 'convenience' that it provides. Most people feel the same way, especially when we receive the bill for our wheelie bins and the price we have to pay for throwing away all the plastic and packaging we never asked for in the first place. Think of the last time you bought a dozen apples and it came with all that unnecessary cardboard and plastic. In most cases that cardboard and plastic isn't there to protect the fruit – it is only to make it more appealing to the consumer to spend more money on.

This is precisely why I took

New rules for packaging waste

on a new piece of legislation this year aimed at clamping down on the ridiculous and unnecessary packaging we are forced to pay for twice: once at the till and again to dispose of it. In fact, about 40 per cent of all new plastic and 50 per cent of paper is made just for packaging in the EU, with the vast majority designed to be used just once before being thrown away. It could be said that when you go to the supermarket you are as much shopping for plastic and pack-

aging as the products contained within.

Ireland unfortunately is one of the worst culprits. According to Eurostat, we generate more packaging waste per capita than any other Member State in the EU, with each person on average going through 246 kg of packaging waste a year. In terms of plastic packaging alone, we generate over double the EU average.

Recently in the European Parliament, we negotiated the Packaging and Packaging Waste

Regulation. Our single most important aim was to reintroduce the idea that packaging, cups, plates, bottles and hundreds of other items should be made of material that can be reused, in a society that increasingly sees these items as once-off and single-use. The idea is that massive corporations like Amazon or McDonalds or Smurfit Kappa cannot replace single-use plastic with single-use cardboard and call it 'sustainable'. That we have to turn the tide on the throwaway culture cultivated by corporate giants who prefer that the consumer, or the State, pays for disposal of the trash they produce.

When it came to the vote in Parliament however the McDonalds lobby had obviously worked hard on MEPs. The conservative EPP Group, of which Fine Gael is a member, voted against a number of measures including even a ban on individual plastic wrapping for fruit and veg. They even voted against making it cheaper to bring your own coffee cup to the cafe, instead of using more single-use plastic and cardboard cups.

On the ground with the ordinary shopper the attitude is very different. Across Ireland, over 70

local groups under the umbrella of 'Sick of Plastic' are now taking part in a weekly shop together, recording the amount of unnecessary packaging in an average trolley, and calling out supermarkets for the waste. People are sick of packaging and they are sick of paying for it.

In the Parliament thankfully we succeeded in a number of measures to reduce plastic and packaging. We achieved a modest binding target on Ireland

to reduce packaging waste by 15 per cent by 2040. In the near future, return systems for glass bottles will be obligatory. We also achieved a ban on non-compostable plastic bags and teabags as well as a ban on dangerous PFAS chemicals in food packaging.

In the weeks to come, we fight to make the law even more ambitious. We are sick of plastic, and we're determined to stop it at the source.



The idea is that massive corporations like Amazon or McDonalds or Smurfit Kappa cannot replace single-use plastic with single-use cardboard and call it 'sustainable'.

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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

West Cork residents call for proper legislation around noisy activities like rock-breaking

Many associate the countryside with peace and quiet, with fresh air and birdsong, with rest and relaxation: It's what draws so many people to West Cork. But the countryside is also a working place which has its own cycle of ploughing, planting and harvesting; the sight and smell of hay being cut in the summer and bales evenly spread in the fields waiting to be collected adding to its charm. Tractors and harvesters are vital to progressive farming making previously daunting and backbreaking tasks effortless. But as rural Ireland continues to develop and expand its infrastructure, a growing concern is creeping into this idyllic setting: In the pursuit of farm development and expansion, the ever-increasing use of rock-breaking machinery is becoming commonplace. With the use of heavy machinery previously only seen on this scale on major construction sites, many natural and semi-natural areas unsuitable for farming are now being converted to farmland. This advancement comes with a cost, as Aga Mitka and other residents living near Johnstown village, three miles from Inchigeelagh found out, when relentless noise from rock-breaking activities taking place on a nearby farm made their daily life a misery.

Aga Mitka and her neighbours live in a scenic and very peaceful area overlooking Lough Kilhanna and surrounded by the Sheehy Mountains. It is because of its natural beauty and tranquility that many, such as Aga who bought her smallholding in 2011, have chosen it as their home. In recent years however, this tranquility has been vanquished by relentless noise coming from rock-breaking activities taking place on a nearby farm. Initially thought to be a short-term project, as weeks turned into months and

months turned into years, the continuous quarrying intensified and the noise got progressively worse, effectively destroying the peaceful existence of residents.

The impact of the hydraulic hammers against solid rock generates shockwaves that reverberate through the air and through the ground interfering with water levels, affecting structural integrity of buildings and permanently changing Irish landscape.

The effects of rock breakers are not limited to the rock they hammer. The echoes of their

actions reverberate far beyond the intended target, spreading discord throughout the surrounding areas.

Exposure to high levels of noise has been linked with numerous health issues including stress-related illnesses, sleep disruption, hypertension, hearing loss, and cardiovascular disease (World Health Organization).

But it is not only human beings who fall victim to the transgressions of noise pollution. The natural world pays a heavy toll for the discord of industrial progress. Animals de-



pendent on their auditory sense for communication and survival find their lifestyles increasingly compromised. Disruption of mating calls, feeding patterns, and navigation systems has dire consequences for various species, potentially leading to ecological imbalances that ripple through entire ecosystems.

After pleas with the farmer and complaints to the EPA and Cork County Council got the residents in Johnstown nowhere, Aga lodged a complaint

directly to the district court. Under section 108 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992, anyone has the right to make a noise nuisance complaint to the District Court; the fee is €25 and there is no requirement to employ a solicitor. On October 11, 2023, Judge James McNulty in the Macroom District Court, after hearing the case, ruled against the farmer, issuing a cease and desist order, and a week later Cork County Council followed with an enforcement notice. "We were tremendously relieved and delighted that our lives could now return to normal, and we could once again enjoy our countryside homes," says Aga.

However, only four days after the court order, Coillte commenced quarrying stone for a forestry lane construction within 300m of the homes concerned and only 100m away from the nearest house. "While this is thankfully a once-off short-term project, it's disappointing that no alternative solutions were considered," says Aga "especially in such a densely populated area and taking into account that exposure to noise over 85 decibels can cause permanent damage to hearing."

Residents say they were not

considered or directly made aware of the planned works, with the site notice (on which breaking rock was not mentioned) placed on a quiet boreen where most would not travel.

Because of the absence of proper legislation governing noise pollution from activities like rock-breaking and land reclamation on farmland, situations like this will not only continue to disrupt human life but also pose a significant threat to the environment.

"This highlights the issue that there are no controls in place to limit noise in residential areas and, while the option of the District Court is open to everyone, one cannot live their life taking everyone to court to exercise their right to a peaceful living," says Aga.

To help preserve the peace of the Irish countryside, Aga and local residents have set up a petition calling upon local government bodies and environmental agencies to implement licensing regulations for rock-breaking machinery operators and urging for regular monitoring of these sites.

To sign the petition visit: www.change.org/SayNoToNoise

Autumn Birdwatch round-up

Chair of the BirdWatch Ireland West Cork branch, **Jez Simms**, writes about the rare and interesting birds that were seen in West Cork in recent months.



This last autumn has proved once again what a fabulous place West Cork is for birdwatchers, with exciting birds turning up at all our best sites, such as Rosscarbery, Clonakilty estuary and marshes, Mizen Head, Dursey Island, Galley Head, The Gearagh, (which gave us an early start with a fabulous Caspian tern on July 26), and Cape Clear Island, with some other not-so-

well-known spots also turning up interesting birds.

A couple of big features this autumn have been unprecedented numbers of Cory's Shearwaters observed around our shores, with counts reaching into the thousands, possibly as a result of our warming oceans. Another feature in late September and early October was a big fall of American Warblers in Ireland and the UK. The highest numbers and variety ever seen, with several new species for both countries. Most of these birds missed West Cork and were seen up in Galway and Mayo. A Red-eyed Vireo was found in West Cork, along with other mega European species such as Iberian Chiffchaff, found by ace birder Chris O'Sullivan, and an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler found by that other ace birder, Paul Connaughton. There was also a very good presence made by American waders with Lesser Yellowlegs and Semipalmated Sandpiper in Rosscarbery and Long-billed Dowitcher at White's Marsh, Clonakilty.

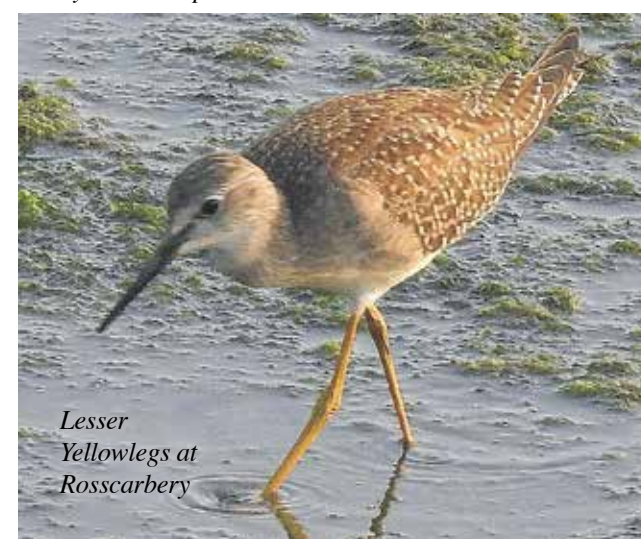
American Golden Plovers arrived a bit later, with two at Rosscarbery, one at Lissagriffin and one at Ringarory. By far the prize wader, and star bird for Cape Clear, was an Upland Sandpiper, a very rare visitor, only the third for Cork and 13th for Ireland, which stayed around for a few days, much to the delight of all birders on the island.

To bring us up to date, a beautiful White-winged Tern was found on Ballin Lough, near Leap, on November 5; I also managed to see it, unlike most of the other birds I've mentioned! And to keep this amazing autumn going, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was photographed near Shepperton Lakes on November 4; and an American Robin was found on Dursey Island on November 6. Another arrival of note is the returning Pacific Diver, which was showing very well in summer plumage last month.

On a personal note, my best day of the autumn was a trip to Cape Clear on October 4-5,



Glossy Ibis at Cape Clear



Lesser Yellowlegs at Rosscarbery

when I managed to see Glossy ibis, Rosy Starling, and a very smart male Common Redstart. Autumn is such an exciting time, so if you want to join in for next year, or on any day at all from now, become a member of BirdWatch Ireland and come along to our monthly outings.

BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch News:

Upcoming outings are:
Sunday, December 3:
Visit to The Gearagh
Thursday, December 28:
Christmas walk at Goleen Marsh, near Skibbereen

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.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

The Dunmore story...

Dunmore House was purchased by Jeremiah and Mary O'Donovan from the Beamish family in 1934: At the time the House and adjoining lands were a working farm. When Mary arrived at Dunmore for the first time and looked out at the sea below the House, she is reputed to have said "there is nothing here but water".

In the early 1940s the O'Donovans first began having guests to stay during the summer months and, in 1948, seventy-five years ago this year, the property was licensed for the first time.

The business was taken over by Derry, son of Jeremiah and Mary, on his marriage to Mary Dineen of Mill House, Ballinascahy in 1961. Mary recounts how there were 137 guests at their wedding and they were all accommodated in the three large rooms then at the front of the main house, each measuring 15 feet by 15 feet: Two of these rooms now make up the main lounge in the hotel.

In 1962, a new modern function room was added to the front of the hotel, which became the location for many wedding celebrations and annual dinner dances (which were popular at the time) – the Gun Club, the local Co-op, The Agricultural Society and the Local Harriers to name but a few. It was also in this room that Derry and Mary had the novel idea to run 'Ballad Sessions' during the summer months. These nights became legendary in West Cork



Peter, Carol and Richard Barrett

with long queues forming on Tuesday evenings to hear Sean O'Se, 'Billa' O'Connell, John White and John O'Shea (The singing fireman!).

Around this time, Derry and Mary, while rearing their young family, also set about

constructing a nine hole golf course on the lands surrounding the hotel. This was indeed a major investment and undertaking at the time and, on its opening in July 1967, photographs of the new course with Derry, Mary and five-



year-old Carol featured on all the National Sunday Newspapers. A new large kitchen with four bedrooms overhead were added in 1972 and, in 1977 the

large building comprising the Ocean (Wedding) suite was built.

The hotel became a destination wedding venue through the 1980s and early 1990s.

Around that time Carol, Derry and Mary's daughter, began to work full-time in the business and, along with Derry and Mary, continued the improvement and development of the hotel. In 1996 under the Seaside Resort Tax Scheme, a new 15-bedroom block was constructed. This addition meant that Dunmore now became a year-round destination welcoming guests from home and abroad.

Over the following decade new bedrooms were added and the 'Courtyard' development comprising four self-contained residential-guest accommodations was completed.

In 2015, Carol's husband Richard retired from his work as a solicitor to work full-time in the hotel and the following few years saw the introduction of the kitchen gardens that now supply much of the produce used daily in the hotel kitchens. In 2017, Richard and Carol's son Peter, following hotel studies abroad joined the team to become the fourth generation to work in and run

Above Dunmore House circa 1955 and as it stands today.

the business.

Throughout the Covid period, work continued in the gardens and environs of the hotel with the addition of the Cliff Gardens and the Ocean walk along the seashore.

In 2022 the Hotel's Adrift Restaurant was recognised with a listing in the Michelin Guide. The closing of the Golf Course in 2022 allowed the development of the 'Ocean Club', giving a panoramic view over Clonakilty Bay: It's now used as a wedding drinks reception area and for various private parties and meetings.

In 2023, seventy-five years after being officially licensed and nearly ninety years after Jeremiah and Mary first farmed the lands, a foal was born on the part of the hotel lands now occupied by Dunmore Sporthorses and so the history and story of Dunmore continues – a home, a place for rest and relaxation, celebrations and song, sport and enjoyment, a workplace for many generations of local people, a focal and reference point for all.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

2023 in review at Dunmore House

No strangers to awards, the team at Dunmore House have enjoyed another bumper year of accolades. Listed in the McKenna's Guide, food is central to everything they do and a key part of any visit to this family run favourite. In spring, The Sunday Times included Dunmore House in their annual 100 Great Places to Stay in Ireland, 2023 with Dunmore part of the best '10 Gourmet Getaways on the island'.

April also saw Dunmore House listed among the highly competitive 'Irish Independent Fab 50' with travel editor Pól O'Conghaile noting, "The fourth-generation family-run hotel is that kind of place, evolving with good ideas and without ever getting ahead of itself since 1948."

Having been added to the Michelin Guide for UK and Ireland in 2022 and 2023, this year Michelin also included Adrift in their June Best of Guide celebrating 'The Best Seafood Restaurants in the Republic of Ireland'.

Writing about Adrift, the Michelin editors noted, "Locally sourced fish and shellfish power the menu at this family-run

restaurant, which features the likes of John Dory, scallops and West Cork mackerel. It sits inside the Dunmore House Hotel and offers stunning views across Clonakilty Bay, ensuring that a window table is always much sought after. There's a bright and airy feel to the dining room, which fits nicely with the coastal vistas and tasty, unfussy cooking. Dishes often make use of the hotel's organic kitchen garden; keep an eye out for the famous local black pudding too."

The summer saw another fantastic inclusion in the Hot Press Best of Ireland 2023 edition with Adrift again keeping great company with some of the best restaurants on the island. And closing off the summer season was the Irish Independent Top 100 in September. Dunmore House was a new entry this year with the Pól O'Conghaile saying, "'It's pure simplicity' Carol Barrett told me when I dropped into her hotel overlooking Clonakilty Bay this year. She's completely underselling it, of course. Dunmore House is simple. But it's simple in the way a little diamond is simple. Happy staff and refined 'country

luxe meets maritime' deco are the opening impressions, but the more you look, the more you see. Think art by the likes of Sharon McDaid and John Shinnors (that's his over the fireplace), menus full of local and sea garden produce, and rooms that mostly face the sea. Several are dog-friendly, too."

In October, Carol, Peter and Richard travelled to Dublin to collect their Memorable Experience Award at the Georgina Campbell Awards 2023 where Ms Campbell said "The wonderful location is the biggest USP of course, but there's plenty else to keep you here. Everything is always immaculate yet homely and the dining experience is outstanding in a lovely low-key way. Delicious home produce, just in from the clifftop gardens (really worth visiting) is cooked with finesse but allowed to be itself – a simple pleasure on a recent visit was a gorgeous side, a bowl of boiled potatoes which, we all agreed, were 'a treat just like sweets'. All round, a high-light of our year."

For the third year running Adrift has been nominated for the 'Best Hotel Restaurant Award' at the Food & Wine

It's proved to be another standout year for all at Dunmore House thanks to the entire team and the year isn't quite over yet!



Photography by Emma Jervis

Magazine Restaurant of the Year Awards, keeping great company with the likes of The Oak Room at Adare Manor, The Owenmore at Ballynahinch Castle and The Saddle Room at The Shelbourne Hotel.

And November saw Adrift make another stand out list in The Irish Times 100 Great Places to Eat as chosen by Irish

Times restaurant critic, Corinna Hardgrave and food contributor, Joanne Cronin. With the inclusion noting, "Whether it's bright or cloudy, the views from the Barrett family's Dunmore House Hotel overlooking the sea never cease to delight. Adjacent to the hotel is the kitchen garden that supplies vegetables to Adrift, named as a seafood des-

tinuation by Michelin. Whether it's Galley Head lobster, whole John Dory or chilli-glazed west Cork tofu, Adrift delivers west Cork on a plate with freshness and consideration."

It's proved to be another standout year for all at Dunmore House thanks to the entire team and the year isn't quite over yet!

From our family to yours,
Wishing you a happy, peaceful
Christmas and a healthy and
prosperous New Year,
Carol, Richard, Peter
and all at Dunmore House.

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A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

I'm often stumped as to what to write when I begin this column but this time I really don't know where to begin. Rustling up Christmas jollity when the people of the Gaza strip are being corralled from one corner to the other whilst their families and homes are being bombed into annihilation, one can only ask how low can humanity sink. With the war in Ukraine continuing and climate change wreaking havoc in different parts of the world it really doesn't paint a pretty picture. As a species we really need to pull our socks up.

Life outside war zones continues on as normal and

In love with chocolate



we are some of the fortunate ones, for that I am very grateful. One thing that we can do is not support the economies of the countries causing this strife so read the labels when you are shopping, and boycott the warmongers, it's the very least we can do.

Someone told me once that when you're feeling down you should eat chocolate, it helps depression. I googled this and it's true. Eating chocolate can have a positive effect on our mental and emotional health, the neurochemicals within chocolate can act as a mood enhancer, relieve stress and make us feel calmer and happier. Phenylethylamine, one of the components within, not only acts as a mood lifter, it's also one of the chemicals the brain produces when you fall in love. And sharing is always good, so plenty of hope there, which has helped me make the decision for this month's recipe.

Tart au Chocolate or plain old chocolate tart is not only delicious but also very simple to make. So simple it almost falls into my category of recipe 'cheats'. The 'almost' being the pastry involved but that's not a problem, you can even cheat there and buy some.

The base of the chocolate tart is made with sweet pastry; we think the recipe that we use is delicious but it needs to be made the day before and can be problematic to roll, as if it's not done quickly it becomes messy. If you have any doubts about your pastry rolling skills, just go and buy it. There is an

Irish company producing sweet pastry; I haven't personally tried it, but it sounds very good. Made in small batches, 'Roll It' sweet pastry is made with butter in Co Meath and sounds like it's worth giving a go.

To ensure the pastry doesn't shrink whilst cooking make sure it comes right up the sides of the tart shell and chill properly before baking. The pastry needs to be completely baked when baking, as it won't cook any more once filled, so be sure to get it good and golden. If the base of the pastry rises up whilst baking, cover your hand with a clean t-towel and gently push it down to deflate. This needs to be done whilst it's hot.

The filling is beyond simple, just melt chocolate, mix together with milk and cream, beat in the eggs and pour into the tart shell. It doesn't even require any real cooking, just put it into a hot oven and turn it off. Let it cool and hey presto it's ready to go.

The recipe below makes a large tart but scale it back if you need to. I never bother, as leftover chocolate pots are always popular in our house and keep well in the fridge for a few days.

If you would like our sweet pastry recipe just drop me an email and I'll send it on.

Tart au Chocolate

Once you have a pre-baked sweet tart shell this is simplicity itself. There really isn't anything to it other than finding good quality chocolate. You're

pretty much guaranteed to receive compliments!

Ingredients:

- 500g chocolate – 55pc or 70pc cocoa mass
- 3 eggs
- 150ml milk
- 350ml cream
- 1 pre-cooked 28cm sweet tart shell
- chocolate curls or a few berries to garnish

Pre heat the oven to 180°

Melt the chocolate in a bain marie – a bowl set over a saucepan of boiling water.

Put the milk and cream into a saucepan and heat until boiling.

Crack the eggs in a bowl and whisk in the boiling milk and cream followed by the chocolate.

Pour the mix into the pre baked tart shell and place into the pre heated oven. Fill the tart shell as much as you dare without it spilling over the edge.

Turn the oven off and leave until the tart has cooled. Chill before serving.

If there is any leftover mix pour it into a cup or ramekin and pop it into the oven with the tart. You'll have a bonus mini pot au chocolate.

Decorate the tart with chocolate curls or strawberries to serve

Wishing everyone a joyous Christmas and here's hoping for peace in the coming year.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

‘Wazzy Woo’ writes the next chapter in its sweet success story with opening of new space in Clonakilty

While fans of Jamie Oliver will be familiar with his catchphrase ‘wazzy wazzy woo woo’, in the past year says **Mary O’Brien**, it has crossed the Irish Sea and become more recognisable in West Cork for the decadent sweet offerings served up by local business ‘Wazzy Woo’, who has revolutionised the world of desserts on our doorstep with its healthy but delicious 100 per cent plant-based baked goods sweetened using non-refined sugar and made without gluten.

The Scottish native turned West Cork man behind this sweet success story is Liam O’Leary. Currently churning out over 700 peanut oaties every week at his kitchen just outside Clonakilty, from an assortment that includes 16 products, ranging from on-the-healthier side, peanut butter cups, nut and date bars and energy balls, to a selection of mouthwatering treats such as fudgy raspberry brownies and hazelnut brookies, Wazzy Woo has become a firm favourite in

satisfying West Cork’s sweet tooth – without the usual guilt that’s served up with dessert!

With the business thriving since its beginnings just under two years ago, Liam now has eyes on a bigger slice of the cake in the creation of a Wazzy Woo shop and cafe in Clonakilty. Opening at the beginning of December in a shared space on Asna Square with current residents Crudge’s Barbershop, Wazzy Woo will bring a whole new non-refined sugar buzz to the centre of town. Aside from



the usual moreish baked goods and nutritious nibbles, there will be cold pressed juices, kefir and other functional drinks plus some healthy breakfast pots. Once the weather warms up Liam will be adding refreshing acai bowls to the menu but, with the cold snap ahead, from now until spring there will be hot chocolates and lots of other luscious winter drinks. This offering of course includes coffee, with neighbouring friends Stone Valley roasting a full-bodied Brazilian bean for Clonakilty’s newest cafe which, as well as catering for grab-and-go patrons will also have comfortable seating available for up to 16 people.

Liam was first introduced to the world of hospitality as a young teenager; he started his culinary career pot washing at the age of 13 at Ballylickey Manor House. Proving his mettle to the French cooks brought rewards for the aspiring young chef and after three summers under their instruction – “they were scary as hell” he laughs – he knew he was destined to follow a path in food and hospitality.

Since then he has never strayed – “except for a year working in accounts administration in New Zealand, which my accountant will find funny I’m sure!” he shares – and when his food journey brought him to Stone Valley Roasters in Clonakilty in March last year, it was purely by chance that it proved the impetus for the Wazzy Woo story, which grew very quickly.

“I was working with the lads

name on the business, and here we are!” shrugs Liam.

Success of course is no accident and behind the scenes, Liam, with the help of employees Daniel and Nora, is working hard to meet increasing orders in his production kitchen, sometimes putting in what can be long and lonely 16-hour days.

When he does get out for quick coffee catch-ups or pints with friends, he says he gets a kick out of people shouting ‘Wazzy Woo’ at him. “It’s immensely satisfying,” he laughs. “I don’t have time to do the deliveries myself anymore, but there is the odd Friday that I can spare a few hours to get out with a few boxes, I really love those days, catching up with my customers and having the craic!”

He credits his friend Grainne Darmody of ‘Pink Moon’ fame in Cork City as being his biggest inspiration in the creation of Wazzy Woo. “I must admit that I was sceptical when she told me her entire offering of cakes and treats would be completely vegan and made without gluten,” shares Liam “but she

blew me away! I learnt so much from her, most of all the fact that the demand for these products is high, and growing stronger all the time.”

He also gives a special mention to his fiancée Kane, who helps out with the business, running errands and doing photography, graphic design, maintenance and deliveries when required.

While there is lots more in the pipeline for Wazzy Woo, Liam is playing his cards very close to his chest when it comes to his future vision for growing the brand. He will however reveal that once the shop is up and running, a larger production unit will follow.

There’s that and of course the Wazzy Woo decadent take on a mince pie to look forward to! Expect a shortbread base with a layer of dark and fruity mince-meat, topped with a punchy cinnamon crumble...dusted, of course, with lots and lots of icing sugar. Christmas on a plate – Wazzy Woo style!



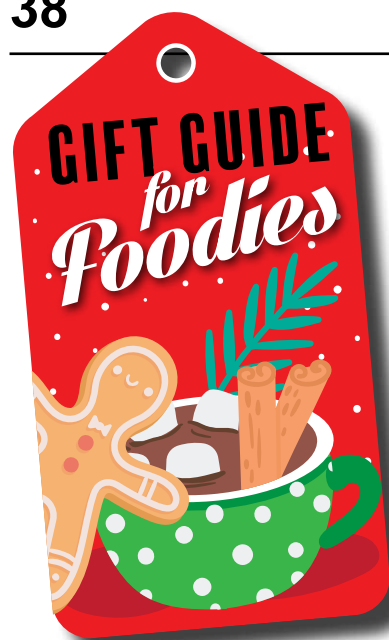


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Using foraged botanicals from the West Cork countryside and flowers from its famous gardens, Fernhill Garden Gin gift bottle and hampers are available at **Fernhill House Hotel, Clonakilty**



Wonderful as an aperitif, Valentia Island artisan Vermouth 700ml €34.95 at **Organico, Bantry**



Be part of the solution and choose to re-use with an Elephant Box. Large €33.95 or small €19.95 at **The Olive Branch, Clonakilty**.



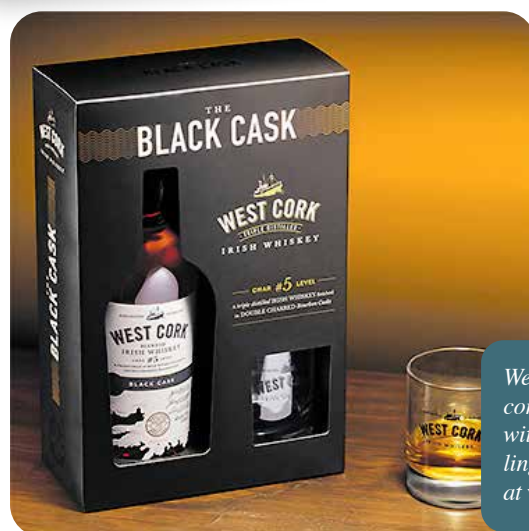
Hyde No.6 President's Reserve is Hyde's master distiller's very special selection of old reserve Irish whiskey casks from the company's warehouse. Available in all Supervalu and local off licence stores or online from **Irish Malts or Celtic whiskey store or hydewhiskey.ie**



Any tea drinker would appreciate a tea caddy tin €6.20 and tea balls €6 from **Clonakilty Tea Shop**, who also stock themed gift boxes for tea and coffee lovers, pick yours!



Something to cherish... Mindful Maker Cheeseboards using Irish timbers working with the natural grain, from €48 at **Forest & Flock, Bantry**



West Cork Distiller's Black Cask gift pack contains a beautifully balanced whiskey with notes of caramel and vanilla and a lingering sweetness on the palate. €41.99 at www.westcorkirishwhiskey.com



A novel take on Irish Christmas baking is The alternative (chocolate-based) Pudding €25, made in Cork or the Aghaboe Farm Mini Christmas Cakes giftset (with 3 different toppings) €35, both at **Urru, Bandon**



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Harry's Nut Butter range are tasty stocking fillers... Try the pumpkin spice one for Christmas! €6.90 each at **The Green Dot, Clonakilty**



This handmade cheeseboard is made from one piece of solid Irish beech with ocean inspired resin art on the handle. €69 at **The Loft, Clonakilty**



Elevate a dining table with this gravy boat, €29 from a huge range of **Le Creuset at Thornhills, Skibbereen**



You are never too old for a jigsaw, especially when it is this Edible Flowers 1000 piece puzzle €17.99 at **Coughlans, Clonakilty**



Spiller's Lane Gallery, **Clonakilty** is stocking the new Tipperary Crystal collection featuring bees including this gorgeous apron for €20. With candles to crockery the range has something for everyone.



For someone who likes a sideserving of chic are these set of stacking plates €45 or Galway Crystal martini/cocktail glasses (pair), half price at €12.50, both in **Tom Sheehys, Clonakilty**





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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

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MADE IN CLONAKILTY**

www.explodingtree.com

It's 15 years since Clonakilty chocolatier Allison Roberts, after moving from Canada to Ireland in 2008, first started out in business selling her chocolate at markets and in shops around West Cork. Since then 'Exploding Tree' – in a Willy Wonka style magic story – has become a full bean-to-bar chocolate factory in Clonakilty. It's not magic beans however that have created this fairytale success story but the passion and commitment of the ethically-minded entrepreneur behind this small fair-minded social enterprise who believes that making chocolate "goes hand in hand with delving into issues around sustainability, human rights and the food industry."

Allison Roberts was just 12-years-old when she first dipped her finger into making and selling chocolate. Today her company – the smallest most alternative chocolate factory in Europe – which sells as much of its products as possible in bulk and unwrapped, aims to be zero-waste with a simple and direct supply chain. Customers can opt to buy 'Exploding Tree' bars unwrapped through the website (explodingtree.com) and 'save the wrap' on an order allowing the company to re-use postal packaging. Selling her bean-to-bar chocolate with less packaging also saves on cost, making Exploding Tree's delicious handmade and healthier Fairtrade chocolate made to Allison's own recipes more accessible.

The only Fair Trade chocolate maker in Ireland and one of only four who work from the bean, Exploding Tree buys all of its cocoa beans and coconut sugar from Fairtrade Organic cooperatives in Ghana and Indonesia. Secondary ingredients are sourced as locally as possible, mostly Irish, but sometimes from other EU countries and organic whenever possible. The Exploding Tree 'Creamy Oat' bar for example is made using oat milk from The Merry Mill, an Irish company.

Allison also does a lot of chocolate making workshops so if you'd like to delve deeper into the world of cocoa and learn how to make chocolate from the bean get in touch now. There may still be some



slots left before Christmas.

"Consumers are so much more educated now about chocolate than they were 15 years ago," shares Allison "People want to know where the cocoa is coming from rather than where the chocolate is manufactured. There are so many more people looking for one hundred per cent chocolate."

While running a small social enterprise in a very competitive market isn't easy, it's a lifestyle choice for Allison, who says she loves the freedom that running her own business allows, such as getting a sea swim in before work every day. "I have met so many interesting people and continue to learn so much. It brings me a lot more than a living wage!"

The Exploding Tree chocolate factory in Clonakilty was awarded the Irish Food Writers' Guild sustainability award in March 2020 and has also received the McKennas guide award every year since 2014.

For the chocolate lover in your life, check out Exploding Tree's Choco-Lovers survival box and truffle-making kit on explodingtree.com. There are also ethical selection boxes and gift bundles, or why not keep your loved one in chocolate all year round with a choco-lovers subscription. www.explodingtree.com



Above: Exploding Tree branding as it is today versus when Allison first launched her chocolate in Clonakilty in 2008.

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OUT & ABOUT



Kelly O'Donovan, Skibbereen at the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science Awards where she was awarded a medal as the student with the second highest overall grade in the module: Financial Planning and control.
Pic: Patrick Browne

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

A world of good food at exotic Baltimore pub

As they get into the swing of the busy Christmas season at The Algiers Inn in Baltimore, it's hard to believe that it's only been four years since Bill and Ann Hillyard relocated here from California. The couple, who have been married for over 30 years, have spent much of that time travelling the globe as food explorers, immersing themselves in the culinary cultures of the places they discovered along the way and discovering and collecting ingredients and techniques to be combined and reimagined and shared. It's this passion that inspires the menu and quirky interior they have created at The Algiers Inn. The couple share with **West Cork People** how for them food and cooking are not just about taste and flavour but about using innovation and creativity to generate shared experiences at the table, bringing together family and friends to relish the bounty of meats, cheeses, seafood and produce on their doorstep.



It was February 2020, just 28 days before the first Covid lockdown, when Bill and Ann began the journey of a lifetime, purchasing The Algiers Inn in Baltimore and transforming the historic old building, whose name summons up memories of Baltimore's piratical past, when the village was a haven for smugglers and pirates, into an exotic Moorish – with a nod to its past – bar and restaurant.

Back in the old days, rumours have it that The Algiers operated

as an illicit sifín under the cover of a legitimate bakery and shop. In 1892, however, Beamish and Crawford Brewery formally established a pub on the premises to coincide with the arrival of the Baltimore extension of the Cork, Bandon, and South Coast Railway. The railway opened the village to legitimate commerce and tourism, forcing the pirates and smugglers out of Baltimore and onto more secluded harbours.

Today the building offers

a locally-sourced yet globally-focused authentic food and entertainment experience at the heart of Baltimore village. The award-winning eclectic menu, while inspired by American fast food – with items ranging from buffalo bites to a North Carolina-style pulled pork sandwich to a selection of legendary tacos – is anything but; with all of the sauces and salsas made in-house.

A review in the Irish Examiner this year described the Carnitas taco as “a sweet and savoury mouthful of tender pork confit, with a verdant, vibrant salsa verde, creamy guacamole and pickled red onions.” The same review proffered the ‘Carne Asada’, “a grilled Walsh's West Cork skirt steak, succulent with juicy umami, dressed with diced raw red onion, coriander, guacamole, and fiery house salsa” to be as good as, if not better, than the fish taco.

While Ann manages the kitchen with a team of skilled chefs, Bill runs front of house. Their bar manager, Sean McCarthy has worked at The Algiers for over 26 years, staying with Bill

and Ann when they took over the business. “We consider ourselves very fortunate to have Sean McCarthy as Bar Manager,” they say, while also recognising their young but professional and hardworking team.

“We had a five-year plan to do up the old pub, but taking advantage of the lockdown, we went full bore, doing much of the work ourselves. Our eclectic menu arose out of the vacuum of the lockdowns,” share the couple.

Bill and Ann's passion for what they do has not gone unrecognised with The Algiers named ‘Munster Traditional Gastropub of the Year’ at the Yes Chef Ireland Awards 2023, as well as having been shortlisted for five other of the awards. The Algiers was also shortlisted for Front of House Team of the Year by the Yes Chef.

“For us, hospitality starts with the genuine enjoyment of doing something well for the purpose of bringing pleasure to others. It is our primary motivation for coming to work every day.

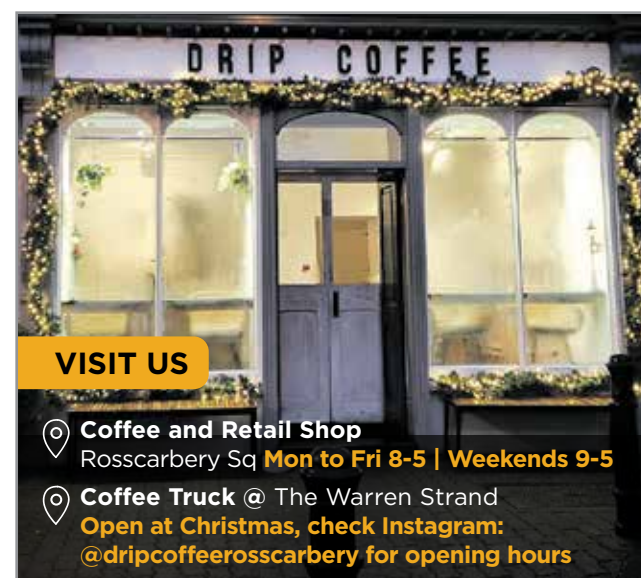
“We are passionate about creating the best possible experience for our guests. Our goal

is that they feel an affiliation with us, a connection, of feeling important and cared-for. This is our greatest reward.”

While far from home, the couple have settled into life in West Cork, enjoying nothing better than long scenic walks and friendly pints in their local on days off. They're also constantly amazed at discovering familial connections with only a few degrees of separation: Like the customer who turned out to

be the granddaughter of Bill's grandfather's business partner in San Francisco, or the guest from Dublin who owns the bar in California that Bill's first cousin manages.

Four years on and West Cork is as captivated with The Algiers as Bill and Ann are with West Cork. It's a lively spot even in off-season. For a tasty meal in a friendly inviting space, you won't go wrong.



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Merry Christmas everyone!

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Mulled mead and apple cup

With enticing aromas of mead mulling with apple, honey and spices, this recipe from **Kinsale Mead Co** will fill the house with Christmas spirit! We love the spiciness of the Atlantic Dry Mead - White Port Barrel Aged but you can substitute with Atlantic Dry Mead.

Ingredients to serve 6:

- 400ml of Atlantic Dry Mead - White Port Barrel Aged
- 125ml apple juice
- 1 cinnamon stick
- slices of fresh ginger root
- Small grating of nutmeg (optional)
- 1-2 tsp of honey to taste
- Garnish: Slice of apple

Warm gently in a pan and allow to steep for 10 minutes.

Pour into a heat proof glass and garnish with a slice of apple.

Tip: You can substitute the spices with a spiced tea such as chai. Just don't leave it steep too long!

Serve hot to warm up after a chill winter's walk or post shopping expedition.



Embracing health and joy: The Christmas triad

As the weather becomes ever more dismal, and the days get shorter it is as if we are enveloped by darkness and then, Christmas appears. It is not only a time of joy and togetherness, but also a celebration with significant health advantages. Christmas offers a unique blend of history, flavours, and connection that helps our total wellbeing.

This triad includes the solstice observances at Newgrange and elsewhere, the delicious spices that adorn our holiday foods, and families getting together.

Even though Christmas shopping traditionally started on December 8; the real start of Christmas, for me, is the ceremony of watching sunrise at Newgrange. During the solstice the passage at this ancient Irish site is lit by the rising sun, thus heralding the commencement of a new agricultural year. The solstice also represents the victory of light over darkness, a metaphor that perfectly captures the spirit of Christmas with the birth of the Christ child. As the knowledge of brighter days

ahead coincides with the spirit of hope and new growth, the excitement and celebration of light surrounding this midwinter event can have a favourable effect on mental health.

The rich selection of spices that add warmth and flavour to the season's meals is one that makes Christmas so unique. In addition to their scent, spices like ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon have several health advantages. Due to their anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and immune-stimulating qualities, these spices have long been valued.

The familiar cloves contain compounds with anti-inflammatory effects, such as eugenol. They are rich in antioxidants, which can help neutralise harmful free radicals in the body thus playing a role in protecting cells from damage. To add to their overall usefulness, cloves also have natural antibacterial and antifungal properties. Traditionally, cloves have been most associated with dental health, and this is due the presence of eugenol which is not only anti-microbial but also helps alleviate pain and is antiseptic. Cloves also help digestion by promoting the secretion of digestive enzymes which help reduce gas and bloating. Other benefits of cloves include the easing of coughs, hence their inclusion in the traditional 'hot toddy.' New research is indicating a role for cloves in controlling blood sugar, but it is early days yet to be sure of this. However, I have rarely seen traditional uses of a herb or spice not to be supported by modern research, so perhaps this is why cloves are added to apple tarts – to reduce the effect of the sugar surge.

Cinnamon is the second most commonly used spice at Christmas, so it is no surprise to discover it is also extremely beneficial to health. Because of its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities, cinnamon is beneficial to health. It has ingredients that fight oxidative stress by neutralising free radicals. Research indicates that it could improve insulin sensitivity, which would help with blood sugar regulation and be advantageous for people with type 2 diabetes or insulin resistance. Because cinnamon lowers triglycerides and LDL cholesterol, it is also beneficial for heart health. Similar to

cloves, its antibacterial qualities promote dental health. Some research is indicating that there may be neuroprotective benefits in cinnamon that help prevent age-related brain disorders. The research on the anti-cancer benefits is in the early stages so a lot more investigation is necessary on that front. If possible, choose Ceylon cinnamon, as it has a reduced coumarin content, and coumarins can be dangerous in large amounts. Since everyone reacts differently, it is best to consume spices in the usual small quantities they are used traditionally.

In a world consumed by hectic schedules, the holidays offer a priceless chance to get back together with family and friends. According to social psychology studies, these get-togethers can promote general mental health by providing essential social support, lowering stress levels, and arousing feelings of belonging, and their role within the family. This, needless to say, may be a positive or a negative, depending on how a person identified themselves within the family. However, generally, the shared experiences, such as cooking a holiday meal together, receiving gifts, or keeping long-standing customs and rituals forge links that increase family ties. Consequently, reduced stress levels, enhanced mental health, and an increased sense of overall satisfaction have all been connected to these events. This, in turn, is linked to happier living. Also, the shared experiences result in enduring memories and though some people's experience may be different, family gatherings



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.rosarikingstonphd.com

around Christmas often have a positive effect on psychological wellbeing and social connections.

In summary, Christmas is a celebration that includes long-standing customs, wonderful meals, and the cosiness of close family ties. It is more than just a time for fun, festivities, and shopping. Newgrange sets the tone for the week ahead, as it represents the victory of light and the hope of longer days. The spices we use to season our food are not only delicious, but also have numerous health advantages. Above all, spending Christmas with family strengthens the bonds that are necessary for a happy and fulfilled existence, which in turn improves our wellbeing. This Christmas, let us celebrate the gifts of health and happiness that this time of year gives us and a happy Christmas to all my readers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took advantage of the free consultations at the clinical training session in September. The next clinical training session will be in May, and I am already starting a waiting list for anyone interested in having a free consultation at the 2024 clinical training workshops. Please email me at rosari@drrosarikingston.com

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

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✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Whiskey brioche with clementine and cardamom cream

Ryan Hoy of the Pike Deli in Clonakilty shares his recipe for a brioche worthy of The Bakeoff.

Ingredients for 9 buns:

- 150g whole milk
- 25g fresh yeast (or dried yeast 12.5g)
- 25g melted salted butter (warm)
- 1 egg (plus 1 for egg wash)
- 40g caster sugar
- 400g strong flour
- 100g Galley Head whiskey
- 200g dark muscovado sugar
- Peel of one clementine
- 250g double cream
- 60g mascarpone
- 40g icing sugar (plus extra for serving)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground cardamom
- 3 or 4 clementines

Dough:

In a stand mixer, bloom 25g (or 12.5g dried) of fresh yeast in 150g of warm milk.

Add melted butter, sugar, egg and flour. Mix on low speed for 4 minutes, scraping down the sides around the midway mark.

Mix on medium/high speed for 1 min.

Cover bowl of mixer with a

towel and proof in a warm place until doubled in size.

With a dough scraper, tip dough out onto a lightly floured surface, divide dough into 9 equal pieces, each weighing 75g

Shape the dough into small balls by folding in on itself and rolling in a circular motion. The dough should be slightly sticky and elastic but should come together without using extra flour. It will be much harder to achieve the right tension on a heavily floured surface.

Place the balls 2 inches apart on a parchment lined baking sheet.

Cover loosely with cling film and proof until doubled in size. (Now is a good time to make the glaze and filling)

Egg wash and bake at 180 degrees for 16-18 minutes, they should resemble small burger buns when cooked.

Whiskey glaze:

Combine whiskey, muscovado sugar and the peel of 1 clementine in a small pot and heat until sugar is completely dissolved.

Set aside until slightly thickened and cooled.

Cardamom cream:

Combine all ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer.

Whisk slowly to begin



with, incrementally increasing the speed until soft peaks are achieved.

Add filling to a piping bag with a nozzle.

Assembly:

Drop warm buns into the pot with warm glaze and turn over to completely coat.

Place on a wire rack with a tray underneath.

Every few minutes "baste" the buns until shiny, keep a little glaze behind.

When buns are cool, use a small serrated knife to cut a small "lid" from the top.

With the same knife, carve a hole into the bun, deep enough to hold a thick slice of clementine.

Place a slice of clementine into a bun and glaze liberally.

Pipe a generous amount of cream filling around the top of the clementine.

Dust the "lid" of the bun with icing sugar, pipe a small amount

of cream filling in the centre and place on top of the bun.

Slice the leftover peel from the bottom of the glazing pot as thinly as possible and garnish the bun top.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Blacks Brewery & Distillery unveil stunning Lagoon Bar



Maud and Sam Black pictured at the soft launch of their Lagoon Bar. Pic. John Allen

Blacks Brewery & Distillery last week opened their highly-anticipated Lagoon Bar at their new brewery and distillery in Cappagh overlooking the Bandon estuary in Kinsale. This has been a huge development and milestone for the business, marking 10 years since the company first started brewing and distilling in Kinsale.

Beginning in June of 2022, the development of the site took place in two phases; phase one includes the Brewery, Distillery and Lagoon Bar, with phase two boasting a visitor and tours centre. The views from the bar are impressive, with an outside seating area overlooking the water. Internally, within the bar a window looks on to the brewing tanks and shiny copper whiskey stills in the production hall. Founded in 2013, Blacks Brewery and Distillery is a fam-

ily-run business, independently-owned by husband and wife team Sam and Maudeline Black.

The idea and motivation for the business came many years earlier when Maud gave Sam a home-brewing kit as a Valentine's Day gift. What started as a hobby for Sam developed into a passion for brewing great beers. Driven by the lack of 'hoppy' and different style beers in Ireland, Sam was encouraged to begin brewing commercially in Kinsale in 2013.

With their enthusiasm for producing quality drinks, Blacks decided to move into the distilling side of the business and, having produced numerous award-winning beers, whiskey was next in their sights.

The experimentation didn't stop there, as in 2020 Blacks installed two Whiskey stills and began whiskey production. According to a local historian, Blacks is the first commercial distillery in Kinsale – historical records showing that any evidence of previous distilling was



for personal use only.

With a wealth of experience to draw on, Blacks started creating their own Irish whiskey that flaunts the rules and perceptions of flavour. "We're prepared to mix up mash bills, marry unique liquids and use category-shaking cask finishes to create fantastic tasting Irish

whiskey," shares Sam Black.

"We started our revolution with flavour-packed experimental craft beer, then we moved swiftly into gin and rum, following our taste buds and sense of adventure. These won us recognition and awards as experts at our craft, and consumer respect along the way."



The portfolio of drinks being produced by Blacks is impressive:

Beers – KPA, 1601 lager, Tropical IPA, Worlds End Imperial Stout and more specials on draught in the bar,

Gins – Juniper Tempest, Citrus Smash and Apple & Kiwi Gin,

Whiskies – Triple Threat, Maple Mayhem and Black smoke are the core range with numerous other specials available in the bar and on their website.

Rums – Golden Rum, which has a 2020 World Rum award, as well as spiced and flavoured rums available in the bar both in cocktail form and with a mixer.

Opening hours for Lagoon Bar in December are:

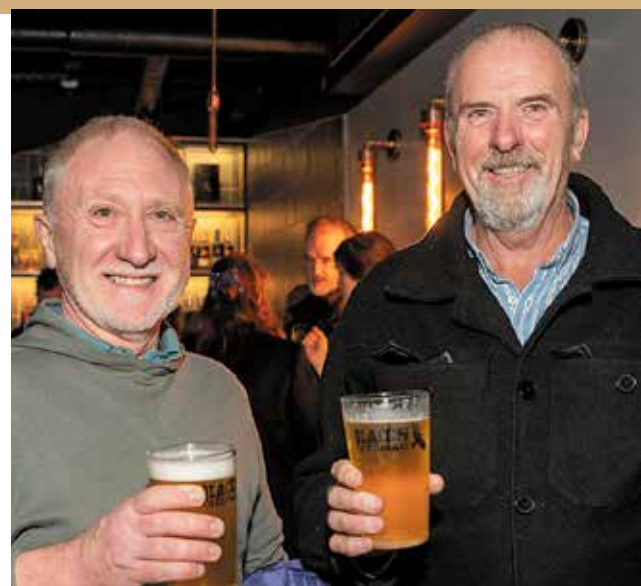
Thursday 5pm to closing;
Friday 5pm to closing;
Saturday 2pm to closing;
Last opening day in December is Saturday 23rd.

A Christmas Market Day will be held at the Brewery & Distillery on December 17, which will include a variety of local craft makers and food producers.

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Annmarie Searls, Phil Price, Mary Coughlan and Christine Mitchell from Kinsale pictured at the Kinsale Lions 35th Anniversary Dinner at Actons Hotel. Picture. John Allen



John Collins and Bernard O'Sullivan from Kinsale pictured at the soft launch of the Lagoon Bar in Kinsale. Pic. John Allen

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Classic French pear tarte tatin with homemade Clonakilty Black Pudding icecream

Annemarie Kiely, of Wild Garlic Restaurant and Coffee Shop in Dunmanway shares her recipe for a classic dish with a local twist.

Serves 8 generous portions

For the pastry:

- 250g strong flour
- Pinch of sea salt
- 250g salted butter
- 150ml cold water

Sieve the flour. Add the sea salt.

With fingertips break the hard cold butter into small chunks and rub in loosely

Make a hole in the centre and add in 100ml of the cold water

Mix until the dough is firm.

Add little more water as you need it but be careful not to add it all and too quickly.

Cover with cling film and leave rest for 20 minutes, refrigerated.

On a floured board knead it gently and create a rectangle

Roll the dough until triple the size, the butter marbling should be very evident at this stage

Fold the top third down and the bottom third up over that. Giving the dough a quarter turn, roll out to triple the size again.

Fold again in thirds and cover again. Set aside in a cool environment until ready to use.

For the tarte:

- Six pears
- 2 star anise
- 2 cardamom
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cloves
- 2 tbsp brandy
- 100g caster sugar
- 100g butter

Place the star anise, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom in a 20cm wide base frying pan.

Melt the butter and sugar with the spices over a high heat until caramelised.

Core and peel the pears and

slice into inch thick slices

Layer the pears in a clockwise motion for approx. ten minutes. Once caramelised, add in the brandy and flambe.

Roll out the pastry you made earlier again to an inch thickness and to the shape of the pan with over laps, tuck them down inside and place in the oven for forty minutes or until golden brown and crispy. Allow cool down

Fill onto a large plate and remove all spices. It is now ready to portion

For the icecream:

- 285ml double cream
- 300ml whole fat milk
- 115g caster sugar
- 1 vanilla pod, scraped out or vanilla essence
- 3 large eggs
- 10 slices of Clonakilty Black Pudding
- 1 teaspoon of mango chutney

Heat the milk and cream, mix with the vanilla and half the

sugar in a pan on a low heat.

Stir the mix often until it starts to simmer and then set aside.

Beat the eggs and sugar until pale and thick.

Beat 125ml of the cream mix into the egg mix.

Reheat the cream until it barely boils and then add the rest into the egg mix.

Like a custard bring the mix to a low heat and stir continuously until it coats the back of the spoon.

Place it in a bowl sitting in a separate bowl full of ice (ice bath) stirring continuously to ensure no skin forms.

Place in a fridge for three to four hours.

Grill the black pudding until cooked through and then crumble finely, allow to cool.

In the icecream machine churn the cold mix and add in the mango chutney and crumbled pudding slowly.

Remove and place in a plastic container.



Freeze until required, will last for up to three months in the freezer (if you don't have an ice cream machine at the last step place directly in the freezer but remove and whisk it every thirty minutes until it starts to go solid,

it will freeze harder when done by hand.)

Wild Garlic is taking pre bookings for takeaway Christmas dinners. Call 023 8855643 or 083 4264163.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Escape to the island

A childhood spent under the twinkling stars of a Beara night sky inevitably drew Crosshaven native Caitríona Hanley back to her roots on Bere island. It's the place where her father grew up but also the place that nurtured Catriona's fierce love of the outdoors. "I have always loved the island and its hold over me has just grown stronger over the years." So it made sense, she tells West Cork People, to set up a business that would complement the spirit of the island, working in collaboration with the beautiful environment and local community. Caitríona pursued her decade-long dream and Wild Atlantic Glamping was born in the summer of 2021, offering comfortable and affordable accommodation for those interested in experiencing all that island life has to offer.



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WILD ATLANTIC GLAMPING

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With the events side of the business taking off, over the past two years Wild Atlantic Glamping has hosted everything from yoga and wellness retreats to weddings, running camps, concerts – this year singer Brian Kennedy even got a performance in on the island – photography, writing workshops, pop-up restaurants and festivals. The inaugural Bere Island Arts Festival was a huge success and plans are already taking shape for next year's festival, which will run from September 19-22.

There are lots more exciting projects in the pipeline for 2024 with yoga and wellness weekends, runners retreats hosted by 'Forget The Gym, the annual 'Ukes go Bere' ukulele festival on the June Bank Holiday weekend, which will include even more events this year and the annual Wild Atlantic Glamping end-of-summer gig on August 24. "I can't wait until I can share more about this," says Caitríona.

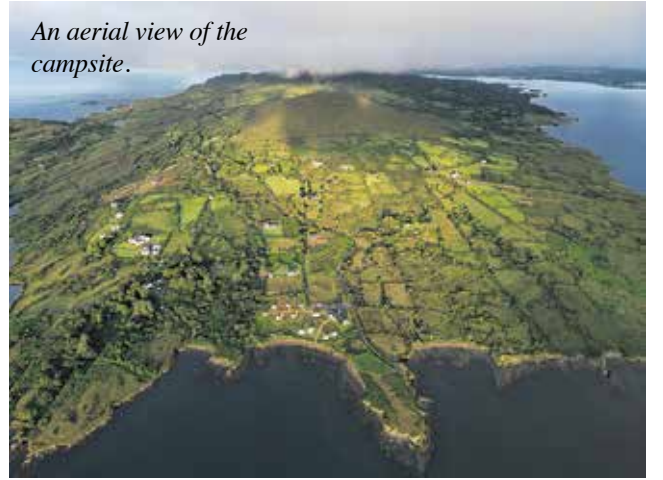
Wild Atlantic Glamping currently offers 10 luxurious bell tents for hire, each named after an area on the island. Eight of the tents sleep up to four people with two larger tents housing a double and three single beds in each. Each tent has its own private terrace with chairs where visitors can relax and enjoy the spectacular sea views while breathing in the salty sea air.

A communal building close to the accommodation offers a fully-equipped campers kitchen, dining area with large windows, again taking advantage of the views, showers with hot water available 24/7, BBQ area and a large all-weather covered terrace with a firepit and picnic tables.

There is a large, warm, bright room available to rent for workshops, retreats, training, private parties, family get togethers and events and the site has direct access to the sea, perfect for swimming, diving, kayaking and sailing.

There is never a dull moment on Bere Island with much to do and see: Favourites include a hike to the Ardnakinna Lighthouse or one of the Martello Towers, the weekly 5km Park Run, a guided tour of Lonehort Battery, a visit to the heritage centre, night kayaking around Lawrence Cove or a sunrise

An aerial view of the campsite.



swim from the glamping site. Ultimately however, a holiday on Bere Island shares Caitríona "is all about creating memories and enjoying the simple things – exploring rock pools, jumping off the pier, eating freshly caught fish, toasting marshmallows over the campfire, and enjoying the freedom of being on an island."

While this all sounds idyllic, running a business on an island does present challenges such as having to factor in additional building costs and planning trips to the mainland around ferry times. But the advantages far outweigh any disadvantages emphasises Caitríona. "Island people by their nature are very resourceful and skilled and Bere Island has such a strong, vibrant, and supportive community there is always someone I can call on if I need help with anything, from giving advice to a guest on the best spots to catch mackerel to helping round up sheep that have wandered into the site. Getting supplies in is not an issue either as the businesses in Castletownbere are very accommodating – I can do my grocery shopping online with SuperValu or phone Harringtons (the local hardware shop) and they will put whatever I need on the next ferry."

Three seasons in and the challenges have not slowed the

success of Wild Atlantic Glamping, which Caitríona says would never have happened without the support of her family. "This is not something that I could even have dreamt have doing without their support. The entire extended family got behind this from the very beginning. I really appreciate how fortunate I am to have a family with a diverse range of skills – from designing the building to hanging gates, pitching tents and making beds – that are all so generous with their time."

Caitríona's longterm vision is to turn Wild Atlantic Glamping into a year-round business, offering accommodation in the winter months. "I think the island is an idyllic winter destination for retreats, a romantic weekend away or someone simply looking for some solitude, peace, and relaxation. I have a stunning facilities building and it is a shame to see it closed up for the winter."

For her there is no greater pleasure than being wrapped up snug watching the waves and listening to the sounds of the wind and the rain on Bere Island with a glass of wine or cup of tea in hand. It's a scenario she hopes others looking to enjoy a slower pace of life will experience in the future.

www.wildatlanticglamping.ie



The facilities building

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Brussels sprout, hazelnut and pickled cranberry salad

Formerly head chef of Deasy's restaurant near Clonakilty, **Caitlin Ruth** hails from Dublin, New Hampshire, USA, and has called Ireland her home since 1992. Listed in McKenna's 100 Best, and awarded the Michelin Bib Gourmand and recently Munster Local Food Hero, she now has a food truck, Caitlin Ruth Food, that serves a menu driven by seasonal ingredients from West Cork's local growers and producers. Her new cookbook Funky' will be published in January and is available to preorder from blastabooks.com. Catch her on instagram for updates of her food truck pop-ups.

This makes an interesting and festive gluten free and vegetarian starter for Christmas Day- or if you don't want to go down the starter route, it can easily be served as a side dish with the main meal. Serves 4-6 people (with left-over pickles)

Ingredients for pickle:

- 340g cranberries
- 300ml distilled white vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 150ml water
- 200g caster sugar
- 1 tsp sea salt

- 1 sprig thyme
- Pinch black pepper
- 1 bay leaf

First pickle your cranberries. Place the cranberries in a clean, dry 1 litre jar or container. Bring the rest of the ingredients to the boil, then pour immediately onto the cranberries. Cover, and let come to room temp. If you have any left after you garnish your salad, you can keep in the fridge for up to three months and use on turkey sandwiches or cheese boards.

Ingredients for salad:

- 2 x 500g net bags of Brussels sprouts
- 4 tbsp mayonnaise
- half tsp smoked paprika
- Zest of half a lemon
- half tsp salt
- 100g finely grated parmesan or pecorino cheese, or use any hard cheese.

To dress Brussels sprout leaves:

- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 7 tbsp pickled cranberry brine.

To garnish:

- 150g roasted chopped hazelnuts

Preheat oven to its highest setting (mine is 230C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Slightly trim the stem ends of the Brussels sprouts,



removing any damaged outer leaves, and place the 750g sprouts into a large bowl, reserving the other 250g. Stir in the mayonnaise to coat the Brussels sprouts in the bowl, then add the spices and stir again.

Put the grated cheese in the bowl, and toss so that all of the sprouts are coated in grated cheese.

Place the sprouts in one layer on the baking sheet, making sure the sprouts aren't touching each other- aim for at least a half inch apart. Bake them in the preheated oven for 12-15 minutes, then remove

from oven and leave to come to room temperature.

In the meantime, take the remaining trimmed sprouts and either break them into individual leaves (tedious) or slice them thinly into shreds. Soak in cold water for 20 minutes, then spin in a salad spinner and reserve until needed. Just before serving, toss these Brussels sprouts leaves with the olive oil, a pinch of salt and pepper, and pickled cranberry brine.

Cover a pretty platter with the dressed Brussels sprouts leaves, and artfully scatter the roasted sprouts onto the leaves. Garnish with as many m pickled cranberries as you'd like, and the hazelnuts, and any cheese crisps that have melted into the parchment paper.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Skibb Olympians and philanthropists honoured at UCC Alumni Awards

Olympic medal-winners, an Oscar-nominated filmmaker, a world-renowned botanist, activists, philanthropists and volunteers were among those to be honoured at the UCC Alumni Achievement Awards, which

celebrated its landmark 25th anniversary in November.

A total of 11 inspirational alumni were honoured with an Alumni Achievement Award, one of the highest accolades given by UCC.

Skibbereen took the lions

share with community lynchpins, John and Catherine Field and Olympic Gold medallist rowers Paul O'Donovan and Fintan McCarthy, all being recognised.

John and Catherine Field are at the heart of the community in

Skibbereen. They are directors of the family business, J.J. Field & Co., which includes Fields of Skibbereen SuperValu, known for championing the very best of local. John was also a founding member of the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen, a digital workspace that helped to drive innovation in the West Cork area.

Fintan McCarthy and Paul O'Donovan both began their rowing careers at Skibbereen Rowing Club. Since they started rowing together the duo has amassed an impressive collection of medals, including Ireland's first ever rowing gold medal in 2020 at the Tokyo Olympics.

The other recipients were

- Diana Beresford-Kroeger, botanist and author;
- Campaigner Mary Crilly of the Sexual Violence Centre Cork;
- Leading lawyer Michael Jackson, Managing Partner of Matheson LLP
- Doug Murray, Oscar nominated and Emmy award winning sound engineer;
- Activist and author Katherine O'Donnell;
- Businessman, philanthropist and Cork University Foundation Chair Neil O'Leary;
- Amel Sami, researcher and educator.

President of UCC, Professor John O'Halloran commended those receiving awards this evening: "I am delighted to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of our awardees. Each one embodies UCC's tradition of independent thinking and is a source of great pride to the university."



John and Catherine Field.



Paul O'Donovan and Fintan McCarthy
Pics Daragh Mc Sweeney/Provision

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"Glorious Glandore"

Bandon STEM student receives scholarship

Bandon student Clíodhna Prendergast, was amongst 62 students from across five Irish universities to have been awarded scholarships as part of the prestigious Women in STEM2D Undergraduate Awards at the first ever national event held in Thomond Park Stadium, Limerick. Clíodhna is studying for a BSc. Biological Sciences at University College Cork.

The Award recognises outstanding female students in STEM2D disciplines: Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, Manufacturing and Design. Sixty-two students from Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick, University College Cork, University of Galway and Munster Technology University have received scholarships as part of the programme.

Each scholarship recipient is set to embark on an inspiring journey, gaining access to a student award, industry mentorship, leadership training, career workshops, Johnson & Johnson site visits, and participation in WiSTEM2D events aimed at bolstering their future in STEM careers.

Scholarship recipients were also presented with bespoke framed glass artwork crafted by Fermoy-based artist Suzanne O'Sullivan.



FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

COMPETITION : SKIBBEREEN SODUKO

Your chance to win a Skibbereen Voucher!

Skibbereen Chamber of Commerce is offering four readers a €30 voucher EACH to experience for themselves all that Skibbereen has to offer this Christmas. You can spend your voucher in over 30 local businesses including shops, supermarkets, cafes, restaurants, hair and beauty salons, fuel suppliers and more.













Available in €50, €20 & €10 denominations, a Skibbereen Town Voucher makes a versatile gift that also helps the local economy...a win, win!

Employers, did you know you can reward employees with up to €1000 of Skibbereen Town Vouchers tax free?

Available to purchase at Abbey Furniture, Bridge Street and Violette, Main Street or contact chamber@skibbereen.ie.

To be in with a chance of winning a €30 voucher, fill in the missing boxes with one of the four choices on the right (*draw or write!*) so that every line and quadrant contains one of each symbol.

Take a photo and email it, with your name, location & phone number to info@westcorkpeople.ie before December 12. Please put 'Skibbereen Vouchers' in the subject line.

- Rowing Oars
- Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa
- Skibbereen Heritage Centre
- Skibbereen Vouchers

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OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Parents Mary and Jerry with Skibbereen's Olympic medal winning rower and Quercus scholar Emily Hegarty, who graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Physiology at a Conferring Ceremony in University College Cork recently. Emily and her teammates won Bronze at the women's coxless four event at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.
Pic Michael Mac Sweeney/ Provision

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE**Invest in your community – how ‘Buying Local’ helps us all****HEALTH**

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

I have seen massive changes to the variety of shops in Bantry over the course of my lifetime. We used to have a fish shop, a veg shop, several bakeries, several independent supermarkets and independent

corner shops, as well as a fabulous cookware shop, a sweet shop, several bookshops, many more clothes shops, as well as homeware and gift shops. All now vanished.

Shopping locally is a huge topic these days. We all see a lot of ‘Buy Local’ messaging in the run up to Christmas. Why is it important to buy local? I always feel a bit awkward tackling this topic as it can really sound self-serving – like I’m just asking you to support my business! And it’s a good question: Why should you give your hard earned money to local businesses?

Buying locally is really about investing in your community and choosing where to spend your money in ways that create benefits locally. When you buy local (from independently-owned retailers) you are investing in the future of your

town and not in the wealth of shareholders of multinational companies who shelter their profits and pay as little tax as possible (often other jurisdictions).

When we think about the shops we do have in rural Ireland, we need to realise that (just like our muscles!) it’s a use it or lose it situation.

If we want to live in towns or villages with access to a butcher, baker, fishmonger, independent grocers, pub, post office, health food shop, shoe shops and craft shops and so on, rather than one with betting shops, charity shops and soulless international chains, WE ALL need to act. Not just nod but ACT and spend our money where it will enrich our town and the town of our children and our children’s children.

Interestingly, we do have well over 100 independent Health Food shops in Ireland, which is a lot considering our population. Most reasonably-sized towns (and many small villages) have an independent Health Food shop. And some, like Organico, have been open a long time. But none of us take it for granted that we will be open forever – we deeply appreciate the support of our communities in keeping our doors open.

With all this in mind Rachel and I decided to visit some of the amazing independent retailers in Bantry and explore why we should celebrate these hard-working local businesses and support them with our hard-earned cash. We enjoy shopping locally, and we want these local shops to thrive, so we made some short videos to highlight them, and shared them on our social media platforms. We started by visiting our neighbours the Bantry Craft Shop,

Sola Boutique and Forest and Flock – if you want to watch them check out our Instagram @organicobantry or #organicobuylocal. We’re hoping to fit a couple more in before

which uses a lot of organic and sustainable fabrics. If you’re looking for a cosy jumper, gorgeous Pyjamas or a glamorous cocktail dress, Marie has it all.



Christmas!

The Craft Shop up the road from Organico is one-of-a-kind. Started almost 50 years ago by Christine O’Kane, and now co-managed by her daughter Colleen, their shelves are full of carefully-selected Irish-made crafts, which they source directly from Irish makers. This involves so much time and energy in building and maintaining relationships, I really admire the dedication! Our father Alan used to buy most of his gifts there and over the years we were gifted hats and belts, mugs and butter dishes, candles and beautiful handmade wooden lamps. They also stock the largest selection of Birkenstocks in Ireland, as well as handmade shoes from an Irish cobbler.

Sola Boutique is run by Marie Cronin, just around the corner from us in Bantry. Marie opened her doors in 2010, having worked for Brown Thomas, and she has a real eye for wearable yet interesting fashion. We love their brand ‘Thought’,

Forest And Flock is an Irish Craft, Art and Design shop in the heart of Bantry, which hosts over 70 independent and unique Irish makers, in a spacious and family-friendly setting. Bernie and her team have created a warm and welcoming atmosphere, with a petite coffee bar (called Piccolo) which offers fabulous coffee and sweet treats. The space is large yet intimate and friendly, and oh so stylish.

We love the incredible selection of Irish-made eclectic jewellery, the fun and practical kids PJs, and the pottery bowls made by Sam Whyte from Bantry House.

There is so much research into the benefits for all of us in shopping locally – here’s a few points I thought worth mentioning:

If we don’t support local businesses they will fail and close – it’s that simple – and this leads to local unemployment

ment, barren main streets and town centres without character or community spaces.

Tourism is a key driver of the West Cork economy and vibrant towns and villages need independent businesses to differentiate them and make them attractive to visitors. Independent businesses stock unique products which are often sourced locally, rather than the same tired selection that you can get anywhere (in any country).

The money spent in locally-owned businesses circulates in the local economy, small businesses pay tax in Ireland (instead of avoiding taxes altogether like some online retailers do!) plus the staff are all our neighbours. And small businesses all spend money with other small businesses so there’s a very positive ripple effect and a lot of the money stays local (instead of going to foreign shareholders).

Small businesses are the mainstay of our social fabric. You can’t have a meaningful relationship with a self-checkout kiosk or a website. Local businesses help connect people and improve mental health, and this is more and more important in our increasingly digitised world.

And remember, like a puppy, your local business is not just for Christmas! Take care of them and they will return the favour.

December Notes

We have our In-Store Discount Day on Friday December 8, when we take 10 per cent off nearly everything.

Christmas Opening Times - Christmas Week we are open 9am - 6pm Monday - Saturday. We are closed on December 24, 25 and 26. Have a great Christmas!

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Offering employment support across West Cork

EmployAbility Service West Cork celebrates a noteworthy achievement, successfully securing employment for 81 clients by the end of October 2023. As one of the 23 Supported Employment Services in Ireland, funded by the Department of Social Protection, EmployAbility Service West Cork stands out for its innovative and distinctive approach to creating job opportunities for people.

Distinguished for their commitment, the job coaches at EmployAbility Service West Cork are dedicated to supporting clients in the West Cork region to not only secure but

also retain employment. The organisation’s success lies in the personalised attention given to each client. By taking the time to thoroughly understand their strengths, experiences, employment preferences, and personal goals, the job coaches embark on a unique job search journey for every individual.

Operating as a free and confidential programme funded by the DSP, EmployAbility’s job coaches engage in regular meetings with clients. These sessions aim to identify the most suitable roles, source compatible employers, and ultimately secure the ideal job for each client. Coordinator Micheal Hurley,

expressing gratitude on behalf of EmployAbility Service West Cork, emphasises the organisation’s ongoing commitment to supporting the community.

Micheal disclosed that, to date, 81 clients have successfully found employment through this programme up to the end of October 2023. The service offers one-to-one client support meetings, providing personalised assistance to guide individuals into meaningful employment. For those seeking employment support, Micheal encourages reaching out to EmployAbility Service West Cork, emphasising the value of connecting with a dedicated job

coach.

EmployAbility Service West Cork extends its reach across various offices, including locations in Kinsale, Bandon, Clonakilty, Bantry (covering Dunmanway and Castletownbere), and Skibbereen. Local job coach details can be found on their website, www.empwc.org, or individuals can directly contact Micheal Hurley, the Coordinator, at 086-8546559. As the organisation continues to make a positive impact, Micheal invites those in need of employment support to explore the services offered by EmployAbility Service West Cork.

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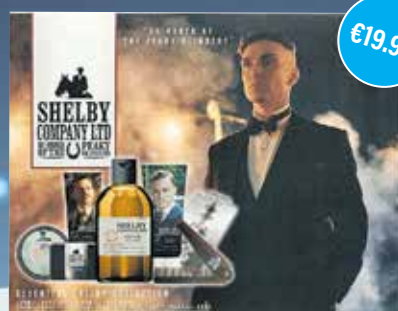
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Accessories maketh the outfit so this Part Two clutch bag in silver or black €69.95 or hot orange Marc Aurel hat €54 and scarf €85 will go down very well, **SuSu, Clonakilty**.



Ideal for knitters is this interchangeable circular needle storage case €25,50 from **Olga's Own, Ballinspittle** or olgascraftstudio.com



Chilly bottles €32 at **Thornhills, Skibbereen**



Aoife Du Burca Jewellery, Pendant €120 at West Cork Crafts, Skibbereen

Sea Magik Sensitive Skin Solutions Gift Set €19.95 at An Tobairin, Bandon

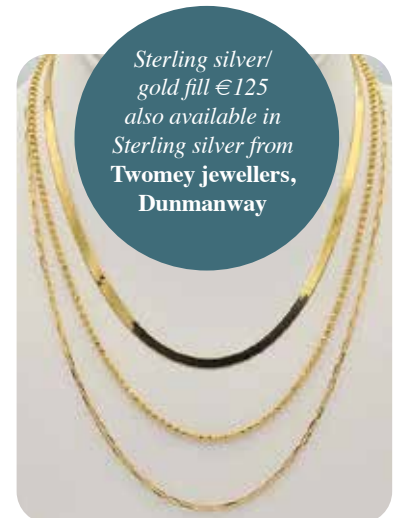


Jenny Glow gift sets €16.95 to €22.95 at **The Waterfront Pharmacy, Clonakilty**

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This Tipperary Crystal Birdy Mug is available in 6 native Irish birds designs, €12 at **Tom Sheehys, Clonakilty**



Elegant Knight & Day gold plated beaded bracelet with crystal & emerald charms €45 at **Spiller's Lane Gallery, Clonakilty**



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A5 hardback notebooks by Irish artist **Simone Walsh**, whose West Cork range is also available in jigsaws, totes & tea towels from local craft shops from €14.95 and online: www.simonewalsh.net



'A Day Out in Schull, West Cork' limited edition print by **Simone Walsh**. Available from Courtyard Crafts in Schull and online: www.simonewalsh.net. Other West Cork prints available! Price from €45

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Shimmer and shine



IMAGE

Louise O'Dwyer
Image Consultant
louise.anewu@gmail.com
Instagram: Louiseodwyer7

It's almost 'Silly Season'! I know that many of you feel like we have been catapulted at a phenomenal speed through 2023, rest assured that you are not imagining it, time 'is' moving faster. Scientists have recorded that the earth is spinning 1.59 seconds faster to be precise. This might not be considered much of a difference but our minds and bodies are so sensitive that it feels like a big difference. It can only remind us that we need to make the absolute most of every second in this wonderful world. Life is precious and delicate and exciting and full of fun but it can also be cold and lonely and bleak, so I'm asking you all to seek out the people around you who are struggling this year and bring some sparkle into their life.

Human contact and connection is absolutely free yet it is priceless...the shopping, the presents, the Christmas movies and the jam-packed refrigerators mean nothing, if there is no one to connect with, giggle with or even cry with. So before I launch into this season's 'must-haves', start your 'December To-Do' list with the names of the people who mean the most in your life and make plans with them; the 'stuff' that you unwrap will always have a value but the time you spend with someone is priceless. I'm very aware that I'm a complete chatterbox, my father-in-law said that I would talk the hind legs off of the Lamb of God but sometimes that chattering makes a connection when it is needed most.

Oversized faux fur coats and teddy bear jackets are the best thing since sliced pan or the Guinness Nitrosurge gadget! As

the temperatures drop, we all want to stay warm without sacrificing style and these coats are definitely statement outerwear. They are ultra versatile and look incredible over a pair of jeans yet will add glam to your favourite festive ensemble.

Velvet has always been a winter go-to for some but this year it reigns supreme with its luxurious and plush texture, adding opulence to anything that you wear with it. Find your signature velvet pieces, from tailored blazers to elegant gowns and even some gloriously cosy loungewear – there is something for every style taste. Velvet completely elevates your Christmas attire and brings with it a sophistication that leaves other materials trailing behind. I've spotted lots of velvet pieces in your local boutiques but don't fret if you are on a strict budget, as the high-street stores have some gorgeous affordable pieces too!

There is no better time of the year to bring lots of fun into how you dress. If there is a woman out there who does not have something sparkly or embellished with sequins, then shame on you! I do think that wearing something that sparkles or shines is the closest feeling to being handed sweets mid-week when you were a child... in the days that you were only allowed to buy sweets on a Friday. It brings with it a fizz of excitement, that bubbly feeling that we simply must relish. It doesn't matter what the occasion – sequins, metallics and sparkle can be worn to anything, anywhere, for the next month. Sequins in bed may not exactly comfortably work but a metallic negligee or sparkling PJ's will keep the Christmas experience on the go 24-hours-a-day! A silver metallic skirt looks dreamy with a cute sweater, one or two glitzy tops will festive up a pair of jeans and a blazer and a sequined dress can be worn several times, in a variety of ways, by changing your footwear (for day or evening look) or varying a sweater or jacket over it.

While not every one of us wants to dazzle in the spotlight, for those who do, have a look at the hypnotic range of embellished jumpsuits – they are to die for.

While various shades of red and green are the traditional colours of Christmas, an all-winter-white look is absolutely stunning. It exudes sophistication and elegance. There is nothing more eye-catching that allows an abundance of repeat

wearability than this dreamy creamy look. You can accessorise with whatever colour you like for an extra pop of colour. I don't think that I have ever seen so many beautiful cream or winter white sweaters than in the shops this season. I do suggest that you try them on and find your signature look, whether it is an oversized Aran jumper or a pretty little fitted one that hugs your body ever-so-gently. You can wear them with anything – jeans, over a dress or a skirt or leggings, and the solid colour means that you can wear it time and time again.

One of the all-time favourites for the Holidays is Christmas plaid; while some years it can take a back seat in the style world, this year designers feel that your Christmas wardrobe would not be complete without classic plaid prints. You can choose from plaid tailored pants, dresses, flannel shirts for a more casual look, or a cute plaid scarf that will keep you snug and stylish.

Stilettoes are back and they are flying out the door of every shoe shop, just in time to be a little broken-in for all of the Christmas parties that are just around the

corner. Will you dare to wear a pair? Classic ankle boots and sneakers are outselling everything else; we do love our comfort so it makes perfect sense. Trendy loafers are gaining momentum also, shoppers either love them or hate them but one thing is for sure, they are ultra comfortable and add a certain elegance to any look, especially with a pair of wide leg trousers. Speaking of which, I adore wide leg trousers, they are the perfect opposite to years of skinny jeans. Don't be afraid to break out and seek out a colour other than black; red will look sensational this time of the year, grey works with everything, a caramel shade adds warmth and winter white or cream is sure to brighten up even the darkest of days.

No matter what clothes you wear – recycled from last year or the year before or a treat to yourself this year, the best way to elevate your look is to accessorise, accessorise, accessorise. Kate Middleton has played a pivotal part in reinventing the statement earring and I am completely hooked. They are a glorious addition for a festive lunch, Christmas party or a boozy night out. The bigger the sparkling necklace the better, but choose a subtle small sparkly earring to complement it. If sparkly jewellery doesn't

float your boat then what about a bag with some pzazz? Or what about a glitzy headband? Treat yourself to something beautiful, from you, to you!

Wherever or whenever this finds you, I hope that you have a wonderful Christmas. Take the time to shop locally, no matter how little you spend, YOUR PURCHASE MAKES A DIFFERENCE, it can help to keep the doors open in a business that is not part of a chain of shops. These precious bespoke shops add character and are part of what makes West Cork unique.

2023 has been a strange one with highs and lows, lots of sunshine and lots of rain, many exciting hellos and oh-so-many sad goodbyes. Thank you for your many lovely words and giggles about my articles, I'm so grateful for your appreciation. Now go out and have fun many times over the holidays and if you fall flat on your ass and roll around the floor laughing, I hope that your very best friend falls down right next to you and you talk nonsense for hours on end.

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Bandon Clothes Swap presents a Christmas gift swap on Sunday December 3, from 11am to 1pm in Bandon Town Hall (entrance on street side near footbridge). Please bring your clean, good condition, unwanted gifts and swap them for 'new' gifts that someone you know might enjoy.

You can also pick up some tips on sustainable ways to gift wrap with recycled or natural materials! Organisers are accepting donations to cover the costs of running the swap and all extra proceeds will go to a very worthy cause, The Bandon Food Bank. See Facebook: Bandon clothes swap.

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Handmade in West Cork, these flaxseed and lavender pillows, with washable covers, are made with certified organic cotton canvas. Ideal for neck pain or tummy ache, just heat the pillow in the microwave for a minute or two and enjoy its soothing effect instantly. €32. Available at www.seasidesquirrel.ie

This hat, scarf and gloves gift box set is €39.95 at **CiCi, Clonakilty**



Naturally at the Wrens Nest – **Forest & Flock, Bantry** exclusive soap with Bantry Bay seaweed, eucalyptus & vetiver. Look out for also the refreshing winter sensation of the North Pole Soap €7.50.



Winter's Night silk twill scarf from an abstract painting by artist, Charlie de Lacey, €200 from de Lacey Rose Garden Gallery, Baltimore. www.delaceyireland.com



Solid 18ct yellow gold starfish earrings set with twinkling round brilliant cut diamonds €1850. Foxtail solid 9k yellow gold link bracelet – a contemporary item made using antique design – €2500. Both from **Linda's of Kinsale**.

Teacher's gift maybe? Felted Christmas Pudding Ornament by Tamzen Lundy €13 at **The Loft, Clonakilty**



Clarins gift sets at **Coen's Bantry** include the Iconic Double Serum Collection €112.80 and the Self-care essentials Tonic hydrating Collection €55.20

Faux-fur lined slippers with a colourful knit pattern for lazy days at home. €35 from **Gooseberry, Clonakilty**



Pebbles, Schull stocks these Irish made fine wool wristwarmers €40 in a huge variety of designs and the Henriette Steffensen scarf €67, made using no-waste sustainable practices, is also in a variety of colours.



This beautifully soft to the touch scarf €37.50 and bag €29.95 are from a selection of accessories at **Options, Clonakilty**



Hand made paper notebook €36.95, **The Copper Merchant, Ballydehob**



This LUNA haircare set includes a thirst-quenching nourishing shampoo, conditioner and detox shampoo €29 **Drinagh Pharmacies**



This striking Italian made suede bag is €55 at **Violette, Skibbereen**



This Sculpted By Aimee Adoring Eye Collection gift set is worth €40 but only €28 in **Drinagh Pharmacies**



Lavender candle, handmade on Cape Clear with island grown lavender. €18 at **The Green Dot, Clonakilty**

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



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ALONE calls for people to ‘Share your Warmth’

ALONE, the charity that helps older people to age at home, is asking the public to share their warmth this Christmas: the warmth of friendship and time, as well as financial support, so that the organisation can help older people struggling with the increasing cost of living and the growing levels of loneliness across Ireland.

The charity launched its Christmas campaign ‘Share Your Warmth’ with Dr. Maureen Gaffney, author and psychologist; Joan Finglas, an older person with ALONE; and volunteer Laura Browne.

The aim of the campaign is to ask The charity has continued to see a sharp increase in demand for its services as the number of older people experiencing hardship continues to rise. One in five over 65’s are living in poverty today, unseen behind a closed door mostly.

Since the start of 2023 ALONE has provided 30,000 individual supports to older people, in every town and city in Ireland, a huge increase on last year.

Dr. Maureen Gaffney launched the organisation’s Christmas campaign to encourage members of the public to take a few minutes out of their day to interact with their older neighbours and relatives who may be experiencing feelings of loneliness as the festive season approaches.

She commented, “Loneliness is not just a problem for the individual – it has wider social implications because loneliness is contagious. Too many clusters of lonely people and the contagion ripples out to the wider society. So reach out today to somebody in your wider family, social circle or neighbourhood whom that you suspect might be lonely. On the run-up to Christmas, before you get too

busy, give them a call just for a chat – if you find that they are actually fine, nothing lost. It’s an act of connection and every connection counts.”

She continued, “But also reach out to ALONE – an organisation whose staff and volunteers work quietly and steadfastly, not just at Christmas but throughout the year, to support and befriend those who need them. ALONE whose message is ‘You are not alone’. Make a donation, however small, or better still consider becoming a volunteer in 2024. That is one gift that will keep on giving, strengthening that web of friendship and belonging that is at the very core of what it means to be a good society.”

ALONE CEO Seán Moynihan commented, “We are looking for people to respond to our call to action to help us help older people who need our services. This can be done

by volunteering your time, spreading the word, or making a donation. We do not want anyone to be alone or struggling this Christmas. You can be the difference and help to ‘Share

your Warmth’.”


If you or someone you know needs support this Winter, please call the National Support and Referral Line on 0818 222 024 from 8am – 8pm, seven

days a week. ALONE operates 365 days a year so we will be there to take your call when you need us most.



Pictured in Bewleys cafe in Dublin was Dr.Maureen Gaffney joining Joan Finglas from Swords and ALONE CEO Sean Moynihan launching ALONE’S campaign


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Photographic prints, with many West Cork scenes, are just €55 including delivery from barryoconnellphotography.com



Designed by Kate Fitzgerald and made by Badly Made Books, these planners and blank notebooks make a lovely gift, especially for someone living away from home €23 at **The Loft, Clonakilty**



Bulldog Triple Dial Tide Clock with Time, Tide and Moon Phase. €55 from **Jellyfish Surf Shop, Clonakilty**



Hear the call of the sea with these boats by Rossbrin Creative from €15 - €65 at **West Cork Crafts, Skibbereen**



A stylish man needs a stylish dog – Northern Ireland's Don't forget the Dog has a range of accessories such as this tweed dickie bow collar €11 at **Grey Heron, Bandon**



Badly Made Books Diary, week a page and journal €24. Coppiceworks handturned pen from Parker style to roller ball €38- €45, all from **Forest & Flock, Bantry**



Expandable tongs, perfect for camping, €13.50 from **The Copper Merchant, Ballydehob**



Capturing West Cork in an unusual way, this A5 print of seaweed foraged at Garretstown beach is printed on sustainable acid free Hahnemühle hemp paper. €18 from a beautiful range of pressings and prints at www.farraigwestcork.bigcartel.com



David Beckham Classic set €21 at **Crowley's Pharmacies in Clonakilty**



Urtekram gift sets such as an aloe vera shampoo and hand cream €18.90 at **An Tobairin, Bandon**



Ziaja gifts sets from €9.99 to €22.99 at **The Waterfront Pharmacy, Clonakilty**



Olanmhor Irish hand-knitted, unwoven wool hot bottle covers (including bottle) €52 at **Urru, Bandon**



Bring back some childhood memories from a huge selection of fun socks by Irish Socksciety €9 at **Grey Heron, Bandon...**



...or you can't go wrong with ski scenes on a sock... in a cracker! €11 from **Gooseberry, Clonakilty**



BOSS Bottled gift set is €105 in **Drinagh Pharmacies**



Clarins Men Energising Expert Skincare €46 from **Coen's Pharmacy, Bantry**

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

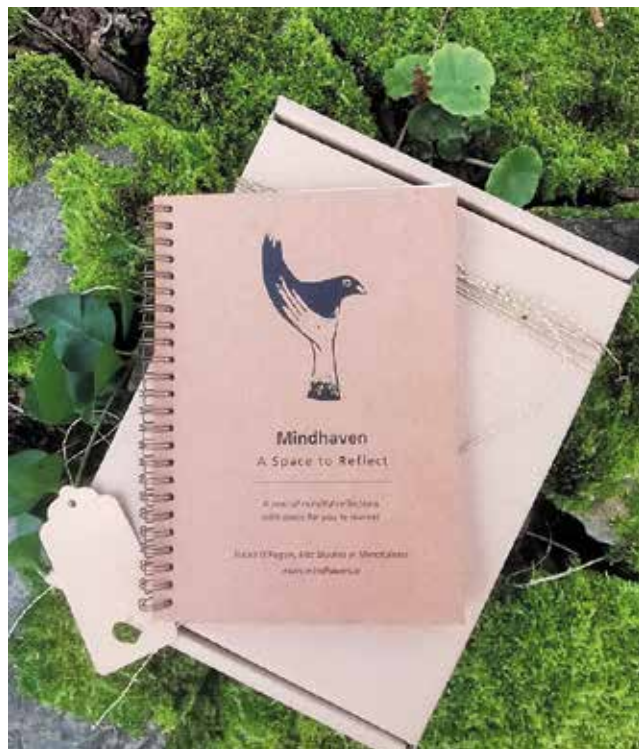
‘Mindhaven: A Space to Reflect’ – inspired by people and places in West Cork



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.



There are times of year possibly more conducive to reflection than others, like these Winter months and mindful reflection can help us to notice precious moments or times in our lives when things seem to be in sync, knitting together, merging, and flowing. November is traditionally a month for remembering loved ones who have passed on, which might prompt us to reflect on all that gets passed down through generations, whether gifts, wounds, hurts, or strengths. Perhaps it was remembering in November or a nudge from my ancestors that urged me to do something that has been percolating for a long time, the creation of a mindfulness resource.

Before I came to learn the skills of compassion-based mindfulness I would say that I spent a lot of my life suffering from what is known as Imposter Syndrome. Having a sense that I was somehow undeserving or not up to the mark and that someone at any moment would see through me. If I'm honest, I still have unexpected moments of feeling 'not good enough', but I am learning to meet such moments, when they arise, with self-compassion. Mindfulness has opened a new way of life for me and given me great courage. So, as I continue to emerge slowly from a prolonged period of grief, loss and change as well as navigating some new health challenges, I feel 'good enough' to take a leap forward in life. I

read somewhere recently that if you are feeling fear plus excitement about a new venture that you're probably on the right track, so here's hoping!

In many ways I have been "putting myself out there" for years by writing these monthly pieces for West Cork People, but this is a slightly new departure for me and there are certainly feelings of fear and excitement. I have created a book/journal called 'Mindhaven: A Space to Reflect' which contains a selection of twelve mindful reflections chosen from almost five years of monthly mindfulness columns written for West Cork People. There is a reflection relevant to each month of the year, followed by space for you to journal and, because there are no dates, you can begin at any time of the year. My books are being handmade on Sherkin Island and are available for sale by ordering directly with me or at different locations including the Courtyard Collective, CECAS at Myross Wood House, Leap and Baltimore Craft Fair. They are priced at €22 each and gift boxed for €28, perfect for posting.

And if, like me, you enjoy being read to, 'Mindhaven: A Space to Reflect' has 12 guided audio reflections, recorded to accompany each written piece. These may be listened to in a relaxed way and include the reading of excerpts from each month with some gentle guided

meditation, poetry and some reflective questions to consider. These audios were recorded on Cape Clear Island and are available to purchase on my website www.mindhaven.ie. I take great pride in the fact that these resources are made locally, inspired by people and places in lovely West Cork. My motivation for compiling this book has come from all the lovely West Cork People readers who have given me such positive feedback over the years. Special thanks to each one of you and of course to everyone at the West Cork People for offering compassion-based mindfulness this monthly platform.

Finally, the message at the centre of it all, Mindhaven conjures the idea of the mind being a safe place and I truly believe that the regular practice of compassion-based mindfulness can support us to find this refuge inside ourselves, strengthen our minds and create our own safe haven within. Haven literally means 'a place of safety or refuge', and for me the word has special meaning being a native of beautiful Castlehaven, where many reflections were written over the years. The name deliberately gives a nod of respect to my roots and influences, and I want to place this poem here, 'I Am My Ancestors' Dream' by Nikita Gill, that it might inspire you to reflect on or share the skills, qualities and talents that you have been gifted with or inherited.

"Your ancestors did not survive everything that nearly ended them for you to shrink yourself to make someone else comfortable."

This sacrifice is your warcry, be loud, be everything and make them proud".

Weekly drop-in compassion-based mindfulness practice sessions continue at CECAS, Myross Wood Leap on Tuesday mornings through-out December (5, 12 and 19) from 10am – 11am. €10. All are welcome to join this wonderful community of practice.

For more information, phone: 087 2700572 or email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com
FB: [susanoreganmindfulness](https://www.facebook.com/susanoreganmindfulness)
www.mindhaven.ie

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



Gifting an experience shows how much you know and care about someone and can be an opportunity for them to tackle something on their bucket list, learn a new skill or just relax and treat themselves. **These ideas will have them trying something new and enjoying all that West Cork has to offer.**



A voucher for the **Clonakilty Park Hotel**, located at the heart of Clonakilty, can be used against a stay in the hotel, food and beverage in the hotel bar and restaurant, the Park Cinema, Park Leisure Club and Park Adventure Centre. Where else would you find such value for money when it comes to combining comfort with fun. www.clonakiltyparkhotel.ie or call 023 8836400



From relaxing overnight stays, pampering spa experiences, and delicious dining options, you're sure to find something for everyone on your list this Christmas with an **Eccles Hotel & Spa** gift voucher. To explore the full range of gift vouchers available, visit eccleshotel.com or call 027 63003.

Set in 30 acres of West Cork hills, the award-winning **Camus Farm's Field Kitchen** restaurant in Ardfield, near Clonakilty, offers an authentic field-to-table experience with much of the produce grown or reared on its own organic farm. Gift this unforgettable food experience to the foodie in your life this Christmas. www.fieldkitchen.ie



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Tucked into one of the most picturesque corners of the Wild Atlantic Way, the multi-award winning **Kenmare Bay Hotel & Resort** is the ideal retreat for discovering the gems of the Ring of Kerry and the Beara Peninsula. Unwind after a busy day exploring at the hotel's state-of-the-art health club equipped with pool, gym, jacuzzi and sauna. www.kenmarebayhotel.com.



Who wouldn't be thrilled by a voucher for one of Ireland's most exclusive and tranquil retreats? **Inchydoney Island Lodge & Spa** combines a stunning location, contemporary accommodation, unique seawater therapies and sumptuous dining to create a most special getaway. Whether it's an overnight stay, afternoon tea for two, dinner in the Gulfstream restaurant or a day at the spa, this is a gift for making memories. For the full list of vouchers go to www.inchydoneyisland.com or Phone 023 88 33143



Solace Holistic Centre in Clonakilty specialises in massage therapy and reflexology...ideal for someone who needs to relax. Call or text 087 9510554 / 023 8859701



A sound bath by **Claire Barton** in her Long Strand sound cabin soothes the nervous system, alleviates stress and nourishes mind, body and spirit. Purchase gift voucher at clairemariebarton.com

Union Hall's **The Dock Wall** is famous for its warm West Cork welcome in a comfortable informal setting, where the mouthwatering menu and confident cooking has built up a loyal following. Enjoy a pre-dinner drink in the cosy front bar or settle in there after your meal...it's an easy place to lose track of time in. For vouchers call 087 330 7277 or email thedockwall@gmail.com.

The Lake Hotel Killarney offers a traditional and warm Irish welcome in a truly magnificent setting. This four-star property is nestled on the shore of the Lough Lein, Killarney's lower lake and enjoys the most magnificent setting with the truly unique backdrop of the mountains, islands, woodlands and the 12th century McCarthy Mór castle ruins. Gift vouchers are available through the website. www.lakehotelkillarney.ie



This year, give a gift that will create memories to last a lifetime at **The Kinsale Hotel & Spa**. Set in 90 acres of mature parkland with panoramic views of Oysterhaven Bay, it offers the perfect location for celebrating all that is great in life. Choose between a relaxing spa experience, energetic gym memberships, lunch, dinner or afternoon tea in The Rockpool Dining Room or simply an overnight stay in one of the deluxe bedrooms. All of the hotel's vouchers can be purchased online and downloaded instantly to be presented as the perfect gift. www.kinsalehotellandspa.ie



Do they have an artistic streak? The only studio school of its kind in West Cork, **Clonakilty School of Painting** offers Taster Class Vouchers for just €30. Artist James Waller offers a range of studio-based courses for children and adults in Classical painting, drawing and printmaking. No previous experience required! paintingschool.jameswaller.org

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Cork company takes the stress out of decorating for Christmas

Love Christmas but hate the thought of decorating your home? If you believe Christmas decorators are for celebrities only, one Cork-based interior designer is out to prove you wrong. Mairéad Collier, owner and founder of Mairéad Collier Interiors, is offering a seasonal Christmas decorating service for the residential market.

Mairéad feels that there's a genuine need for this service. "There's a huge pressure built up around Christmas to have everything perfect," she says "but for a lot of people it's unrealistic. This can be for a variety



of reasons. Whilst it's true that many of my clients like the convenience and the designer touch, there are others who

avail of the service because of work or travel commitments, it's their first Christmas following a bereavement or a divorce, they have aging parents whose house needs decorating too, or they are recovering from major surgery."

Each client can tailor the service to their needs by choosing from a menu of services, with an hourly rate of €65. Most popular is obviously decorating the Christmas tree and mantelpiece, however Mairéad also offers the option of dressing your table, console or coffee table or a full room. She will even write and post your Christmas cards!

Working with the client's own decorations, Mairéad will give them her designer's touch and create that 'Wow' factor we all talk about but can't replicate! Obviously there is a time limit to the service given its seasonal nature so it's important to book an appointment as early as possible, as slots are limited and book up fast.

For further information or to book the service please contact Mairéad Collier Interiors by email info@maireadcollierinteriors.com or by phone 086 8986735.

Celebrating Christmas and community



A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

I have never been one to get into Christmas too early. I try to resist all jingle bells, decorations, or carols until after my birthday in mid-December. Besides, in our family we have to celebrate Thanksgiving before we even entertain the thought of tinsel. This year's Thanksgiving was special as we had three daughters home (the eldest is out in Australia). When you have adult children, having all of them home for any of the holidays is no longer a given. It was lovely. A true family gathering with old friends and new. We were ten for dinner, eleven for dessert. I baked two pies, cornbread, and a chocolate roll. Turkey and all the many trimmings were a group effort, and everyone ate too much, as is traditional.

Back in the day there was a nice pause between Thanksgiving and my cue to start feeling jolly. Things didn't really kick off until December 8 which, as everybody knows, is both the feast of the Immaculate Conception and 10 per cent off day. December 8 was the start of

proper Christmas. That was reasonable. After all, we must keep the jolliness going until January 6. One month of Christmas is plenty. I don't need six weeks of it. Alas, these days, by the end of November it is impossible to avoid the festive season. Thanksgiving was barely over before Christmas took centre stage. In fact, I found myself eating a plate of delicious Thanksgiving leftovers while watching the Toy Show. Then we went into town to see the lights being switched on. The Christmas season is officially open. So be it. I'm ready to get into it.

I love Christmas in West Cork. The sense of community is strong all year round, but it gets heightened at Christmas. We hear a lot about community from politicians and the media, but you can only really understand what it means by living it. Here in West Cork, we are blessed with a sense of community that feels so natural, that I sometimes forget how exceptional it is until I'm reminded of it by visitors mentioning how friendly and kind people have been to them. In a world that sometimes feels quite scary, our community feels like a safe and gentle place.

There were so many times this year that we all came together. My highlights this year have been the wonderful street carnival, the agricultural show, a gathering to celebrate Sinead O'Connor,

the guitar festival, and Samhain. But there are also all those other moments of community: the markets, the sports clubs, and of course the music sessions. These and the hundreds of small exchanges – on the street, in a pub, at the school gate – are the threads that tie us to each other and which we weave into a community.

As the winter solstice approaches and we enter the darkest days of the year, coming together is much more precious. Perhaps that is why community is so special at this time of year. We need good company to keep us going through the mid-winter whether it's sitting around a fire with family and friends, or chatting with a stranger in a pub. We light candles and string up shiny tinsel to counter the darkness outside, and we get together to counter the darkness inside. There is something magical about being together when it's cold and dark outside. I think that this year we need that magic more than ever.

So, get the tinsel out. Light the candles. String up the lights. Put the Elf on the shelf and decorate the tree. But most of all, let's do what we do best: reach out to one another, and celebrate together. Welcome the new people and weave them into our community. The world seems full of dreadful news now, some of it close to home.

That spreads its own type of darkness.



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Anam Cara planning Camino Walk in 2024

In May of this year, a wonderful group of supporters of Anam Cara walked part of the famous Camino de Santiago. Each person on the trip could relate to the overwhelming sense of loss, whether they had lost a child themselves or were supporting someone whose child had died. Anam Cara is delighted to announce that the 2024 walk is in planning and the date is confirmed for next April.

Speaking about her experience taking part, one bereaved Mum said "I came across an advertisement for the Anam Cara Camino walk a few months after my son's death and completed one month before his first anniversary. Anam Cara has been so good for my mental wellbeing, and I had heard that people find great peace walking the Camino, so decided to find out more. With being able to focus on very little, they made the whole experience very easy, from setting up our 'just giving pages' and the detailed preparation information, to the support along the way. I had the absolute pleasure of walking with other bereaved parents who understood what the experience meant to me. By sharing our stories along the way, I felt that each of us brought our children along with us on the journey. This was so much more than just a fundraiser and will be back on another Camino with Anam Cara soon!"

On April 28, 2024, the group will depart Dublin to take on the final section of the Portuguese Coastal Camino, where they will be walking from Oia to Santiago. The total distance is approx. 110km over the week. If you would like some more information, please contact Jamie on j.conway@anamcara.ie or 01 4045378. All funds raised will ensure Anam Cara continue their support services for bereaved parents, nationwide.

The Consumer Rights Act 2022 introduced new rights when you buy in a shop. They only apply if you bought something in a shop on or after November 29, 2022.

You have slightly different rights if you bought on or before 28 November 2022 or bought something online

Before you buy, you have a legal right to the following information:

- The seller's business name, address and phone number
- Product details (if not already clear)
- Total price, or how it will be calculated
- Length of the contract
- Any extra charges, for example, delivery or postal charge
- Your right to cancel, where it applies

The information must be clear, understandable and given to you before you buy. Sellers must not make false claims that would influence your buying decisions. A seller who makes a false or misleading claim about a product is committing an offence and can be prosecuted.

What you can expect from your product

When you buy a product, you make a contract with the seller. The seller must always provide products in line with the contract. Under consumer law all products you buy must meet certain conditions. The product must:

- Be fit for any purpose you brought to the seller's attention
- Be fit for all purposes which it is normally used for
- Have the qualities and features of similar type products
- Fit the description, type, quantity and quality agreed in the sales contract
- Be durable and of expected quality for normal use
- Meet the quality of any sample or model you were shown

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Your rights when you buy in a shop



- Match any advertisement or labelling
- Have the necessary functionality, compatibility, interoperability and other agreed features
- Come with all accessories mentioned in the sales contract and with the correct instructions
- Have the spare parts covered in the contract
- Be installed correctly by the seller (if applicable)
- Have information on digital updates that support the product, if applicable. You can get updates once or continuously

You have the same rights when you buy at full price, reduced price (for example, in a sale) or buy a second-hand good (if bought from a business).

What happens if things go wrong?

Under current consumer law you are entitled to certain remedies when something you buy does not meet the conditions outlined earlier. A remedy can be a:

- Repair
- Replacement
- Refund
- Price reduction
- Short term right to cancel

What are my rights if I change my mind and want to return something I don't want?

You do not have an automatic right to a refund when returning something you bought in a shop because you have changed your mind. If there is nothing wrong with the item (for example, there is no fault) you have no legal right to return the goods. Whether or not you can get your money back depends on the seller's returns policy.

However, many sellers voluntarily allow customers to return or replace goods during a certain time period. The seller may offer a refund, exchange or credit note as a goodwill gesture. Check what the seller's returns policy is before you buy.

If the seller accepts returns, you usually must:

- Make sure the items are in good condition
- Keep the original labels and tags attached
- Have proof of purchase (for example, a receipt)

What are the steps to make a consumer complaint?

You have rights if the seller does not meet their obligations to you. If things go wrong you should bring the product back to the seller with original packaging (if possible) and proof of purchase such as receipt, bank or credit card statement, or invoice. You should explain what the problem is and how you want it corrected. If needed, follow up with a written formal complaint

You should always approach the seller first, to give them the chance to put things right. Always keep notes of what happened, including dates and times of conversations, the name of the person you spoke to, and what was agreed. Keep previous correspondence (for example, email, web chat, and online contact form) safe as you may need this if you want to take your complaint further. Try to sort the problem with the seller as quickly as possible. A delay could affect the outcome you get (for example you might only be entitled to a repair instead of a refund)

If the issue is still not resolved, you should put your

complaint in writing (letter or email) stating all the facts of the case so far. You should include copies of any relevant documents that support your complaint.

Keep a copy of the complaint letter or email as you will need this if you decide to take your complaint further. It is a good idea to send the letter by registered post or attach a read receipt to your email. This means you have proof that you sent the complaint and it was received by the seller.

What is the small claims procedure?

The small claims procedure (also known as the Small Claims Court) is a service which provides an inexpensive way for consumers and businesses to resolve disputes without employing a solicitor.

The service is provided by the local District Court offices. To use the service, the claim cannot exceed €2,000.

If you need further information about this topic or you would like information on other issues, you can drop in to the local Citizens Information Service in Bantry or Macroom. You can also telephone them on 0818 07 8390. They will be happy to assist you and if necessary arrange an appointment for you.

WEST CORK HELPLINE 0818 07 8390

The Bantry offices are staffed from 10am -5pm from Monday to Thursday and on Friday from 10am-4pm. Macroom office is open Mondays and Tuesdays, 10am-1pm and 2pm-4.30pm. Alternatively you can email on bantry@citinfo.ie or log on to www.citizensinformation.ie

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Fertility series: Pre-birth preparations



Amanda Roe

Acupuncture and
Clinical Hypnotherapist

In preparation for childbirth, a woman's doctor will usually recommend weekly visits from about 36 or 37 weeks, to check the babies heartbeat and position, and also to keep an eye on the mother's health, as certain conditions like pregnancy-induced hypertension can lead to problems.

During these final few weeks mum will hopefully be on maternity leave from work and is usually preparing the home, finalising her birthing plan and attending antenatal classes.

Women who contact me after their due date are often anxious that the hospital will have to induce labour and they worry that things will accelerate faster than the body can manage naturally.

Worry and anxiety are emo-

tions that stress the body and activate the sympathetic fight or flight response. This is counter-productive, as the body needs to feel calm and relaxed, so that the cervix will feel safe to open and the woman's endorphins have time to build naturally to manage contractions.

Chinese medicine has been used for thousands of years to support women through pregnancy helping with fertility issues, treating pregnancy-related conditions like nausea, heartburn, haemorrhoids, insomnia and pregnancy-induced high blood pressure. Then towards the later stages of pregnancy, acupuncture is used to turn a breech baby, calm the mind, prepare the woman's body for childbirth, induce labour, manage pain and even afterwards for postnatal depression, mastitis and insufficient lactation.

When used to induce labour, acupuncture is best used as a series of pre-birth treatments, ideally once a week from week 36 until delivery.

These treatments are designed to:

- Promote optimal positioning of the baby for birth
- Tonify Qi and support energy levels
- Nourish blood
- Relax and soften the ligaments

- Aid cervical dilation
- Descend the baby and
- Harmonise emotions

Women report that the baby becomes more active and sessions help them to manage emotions like frustration, anxiety and fear.

Research shows that pre-birth acupuncture sessions shorten the time that women are in labour, and there is also an opportunity during these sessions to learn how acupressure can be facilitated by the birthing partner during labour for pain relief.

During pregnancy women often feel an internal need to be a super pregnant mother and to continue working and doing everything she did before becoming pregnant. But it is important to remember that in order to be in the best possible energetic place for childbirth your number one priority should be in taking care of yourself and maintaining good energy levels for labour.

It will help to eat well and stay physically active throughout your pregnancy with activities like walking, swimming, tai chi or yoga. Maintain a good sleep routine and, to keep your emotions balanced, you may even need to avoid disturbing films, sad books and negative

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www.roehealth.ie Email: amanda@roehealth.ie

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news and instead opt for comedies to watch and read positive and inspiring books.

Please remember that during the later stages of pregnancy it is most important to prioritise time every day to rest with your feet up, or to sleep or nap during the day, so you are well rested with good energy levels in preparation for the birth.

Amanda Roe is a Clinical Hypnotherapist 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 consultation visit www.roehealth.ie or call/text Amanda on 087 633 1898.

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Teresa O'Neill and
Therese Hayes

Clonakilty's Pink Ribbon Walk a huge success

The organisers of Clonakilty's Pink Ribbon Walk would like to thank anyone who helped in anyway to make the 2023 annual walk one of the most successful walks to date. If you walked, ran, sponsored food or drinks, or volunteered on the day, a huge thank you to one and all.

The funds collected this year amounted to €9416.81 which is an incredible achievement. As well as raising funds for the Irish Cancer Society's Action Breast Cancer Programme, which provides breast cancer information and support services to thousands of women and men across Ireland each year, it was, as always, a hugely social occasion.

A special thank you to Teresa and Mike O'Neill, their family and staff of Fernhill House Hotel who make it all happen.

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ASTROLOGY

Kate Arbon

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

December Sun Signs

After November, a month of stressful volatility and frustrating tensions, December will have a more gentle feel. It is certainly a busy month with lots of planet activity but this is mostly between more co-operative planets than in previous weeks. We can still expect shifts and changes to challenge us but these are largely a continuation of what has already been set in motion. The current retrograde season for all planets will end by mid-January with both Neptune and Jupiter moving forwards once more before 2024 begins. This allows the closing month of 2023 to be a time of reflection and reconsideration, as we slow down to tie up loose ends and find time to relax and set the outer world aside for a while. The planet action of December puts the focus back on our personal lives and what matters to us as individuals and family groups. This month it's time to sort out what is important closer to home.

Mercury takes a prime position for most of the month, as it moves into Capricorn on December 1.

It also makes a positive connection with Saturn on December 2 and again on December 21. This gives some weight to our words and turns our minds to practical matters. We

can be very productive this month, as projects, ideas and plans for the longer term are given extra energy. It can be a time of seriousness and focus, as Capricorn prefers to be mature or responsible and is cautious about new or untried options. Traditional values are favoured as we start the month. Mercury makes connections to all the personal planets this month: Venus, Mars Jupiter and Saturn, prompting us to make new connections in all areas of our life. Our romantic life, business and social all get to be enhanced. Our thinking and ideas can be developed in new directions and we may just start to 'join the dots' in revealing ways.

The final Mercury retrograde of 2023 gets underway on December 13 through to January 2. Let's look back over our plans and paperwork before the new year. The retrograde can slow things down and also mean we have to redo or rework transactions, ideas or proposals. Be prepared for plans to change over the holiday period. Mercury will slip back into Sagittarius on December 23 and this sign is notorious for over-subscribing, expecting too much or overdoing things. Keep the arrangements simple, be flexible with alternative options and keep a sense of humour

to avoid getting stressed. Use this time wisely for taking time out to reflect and reconsider what you want in life and how you might achieve this when the energy supports 'fast-forward' in the New Year.

Mercury in Capricorn will also set the scene for the coming months, as it gives its energy to the Solstice on December 22 when it joins with the Sun at this auspicious time. This theme will play out until the Equinox in mid-March. We can expect to have a more practical focus. This is the time to work on longer-term ideas and plans. It is a good time to consider how you use your power and energy and how to put this into being resourceful. On a global or mundane level, there may be some restrictions or limitations put on communication. This could be through censoring or some actual block on movement or trade around the world. Mercury is the planet of commerce and exchange in business and finances as well as ideas and thoughts.

A big shift can happen now as Neptune turns from its retrograde on December 6 after almost six months. Look to where Pisces is in your birth chart to see where this energy will be released for you personally. It may be subtle but it can be powerful. This

planet represents the non-physical aspects of our experience. It can create confusion and illusion, as it breaks the rules of our material world. Things are rarely what they seem with Neptune in the mix. For several months the focus has been on personal reactions and responses. Hopes and wishes have been reviewed whilst our spiritual or intuitive connection has been elusive or questionable at times. Now we can begin again to sort out the reality from the fantasy. Neptune allows us to imagine and create. We can use our creative ability to manifest the reality we prefer but we have to imagine it first. This planet helps us to tune in to a world where our physical limitations do not exist. We can use this 'dream' world as a template or inspiration for daily living. Neptune travels through a sign approximately every 13 years and has been in Pisces, the most dreamy, creative and otherworldly sign, since 2011. We can use these final months to complete our spiritual awakening before it moves on to the individualistic sign Aries in 2025. The last decade has shown us the shadow side of Neptune. The delusion and the mirage. Political deception and media distraction have worked like

a mass hypnosis. It's time to become alert to our sleepy state and activate the potential of our own mind. As Neptune gains ground once more in the coming months we can utilise the power of mass consensus in a positive way. This is achieved by keeping an unwavering focus on love and compassion as a driving force. We will get more opportunities to practise this in the coming year.

The month, and the year, end with a big burst of positive energy when Jupiter leaves its retrograde in Taurus on December 31. This is a sign that loves the good things in life and Jupiter does this to the extreme. Enjoy the sensual pleasures, the comforts and the delights of home and family. This combination puts the focus on simple and natural things. This is when Jupiter can really express its bountiful energy. An appreciation of the simple things will carry you forward into 2024 with optimism and joy. The cycles of life are relentless, formidable and yet ultimately, dependable.

December has a New Moon in 21 degrees Sagittarius on the 12th at 11.32pm and a Full Moon in 5 degrees Cancer on the 27th at 00.33 am



Aries: Travel, study or spiritual matters have been taking your attention. Not content with anything 'hum-drum', you're likely to want the freedom to explore new ground or invite new experiences into your life. This is a great time to think big and make the most of the opportunities that come your way. An overseas contact may get in touch or new information provides the chance to break out from any restricting routines to try something different. Be prepared to open your mind to new ideas and lifestyles. Life could get hectic around Full Moon so pace yourself whilst you still have some time available.



Taurus: The next three weeks might be a trying period; you may feel anxious and worried about money, health or concern for other people. It will pass. You are simply focused on the negative side of a cycle at the expense of the positive. It's a great time to acknowledge what doesn't work well in your life and prepare for the next phase. After the Full Moon on December 27, you begin to acknowledge what you have in terms of real assets and how you can make the best of them. Finances, accounts and money matters can improve when they get your full attention.



Gemini: Personal and professional partnerships will need your attention for the next few weeks. Finding a win-win situation for everyone has to be your goal. Interesting and stimulating people may come into your life now and you'll want to find more time for intimate encounters or shared experiences. Your personal style and self-expression become the issue later in December. You won't want to be dictated to by other people's demands. Being seen and accepted on your own merit becomes a priority. Take time to consider if you are making the best of your natural skills and talents. You may discover you are underestimating yourself!



Cancer: This is a good month to organise your work and routines. You'll benefit from making adjustments especially if you've been overdoing it lately. Focus on the necessary tasks even if they don't reap obvious rewards. Simple practical concerns about health, money or everyday responsibilities must be given your attention but don't allow yourself to become over-anxious as a result. Treat yourself with care and pay attention to your practical needs especially up until Full Moon on the 27th. Take a few days mid-month for some solitary or downtime to reflect and restore your spirit and vitality.



Leo: Your imaginative powers are strong and you enjoy a chance to express your creative talents during the next few weeks. Give scope to your originality and get yourself noticed. Your feelings for loved ones are more intense now and children may take an important role in your life at this time. You want to have fun. Don't take yourself too seriously and taking chances might pay off. You may surprise yourself with what you come up with by just playing around. Expect rewards and acknowledgement for past efforts as we approach the month's end.



Virgo: During early December you may feel like staying home. Build up your reserves so you have plenty spare for later. Use this time to complete unfinished tasks and don't expect to get started on anything new until after mid-month. Putting your energy into your domestic life will feel important. You feel some sense of achievement as a result. Your work or social status takes on greater significance in a few weeks when you'll want to put your best effort into making the most of your situation. The real rewards will become more apparent after the 27th when you can expect some well-deserved recognition.



Libra: Follow the urge to get out and about and make connections over the next three weeks. You may have opportunities to get more involved with your neighbours or local events. This is also a good time to catch up on correspondences or to do some writing. You may feel restless if you don't find activities that stimulate your mind. Travel, foreign visitors or starting a new study course will likely be a feature by mid-month and you'll want to seek out more information and expand on what you already know. A boost to your work life or career is likely towards the month's end.



Scorpio: With last month's Full Moon opposite your Sun sign the spotlight has been on dealing with any relationship issues in the last couple of weeks. The December New Moon finds you focused on your material security. Actual money isn't the only source of wealth and you'll probably find you have abundance in another form. Concerns or anxieties about being dependent on others may trouble you around mid-month. It's a short-lived phase if you don't dwell on the negative. Your world will open up with new opportunities after the Full Moon on the 27th. Make plans, think big and remember to include other people in your dreams.



Sagittarius: Everyone wants to see what you're going to do next during the first weeks of December. This month you'll need to stand up and display your self-confidence in a way that wasn't called on before. Make adjustments if you are not representing yourself accurately or in a way that is most true for your character. Relationship matters occupy your mind around the Full Moon on the 27th. What's important is how these areas of your life are impacting your lifestyle and self-expression. The trick is to handle any tense moments with grace, state your position and move on quickly.

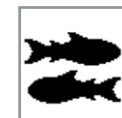


Capricorn: During early December your inclination is to shun the limelight and keep pretty much to yourself. You can be very productive in the next few weeks by just quietly working away behind the scenes in seclusion. Reconnecting with your inner world is important for your sense of equilibrium. Valuable insights and breakthroughs are possible. Enjoy the quiet 'alone time' whilst you can as the demands of your outer world will encroach again soon enough. After the 22nd, when the Sun moves

into your own sign, you will get the boost you need, as life throws you some new or exciting challenges and you will be ready for them.



Aquarius: This month it's who you know rather than what you know that matters. The spotlight is on your position within your community, in group ventures, or in work projects which involve others of like mind. Make the opportunity to meet new people; the benefits will soon follow. It's also time to move up a gear in your social life. The focus shifts after the Full Moon on the 27th as you get out the party gear or just take some needed leisure time. Having fun is the theme and allowing the inner child some freedom to run loose now brings its rewards.



Pisces: Now is the time to make plans for your future. Personal status or vocational concerns are likely to dominate your thinking through November into late December. If you want to fulfil your ambitions or go a step further then make some positive moves. Getting yourself some recognition for what you do well takes on extra significance. Remember to balance the demands of work or public life with the needs of your home life, especially from mid-month onwards. Family or domestic arrangements need your attention but you get the support you need to create a secure foundation to work from.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Trouble with the waterworks



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Dr Paula Stanley

drstanley@westcorkpeople.ie

In almost 30 years of seeing women of all ages – in the UK for 29 years and here in Ireland for the past five months – female urinary symptoms are something that women rarely volunteer: I have to specifically ask about leaking or peeing problems.

What I find horrific is that women seem to resign themselves to peeing 20 times a day, wetting themselves, and assume this is another cross to bear for being a woman and getting older.

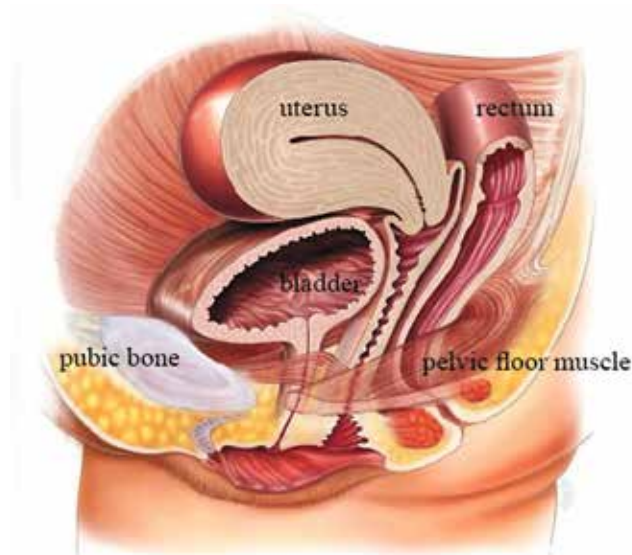
It is time to drag the 'Ugly Duckling' that is 'Female Urinary Issues' kicking and screaming and leaking...out of the dark cupboard under the stairs.

If I had my way, the HSE would run a public health campaign television advertisement that would go something like:

'A choral line of women, 25 to 85 years, on a stage in a Moulin Rouge-style setting. The song is sung to the tune of Beyoncé's 'All the Single Ladies', the women are belting out: "...to all the leaky ladies, all the leaky ladies!..." High kicks not possible for obvious reasons....and the choral line keeps splitting as ladies need to dash off to the porta-loos onstage in the background. Stage prop building labelled 'Female Health Clinic' descends from the rafters, encases the choral line...silhouettes of women being examined, issued medicines, then it rises again and all the ladies start high kicking and doing jumping jacks. END SCENE.

But it is not just about leaking. There are many different types of urinary symptoms that women are equally loath to discuss. A woman can suffer maddening urinary frequency often needing to pee 20-plus times a day; constantly worried about being able to find a toilet, she is reluctant to leave the house, restricts her fluids, takes less exercise and basically has her life ruled by her bladder.

Some women will also be up several times at night to pee, which means their sleep is poor and they are exhausted. Women



can get recurrent cystitis, the lay-term for burning or discomfort passing urine. While some of these women are also dealing with other menopause symptoms, urinary symptoms in the under 45-year-olds is a commonly neglected area.

In terms of public health campaigns/public awareness of female urinary issues, since moving back here in March this year, all I have seen are ads for continence pads and pants – being advertised by very young-looking women. This horrifies me, as many urinary symptoms can be treated effectively: the ads should be saying go see your GP, not put a nappy on!

Where to start:

If you are having any urinary symptoms, go see your GP. What your GP needs to do is take a detailed female health and urinary history. With pressure of work on female GPs in West Cork, I fear that it might not be possible in a busy clinic, which often involves seeing 15 to 20 patients in a morning, to have time to undertake a detailed assessment. More than that, I have learned that many women find getting access to a female GP nigh on impossible. In addition, embarrassment often stops a woman coming to her GP, even when she can access a female GP. This was one of the many reasons I set up the dedicated Women's Health Service in West Cork.

The following symptoms need to be specifically asked about:

Day time frequency: How many times per day do you need to pee? If there is a lot of frequency it is important to find out how much fluids, in particular caffeine drinks like tea or coffee, a woman drinks in a day.

Nocturia: How many times at night do you wake because you need to get up and pee?

Dysuria: Is there any discomfort, be it true burning or an uncomfortable feeling in the genital area, or perhaps low down on the front of the abdomen, over the bladder when you pass urine?

Urgency: This is defined as an

urgent or sudden, dire urge to pee, often associated with discomfort.

Haematuria: Have you ever noticed blood in the pee when you are not on or near a period? Or ever noticed your urine looking a little pink in colour?

Incontinence: Is there any leaking? And if so what are the circumstances?

Is it when you laugh or sneeze, resulting in a very small amount of urine coming away? This is called Stress Incontinence.

If you have a full bladder or when you feel the urge to pee, are you able to hold on for a bit or do you need to go find a toilet NOW! Have you ever had a situation when you could not get to a toilet fast enough and completely emptied your bladder as a result? This is called Urge Incontinence.

Double micturition: When you have a pee, does it feel like you have not completely emptied your bladder? Do you get dripping or dribbling when you go to stand up when you thought you had finished?

Vulval / vaginal symptoms: Is there any associated dryness/soreness inside the vagina or of the skin of the external genital area? Is there a new or change to vaginal discharge? Is there a new man in the woman's life? Sexually transmitted infections like Chlamydia can present with cystitis.

Abdominal bloating or swelling? Pelvic or intra-abdominal masses can rarely present with bladder symptoms.

Prolapse: Do you ever notice a feeling of something coming down in the vagina or a pressure feeling there?

Female health history:

How many children have you had? Pregnancy and vaginal delivery will weaken the pelvic floor, more so if any of the babies were very large, over 9lb, or if the delivery was associated with a major tear.

UTIs: Have you ever had urinary tract infections, UTIs, in particular recurrent infections?

Have you had any gynaecological surgery hysterectomy or

repair of a prolapse?

Last period? Are you pregnant? Menopausal?

Medications: Is the woman on any medications that might cause urinary symptoms, like a diuretic. Other causes: has there been weight loss? Might this represent new onset diabetes?

So you begin to get the idea: female urinary symptoms can be many, varied and often multifactorial.

Examination:

You cannot fully evaluate a female patient with urinary symptoms without physical examination.

I will examine the external genital area, the vagina, assessing the pelvic floor strength, looking for any prolapse, assess for signs of pelvic or abdominal masses that might be pressing on the bladder.

In patients over 50, I look for signs of atrophic vaginitis or changes to the vagina and external genital area caused by lack of oestrogen.

Dipstick the urine – to rule out infection and check for blood in the urine.

Further investigation may be warranted. If there have been recurrent UTIs, a lot of frequency,

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and wish you all a Happy Christmas!

any stress incontinence, I request a pelvic and bladder scan looking as to how the bladder is filling and emptying.

What next?

Next month – the causes of female urinary symptoms and their treatment.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Finding hope in 'little Irish miracles'

A native of Kiev, graphic designer Oksana, 47, was living in Irpin, the city that symbolises Ukrainian resistance, when war broke out in her home country. Grabbing her backpack and her cat 'Rocky', Oksana and her neighbours managed to board the last evacuation train before the railway line was blown up by the Russians. He mother and nephew are still in Ukraine. "We all felt the horrors of war from the first day," she shares. "It was scary to see and hear tanks on our streets, loud explosions, people hiding in basements." On the invitation of a kindhearted family in Wexford, Oksana moved to Ireland, taking 'Rocky' with her in the backpack. She left her home and a career as a graphic designer and art director in a well-known magazine behind. Oksana was later resettled in Bantry, where she says the snow-covered mountains were the first sight she remembers seeing from the bus as she approached her new home in West Cork. Oksana was placed in Ardnagashel Estate in Ballylickey between Bantry and Glengarriff, close to a forest and the sea. While the Ukrainian refugee and artist has since relocated to Drogheda where she can live more independently, she continues to paint the West Cork landscape and historic buildings she sketched while here, as well as using the traditional Ukrainian 'Vytynanka' technique to create beautiful traditional Ukrainian paper cut-outs, and is taking commissions through her website oksanaso.myportfolio.com. Oksana shares with West Cork People why West Cork will always hold a special place in her heart.

"Right from the beginning there were so many people who helped us in West Cork," shares Oksana. "I know that things are not easy for many Irish people, but after experiencing war, it is the small gestures that come to mean so much. Our manager



Mary, who helped with administration issues as best she could; my social worker Katherine; Dr. Aisling Morris from Glengarriff Medical Centre, who helped me to get my shaky health in order, the English teacher from Atlantic School of English, Jade and Mary from the St. Vincent de Paul store, where I worked as a volunteer and improved my customer service skills...and many, many others from West Cork. I will never forget these people."

Since arriving in the 'land of land of a thousand welcomes', Oksana has had many what she calls "little Irish miracles" happen to her. "In those first days, I was so lonely. I used to sit on the shore by the sea not knowing what to do with myself." She recalls the kindness of strangers such as when two local women engaged her in conversation, by the end of



which, they had offered her a lift to Cork City. "That act of kindness was so important

to me in that moment," says Oksana. "There were so many more meetings with people and unexpected kindnesses over time."

An artist, Oksana could not resist painting her surroundings, posting photographs of some of the finished works on the Glengarriff Noticeboard on Facebook. Her beautiful paintings soon drew attention, with her representation of a boat in Glengarriff quickly snapped up by the owners, followed by a commission for a series of drawings depicting Bantry's Anchor Bar.

"Art is what protected my mind, and therefore my life," shares Oksana "so it was the best thing that happened to me during this difficult time."

While she feels pain when thinking about her pre-war life, her home, her mother, her friends, Oksana says that wherever she is, she tries to visit local historical sites, museums and galleries. "There I find peace," she shares. She is currently studying Art and Business at Drogheda Institute for Further Education with the hope of contributing to her local community and the arts and culture scene in Ireland.

As Christmas approaches, she plans on volunteering her time and skills to local events. "I believe that giving back to the community is important, especially during the holiday season," she says.

Oksana has just shown some of her own paper cut-out pieces at the International Charity Bazaar at the RDS in Dublin and in the future her hope is to showcase her work in galleries, or even at her own venue, and to share the traditional paper-cutting art form of 'Vytynanka' through classes for Ukrainians and local residents, bringing both cultures together.

For more information on Oksana's work go to oksanaso.myportfolio.com

Men's Shed Funding Boost for Winter: O'Sullivan

Men's Sheds in Clonakilty, Skibbereen and Kinsale will receive grants under a new €1 Million Fund, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan says.

In all, grants of up to €3,000 will be provided to 435 Men's Sheds across the country.

"The funding is designed to assist Men's Sheds with their running costs such as their

heating, electricity utility and insurance bills," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"Men's Sheds are a hugely positive development for communities. Tackling isolation isn't easy, and the men's sheds in Clon, Skibb and Kinsale are such welcoming environments where men of all ages come together to socialise, share their skills and work on meaningful projects.

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

West Cork youth recognised at Garda National Youth Awards

There were two winners from West Cork – Yvonne Lynch and Farrah O'Shea from Bantry and Heidi Harnedy, Union Hall – at the recent Garda National Youth Awards, which took place on November 4 last to recognise exceptional young people aged 13-21 who have positively contributed to their community.

This year's event took place at the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise and acknowledged the remarkable contributions made in a number of Garda Divisions which included Offaly, Dublin, Kerry, Cork, Sligo/Leitrim, Mayo/Roscommon, Longford and Donegal. Twenty-five awards were presented by Deputy Commissioner, Anne Marie McMahon.

Yvonne Lynch and Farrah O'Shea, Bantry

Yvonne and Farrah are both senior students in Colaiste Pobail Bheanntai (Bantry Community College) and lead the way in breaking down barriers among their peers through their hard-work in the 'The Hub' – the school's special needs centre.

Both young women are driven by their love of helping others, and volunteer their time in taking weekly trips to see the residents in the nursing home in Bantry, keeping the community clean with Bantry Tidy Towns and their work in the local charity shop.

It is no wonder that both Yvonne and Farrah are widely recognised and respected in their community. They are wonderful advocates for the use of sign language and are always encouraging those they meet to become familiar with its use. They're never not fundraising or planning their next initiative to benefit people.

They are fun-loving and bring so much positive enthusiasm to all that they do. Their 'can do' attitude is infectious and reminds us all here today that there is always a positive



contribution that we can make to one another's lives - our friends and neighbours, even complete strangers.

Heidi Harnedy, Union Hall

At the age of 11, Heidi Harnedy began caring for her baby sister, Maya who was diagnosed with a rare health condition. This was a difficult undertaking for someone of her young age but Heidi would time the length of her baby sister's seizures, soothing her once they had subsided while also helping to care for her two other younger sister's at the same.

Very tragically, baby Maya passed away earlier this year, and in her memory Heidi began her mammoth

fundraising efforts by way of 'The Wildflower Seeds.' The money raised by Heidi is now being used to make a number of accessibility upgrades to her local playground so that children with special needs can make use of it in the future. A portion of the money raised has also been donated towards research into her sister, Maya's rare condition.

Heidi's work has not stopped there though, as she also has a great passion for water safety. She is currently undertaking Water Safety and lifesaving training, with a future aim to teach younger children how to swim. She is a rock to all those close to her and cherished for all her strength and resilience.

Speaking on the day of the

awards, Deputy Commissioner, Anne Marie McMahon said, "Today is about recognising the dedication of young people – how they support one another and help their communities. Each of today's recipients demonstrate all that is great about our young people, and all of us in An Garda Síochána are very proud of their hard work which is all done purely out of the goodness of their hearts."

"They are excellent examples of young people who give up their free time to help others, and we know that this is all a sign of bright, positive futures."

It is important that we celebrate and acknowledge the contributions they have made. We hope today's awards will bring encouragement and confidence to these talented young people and allow for further growth in their futures."



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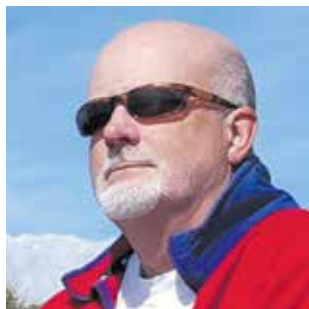
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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

From Polish to Irish – an unexpected West Cork story



THE DNA OF WEST CORK PEOPLE

Mark Grace

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

Meet John STASKY. Born 80 years ago in New York, John has been very open about his 2016 DNA test. I am pleased he has agreed to share his story as an example of an ‘almost proven’ West Cork connection. It took a while to find a solution that fitted the available data.

I have been working on John’s DNA since 2017 when his match to my wife, Felicity, and her cousins became apparent, picking it up every six months or so to see if there was any new information to progress his story. It was a tough one. As John relates “the Ancestry DNA test was the result of a dinner party we attended. The discussion about the results from our friends were very amusing so I signed up for a laugh.” What

John did not expect was his result.

Despite the Polish father he thought he had (American diminutive STASKY coming from STASZEWSKI), he turned out to be 95 per cent Irish and pretty much all West Cork at that. Through his DNA matches he immediately found an adopted half-brother (who was about 50 per cent Irish) and a tight cluster of close matches belonging to the McCARTHY family in New York.

My investigations show that the McCARTHY cluster of six people, who have since reconnected with their wider family, only matched a specific cluster of Felicity’s matches – all those who descend from her MENNIS=COLLINS great great grandparents, who married in Leap (Kilmacabea) in 1838. What both groups have in common is a COLLINS matriarch. COLLINS appeared to be the link, which is supported by finding no matches to the other side of these marriages. John’s other McCARTHY West Cork roots appear to come from around Schull.

Thanks to a host of new DNA testers and matches, recent investigations have shown that both groups also match a third cluster (currently six people) who also connect to the COLLINS family, specifically the ones who farmed in the Gurteenaduige townland just north of Leap, West Cork. This was a significant breakthrough. Members of this COLLINS



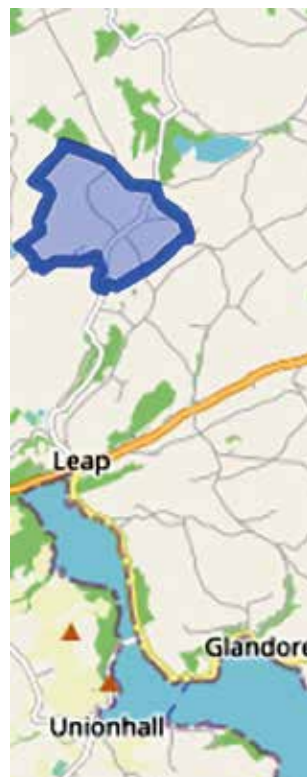
John Stasky

family indicate that there were originally three properties in the townland all belonging to the family. They are also aware of the (unspecified) MENNIS family connection.

Gurteenaduige is a townland of just over 290 acres, part of the Kilmacabea parish. On census returns it can also be referred to as Knockskagh. By 1901 it appears that all three of reported families were still farming there.

In 1901 (House 9), Denis COLLINS (30) and his wife Mary Ellen CONNOR (36) had four young children. This is the line that is currently DNA-proven back to John COLLINS c1827 of the same place. John may be the son of James COLLINS of Downeen, Rosscarbery, but it is far from clear. The 1911 census (House 5) reveals that Denis and Mary Ellen’s family had expanded to eight children.

In 1901 (House 18), Timothy (70) and his wife Johanna SWEENEY (75) were living with their two unmarried sons Thomas (40) and John (35). Daughter Johanna had



Location of Gurteenaduige (c/o townlands.ie)

apparently married a Brian CORRIGAN in Adelaide, South Australia. In 1911, Thomas was single and still living in the house enumerated as House 21. John had married Mary Anne DONOVAN in 1907, had two small children and was living in House 9. Timothy is the 1833 son of James COLLINS and Mary MAHONY of the same place.

In 1901 (House 19, so presumably adjacent) was another, slightly older Timothy and his wife Mary (both 75) with unmarried sons Michael (38) and Daniel (34). There are no local records (baptisms, deaths, or marriages) prior to or after this period, so the family appear to have moved away by the 1911

census.

There are no longer any COLLINS living in the townland, having all having recently left after at least two hundred years of residency. From census records we know that family were born in County Cork by the early 1800’s. While COLLINS is a very common West Cork name, the family believes that they originally came from County Limerick. That may yet be proven by DNA connections as the family do not believe they are connected to the other families of the same name in the area. This discreet genetic grouping (as the one in New York and the descendants of John MENNIS) has allowed data triangulation which otherwise would not have been possible, so does support this story.

Even though records are missing in the critical early period to complete the connection through a paper trail, we can at least explain why John Stasky is Irish and can pretty much point to where his West Cork roots are. Sadly, while we have a strong McCARTHY suspect that explains all the crossmatching, we cannot prove beyond all doubt who his father is. Consequently, John is potentially Felicity’s 3C1R or 4th cousin, depending on how the families tie together.

John is pictured during his recent visit to Ireland, having dinner at his new-found cousin’s restaurant in Cork (Isaacs). The RYAN family (also owners of Arbutus Bread) are descendants of the MENNIS=COLLINS marriage and Felicity’s first cousins. I am told one of the RYAN brothers who has DNA tested has the facial characteris-

tics of the COLLINS line.

For those interested, John’s DNA can be found on GED-match under his name and also on Ancestry and MyHeritage as part of my wider DNA-connected West Cork project. He should be easy to find in your DNA match list if you share this connection. Anyone who has DNA-tested and related to this story is welcome to contribute.

My thanks for the feedback from various members of the Facebook groups ‘West Cork Genealogy’ and ‘West Cork DNA’ who had more to stay about this COLLINS family, which provided valuable support for the original working hypothesis.

Unlike more than a dozen cases I have been successful with for parts of my wider British Isles ancestry, this is a rare example where my research has helped (partially) solve questions about adoption or illegitimacy on my wife’s Irish side. This is only the second to date. As indicated many times in my column, the lack of a paper trail in West Cork creates barriers, but sometimes DNA (where you can find enough of it to triangulate) can be very useful. I hope this example will encourage those of you who have unanswered questions to consider doing a DNA test. You just never know.

Thanks for permission to share, John. “Cheers,” and Merry Christmas to you all!

Questions that can be answered as part of future articles can be emailed to DNAmatchingprojects@gmail.com or follow the West Cork DNA projects on Facebook “My Irish Genealogy & DNA.”

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OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Clodagh Kelly, Jack Sheehan, Eimear O'Shea and Ellie O'Sullivan, Beara Community School, Castletownbere with the Deputy Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Deirdre Kelly at a special Student Enterprise Conference hosted by Cork County Council's Local Enterprise Office. Pic: Alison Miles / OSM PHOTO



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West Cork group raising funds to help young Afghan girl follow her dream of becoming a dentist

A West Cork group has started a fundraising campaign to bring a young Afghan woman fleeing the Taliban to safety in Ireland.

The young woman, 23, referred to as Aisling to protect her identity, is hoping to complete her dentistry studies in Ireland.

Her move here has already been approved under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

As one of the Afghan generations that lived most of her life under the International Coalition occupation of Afghanistan from 2001 – 2021, Aisling had access to primary, secondary and third level education.

From a young age she always dreamed of being a dentist, and

completed five years of her dental degree in Herat University in Afghanistan, excelling in all her studies and activities while in university.

However in 2021, as soon as the Taliban regained power, her time in university ended abruptly.

Aisling came onto the radar of Taliban because of her 'lack of compliance', both by starting a book club and continued activism to protest against the closing of education to girls and to reopen access to education to them.

She is in danger of getting forcefully married to one of the Taliban

leaders and her parents are under extreme pressure to comply with this.

'Fáilte Aisling' is an Irish Government-approved West Cork-based community sponsorship group that supports refugees as they rebuild their lives.

The group has accommodation and support in place for Aisling when she arrives and are fundraising to meet expenses.

A number of fundraising activities have already taken place in West Cork with more planned in December. A clothes swap event will take place in The Green Dot in Clonakilty on December 9, between 9.30 and 11.30am. Keep an eye out on social media and locally for this and details of upcoming events.

To make a donation go to www.gofundme.com and search for 'Fáilte Aisling'.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

A teacher for all seasons

It was one year ago this December that I wandered along the Ganges river in India's holy city of Varanasi, one of the oldest cities in the world. It was Christmas time and although I'd been in the country for weeks, everything still seemed surreal. My senses were tuned all the way up while part of me was seeking some familiar connection. I'd felt called to travel to India for decades, especially to this place where people have long come to prepare for death; ideally to make their final transition. Cremation in Varanasi – also known as Banares, Kashi and the city of lights – has a special significance for Hindus; assuring the deceased lib-

eration from the cycle of birth and rebirth. There are many memories I hold from the days spent there, particularly the traditional religious ceremonies at sunrise and sunset, as well as witnessing the rituals involved in public cremations at various stages. It was easy to forget about Christmas as we know it, surrounded by so much intensity. Unsurprisingly, there were no identifiable decorations and the sea of people and vendors seemed to go on as if it was just another day. A most unusual 'Santa Claus' mask was spotted a few times outside souvenir shops, but nothing more.

There is one scene that returns to me again and again



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.

of a man sitting cross-legged, eyes closed on a cremation ghat. Picture a mound near the river in which wood is laid and where the remains of the dead are cremated (I just read 2,500-3,000 bodies per year) I have no doubt that he was meditating; whether it was on his own impermanence or in contemplation of a beloved

who had died. I did later observe him helping to wash and anoint a dead man (with oils, incense, flowers) so perhaps he was also in quiet reflection and prayer for a relative; considering the life and onward journey of the person. I'd read and heard about uninhibited scenes here, yet I was again reminded that not only was I a world away in distance and culture, but most definitely in relation to death.

Many cultures, including those in the Far East live within the bookends of life and death throughout their days. There is much we can learn from this. At the same time, I imagine if I'd spent days of observation at the cremation ghats (which part of me longed to do while my travel companion was understandably, not into) it wouldn't magically remove my fear of dying or rewire my brain into total acceptance that all I love while perish.

Still we don't need a terminal diagnosis to practice gentle awareness. I was recently in conversation with someone who feels they have much fear around death. This person has lived with health challenges and experienced the deaths of

several close family members, but also believe there's something beyond personal grief that concerns them. Courageously, they reached out to see if I might support them as they look more deeply at this, and so we'll walk this edge together.

Even though I routinely listen, hold space and support others around the end of life, I too can be overwhelmed by life and death. There are certainly periods where I feel a mental, spiritual heaviness of it all. I catastrophise – assuming 'the worst' at times. Being an end of life doula doesn't guarantee my being at peace with death, however becoming increasingly familiar – and therefore more at ease – with death is a lifelong practice. In recent days I've sensed being in a weighty space, but writing this brings awareness that the trees are barren, the sky is heavy with clouds, the light infrequent. Gratefully wisdom also reminds me that collectively we are in the thick of endings – another year and cycle coming to a close.

Winter is time for deep rest while the festive season can leave us bereft for times gone past; lamenting all that's

departed. Whether it is because of what I do, the frequency of death in the media, the time of year, or all of it, I too need to practice what I encourage – honouring. This looks like knowing my limitations and the way in which they have shifted. Allowing emotions to take up space and when it arises embracing gratitude, celebration, joy in spite of everything. Like the man sitting, quite literally, in the midst of life and death, there is awareness – beauty even – to be found in every phase of life.

"Thinking and talking about death need not be morbid; they may be quite the opposite.

Ignorance and fear of death overshadow life, while knowing and accepting death erases this shadow."- Lily Pincus

"If we look at how we have perceived and portrayed death in India, you will see that death is not seen as sinister."

- Jagadish Vasudev (Sadhguru)

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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West Cork nun named Cork Person of the Month

West-Cork Presentation Sister, Josephine McCarthy has been chosen as Cork Person of the Month for November in honour of her 30-plus years of work in community development.

Known as Sister Jo, her missionary work has led her to the Cork and Ross Mission in Peru in 1978 and later to Presentation Missions in Ecuador and Peru, South America where she worked for 20 years before returning to Ireland in the early 2000s.

"We did serve in some very dangerous places whilst doing our missionary work – when in Ecuador we lived in an area which was completely lawless and every dispute was settled with an axe," remembers Jo. For many years she supported a development education programme with Presentation Secondary Schools, facilitating an immersion experience for teachers and students in Africa, Pakistan and India.

In 2006, the Presentation

Sisters established the Cork Migrant Centre (CMC) at Nano Nagle Place (NNP) in Cork City. The centre provides free, confidential information on access to services and immigration issues to EU and non-EU migrants. Sister Jo has been a key shaper and developer of programs at the Cork Migrant Centre.

NNP, under the direction of CEO, John Smith, houses an award-winning museum, regenerated heritage buildings, walled gardens, a design shop and Cork-focused book shop and the wonderful Good Day Deli. NNP is also an outreach centre promoting development education, social inclusion and integration. The Lantern Project, Men's Group and Cork Migrant Centre host a range of events, activities and outreach programmes supporting over 385 participants weekly. Cork Migrant Centre is a Psychosocial Wellbeing and Integration Hub, creating 'safe spaces' where migrants can enhance

their skills and capacities (emotional, physical, cognitive, social, and cultural). CMC also initiates integration opportunities by building collaborations, partnerships' and linkages Nationally and Internationally. CMC is committed to supporting residents of Direct Provision centres across the city and county and is a leading voice at national level in the promotion and protection of migrants' rights.

A native of Ballinacarriga, Dunmanway, from a young age, Jo was inspired by the legacy of Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters. Jo followed in Nano's footsteps discovering a calling to work on the Missions. She has said that Nano Nagle has been a constant in her very colourful life that took her to Peru and Ecuador.

In 2018, Sister Jo stepped down as Director of CMC but she remains an active volunteer with Dr Naomi Masheti and her dynamic team.

Josephine's name will now

go forward alongside the other monthly winners for possible selection as Cork Persons of the Year at the annual Gala Awards Lunch in January, 2024.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Valerie and Cormac Fitzgerald from the Kinsale Lions pictured at the Kinsale Lions 35th Anniversary Dinner at Actons Hotel. Picture: John Allen

Jump in for Mozambique



The annual Inchydoney Christmas Morning Swim at 11am is happening again this year, as usual to raise funds for Clogheen native Rev. John Kingston's Mission to Mozambique, where Fr John and his fellow missionaries provide a programme that fosters education in a variety of ways.

"We continue to promote the education of the rural poor, including orphans and people with fragile family support," he says.

"At present we have a number of students, male and female, doing college courses and are happy that the education being

provided is of high quality. The same cannot be said of many areas of education in Mozambique, except in the private sector."

Finding the financial means to support and subsidise the education of these vulnerable young people can be difficult, so Fr John is most grateful for the funds raised by the Inchydoney swim.

"I appeal to all who can, to support the swim again this Christmas morning, knowing that every euro you donate will make a difference to some young person's life here. Your solidarity and generosity are essential so

that we do not interrupt the education we are trying to provide in a reliable way."

Sponsorship cards available from Mary White (087 2806063) or O'Donovans Hotel, Clonakilty or you can donate through GoFundMe.

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LEGO Sky Police Parachute Arrest €34.99; Airfix model kit €21.99 and Schuco Hürlimann H-6160 (limited edition) €169.99 all from Collector Toys, Innishannon



Wildflower Bracelet Making Kit €8 at The Green Dot, Clonakilty





Roxy Longboard Skateboard €159 from Jellyfish Surf Shop, Clonakilty



A timeless children's favourite are these crochet teddies by E & M Crafts from €25 at West Cork Crafts, Skibbereen



Encourage a lifelong skill with this Kids' Kitchen Takeover Cookbook €20 from Organico, Bantry

Cute and cosy hot water bottle €24 at Thornhills, Skibbereen



Dixit is the illustrated game of creative guesswork, where your imagination unlocks the tale! Boardgame of the Year in 2010 it is still a crowd pleaser and Dixit Disney is new this year to celebrate 100 years of Disney €37 at Happy Go Lucky, Clonakilty which has one of the biggest collections of board games in Ireland!



LEGO Emergency Vehicles HQ €70 ; PLAYMOBIL Take Along Dolls House €50 and Fisher-Price Flap & Wobble Penguin €40 all at Happy Go lucky, Clonakilty

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President Micheal D Higgins and Sabina Higgins with Aidan, Emma and Shane Murphy from Dunmanway at a recent Áras an Uachtaráin Afternoon Tea Reception.

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**CHRISTMAS
FAMILY
SESSIONS**
23RD DEC

Hairy Henry - an inclusive Care Farm:
Therapy & Education for people with additional needs

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK

Sacred Heart Secondary School engaged in 'Stand Up Awareness Week' in November, a week aimed at building an inclusive culture in schools in association with Belong To Youth Services. Part of the focus for this week was increasing awareness about the LGBTQ+ community and some of the activities undertaken ranged from raising the Pride flag, creating a 'rainbow walk' across the bridge to students engaging in quizzes in their SPHE classes which were run by Transition Year members of the Stand Up Awareness Week committee, led by Ms Claire Holland.

Hairy Henry offering a quiet Christmas outing for families

Hairy Henry Care Farm, which caters for children and adults of all ability levels with therapeutic riding, riding lessons and farm camps, will run Christmas Family Sessions on December 23, from 10am to 6pm. Each 60-minute session is for a family or group of up to six persons. Slots must be booked in advance. The sessions are designed to provide a festive but quiet space for families to enjoy the farm at Christmas time and

are very much suited for children with additional needs. Sensory input will be kept low – no loud music or bright costumes – and every family will have the farm to themselves for their 60-minute slot. In the sessions, families can meet all the Hairy Henry animals, spend time with the ponies and have a go at horseback riding. For bookings, please go to www.itsplainsailing.com/org/hairyhenry

Hairy Henry's welcomed very special visitors in October.

A group from La Crosse Bantry Friendship Association visited the Care Farm all the way from Wisconsin, USA for a cup of tea and a look around the farm, and also to deliver their donation from a fundraiser they ran for Hairy Henry back in the US in March.

"We feel very grateful to be the recipients of such generosity and goodwill," says Sandra Schmid. "These sort of donations make it possible for us to improve our place further for

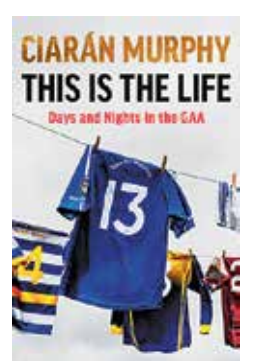
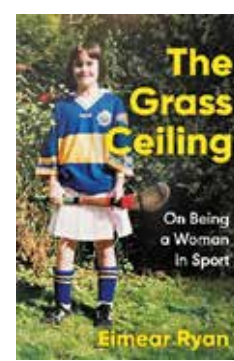
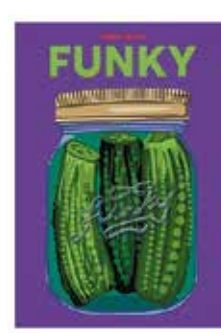
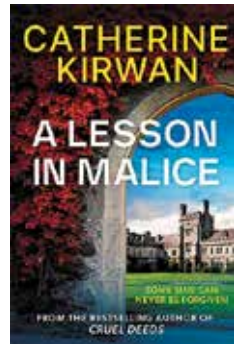
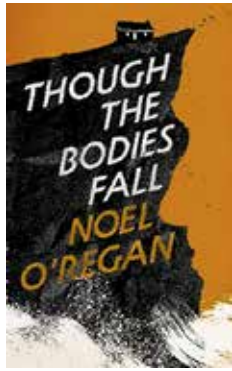
the benefit of the children and their families who come here for therapy. We plan to use this donation to develop our indoor area further over winter, adding activities and installing tools that can be used in therapeutic riding and animal-assisted learning."

You can get updates on this as well as all the other activities and life on the Hairy Henry Care Farm on their facebook page.



La Crosse Bantry Friendship Association at the farm

CHRISTMAS READING



Literary picks

Eimear O'Herlihy grew up in Cork in a house where books were always part of the family Christmas presents. She is the festival director of West Cork Literary Festival which takes place over one week in Bantry each July and includes writing workshops, readings, seminars and events for families and young people. Several events from previous festivals can be re-watched on the festival's youtube channel www.westcorkmusic.ie/WCLFYouTube. The 2024 West Cork Literary Festival will take place from July 12-19.

2023 was another excellent year for Irish writers, including Cork writers, and I could provide an endless list of must-read new books. It wasn't easy to narrow it down but hopefully I have come up with a varied list that will appeal to many different tastes.

Disha Bose's debut novel **'Dirty Laundry'** is set in Cork, where Disha lives, and readers will be hooked on this tale of lies, desire and the secrets that can make or break a marriage amongst a clique of seemingly perfect wives. We all have our dirty laundry to air and Disha weaves an absolute page-turner of a story. This novel was picked by Good Morning America TV Show as one of its Book Club Picks. Perfect for readers of thrillers, commercial fiction and literary fiction alike.

'Though the Bodies Fall' is the brilliant debut novel from Noel O'Regan and it is set in his native Kerry. The main character lives in a picturesque cliffside setting which has become a suicide black spot and he, following in his mother's

footsteps, feels called to keep a constant watch and save people from taking this action. It sounds very dark but it is so beautifully written and Noel is definitely one to watch. For lovers of literary prose and Irish fiction.

If you are looking for a present for a UCC graduate there are two wonderful new novels set on campus – Catherine Kirwan's crime novel **'A Lesson in Malice'** features solicitor Finn Fitzpatrick (the protagonist of her previous novels) as she becomes embroiled in a murder on campus where everyone, including Finn, is a suspect. The **'Rachel Incident'** is the latest novel by Cork author Caroline O'Donoghue and the main character Rachel looks back on her college years in Cork in 2010 – it's a gorgeous, heady coming-of-age novel with loads of humour and stunning writing. Both books are a love letter to Cork city and it's a joy to walk the streets on the pages of these novels.

Denis Cotter's award-winning new cookery book,

'Paradiso', is a collection of recipes and reflections on the past thirty years of this incredible, world-renowned vegetarian restaurant in Cork. It's the perfect gift for the cook in your life and also for people who adore reading about food. December is also a great time to place a pre-order for **'Funky'**, Caitlin Ruth's cookbook about pickles, relishes and preserves. Caitlin is a West Cork legend and chef extraordinaire. **'Funky'** will be published in January and the book design is a work of art in itself. It can be pre-ordered from blastabooks.com.

Sports memoirs always make excellent Christmas presents. The **'Grass Ceiling'** is Eimear Ryan's compelling memoir of growing up as a camogie player in rural Tipperary and it reflects on her life as a young girl and now woman in the traditionally male-dominated world of sport. It will appeal to GAA fans of all genders and anyone interested in the role of women in sport. It would pair wonderfully with **'This Is The Life: Days and Nights in the GAA'** by Second Captain's Ciarán Murphy.

'Cacophony of Bone' is the second book by Kerri ní Dochartaigh and it is part memoir, part nature writing and part diary set over the course of 2020 – Kerri and her partner move into a remote cottage in Westmeath at the very end of 2019, looking to put down roots and with no idea what the year ahead holds. When the pandemic strikes their lovely seclusion turns into enforced isolation and

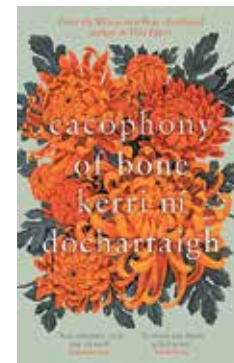
Kerri is as far as it is possible to be in Ireland from her beloved sea. It's a gorgeous, thoughtful book about home and family and how life changes when you least expect it – Kerri discovers that she is unexpectedly and delightfully pregnant (no spoiler here as we were lucky enough to meet Kerri and her baby during WCLF 2022!) The nature lover and diarist in your life will love this book.

And for the young people in your life, **'Wild Wonders'** is a beautiful collection of short nature stories for children and each one is accompanied by the work of a different il-

lustrator. There are stories from Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde, West Cork's E.R. Murray and many others. **'Inis Mara'** is a new Irish-language book for teens by Tristan Rosenstock. It is set on a small island where a new leader and his lack of concern for the environment

has a detrimental on the island until a young islander takes action. **'Inis Mara'** is illustrated by Mark Wickham who is from Bantry (because who doesn't love a West Cork connection).

Happy Christmas and happy reading to all of you!



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West Cork WondeRings

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"This remote corner of a remote island / a raggedy scrap of green blotting paper / cast off the coast of Europe / full of eccentrics, artists, alternatives, / foreigners and the famous / with more happening, more life, than many a large town."

West Cork WondeRings is a personal, poetic and pictorial book, telling of Tony Webb's adventures in West Cork, some of the people, and some of the history, culminating in finding, working, building and enjoying

his 'Paradise'.

"My home is a room in a forest / surrounded by clematis and wisteria / with the clatter of the kitchen / the background of loving pigeons".

Tony describes himself with the Beatles lyrics 'The Fool on the Hill'. He has self-published his book in his own style (with all its faults). It's available free on Amazon Kindle, or from the author at skehil@gmail.com for €25. The book will be on sale at Bantry and Skibbereen markets during December.

'West Cork WondeRings' by Tony Webb is a fascinating book on the author's move to West Cork over 35 years ago, searching for the good life, good place, good

CHRISTMAS READING

Books for under the tree...

Recommended by Kerr's Bookshop, Clonakilty

The Super Pets and Me
by Noel Fitzpatrick
Supervet Noel Fitzpatrick's latest book, 'The Super Pets and Me' is the perfect gift for any young aspiring vet or animal lover. Describing how a busy vet practice runs, it is also full of stories about some of his amazing patients; from Peanut, the world's first cat with two front bionic limbs, to Betsy, the six-month-old cockapoo, who was given a new lease of life when her crushed paw was replaced with a skateboard wheel. Parrots, chameleons, hedgehogs and even a lion have been treated by the Supervet. True tales that celebrate kindness, perseverance and the unbreakable bond between humans and animals. (From 9 years)

Milly McCarthy and the Irish Dancing Disaster
by Leona Forde,
Illustrated by Karen Harte.
Ten-year old Milly wants to win a medal for Irish dancing, just like her neighbour Abbie Horgan. But Irish dancing takes talent and practice, and Milly's skills are in short supply. When

she is subbed into an Irish dancing competition at short notice, there's only one way things are going to go - disastrously! The feis is turning into a fiasco and they'll be lucky to get home in one piece, let alone with any medals. (From 7 years)

Impossible Creatures
by Katherine Rundell
The Archipelago contains magical islands where all the mythical creatures actually live and thrive. It is here where Mal and Christopher set out to uncover why griffins are mysteriously disappearing only to discover that they have a bigger challenge. They must save the islands and the world beyond them from a rising evil. In this fantasy story for children, Katherine Rundell has created a mesmerising story of adventure, intrigue, and danger. (From 9 years)

Alex Rider Nightshade Revenge by Anthony Horowitz
Nightshade – a sinister group of assassins - has targeted Alex Rider and abducted his best friend, Tom. Alex doesn't know

who he can trust when he finds himself in a world created by a new gaming system. Nothing is real but the game could still kill you. What twisted evil are Nightshade up to and how will Alex navigate this new augmented reality to save Tom... and everyone else? Anthony Horowitz has created a gripping new challenge in this book for our beloved teenage spy. (From 12 years)

Something Terrible Happened Last Night by Sam Blake
It's Katie's 17th birthday. The dance floor is packed and the drink is flowing, when a huge fight breaks out, sending guests fleeing. When Frankie, Jess and Sorcha go back to help Katie clear up her wrecked house before her parents get home, they find a body on the living room floor. Is this a tragic accident or a murder? Not satisfied with the gardai investigation, the group of friends begin to

piece together their own investigation about what really happened that terrible night.

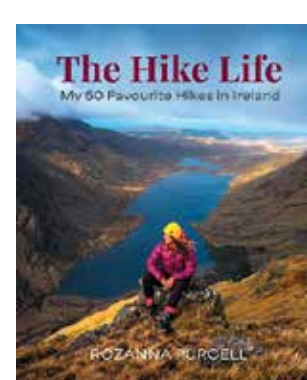
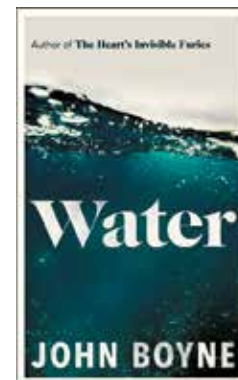
This gripping teen thriller with twists and turns will keep everyone guessing. (Teen)
Water by John Boyne
Vanessa arrives on an island off the coast of Galway, immediately changing her name and cutting her hair. To the locals, she is Willow Hale, a solitary outsider escaping Dublin to live a hermetic existence in a small cottage, not a notorious woman on the run from her past. Away from a daughter who is no longer speaking to her, and a husband who has committed an



unspeakable act, Vanessa is confronted by the need to examine her own shame and guilt. A disturbing story of betrayal, serious damage done, and renewal.

The Hike Life by Roz Purcell
Roz Purcell, through her vast hiking experience, brings to life the beauty and majesty of Ireland's mountain hikes, forest trails and cliff walks. Full of gorgeous photographs, Roz includes 50 unforgettable

hikes that span the entire island. Along with practical advice and easy-to-follow routes, Roz has created a complete guide that includes everything you need to know in order to explore the outdoors safely and enjoyably. She rates each trail on its difficulty level so there won't be any surprises and she even includes recommendations for pit stops and photo opportunities along the way.

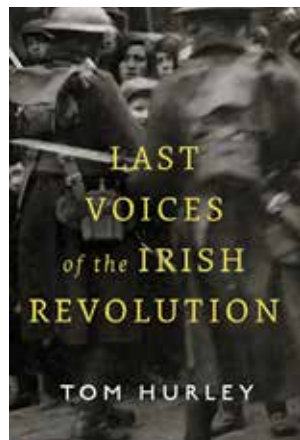


'Last Voices of the Irish Revolution' in new book

The Irish Civil War ended in 1923. Eighty years on, author and documentary-maker Tom Hurley wondered if there were many civilians and combatants left from across Ireland who had experienced the years 1919 to 1923, their prelude and their aftermath. What memories had they, what were their stories and how did they reflect on those turbulent times?

In early 2003, he recorded the experiences of 18 people, conducting two further interviews abroad in 2004. Tom spoke to a cross-section (Catholic, Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist) who were in their teens or early twenties during the civil war. The chronological approach he has taken to his book 'Last Voices of the Irish Revolution' spans fifty years, beginning with the oldest interviewee's birth in 1899 and ending when the Free State became a republic in 1949.

Many of the people featured for the book had West Cork connections. Daniel O'Donovan was born in Bantry in 1903. He spoke to Tom about his early life in the town where his parents ran a pub, WW1, joining the 3rd Cork Brigade IRA, Black and



Tans, Auxiliaries, ambushes, his imprisonment on Spike Island in 1921, the Treaty, Collins death, joining the Free State Army, coming under fire in Bantry, damage done to roads, leaving the army and joining An Garda Síochána in 1925.

Longford native Patrick Greene, born in 1900, discusses many things ranging from 12th parades, Home Rule, 1916 Rising, 1917 Election, going to college Dublin in 1918 but of particular interest to West Cork readers would be the story of how he came to meet Johnny Collins (brother of Michael) in Westmeath in 1921. It was he

who advised him to learn the Irish Language thus instigating Patrick's arrival in Ballingearry in 1922. Patrick discusses the people he met in Ballingearry including Scottie McKenzie-Kennedy who was later killed during the civil war.

Kathleen Noonan née Charles was born in 1902 in Kanturk and joined Cumann na mBan. She related memories of visiting her aunt who operated a post office in Rathbarry and was married to an RIC man. She could remember helping to deliver telegrams to Castlefreke Castle before part of it was destroyed by fire in 1910. There are many other stories pertaining to West Cork and its people in the book also.

One hundred years after the Civil War ended, these 20 interviews recorded by Tom Hurley come together to create a unique oral account of the revolutionary period and the tensions that were brewing in the run-up and aftermath. Together, theirs are the 'Last Voices of the Irish Revolution'.

'Last Voices of the Irish Revolution' by Tom Hurley is available in bookshops

throughout the country and can also be ordered online via their websites. It is published by Gill Books.

In the following edited extract from the book, IRA veterans Daniel O'Donovan from Bantry (born in 1903) and Dan Keating from Kerry (born in 1902) reflect on the Crossbarry ambush of 19 March 1921 (neither man participated).

March 19, 1921:
Men from the Third (West) Cork Brigade Flying Column under Commandant Tom Barry attacked and smashed an encircling force of British military and police at Crossbarry. At the time the column was operating at a strength of 104 men. They were outnumbered at 10:1 but at the end of the battle, according to one account there were at least 39 British soldiers dead and 47 wounded, as against three IRA men dead and two seriously wounded. Other accounts claim British casualties were overstated and that 10 had been killed and three wounded.

From the start of the battle Flor Begley, the brigade piper,

played martial airs on his bagpipes, which inspired the IRA volunteers. Daniel O'Donovan remarked that engagements like Crossbarry and the earlier one at Kilmichael were a great boost to the morale of those fighting against the British in West Cork.

There was a great jeer up. We thought in our time hearing about them and the columns being so successful and I happened to know a few in the column at the time and they were heroes to us then."

The IRA killed at Crossbarry were Con Daly, Jeremiah O'Leary and Peter Monaghan. Comrades present on the day such as Tom Barry, Tommy Kelleher, Liam Deasy and others lived to tell the tale:

"Well I knew all those to see and by repute but I never saw any of them during my time."

Dan Keating emphasised the effect of Flor Begley's pipes on the day. In his view, not only did they rally the volunteers to glory, they demoralised and frightened those attempting to encircle them. At this time the total British military presence in Co. Cork was over 12,500 men. Dan summed up the significance

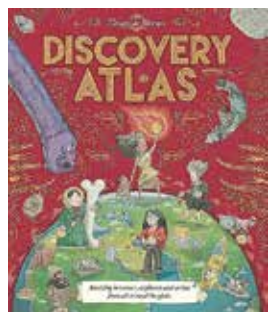
of Crossbarry.

"It was the most complete victory that was achieved by the IRA in the whole campaign. After some time anyway the British counterpart in Cork, he demanded that if they were to defeat the IRA he wanted 30,000 troops in Cork plus field guns and armour cars. The British were in no position to supply all that at the time. Times were bad in Britain after the war actually some of the people in Britain were starving at the time. They just couldn't do it and they decided anyway after some time, they started throwing out feelers and all that anyway. It must be said that Crossbarry was the cause of bringing about the truce you had in Ireland."

On March 19, Brigade Commandant Charlie Hurley was also shot by British forces. He had sustained injury after taking part in the ambush at Upton railway station in February and was convalescing at a house near Crossbarry, when it was surrounded by the British on the morning of the ambush.

CHRISTMAS READING

Recommended by Worm Books Schull



Discovery Atlas

by Thiago de Moraes

This lovingly illustrated large-format hardback Atlas is filled with historical facts and wonders about how humans discovered everything from Medicine and Technology to Food, Space and Sport. Meet amazing inventors, great explorers, artists and astronauts from around the globe. From dinosaurs to robots and everything in between, this book will captivate children and adults alike.

Cures of Ireland

by Cecily Gilligan

Delve deep into the ancient Irish history and wisdom of 'The Cure'. Author, Cecily Gilligan has been researching the rich

world of Irish folk medicine for almost forty years, interviewing people around the country who possess these mystical gifts, their families and those who have benefited from their cures. Profiles of ninety-three women and men, of all ages, with a wide variety of cures, who continue to impart their knowledge to this day. This is a lovingly told story of a precious but sadly declining rural tradition.

Songs of the birds

by Isabel Otter

and illustrated by Clover Robin

Explore enchanting bird calls and habitats in this beautifully illustrated book. Budding birders will discover fascinating facts and learn how to identify the call of a song thrush and the markings of a Moorhen. Familiar locations such as woodlands, towns and gardens are transformed into a wonderland of birds and their sounds.

Lethal legacy by Fin Dwyer

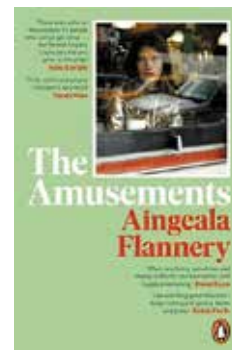
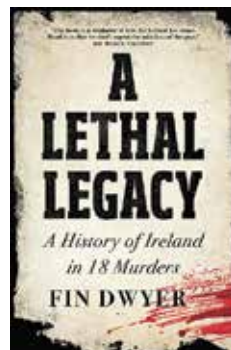
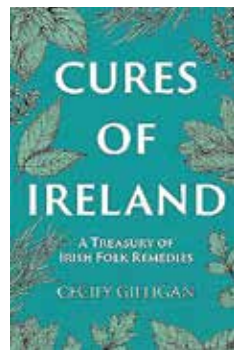
An alternative history of Ireland as told through 18 murders.



Fin Dwyer, presenter of the excellent Irish History podcast explores 200 years of societal change through the intimate tales of murders committed and the effects on the wider communities. From the desperate retributions of the Land War of the nineteenth century, through the tumult of the revolutionary years, to the emerging traits of contemporary Ireland, these largely unknown stories of human tragedy offer a fresh perspective on a history we think we know.

Doppelganger by Naomi Klein

Journalist Naomi Klein's latest book is a dark tale of our times. Doppelganger begins with the author being mistaken for another well-known writer, Naomi



Wolf whose online persona and views stand in stark contrast to her own. From this curious case of mistaken identities she explores the increasingly disturbing world of social media extremes and internet driven culture wars.

The Amusements

by Aingeala Flannery

This bittersweet novel chronicles the lives of two families, their neighbours and a host of fleeting characters in an immersive portrait of a seaside town across three decades. It's a beautifully sympathetic rendering of broken dreams, chance and fate in the never ending cycles of life in a changing town.

A children's author's picks

Sarah Webb is an award-winning children's author and writes a lot of her books in West Cork. She is passionate about children's books and this year helped set up Discover Irish Children's Books, a campaign to highlight Irish books for young readers. See www.discoveririshkidsbooks.ie for more about the campaign and lots of Irish children's book recommendations. Here are her favourite books for children and young adults from 2023.

The Swing

by Britta

Teckentrup

If you are a fan of The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse, this is the perfect book for you. Each spread shares a different illustration of an old red swing and captures a particular time and mood. The swing means different things to different people, but it is always there, braving the elements. Age 7-plus.



Milly McCarthy is a Complete Catastrophe

by Leona Forde,

illustrated by Karen

Harte

Milly is a smart, funny Cork girl who is always getting into trouble. When her class visits

Fota Island wildlife park, she manages to cause mayhem. This book is carefully designed to appeal to Wimpy Kid and Dork Diary fans, with lots of line drawings and clever typography. Great fun! Age 8-plus.

The Final Year

by Matt Goodfellow,

illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton

Looking back over the year, I think this is one of the books I'll remember the most, it's powerful stuff! It's a verse novel about Nate who is having trouble at both home and at school. He's being bullied and his mum relies on him a lot at home. When something happens to his little brother, he finds it hard to cope. (Don't worry, there's a happy ending!) Age 10-plus.

The Girl Who Fell to Earth

by Patricia Forde

Patricia Forde is Ireland's new Laureate na nÓg and this is her first book published as the Laureate. And what a book it is, a beautifully written science fiction novel set in the near future, about a girl from space who falls to earth, that examines what it means to be human. There are loads of twists and turns and I loved it! Age 11+

Murder on a School Night

by Kate Weston

Published in July

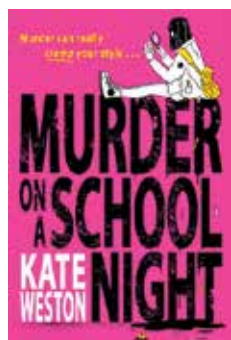
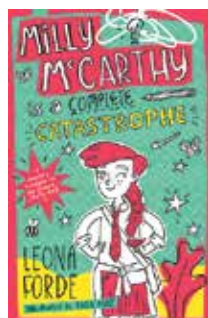
This book made me laugh so much. If you like murder mysteries with a dollop of school drama and feminism thrown in, this is the book for you! Best friends Annie and Kerry have never been popular, but when they start investigating the murder of one of the popular girls, they find themselves drawn into her world. Think Murder Most Unladylike meets Heathers. Age 15-plus.

Catfish Rolling

by Clara Kumagai

Clara was a great hit at the West Cork Literature Festival this year and for good reason. Her book is terrific! Teenager Sora is trying to find her mother who has been lost after an earthquake. Is her mother living in another pocket of time? Sora is determined to find out and visits the strange, liminal spaces where times runs differently

after the earthquake. The writing is sublime and it's a rewarding, thought-provoking read. Age 15-plus.



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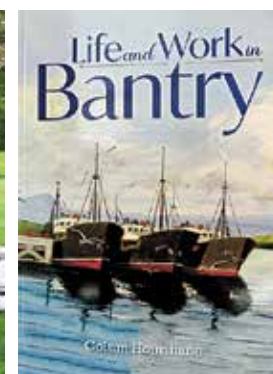
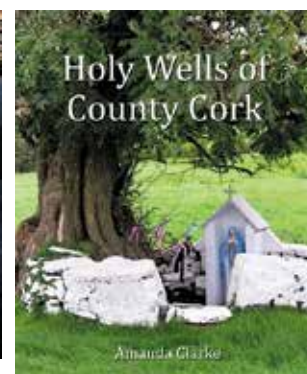
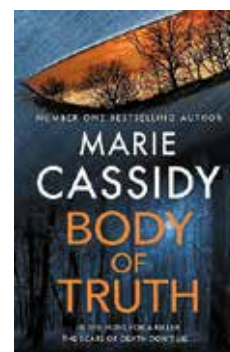
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In the Blood by Pat Spillane
Pat Spillane is one of the best-known sportspeople in Ireland. Selected for the GAA's Team of the Millennium and winner of eight All-Ireland senior football medals, he is one of the greatest Gaelic footballers ever. Yet that isn't half of the Spillane story. He has also been one of the most controversial GAA pundits of all time, driving the agenda on The Sunday Game and in

The Sunday World for thirty years. His analysis and criticism have been headline news everywhere Gaelic football is discussed, and the terms he coined, such as 'puke football', have entered the Irish lexicon. Here, Pat reveals the sadness of his childhood when his father died; his dazzling football career and encounters with other immortals, from Mick O'Dwyer onwards; the reality of life as

pundit under pressure from managers; and the huge stress of dealing with the machinery of government in the aftermath of his spell with CEDRA, the state advisory group on rural affairs.

Like the man himself, 'In the Blood' is uniquely frank, witty, honest and revealing – and a must-read for GAA fans everywhere.



Body of Truth by Marie Cassidy

In the hunt for a killer the scars of death don't lie – from Ireland's former state pathologist Marie Cassidy comes a gripping thriller where the secrets of the mortuary are uncovered with scalpel-like precision. Dr Terry O'Brien has recently arrived in Ireland from Scotland to take up a position as State Pathologist when a high-profile murder occurs. The victim is Rachel Reece, host of a popular true crime podcast on unsolved murders of Irish women and niece of a prominent politician.

As Terry gathers evidence to help with the police investiga-

tion, she becomes convinced that they are following the wrong line of inquiry and begins her own research. She soon finds herself in the thick of cold cases of murdered Irish women, with questions mounting. What did Rachel Reece find out about the unsolved murder of Eileen McCarthy before she died? Who is sending ominous messages to Terry and what do they mean? And why is she increasingly at odds with her superiors? Terry knows that the pathology never lies.

But when her forensic skills reveal something that might hold the key to the case, little does she know the deadly risk of revealing the truth...

Holy Wells of County Cork by Amanda Clarke

There are 358 holy wells recorded in the Archaeological Inventory for County Cork and Amanda Clarke has spent seven years visiting them all at least once. She has found them by roads, in city, town and village, seeking them out down boreens and up mountains; on cliffs and by the seashore; across fields and in copses; in bullauns, earth-fast rocks, trees and lakes.

In her lively and accessible style she records the characteristics of the County's holy wells, the stories of patron saints and their sometimes not-so-saintly deeds, the spiritual rituals, devotions and rounds of the faithful and the often profane partying and faction fighting that followed pattern days in the past. Supported by local

knowledge and painstaking research into historical archives and other sources she looks at water, holy trees, miraculous cures, offerings, and occasional appearances of auspicious fish. A representative set of examples of individual holy wells is included in more detail and the book is richly illustrated with photographs, mostly taken by the author herself.

Life and Work in Bantry by Colum Hourihane

Following up on his extraordinarily successful 'Bantry Through the Centuries', author and academic Colum Hourihane presents 'Life and Work in Bantry', detailing work and play in the town and the book covers many topics including blacksmith tradition in Bantry, music, clubs, organisations, societies and associations. The book has plenty of photographs of the town and its denizens. A veritable feast of local history, with much to peruse and amuse!

For younger readers:

The Slug and the Snail by Oein DeBhairduin

Drawn from the Irish Traveller storytelling tradition, DeBhairduin's tale is a gentle allegory about identity, self-acceptance and different ways of seeing the world. Two slugs travel happily together until they meet a crow who asks

them where their home is. The younger brother, embarrassed, makes himself a shell, and calls himself snail.

The older brother carries on as he is. At first, the brothers grow apart. But in time, they learn to respect each other's way of life. Also available as ghaeilge.

Ride to the Rescue by Nina Carberry

Ride to the Rescue is the exciting first book in The Rowan Tree Stables series -- an illustrated pony series inspired by Irish author Nina Carberry's own childhood, featuring 10-year-old Grace and her best friend, Aaron. Grace and Aaron attend different schools but meet at the local riding stables, where they like to ride out together. Though opposite in character, they are the best of friends, bonded by their shared love of ponies and adventure.

Their ponies Daisy and Nipper are best friends too! In Ride to the Rescue, Grace and Aaron discover something fishy about the local river. It's up to them – and their ponies – to track down who is behind it. But how will they manage when Grace's pony, Daisy, gets injured?



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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all our readers!



The plaid coat

by Mich Maroney
Editor/Designer of Swerve Magazine

She is dressed in a wonderful plaid coat, perfect for autumn. Impossibly chic, she would not look out of place on the streets of Milan, Paris or Rome. Accompanied by a handsome man, tall and elegant, not unlike Keanu Reeves. What are they doing in Skibbereen on a dismal rainy morning, this couple who radiate glamour and sophistication? Often to be seen wandering about town, they have an air about them: You

would be forgiven for thinking actors, or artists, but certainly not refugees shares Mich Maroney.

So who are they? Galyna is an artist – a photographer and fashion stylist. She has exhibited and sold work at the Members' and Friends' exhibition at the Uillinn Arts Centre (all proceeds went straight to the war effort in Ukraine). Vlad is an intellectual and computer whiz, a programmer and analyst. He is working on a programme to facilitate learning English as a foreign language.

They escaped Kherson after

the Russian invasion, leaving behind a large house and all their possessions; arriving in Ireland with only what they could carry. Clothes, cars, a large library, all gone. Their life in Ukraine was vibrant. Galyna and Vlad are both highly creative people and life without an outlet for creativity is tedious and frustrating. They are, however, uncomplaining; simply grateful to the Irish people for being given shelter. Meanwhile, they are trying their utmost to make a life for themselves. Galyna dresses the windows of a charity shop in Skibbereen and makes wonder-

ful costumes out of discarded clothes, which are then used as props for her photographs. Since arriving in Skibbereen their English has improved 100 per cent.

The worst thing about leaving their homeland is that they have been separated from their families. Galyna's elderly mother, who is in her 80s, refused to budge. Galyna telephones her mother every day, never knowing if the phone will be answered. Her son and son-in-law are both living in Lviv. They were not allowed to leave the country and could be called up at any time. Galyna's daughter

and grandchildren made it to Scotland. Vlad's son escaped to Sweden. Friends and family, all scattered.

The house they left behind in Ukraine was spacious and filled with beloved objects collected over the years. Now, they are reduced to living in a room just bigger than the two single beds and wardrobe it contains. The house is shared with over 40 others. Still, they both manage to work on their creative projects in this tiny space.

And the wonderful plaid coat? Made from a blanket from the charity shop.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Gordon Moxley exhibition at Bantry Library

An exhibition of work by Gordon Moxley will run at Bantry Library from November 28 to December 22, 2023.

Most of the work in this exhibition is dramatically different to what Gordon was working on in 2016. In the pieces on A4 and A3 paper, the artist has arrived at an extraordinary way of using the medium, various types of felt tip and pen, sometimes with paint. He makes tiny marks which meet each other precisely to form areas of colour which have a very unusual vibrancy. It takes a long time and a lot of care to complete.

The whole approach could hardly be more different from the long pieces on card, also recent, in which Gordon demonstrates how his ability to work loosely, fast and with great panache has not deserted him.

If you are interested in buy-

ing one of Gordon's paintings, e-mail: tom46weld@gmail.com or leave a message for Tom at the library desk. All proceeds to Gordon's art materials. In the interests of showing more work, frames are not being used.

Gordon lives on the family

farm near Drimoleague. Now in his fifties, he has attended CoAction for many years.

The exhibition will run

during library hours only, Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9.30am-5.30pm.



Christmas show of small works returns to Blue House Gallery

With the festive season upon us, and people seeking extra special gifts, downstairs in the Blue House Gallery in Schull has a wonderful selection of works from its gallery artists, all under €300.

Amongst these treasures are beautiful miniature figurative works by Mary Carter, vibrant screen prints by Shane O'Driscoll, textile work by Julia Zagar, fluffy footstools by Alison Ospina, paintings by Lesley Cox, ceramics by Etain Hickey

and landscapes by Janet Murren to mention just a few.

Upstairs at the gallery there is a selection of larger pieces including works by Ayelet Lalor, Ian Humphreys, Oonagh Hurley, Alyn Fenn, Angela Fewer, Helen O'Keeffe and

Fiona Power amongst many others.

Open every day in December. View works also at www.bluehousegalleryschull.com



Ayelet Lalor



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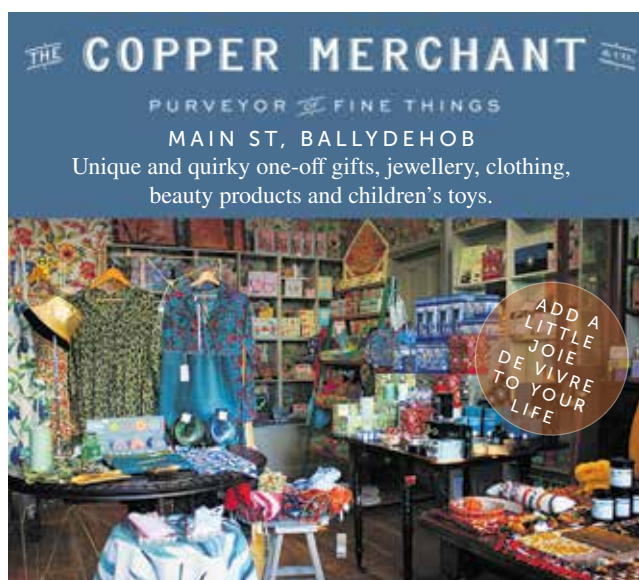
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Awareness and fundraising documentary at Clonakilty Film Club tells the human stories of Gaza

Regular attendees at Clonakilty Film Club know how often a film, even when fictional, helps us to understand people and situations beyond the headlines; even more so when the film is an award-winning documentary. At a special screening on December 12, the Club will show a 2019 documentary film by Irish film makers Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell that will bring the audience closer to understanding the ordinary people of Gaza. All proceeds from the screening of 'Gaza' will go to Médecins Sans Frontières to help all children affected by war.

It's hard to imagine anybody living a normal life in the Gaza Strip. Frequently labelled as the world's largest open-air prison, it makes an appearance on news reports every time a confrontation erupts between Israel and Hamas. From TV sets thousands of miles away, this tiny piece of land has been reduced to an image of violence, chaos and destruction. So what do the people do when they're not under siege?

The Gaza which is seldom seen is ordinary, everyday Gaza, a coastal strip which measures just 25 miles by six and which is home to an eclectic mix of almost two million people.

Gaza cannot be understood in a purely political context or by analysing tragic sound bites during conflict. It can only be understood by immersion, by living amongst its people and by recognising and exploring its rich social diversity and cultural subtleties.

The filmmakers say: "'Gaza' will introduce the audience to the surprising and the unexpected, the unfamiliar stories that portray its true face. It takes an atypical approach to finding out what makes this remarkable place tick as it introduces to the world extraordinary stories of everyday characters leading ordinary lives."

"'Gaza' depicts a people plagued by conflict but not defined by it and as we journey through the physically broken and battered landscape, we let our cast of characters speak for themselves. Through them we gain a nuanced understanding of what life is really like for its citizens and by extension, grow and foster a rare familiarity and affinity with this truly unique place, as we build towards a tender portrait of a beleaguered humanity."

'Gaza' won Best Documentary and the Dublin Film Critics Award at Dublin International Film Festival 2019. The film is 90 minutes long and certified as suitable for ages 12 and over.

Tuesday, December 12 at 8.30pm in Clonakilty Park Cinema. Entry is by donation at the door and all are welcome. Royalties to screen this film are being waived by the filmmakers and all other costs will be met by Clonakilty Film Club, so that 100 per cent of all money donated on the night will go directly to humanitarian aid in Gaza through Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders, a non-governmental organisation known for its projects in conflict zones.



In a still from the film, *Karma Khaial*, 15, plays the cello in front of the ruins of the former Al Waha resort, in northern Gaza.



Surfers enter the Mediterranean Sea in front of Gaza City, in the Gaza Strip. During the summer months the beaches around Gaza City attract large crowds, with the coast being the only real recreational space available in Gaza.

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"Stoneware, which glows with unique glazings." *The Irish Times*, Jan 2022

Christmas Members' Exhibition at Gallery Asna

The Clonakilty Arts Centre's Christmas 'Members' Exhibition' is opening at Gallery Asna on Saturday December 2 at 5.30pm.

This delightful exhibition of work by local artists and craftspeople includes an eclectic mix of paintings, prints, sculpture and ceramics, along with a selection of artists' Christmas cards. All artwork is affordably priced and make perfectly unique gifts for the season.

Exhibition runs until December 23, open Mon to Sat 11am to 5pm.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Passing on the Songs



‘Passing on the Songs’ is a beautiful concept, rooted in the oral tradition of passing music and song onto the next generation, a vital and somewhat fragile but ultimately powerful act.

Thomas McCarthy is a renowned Traveller singer, an artist who has brought Traveller music, particularly songs never written down but central to Traveller Culture across generations, to the general public, other musicians and academic institutions. Thomas

came to national fame through TG4 Gradam Ceoil Award, and an acclaimed documentary on his life and work.

Over Autumn 2023, in partnership with the Cork Traveller Women’s Network, the families, and Triskel, Thomas has been able to create the space and time to work directly with young people from

the Traveller Community, each of them talented singers and performers, and teach them the songs, using the oral tradition, spending time with each young person, transmitting the music directly. The culmination of this time will be a live performance by Thomas and guests – including Rosie McCarthy who featured in West Cork

People last month – on the Triskel stage.

Thursday, December 14 at Triskel Christchurch, 8pm.

For tickets go to triskel-artscentre.ie.

The poet and the publisher

Life gets better when you can see it as a story, happy ending or not. Turn the mundane into the magical or the mythological. A new(ish) generation of poets are delving deeply into the Celtic myths to do just that. Catherine Ronan, who lives near Bandon, is one of them says **Moze Jacobs**.



Catherine Ronan. Pic: Aodhán Floyd

Poet Catherine Ronan has had a bit of a meteoric rise since the Covid lockdowns. (See also our interview in the June issue of West Cork People). At that time she was still seeking to get published. Now her first collection, ‘Elemental Skin’, will be launched on December 6 at DeBarra’s Spoken Word in Clonakilty. The book is being published by Revival Press, an imprint of the Limerick Writers’ Centre, “A space where established and emerging writers are nurtured and thrive,” as per their website www.limerickwriterscentre.com.

Dominic Taylor is Ronan’s publisher. As well as Managing Editor of Revival he is a writer of poetry and songs, with three self-produced albums released. “The first single poetry collection published by Revival was by the Limerick poet John Liddy. We got a donation for it from Frank McCourt, the author of Angela’s Ashes. He sent us \$1,200. I consider it lucky money. I still have it and have added to it incrementally over the years. That’s 161 books down the road. It allows us to take small risks. We’re a community publisher rather than mainstream. Volunteers put the books together so we don’t pay commercial rates for the

pre-production. But the printing unfortunately has gone up by 70 per cent this year alone.”

How did you two make contact?

Catherine: “I emailed Dominic a year ago, mentioning that I’m familiar with the work of poets that he published. When I asked him to read my manuscript, he kindly said yes.”

Dominic: “She brought me into a place that I’m very interested in – the mythical/mystical realm. She has a visionary ability. It’s how the ancient Fíli, poets of ancient Ireland, wrote their poetry.”

Sometimes, Catherine Ronan dives into times long past; with gusto. For example in ‘New Iron Age’ that starts with: ‘I am the tiger in the tiger stone worn / around the blacksmith’s neck, swinging / furiously in the smoky taste of war.’

She’s equally at home with Uncle Jerry of the cabbages, Aunt Mary with her hairy chin, “full of Irish mí-adh”, and Penny Peugeot (a very personable vehicle), as with (black) eagles and wolves, the Greek god Hermes, Brigid, ghosts, Clíodhna (Queen of the Banshees), Joan of Arc, perfumed skeletons. And then

there is the Walled Man of Bandon, Silver Fox, Cider Santa and numerous objects turned into creatures turned back into objects, the heaviness of death and loss made light with dollops of humour.

Would you say you are a visionary?

“I definitely believe that we inhabit a world between the physical and the imaginary, the magical and reality. I’ve always had an internal landscape that I like to explore. It’s like opening a door and going into, as Dominic said, this mystical field. You have to practice to open that door and allow in whatever comes. There’s a poem in the book called ‘Him’. It woke me up around 5am. I just wrote it out as if I had nothing to do with it. ‘Him’ came to me. He was telling me his story as I told his.”

Elemental Skin will be launched by Anton Floyd on December 6, 8:30pm, at DeBarra’s Folk Club, Pearse Street, Clonakilty

www.limerickwriterscentre.com. Video interview with Catherine Ronan and Dominic Taylor on youtube. With thanks to the Cork Arts Office.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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.

I have, throughout this year, mostly resisted writing about art in relation to war, as images of ongoing conflict have never been so widely disseminated, heartrending and explicit, available constantly on everything from social media platforms to highly respected establishment media sites. In 1937, however, when the Spanish Republican government commissioned Picasso's 'Guernica' visual documents of atrocity were not available in 24 hour news feeds; indeed such things did not exist. When 'Guernica' was exhibited at the 1937 World Trade Fair in Paris it helped bring world attention to the Spanish civil war; a monumental painting by the world's most famous artist, in the place of a live video stream.

Writing in the Times and New York Times on 28 April 1937, journalist George Steers published the following eyewitness account of the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica, an account which in its French translation would have a pro-

From Guernica to Gaza: Picasso's image of humanity endures



found influence on Picasso:

"Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders. The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes consisting of three types of German types, Junkers and Heinkel bombers, did not cease unloading on the town bombs weighing from 1,000 lbs. downwards and, it is calculated, more than 3,000 two-pounder aluminium incendiary projectiles. The fighters, meanwhile, plunged low from above the centre of the town to machinegun those of the civilian population who had taken refuge in the fields."

With the men away at war

the victims of the Guernica bombing were defenceless women and children, and it is this fact which Picasso sought to reflect in his aesthetic vision of the horror. As an image it has endured, being one of the most recognisable symbols of the United Nations, which has had a tapestry, commissioned after the original by Nelson Rockefeller, on display in its conference building in New York since 1985 (on loan from the Rockefeller Estate). One might ask why it has remained so cogent when so many other images of war have passed before our eyes? The answers, I would suggest, are manifold, and central to them, Picasso's singular pictorial language and compositional power.

The pictorial language employed in 'Guernica' was the

culmination of years of linear deconstruction and shadow play, and was presaged in works such as Picasso's etching 'Minotauromachy.' It was forged as an 'envelope' composition, with a central pyramid and sideways pyramids on both ends. Within each pyramid one can discern a centre for the vortex of forms which spiral around it. The forms, shadows, lights and lines spill and intersect, forming tumultuous, jagged planes, which create a sense of frantic claustrophobia, the raw graphic lines, underlined by a chilling and powerful stability.

That 'Guernica' was achieved in a linear, cartoonesque language on a scale of over 3x7 meters compounds the overwhelming surreality of the image. A realistic rendering would never have had the same impact,

for the pictorial language itself was a dismemberment. Its very delivery was its message, and this, perhaps, is the secret of its longevity.

What 'Guernica' has to say to us today is chilling; it echoes Goya's 19th century 'Disasters of War' etchings, Pieter Bruegel's 16th century painting, 'The Triumph of Death,' and so many others in between. It stands for Aleppo, for Mariupol; for Gaza city and Khan Yunis, and for all cities and towns indiscriminately bombed in recent history. Picasso's 'Guernica' haunts every failure of the United Nations' dream; it screams the failure of nations to live up to its ideal. The seed of this failure is rage. Writing in Rome, in the first century, C.E., Seneca the Younger wrote a treatise on anger, and his words reverberate

throughout the centuries:

"...you are right in feeling especial fear of this passion, which is above all others hideous and wild: for the others have some alloy of peace and quiet, but this consists wholly in action and the impulse of grief, raging with an utterly inhuman lust for arms, blood and tortures, careless of itself provided that it hurts another, rushing upon the very point of the sword, and greedy for revenge..."

The only way out of Picasso's hallucinatory vision is to heed Seneca's words and quell the fires of one's own rage; to defend, but not to lash out. That, of course, is much easier said than done, but it is, in a nutshell the challenge of the individual, as much as of the body of nations which comprise our precariously balanced world.

OUT & ABOUT



Clonakilty artist and MTU Crawford student Maggie O'Hea is pictured at the 2023 Tech Industry Alliance Leaders Awards for which she designed the glass award.

Pic: Gerard McCarthy

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Wintertide concert in Ballydehob

‘Wintertide’, a performance by West Cork Choral Singers, directed by Susan Nares and accompanied by Kevin Lewis, will take place on Sunday December 10, at 7.30pm in St. Matthias Church, Ballydehob.

The programme will include carols for all to join in, guest soloists, friends, local young performers, songs and music to warm the heart on a winter’s night. With complimentary hot punch (alcohol free) and mince pies.

There will be a retiring collection to cover costs with all profits going to the parish. www.westcorkchoral.ie



New body of work from artist Mary Sullivan shines light on Bere islanders

Mary Sullivan lives and works on Bere Island, off the south coast of Ireland. Her work turns a critical lens on the complex history of women’s labour, island life and identity.

‘From the Inside Out and the Outside’, until December 23 at Uillinn is a new body of work, which started as a direct response to observations of the community of Bere Island during the initial Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. The work focuses on the fragility of the island people while at the same time highlighting their strength and resilience. This exploration is set against the backdrop of Mary’s previous work around gendered labour, female narratives and the military sites on Bere Island including ‘At

Home, At War’ which won the RDS Taylor award in 2018.

The military occupation of Bere Island is a recurring theme of Mary’s work and she continually explores the former military buildings and sites to actively engage with particular experiences of life as lived from a domestic, female and island perspective.

“From the Inside Out, and the Outside In’ reflects on the realities of island life that are often obscured by romanticised notions of islands and island communities. While islands are often perceived as safe havens for those escaping the hustle and bustle of mainland urban lives, for island dwellers, the experience extends far beyond the safety net that comes with being enclosed by the sea.

Importantly within this context, isolation, which is typically associated with vulnerability or a lack of safety, is translated into strength through preparation, communication and exchange,” says the artist.

“Through sculpture, performance, video and drawing, ‘From the Inside Out and the Outside In’ represents the strength of island networks at a time of extreme social isolation and fragmentation. It seeks to draw out the tension between transparency and opacity that has historically structured mainland / island relations, capturing the ebb and flow of its journeys on its way.”

“These characteristics were thrown into sharp relief in 2020 when the world was stricken by fear and chaos at the emergence

of the Covid 19 pandemic. Preparing for emergency and unpredictability is part and parcel of island life and the pandemic was typically met with a pragmatic and practical response on Bere Island. This situation provided a unique opportunity for the community to come together around collective acts of reciprocity and generosity and the eight works developed for this exhibition are inspired by the power and nuance of those actions. For example, the unity of the artwork ‘Glass Houses’, represents the strength of island networks at a time of extreme social isolation and fragmentation, while also highlighting their fragility at the same time.

“Reminiscent of my feelings and experiences upon first moving to Bere Island, these works are shaped by my understanding of island life as being simultaneously defined by openness and limitations, community and autonomy, roots and routes.”

Mary Sullivan graduated from the BA (hons) Visual Art Degree Programme, Sherkin Island in 2018. She was the first recipient of the RDS Taylor Art Award as a graduating student from TU Dublin for her work At Home, At War. Mary has exhibited in institutions in Ireland and the United Kingdom, most notably in the RHA (Royal Hibernian Academy) Gallery, Dublin and at The Leydon Gallery, London. In 2019, she produced and exhibited her debut solo exhibition Breathe

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Mary Sullivan, *The Fine Line*, video still (Island's Point, Bere Island), 2022.
Pic: Mickael Do Couto

in the underground rooms of a disused military shelter on Bere Island which received critical acclaim. In 2019, she was awarded the Graduate Research and Development Award with mentoring from artist Jesse Jones by Create, Ireland’s national development agency for collaborative arts.

This exhibition is supported by the Arts Council /An Chomhairle Ealaíon, a Cork County Council Arts Bursary and Creative Places: The West Cork Islands.

Season's Greetings

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘Big Dreams’ for Rachael Lavelle

Dublin musician and composer Rachael Lavelle released her debut album ‘Big Dreams’ on November 10, and has just embarked on a tour of Ireland that will see her perform her ethereal soundscape in Leap and Kinsale this December. With shows already sold out in Dublin’s Project Arts Centre and Cork city’s Coughlan’s, and two UK dates so far confirmed for next February, her performances at Connolly’s and Prim’s Bookshop are sure to entice a savvy audience.

At only 30 years of age, Rachael Lavelle started her music career relatively late. Though she went to piano lessons as a child, it was her grandfather who had the most influence on her. A pianist and the composer behind Ireland’s 1967 Eurovision entry ‘If I Could Choose’, Michael Coffey wrote the musical comedy ‘Carrie’ which was quite popular in Ireland. A reserved child, Lavelle loved singing along to Disney movies, and so her parents sent her to dance and drama classes. She became obsessed with the Italian language, and so studied for a degree in Sociology and Italian at Trinity College Dublin. Although music would have been a big part of her life, it wasn’t until a stay in Italy as part of an Erasmus programme that she realised she wanted to write her own songs. And write

she did, putting a band together and recording her four-track EP ‘Superman’ at her cousin Damian Moloney’s house. The result was a self-released debut that gathered interest on the Irish music scene and landed her high profile gigs around Dublin.

Interested in film music and electronic music, Rachael enrolled in a Masters in Music and Media Technology the same year, and studying with Kinsale composer Linda Buckley became a revelation. “She’s incredible and completely changed my life,” Lavelle reveals. “I wanted to use my voice in a different way with technology, and the composition classes kind of fed into my songwriting and more into the technology, so I was blending composition, technology and my voice in that way.”

Rachael’s voice is indeed

quite unique. Her friend once remarked that she “spoke in the same register as people yawn”, a dusky vocal tone that is delivered sparsely in song, and with a haunting quality. This is perhaps why she feels at home singing for funerals, which she gets through word of mouth or via undertakers. “It sounds depressing, but it’s actually very life-affirming,” she explains. “I like listening to eulogies and hearing a lot of people’s emotions.”

In 2017, an impulsive trip to Lisbon following a break-up started the process of what would become her debut album. Serendipity brought her to an artist residency which she would end up travelling to every day on a boat. “It was a really peaceful place overlooking the river,” she says. “There wasn’t really anyone around and this is where I wrote a lot of the melodies and made a lot of drum samples.”

Several years in the making, ‘Big Dreams’ is a musical landscape that takes you on a journey into Rachael Lavelle’s psyche. The album was recorded mostly on the computer in her bedroom except for the vocals which were recorded with Alex Barwick in his Dublin studio. Her observations on life are conveyed with a dry sense of humour and achieved through the manipulation of her voice, enveloped with rich synthesisers and a cinematic sound design. She admits not really enjoying spending time in the studio, preferring the experiment at home where she can try things out and not feel under any pressure. Multi-instrumentalist and long-time collaborator Ryan Hargadon, who also performs with Wicklow folk singer-songwriter Anna Mieke and Dublin rapper Kojaque, played saxophone and clarinet on the album. “Ryan has been in my band since the beginning. Me and Ryan will have very similar tastes in synths, and he really understood the sound world that I was trying to make. His collaboration was very big.”

Rachael reveals that she was inspired by the familiar things but that she tried to make them



MUSIC BOX

Lauren Guillery

Lauren Guillery is a rock musician and music lover. Her album ‘Disaster in La La Land’ is available on all music platforms.

dream-like or confusing in some weird way. “Whether that’s being on Instagram, or hearing someone talk, or reading something, I’m always looking for things that are very familiar in my life, and I love trying to reinterpret them in a really dramatic musical context”, she explains. “A lot of the lyrics on the album are inspired by YouTube videos or something my friend said. Simple things that are very ordinary, but I like re-contextualising them.”

There’s an inner monologue that runs through the album. If

you’ve ever travelled by tram in Dublin, you may recognise the voice of broadcaster Doireann Ní Bhriain – the Luas lady that announces all the stops. Rachael approached Ní Bhriain to become the narrator of that inner voice. “I loved the idea of her being a familiar voice that’s telling you where you’re going during the day, but I liked imagining that she was telling us something else, and that she was getting into our heads.”

Since the release of ‘Perpetual Party’ in 2019 – the song that would become the title track for the album, Lavelle has participated in many collaborative projects. During Covid, she presented her repertoire of songs as part of a collaboration with Glasshouse, a contemporary music ensemble that presents collaborative interpretations of contemporary albums. She also performed with Dulciana Vocal Ensemble, a chamber choir committed to promoting the music of female composers. Last year, she appeared on Villagers’ Connor O’Brien album ‘Fever Dreams’ as well as Crash Ensemble’s latest album, and she took part in Cumasc, a music programme on TG4 that paired her up with American composer Peter Broderick for the day. Rachael has also composed music for film, notably she wrote the soundtrack for Laura Quirke’s short film ‘Devotion’. She also played

the voice of Mother Nature in Laragh McCann’s film ‘Where Is She?’. “It’s a really beautiful film about the environment and being a woman,” she remarks.

Rachael Lavelle’s album artwork and accompanying music videos are very compelling. Award-winning film director Bob Gallagher, under Sarah Flanagan’s art direction, produced the videos for ‘Let Me Unlock Your Full Potential’ and ‘Big Dreams’. Inspired by the 1980 performance art piece ‘Rest Energy’ by artistic duo Marina Abramović and Ulay, the video for ‘Let Me Unlock Your Full Potential’ sees Lavelle transformed into William Tell’s wife, reclaiming the power she once held. In the video for ‘Travel Size’, film director Anna Heisterkamp turns Lavelle into an air hostess. “I’ve worked with really amazing people for this album release,” Rachael says. “They’re just all legends, and it’s been so fun to do the visual things because it’s not really a world I’m in at all, so it’s just been fun to work with people on that aspect of things.” For the album artwork, art director Sarah Flanagan came up with the idea of a giant pillow. “Originally there was meant to be press shots of me on the pillow,” Rachael explains. “We tried a few different things, but then it felt like the album was either in the air or in water, something between the two. It made sense that I’d be sleeping or lazing around on a pillow in an imaginary sea.”

Reports of Lavelle’s performances at festivals such as Other Voices in Dingle and Another Love Story in Co. Meath include words such as ‘spellbinding’ and ‘captivating’. A quick online search of her name will confirm that this is indeed the case. For her show at Connolly’s, Rachael Lavelle will be accompanied by Ryan Hargadon on saxophone and clarinet, and Hannah Hiemstra on bass and drums. “I’m super excited to play in Leap,” she exclaims. “I played there opening for Saint Sister in 2019 and I just love the energy there, Sam and everyone, they’re so welcoming and it’s such a special place, and I’m so excited to return!” No doubt everyone in the audience will witness something very special that night.

Rachael Lavelle with support from Ellie O’Neill plays Prim’s Bookshop in Kinsale on December 6, and Connolly’s of Leap on December 8.

BARRY O’CONNELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Irish Landscape Photographer



barryoconnellphotography.com

Free International Delivery | barryoconn@hotmail.com

December Gig Listings

Compiled by Lauren Guillery

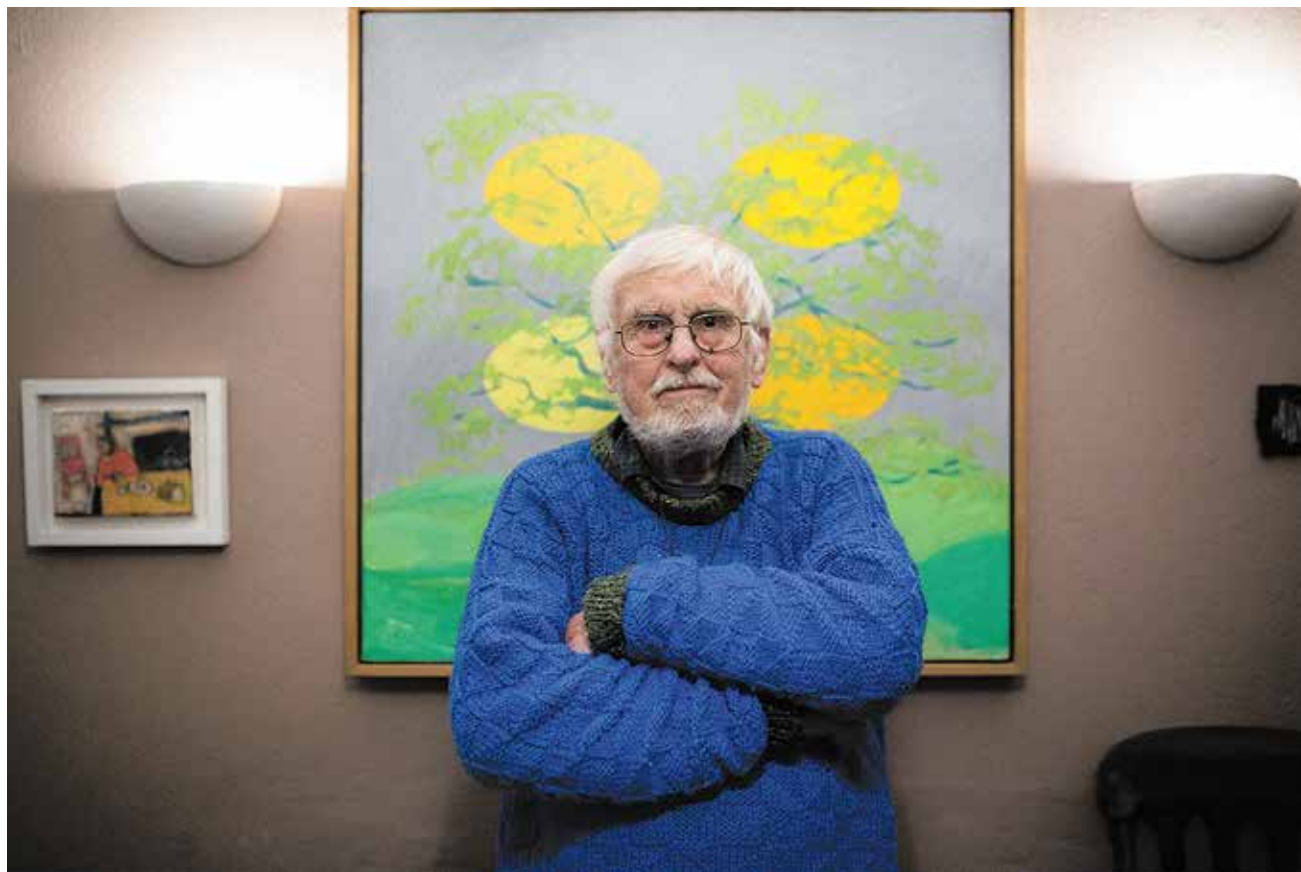
- Dec 1 The White Horse Guitar Club | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 2 Rufus Coates and Perlee | Levi’s Corner House
- Dec 3 The White Horse Guitar Club | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 8 The Songs of Gillian Welsh | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 8 Rachael Lavelle | Connolly’s of Leap
- Dec 9 John Blek | Levi’s Corner House
- Dec 10 John Francis Flynn | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 15 Susan O’Neill | Connolly’s of Leap
- Dec 16 Susan O’Neill | Connolly’s of Leap
- Dec 17 Xylouris White | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 23 Paddy Dennehy | Levi’s Corner House
- Dec 28 Junior Brother | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Dec 30 Kíla | DeBarra’s Folk Club
- Niall Connolly | Levi’s Corner House

Her friend once remarked that she “spoke in the same register as people yawn”, a dusky vocal tone that is delivered sparsely in song, and with a haunting quality.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Local People, Local Wisdom: David Seeger, Castlehaven



Aoise Tutty Jackson

In this photo series West Cork photographer Aoise Tutty Jackson uses her informal and fresh style to connect with, and share the wisdom of, people in our community.

www.aoisetuttyjackson.com
email aoise@92circles.com or call 086 3465373.

Well-known artist David Seeger, who lives in Castlehaven, recently celebrated his 86th birthday. Born in Bradford in West Yorkshire, David was inspired to become an artist at a very early age, growing into a highly prolific and well-loved creative. He has worked with many forms but is particularly well known for his ceramics, and also notable for sculpture, paintings and printmaking in various media. David studied counselling psychology in 1987, which has heavily influenced his work and life. He moved to Ireland in 1990 and has lived in West Cork for the majority of that time.

"I'm very down to earth and

ordinary, I make pots on the wheel. The stuff I put together in a recipe for a glaze is stuff that comes out of a hole in the ground. Literally this stuff becomes jewellery and diamonds – but it's so simple. You don't have to be clever, you just do it for a long time and it works.

There's usually a massive rivalry between other artists, but I'm simply at the other end of that. David Hockney went to the same school as me and I'm grateful for what he can do better than I can, which gives me space to do what I can do, that is unique to me.

I've been through all sorts of tests and conflicts where I've grasped the nettle rather than escaped. My life has been gifted by being in touch with the very best teachers in the world. My Aikido teacher, my counselling teachers and my art teachers. I'm no good at music despite having a great teacher there as well! I have a skipping heartbeat so I'm out of time!

The nature of being awake and alive is that things are uncertain and that's uncomfortable. Once you grasp that you can work creatively, that's the impulse to be creative, let's find a way of doing that. This discomfort of being alive is the key.

I became a trained counsellor, not to be become a counsellor, but because of how it informed my creative process; and also to help me

sort this sh*t out, which has been profound. Every piece of artwork I make is an answer to a question. You could say everything I say has a question mark.

Ho'oponopono has been very helpful during difficult times in my life. It's an ancient practice of forgiveness from Hawaii. There's a word that Carl Jung used which is 'individuation' – Ho'oponopono is the same, you accept 100 per cent responsibility for everything at your end of a conflict. You forgive them and you forgive yourself. First step 'I'm sorry', second step 'Please forgive me', third step 'Thank you' and fourth step 'I love you'. You say it to them, but under your breath, and simultaneously address the phrases to them and yourself (being aware of your own unconscious imperfection as part of the interaction). We all want to feel safe, loving each other's differences is all that needs to happen.

You can change yourself, you shouldn't even attempt to change anybody else, just accept the fact that you can change your attitude to something you don't like. Physically move away from it if it's that bad, but deal with it, don't bury it.

That's the one thing in life, everything changes all the time. There is not one thing that does not change, including you."

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

O’Sullivan pushes for capital funding stream for drama and musical theatre groups



Cork South West TD Christopher O’Sullivan has said that, “Drama groups and musical theatre groups need their own type of ‘sports capital’ style funding.” Deputy O’Sullivan said, “there are a vast amount of incredible drama and theatre groups right throughout Ireland, however, there is a shortage of fit for purposes theatres and performance spaces to accommodate them. This needs to change.” He continued, “for many years arts groups and drama groups have had to battle for general funding from the Department of Community and Rural Affairs, to upgrade or to build new theatres or performance spaces. I think it is high time that we created a new specific capital programme to mirror that of the Sports Capital Programme that we have seen sports groups benefit from.”

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Recently Deputy O’Sullivan chaired the Arts and Culture Committee of the Oireachtas, where representatives from national drama organisations and musical theatre organisations made a plea for extra supports for groups. There was wide consensus at the suggestion of a specific capital fund for the sector. Deputy O’Sullivan continued, “we have groups like Kilmeen Drama group who are incredibly well known on the national stage due to their success, Gaggin Drama Group is another example. They are dotted right around West Cork, but what we lack really is proper formal spaces. I will continue to work towards this goal.”

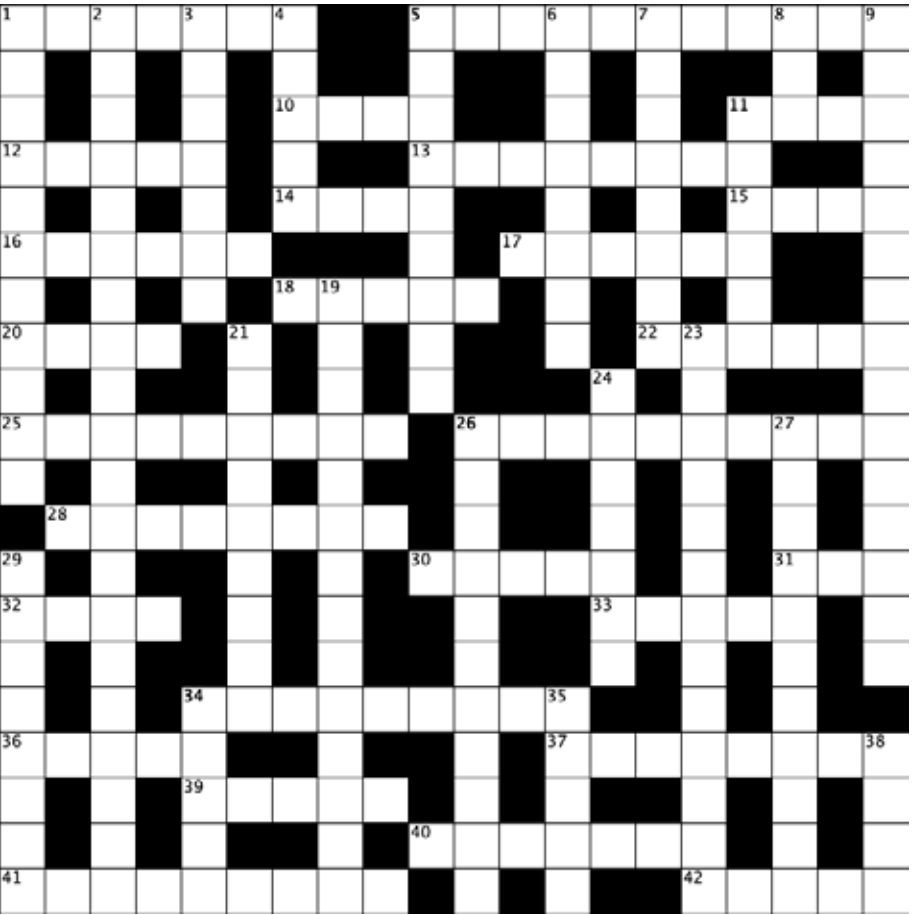
Sudoku

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

				9	7	4		
6								
	2	1						
		2					9	
	1	8	3		4			
			8	7			1	
								5
					3	1		
		5	2	1		3		7

	8				5	7		
		3			9		5	
		9						
9				8	2			6
		6	3	4		2		
3		4		2				
	7			1	8		3	
								1

In the news Crossword



- ACROSS**
1 US Secretary of State Antony (7)
5 Dystopian Suzanne Collins novel, with “The” (6,5)
10 Sounds like Champagne! (4)
11 Seep, discharge (4)
12 Hairpiece (5)
13 Scottish actor known for a ‘succession’ of well-known characters (5,3)
14 Fluctuating toy? (2-2)
15 Husband of a British countess (4)
16 Wholesale’s opposite (6)
17 Mustang Sally singer Andrew (6)
18 Burn with liquid (5)
20 A formal legal document (4)
22 Would benefit from attending Confession perhaps? (6)
25 Overshadowing (9)
26 Soviet leader after Stalin (10)
28 Just the weapon to turn the tables? (8)
30 Small head covering causes sullen look (5)
31 Popular ingredient in punch (3)
32 Web-based diary (4)
33 Masqueraded as silly dopes (5)
34 Like Handel’s sacred music (9)
36 Revived from the past, but now trendy! (5)
37 Actor Ford often seen with a whip? (8)
39 Addictive drug from poppies (5)
40 American frying pan (7)
41 Mr Williams, author of ‘Cat on a Hot Tin Roof’ (9)
- DOWN**
42 Disorderly rugby manoeuvre? (5)
1 Harsh taste to dessert makes for an oxymoron (11)
2 The transition from creating goods by hand to using machines (10,10)
3 Nice kit, spreading some energy (7)
4 Quick, nippy (5)
5 Hostile paramilitary force occupying much of Lebanon (9)
6 Regal act ices over matter of the stars (8)
7 Help organisation become flushed and angry (3,5)
8 Bovine noise (3)
9 Twice-sacked British Home Secretary (6,9)
11 Varient spelling of gas became Irish dance venue (6)
19 A curry, beer cans laid out as festive treat (9,5)
21 A rich pagan folklore surrounds this parasitic plant (9)
23 Boisterous (2,4,7)
24 Team leader in a Yuletide song (7)
26 Odds and ends (5-6)
27 Coiffeur hears driers breaking down (11)
29 Remove painting by Kandinsky, possibly (8)
34 Largest in the deer family (5)
35 Hopscotch necessity (5)
38 It’s not out of the ordinary (4)

Across: 1. Blinken; 5. hunger games; 10. fizz; 11. ooze; 12. toupe; 13. Brian Cox; 14. yo-yo; 15. earl; 16. retail; 17. Strong; 18. scold; 20. writ; 22. shiner; 25. echipsing; 26. Khrushchev; 28. revolver; 30. scowl; 31. run; 32. blog; 33. posed; 34. messianic; 36. retro; 37. Harrison; 39. opium; 40. skillet; 41. Tennessee; 42. screen
Down: 1. bitter-sweet; 2. Industrial Revolution; 3. kinetic; 4. nifty; 5. Hezbollah; 6. galactic; 7. Red Cross; 8. moo; 9. Suella Braverman; 11. oxegen; 19. cranberry sauce; 21. mistletoe; 23. in high spirits; 24. Rudolph; 26. katie-knacks; 27. hairdresser; 29. abstract; 34. moose; 35. chalk; 38. norm

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Molly O'Mahony announces new EP and shares first track

Molly O'Mahony's new EP release is an extension of 'The House of David', her 2022 debut album. "In the midst of a housing crisis, why not go ahead and build what you can, says I," shares Molly.

"The first track 'Quietly' had to be dropped from the original A-side of the album, because it ran too long to be pressed to vinyl. I don't think it belonged as part of the album arc though, in hindsight. It was supposed to be released separately. It's a very wholesome track about first love and being madly in it. I

wrote it when I was twenty-two. My youngest brother Gabriel features on bass vocals in the chorus, one of my favourite features of the arrangement."

Molly O'Mahony has been paving her own unique creative path over the past decade.

She formed the art-folk group Mongoose with three friends upon graduating from UCD in 2012. Within this container, she explored her abilities as a songwriter and instrumentalist, and honed her distinctive singing voice, holding the position of lead vocalist, guitar player and in later years, drummer, in the

band.

Molly's power lies in her ability to feel deeply and to convey that feeling through her words and her voice. Her main mark on the music of Mongoose, both in writing and performance, was the raw emotion at its core.

In 2020, she returned to her home place of West Cork after a decade of living in Dublin. With a back pocket full of personal songs – extensions of her compulsive journaling habit – she was compelled to strip it all back and make an album that reflected her emotional experience of moving through the world.

'The House of David' is the product of her two years under lockdown. Sound boarded against the musical ears of her siblings Matilda and Fiachra, and utilising their complementary voices to sit alongside hers, the arrangements were carved out with vocals at the fore. The songs were recorded in a concentrated haze of musical alchemy at Black Mountain Studios, Dundalk, with producer Alex Borwick at the helm.

Her highly-anticipated album, 'The House Of David', was finally released in its entirety, on November 10, 2022. It held

the 'Album Of The Week' spot on RTE Radio 1 in December of last year, and was nominated in the 'Best Debut Album' category at The Hot Press Awards, 2023.

As this year rounds to a close, she will complete the album edifice with an 'Extension' EP, an addendum to the record, which showcases two previously unheard tracks, and includes a reimagining of the album track 'Tomorrow's Lunch' with the RTE Concert Orchestra, recorded in June of 2022 for RTE Radio 1's 'Sounds of The Summer' series.

Molly also tours Ireland

throughout December to promote the EP and mark the album's first birthday, culminating in her first Vicar Street appearance, supporting the mighty Damien Dempsey, on December 23.

"Mingling romantic vignettes with loving dedications to platonic friendships, sibling adoration and familial loyalty, her undeniably rich, soothing voice tells each story with passion, delicacy and care." Kate Brayden, Hot Press

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Easy winter crafts: Christmas star

Because it is a repetitive activity, knitting is calming and mindful – excellent as a winter wellness practice for your mind! If you are relatively new to knitting or you haven't picked up your needles in years, here is a simple pattern for a Christmas star from Ravelry.com to get you going.

Materials:

Needles: 3mm circular & 6x dpn
Yarn: Less than half a ball of DK or any weight knit at a firm enough gauge, so that it can hold the stuffing.

Abbreviations:

CO: cast on
cdd: centered double decrease,
slip 2 sts as if to k 2 together,
k 1, pssso
k: knit
p: purl
pssso: pass slipped stitch(es) over
sts: stitches
wyib: with yarn in back

Directions:

This star is knit in the round from the points to the centre, starting with a cast-on from where stitches are later picked up to knit the other side.

Two-way cast-on:

Backward loop loosely CO 105 sts onto circular needle. Turn work. K all sts. Turn work. Skip setup rnd, k round 1 onto 5 dpns. Do not turn, join in the round, being careful not to twist. Make sure you have 19 sts on each needle. Continue following the instructions, starting with round 2.

setup rnd	k all sts
round 1 (95 sts)	(k9, cdd, k9) 5 times
round 2 (85 sts)	(k8, cdd, k8) 5 times
round 3 (75 sts)	(k7, cdd, k7) 5 times
round 4 (65 sts)	(k6, cdd, k6) 5 times
round 5 (55 sts)	(k5, cdd, k5) 5 times
round 6 (45 sts)	(k4, cdd, k4) 5 times
round 7 (35 sts)	(k3, cdd, k3) 5 times
round 8 (25 sts)	(k2, cdd, k2) 5 times
round 9 (15 sts)	(k1, cdd, k1) 5 times
round 10	cdd 5 times (5 sts)

Cut yarn, using tapestry needle thread tail through remaining 5



sts twice. Weave in along back of cdd-column. Cut off tail or thread it through tip of column if you want to use it as a hanger.

Flip work upside down. Join yarn and knit picked up sts, starting with setup round.

Picking up sts for other side of Star: With circular needle, working from right to left and

from the top down, pick up purl bumps below sts on dpns. Make sure you pick up as many sts as you have CO.

Work round 1-8 of instructions. Weave in ends and stuff the star firmly. Knit round 9 and 10. Finish as described for first half of Star.

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If this simple project has whetted your appetite, Olga Prins of Olga's Own has put together some lovely kits (pattern and required yarn) that can also be posted. For those on a budget, she has a range of one-ball wonders – hats, cowls and socks, all priced under €20. And for those looking for something a bit more substantial, she offers a stunning selection of kits for

scarves and shawls ranging from €34 to €60. These beautifully crafted pieces are sure to elevate any ensemble. Call into her shop to see the range or contact her via WhatsApp on 089 6177905. Olga also runs regular adult and teenage workshops in craft and knitting at her shop in Ballinspittle village if you would like some help to improve your skills.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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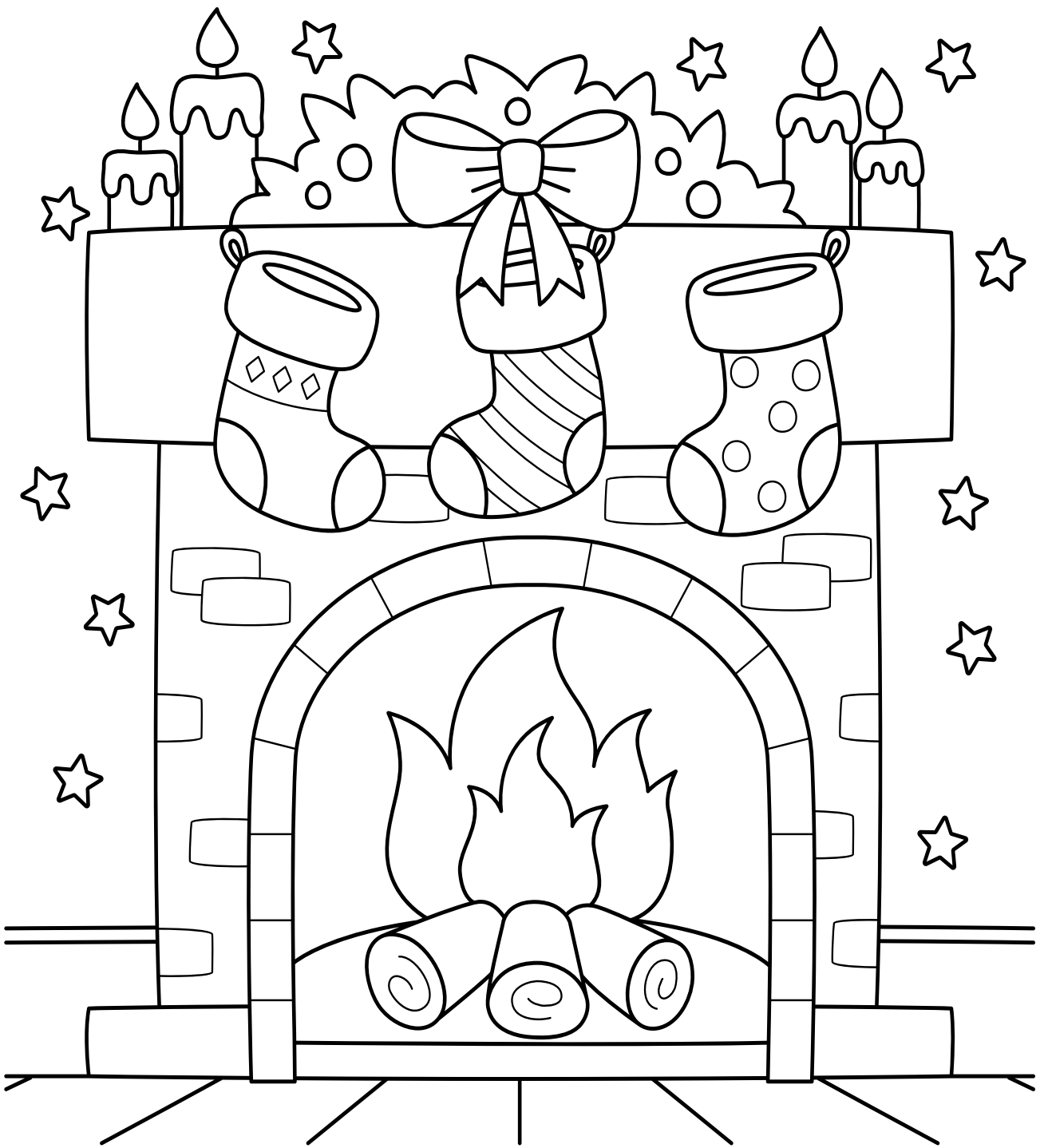
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COMPETITION

Spot the difference

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Ask your guardian to take a photo of the circles and email it, with your name & age, to info@westcorkpeople.ie before December 12. Please put 'Snowman competition' in the subject line.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Craft Corner

This month **Natalie Webb** is showing us how to make a holly wreath.

"Wow its hard to believe that its nearly Christmas! Homemade decorations are really fun so I hope you enjoy making this holly wreath and maybe see what other decorations you can make!"

Materials:

- Thick cardboard. I used an old base from a cake that I had kept for crafting because it is gold but you can use any colour.
- Light green card and dark green card.
- Marker
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Little red pom poms (I didn't have these so I used bits of red pipe cleaner that I twirled into a circle.)
- Ribbon or string to hang your wreath.

Method:

Using a template (for example a small side plate) cut out a circle from your thick cardboard. Then, using a smaller



template, draw a circle in the middle of your disc and cut it out.

On the light green card draw a holly leaf approx 7cm long. Using this as a template draw 7 more on the light green card and eight on the dark green so that you have 16 leaves in total (depending on the size of your circle of card you might need more or less leaves).

With a black marker draw leaf veins on the holly leaves.

Now glue the leaves in a symmetrical circle pattern

around your cardboard disc. I did it so that the top and bottom of the leaves slightly overhung the edges.

Stick your red pom poms or little bits of pipe cleaner (if you don't have these you can cut out red paper or card) around the bottom inside edge of your wreath to look like holly berries,

Using ribbon or string you can tie this around the wreath to hang it up.

I hope you all have a lovely crafty Christmas...enjoy!



Young people offered the chance to have their creative wishes come true

Have you ever wished you could play a musical instrument, write a story, design clothing or make a comic book? Cork County Council and Creative Ireland has announced a new arts programme for 2024 that aims to grant the creative wishes of Cork children and young people.

As part of Cruinniú na nÓg in 2023 a young person living in West Cork learned how to play the drums in a series of workshops. This had been their dream, and the opportunity to participate in the free workshops as part of our national day of creativity helped them to realise their ambitions. This inspired the team behind Cruinniú na nÓg in County Cork to develop a programme that helps

more young people to see their wishes come true.

Applications will be accepted for 'My Creative Wish' from all schools in County Cork and eight winning wishes from young people up to age 17 will be granted. The winners will receive six creative workshops for themselves and their class, facilitated by professional artists.

The winners, along with their parents and teachers, will meet with Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn to learn how their wish will come true. Mayor O'Flynn said, "I am looking forward to hearing about the creative wishes of our imaginative young people. When I was growing up, I had many creative ambitions and I would have loved an oppor-

tunity such as this. Whether it's playing the ukelele, or learning to a new art form, the young people whose wishes are granted will have a fantastic and creative experience."

The eight winning creative wishes will be showcased, with the support of the school, as part of the National Day of Creativity, Cruinniú na nÓg on Saturday, June 8, 2024. This may take the form of an exhibition, concert, or performance. 16 runner-up proposals will be selected to receive a free Creative Ireland funded workshop at their local Library.

For more information email creativeireland@corkcoco.ie

The deadline for receipt of applications is December 15, 2023





Handmade essential oil diffuser, with range of scents to choose from, €24.95 from **Inchydoney Candles, Clonakilty** which also has gift boxes available and made to order.



Green Wood Armchairs by West Cork artists Alison Ospina. Left is a hazel armchair upholstered using a rare breed Gotland Fleece (from a Swedish Island of same name). For sale at the Blue House Gallery, Schull for €950. Open daily in Dec. Right is another hazel armchair made in collaboration with Clonakilty handweaver, Suzanne McGuirk, on sale at Cnoc Bui Arts Centre, Union Hall in their first ever Christmas Member's Show for €950. Open Thurs - Sun 12-4pm until December 17.



Abbey Furniture, Skibbereen gifts would be welcome in any home. From a huge selection this year you'll find Libourne damask bedspreads by Forever England, from €110; this set of 3 nesting tables €229 and this wicker basket with leather straps €35.



Gardeners love stylish tools such as this stainless steel heart-shaped trowel €33 and watering can with 4.5l capacity €32.99, both from **Clonakilty Garden Centre**



These memorable recycled glass baubles, made by Fair Trade artisans in India, are €12.50 each in **The Green Dot, Clonakilty**



Newly available are these West Cork Folk candles €28 each or 4 for €100 at **Grey Heron, Bandon**



Also known as a bonsai rake, this copper weeder 'Spika' is handy for delicate weeding work. The three tined rake can be used to gently remove soil and weeds from around plants while the spatula can dig out weed roots. 26cm long. €29.90 at **www.fruithillfarm.com**

St Eval Geranium Candle €18.65 at **An Tobairin, Bandon**



Bring the garden in with this Amaryllis bulbs and pot €11.95 or Orchid and pot €19.90 at **Deelish Garden Centre, Skibbereen**



Another stylish gift for a home grower is this **Yvon Flynn Pea Picker** - €145 at **Forest & Flock, Bantry**



Handmade ceramic stoneware bowls €23 and small dishes €14 from **Fiachra Crowley, Kenmare**.



Luxurious Klippan wool throws €85 at **Thornhills, Skibbereen**



Mr Kite table lamps €72 from **Courtyard Crafts, Schull**



Talking point lighting by Dublin designers **Kopper Kreations**, from €130 at **Grey Heron, Bandon**

HOME & GARDEN

Christmas at Deelish Garden Centre



THE NATURAL GARDENER

Noah Chase

Noah studied horticulture at the Eden Project in Cornwall, England. He now co-manages a family run nursery, Deelish Garden Centre in Skibbereen, specialising in rare, unusual and edible plants. His passion is sustainable gardening, useful plants and care of the environment.

After a wet start to November, it has been lovely to finish the month with some settled dry spells and mild temperatures for

this time of year. We are very excited to be hosting our annual Christmas Craft Fair on Sunday, December 3, from 11am-5pm. The Christmas fairs here have gotten bigger and better with each year and this year will not be a disappointment. With over 40 stalls booked in this year, including many new arts, crafts, food and drink stalls, there will be something for everyone. It is a fantastic opportunity to support locally-produced products that can make unique gifts. By supporting these bespoke local producers, we are all keeping our local economy (as well as the community spirit) vibrant and healthy.

As usual, we supply living Christmas Trees at this time of year. The quality this season is fantastic, as they are from a specialist, who grows them inside pots from a young age, which means minimal root disturbance and maximum chance of successfully growing it on for many more Christmases to come. This year, we have Picea and Nordmann Fir tree varieties. The Nordmann is the most popular non-shed, soft-needled variety. We have



Bare root trees, hedging and fruit have all now arrived and have been heeled in the ground.

small trees from 3 to 4ft high, as well as larger 6ft and 8ft trees. I have written in previous articles about the many benefits of switching to a living Christmas tree and each year I see more and more families making this positive switch, and I hope this trend will continue to grow each year. We also have a limited number of beautiful glass Christmas tree ornaments that are proving to be very popular this year.

The month of December is always busy at Deelish! Bare root trees, hedging and fruit have all now arrived and have been heeled in the ground. This year the selection, quality and value is better than ever, after a great year of growing. With prices starting from 70 cent for a 3ft hedging tree, many

gardeners choose this time of year to plant hedging or extend their forestry plantings. We are also helping farmers to source bare root trees for the ACERS government scheme.

We have a great range of bare root fruit trees, including Apples (as well as Irish heritage varieties), Plums, Plumcots (plum-apricot cross), Pears (as well as Asian pears which are brilliant!), Cherries, Cobnuts, Almond, Peaches and Nectarines to name a few! Soft fruit is also very popular, as we can supply this in bare root form as well. Rhubarb (3 giant stools for €10), Asparagus (4 crowns for €10), Raspberries (10 canes for €15), Red white and black-currants, Worcesterberries and Gooseberries are all good edible options. Newly-arrived potted fruit includes Grapes (indoor and outdoor), Blueberries (8 varieties including our own native Bilberry), Chilean Guava (3 varieties), Kiwis, Mulberries, Jostaberries, Loganberries, Blackberries, Pomegranate, Sea

buckthorn, Aronia, Figs, Feoijoa and Hops to make your own teas and beer! As you can see from the list above, this is the best time of year in terms of variety and value to start planting trees, hedging and fruit.

If you are looking for an unusual gift for a gardener in your life, we have you covered! Gift ideas include a huge selection of unusual, hardy and beautiful plants, quality gardening tools, organic seeds, solar lighting, a fantastic selection of pots and garden ornaments, Indoor plants, air plants, Bonsai and Citrus plants, kids tools, as well as loads of bespoke useful gardening gifts. If you can't decide, our gift vouchers are also always very popular. We look forward to seeing many of you here at the craft fair on December 3 or in the near future. Wishing all our friends, customers and West Cork People readers a Happy Solstice, Christmas and New Year!

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HOME & GARDEN

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GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

In December, the garden can provide many natural decorative plants to adorn both the house and garden for the festive season.

Equally the garden can be a great source of fresh vegetables for the Christmas period:

Carrots, parsnips, swedes, cauliflower, Savoy and winter cabbage and of course the essential component of the Christmas Dinner table, Brussel sprouts. Protect members of the cabbage/brassica family against pigeons by netting the crop to exclude feathered intruders. Brussels Sprouts and winter cabbage should be earthed up and staked as a precaution against winter winds and gales. Tall Brussels sprouts can be especially prone to wind damage if not secured against winds and gales so use stout, robust, sound stakes. Pick off dead leaves as they appear.

Colour for Christmas

Brighten up winter containers with winter hardy shrubs such as Skimmia – red-berried varieties or red-budded varieties such as Skimmia rubella, which will retain its red buds until March. Skimmias are evergreen shrubs with glossy, evergreen foliage. Use an ericaceous, lime-free compost for best results.

The Christmas Cherry is bright and cheerful and fulfils the festive requirements of bright mid-winter colour. The berries last all winter, often until Easter (protect from birds and vermin). If you encounter a particularly cold snap of weather bring indoors into a cool, bright place. Christmas cherries are inexpensive to buy, usually under five euro or more for larger pots. You can associate them with silver variegated ivy, winter flowering Heathers, dwarf bulbs such as Iris, Snowdrops, Dwarf Narcissi and Tulips, Hyacinths, Scillas, Pansies, Violas, Polyanthus, Bellis, dwarf Wallflowers.

Use fresh compost with some slow-release fertiliser mixed thoroughly in. Dispose of old debris from the summer and check that drainage is working ok and that there is an adequate outlet for excess water.

Check that the plants you buy are fresh and not drawn, or tired-looking or with symptom's of disease such as botrytis or leaf spot. Never buy poor plants, as if you start off with good plants, you will have a greater chance of success.

Plants for Christmas

Plants are a very acceptable gift for Christmas. Amongst the most popular choices are Camellias, Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Azaleas. Roses are popular choices, including the David Austin Roses, which come in a range of attractive colours and of which many of the varieties are very fragrant. Why

Cootamundra Wattle
(Acacia baileyana)



not give a gift of a collection of Apple trees or a Flowering Cherry or Crab Apple – ideal for the new homeowner. A flowering crab will provide you with both blossom and fruit that is highly decorative and can be used in cooking as well.

Spring Flowering Bulbs for Outdoor

It's not too late to plant bulbs to flower in the Spring! You can still plant Daffodils, Tulips, Hyacinths, Anemones and Scillas. Make sure bulbs are firm and sound and if you have some bulbs lying around, get them into the ground without delay. Label & mark all bulbs with variety, colour and height. Bulbs are best planted in bold groups of the same variety – plant in groups of five, seven or nine.

Christmas trees

Natural, Irish-grown Christmas trees are a popular choice, as they both look and smell well. The nordmaniana are the most popular choice. If you are not ready right away after purchasing your Christmas tree, do keep it in a cool place until you are ready to bring it indoors. When it is brought indoors, provide a reservoir for water. Many Christmas tree stands have an in-built reservoir.

Continue Planting

Continue planting trees, shrubs, climbers, shelter trees, hedging, fruit trees and bushes. If the ground is not waterlogged or frozen, do proceed with planting. Heel in plants if soil conditions are not suitable. Stake trees securely, protecting bark with tree guards if rabbits or hares are active.

Trees and Shrubs for Winter Colour

Acacia (wattle, mimosa) need a sheltered well-drained position.

They provide attractive foliage and flower colour.

Hamamelis – the witch hazel, flowers in the December-February period. They have attractive flowers in the depths of winter with sweet fragrant flowers that will fill the garden with a wonderful fragrance. The flowers come in attractive shades of sulphur yellow and reds.

Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill' is one of the best shrubs for flowering in mid-winter. It flowers December to late February when it will fill the winter air with its delightful fragrance.

Viburnum tinus flowers October to April and is evergreen.

Viburnum x bodnatense 'Dawn' flowers in mild spans from October until May. Sweetly scented.

Aucuba japonica 'Variegata' is a hardy variety with evergreen foliage – gold-spotted splashes on an evergreen leaf, bright red, glistening berries – tried and trusted.

Early Rhododendrons such as Christmas Cheer will flower early and provide great colour at an otherwise quiet period for colour.

Winter Heathers provide great colour all winter. They are most effective planting in informal groups. If you have alkaline soil add an ericaceous compost. Many of the best varieties will flower continuously for up to six months – unperturbed by heavy rains, gales or cold. Associate with dwarf conifers, Azaleas, Ivies, Dwarf bulbs, Eonymus (gold or silver-evergreen)

Fruit Garden

Check stored fruit, discarding any rotten. Check apple and pear trees for canker. Check tree stakes and ties, replacing any that are broken or rotten. Winter prune apples and pears. Prune

currants and gooseberries.

Prune grape vines. Vines should be pruned when dormant, as they will bleed copiously if delayed.

Christmas Pot Plants

Christmas pot plants are as traditional as the Christmas tree or turkey.

Amongst some of the most popular are:

Poinsettia with their red, white, pink or marbled bracts. Keep in a temperature of 13-15c, watering sparingly and avoiding draughts. A liquid feed on a monthly basis is beneficial.

Hyacinths and Narcissi (forced) keep in a cool, bright room, away from hot fires.

If kept too warm they will become limp and the flowering time will be shortened.

Christmas Cactus – bright trumpet flowers.

Keep in a bright area out of strong sunlight, at temperatures of 15-21C. Don't keep in water more than 10-15 minutes. Christmas Cacti can live up to 100 years. Keep out of draughts and avoid sudden changes in moisture, temperature or sunlight. Feed monthly June-August to encourage Christmas flowering. Colour range includes red, pink, white or purple.

Greenhouse

Ensure heaters are in working order. Any watering should be done early keeping water off flowers and foliage. Clear out cropped tomatoes. Keep a watch for pest, dead leaves and wilted flowers.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and peace, good health and success in the New Year.

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HOME & GARDEN

Increase in Septic Tank grants to benefit even more homeowners in 2024 - Lombard

Homeowners dealing with failing septic tanks will be assisted with funding to carry out improvement works up to €12000 from January 1, 2024, a Fine Gael Senator has said.

Fine Gael Senator, Tim Lombard said that an increase in grants available for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (commonly known as Septic Tanks) will also benefit even more homeowners from next year.

"The Septic Tank grants are to be increased to €12,000 from

€5,000, representing a massive 140 per cent increase," Senator Lombard outlined. "But significantly, the previous qualifying condition that the septic tank must be registered with the local authority prior to February 1, 2013 will be removed, meaning that more homeowners across Cork will be eligible to avail of these grants from January 1.

"These enhanced grants can be used to repair, upgrade, or even replace septic tanks which aren't fit for purpose. This is really positive news for owners of standalone and rural housing

who have faced challenges maintaining proper functioning septic tanks. We know that there are almost half a million homes around the country which aren't connected to a public sewage network and therefore have their own network.

"An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report showed that half of septic tanks inspected failed the report, with an additional 20 per cent posing an immediate risk to human health on the environment. If sewage isn't treated correctly, it can carry harmful bacteria and

viruses which pose a threat to our gardens, rivers, and streams.

"That is why it is so important to have a high standard septic tank – but heretofore that has proven costly and stressful for homeowners. These significant grants increases are set to benefit more homeowners in Cork than ever before, benefitting their families, their homes and land and also the environment," concluded Senator Lombard.

PETS

Teaching owners to teach their dogs



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.

Just occasionally, I get a call from an owner and before I'm told the nature of the problem, he/she gives a sheepish laugh saying 'I know I'm the reason my dog is doing what he does and it's me that needs the training!' I join in the laughter and answer reassuringly that it could just be mixed messages.

But, in reality, I'm delighted with this comment because it generally means that the person understands that sorting out a dog's behavioural problem more than likely means a change in the owner's ways

before anything can happen. That means the owner is already receptive to making those necessary changes in a genuine bid to improve life for both of them.

There's no such thing as a 'quick fix' or a 'magic wand' in dog training but it's depressing when I visit someone who believes that I can produce a result without the owner making changes. In most of those cases I've found that a dog doesn't comply with any effort to train him because he knows that his owner isn't going to change his ways. So, in effect, why should he?

I work on the philosophy that respect is a two-way street in any relationship whether between two humans or inter-species. A lack of respect on one side or the other means there's an imbalance in that relationship and it won't work long-term.

All of us are sentient beings. In other words, we all have the same emotions but we, humans, give direction to our canine companions while respecting their feelings.

Showing consideration for those emotions doesn't mean that we are a pushover for our dogs. Rather I believe we can work to train and understand them from a position of strength.

For example, if I see that my dog is fearful of other dogs, I don't pander to that fear. Instead I feel it's important for me to

recognise his fear and then give him another, more positive, way of regarding other dogs. So I won't try to force him to 'meet and greet' them, but nor will I avoid them. I will give him a chance to view other dogs from a distance. I keep him far enough away that he can cope so that he doesn't feel the need to bark, growl, lunge or use any other negative behaviour to hopefully make the dogs disappear.

If he can view them in a relaxed manner, his brain begins to work again and he can then notice that I'm not bothered by them. Hopefully he will take his queue from me especially if he has learnt to trust my judgement in other things. I might try to offer him a treat as a reward for standing or sitting quietly. The simple act of taking a treat – or not – tells me how he feels. If he eats it as normal, he's quite relaxed. Gulping it down means he's slightly aroused and I probably need to move him back a little further. Spitting out or ignoring the treat means he's reaching his threshold when he will feel the need to react. If that's the case, then I will take him back a good deal further until he can stand, sit quietly or even lie down. That means he's in a comfortable space. I might then very gently praise him for doing



so well and simply stay put.

He can relax because he knows that I'm listening to his signals. In this case, he's telling me he's afraid. It doesn't matter whether I think his fear is groundless. The important point is that I'm listening to him and giving positive direction.

If you think about it, we, humans, like our doubts, fears or worries to be acknowledged and not just laughed at or dismissed. It would, therefore, make sense to acknowledge whatever is bothering our dogs and lead by example.

Each dog is different and will obviously react in a particular manner. Some years ago I had a very laid back Boxer who trusted me implicitly which made life easy for me.

Saffron, my present Boxer, is the excitable type which is teaching me to be very quiet, grounded and patient when she overreacts to a given situation. Getting over-excited myself only results in her becoming completely OTT. But, quietly

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calling her to return to and focus on me works wonders.

This has meant me having to change my ways and to recognise the extent of the particular emotions she's displaying in any given context rather than expecting her to do my bidding no matter what. And that's

what I mean about an owner changing his ways to help his dog adapt to a new and better behaviour.

SPORT



Justin Crowley, Clonakilty receiving his 15 Year Service Award from Thomas Byrne, Minister of State at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Sport and Physical Education) and Clare McGrath, Chair, Water Safety Ireland at the Water Safety Ireland National Awards Ceremony in Dublin Castle on November 14.

Cork applications for Texaco 'Support for Sport' funding invited

Applications from sports clubs in Co. Cork and beyond are now invited under the fourth Texaco Support for Sport initiative in which a fund of €130,000 will be divided in €5,000 amounts and distributed to successful applicants in each of the twenty-six counties.

Over the past three years, a gross figure of €385,000 has been divided amongst 77 sports clubs across Ireland, of which €5,000 each went to three successful Co. Cork clubs: Riverstown Amateur Boxing Club, Glanmire (2021), Rockbán Ladies Football and Camogie Club (2022) and Bandon Ravens Basketball Club (2023).

Open to all sports clubs irrespective of sporting discipline, size, membership, age, cultural appeal or gender (including clubs that may have been unsuccessful in their application previously), the initiative is one

that 'recognises and supports the valuable contribution that sports clubs make to communities and throughout Irish society'.

Launching the 2024 initiative, James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations, Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited – the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand – described the programme as one that "provides a route to vital funding for those clubs and communities that need it most."

Following lines similar to that which proved successful over the past three years, clubs wishing to apply should first register their interest on www.TexacoSupportforSport.com, followed, before closing date, by a completed application that should include details of their sporting activity, the importance of the club in their local community, the purpose for which the funding is sought,

and the use to which the funds will be put.

A sole qualifying requirement is that clubs must be properly constituted and supply confirmation of a valid Games and Sports Exemption number (GS number) issued by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Closing date for applications is January 31, 2024 with adjudication taking place thereafter.

Leading the process once again is Texaco Support for Sport ambassador, broadcaster and former Irish rugby international, Donncha O'Callaghan. Clubs that received funding to date span the spectrum of Irish sporting activity – archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, bowls, boxing, camogie, climbing, cricket, diving, Gaelic football, golf, gymnastics, handball, hockey, hurling, kayaking, rowing, rugby, soccer and tennis amongst them.

MOTORING



CAR
REVIEWS
Sean Creedon

A funky VW Buzz

a year. Truth be told up to now we haven't see many of them on Irish roads.

Graeme Lennox, Head of Group Communications with VW in Liffey Valley, Dublin explained that there were 'availability problems' with the Buzz earlier this year, but he added that VW now has attractive finance deals which means we should soon see more of the funky looking car/mini bus on our roads.

I think funky is the word that best describes the I.D. Buzz and the yellow and white colours of my test car certainly added to that funky look. The yellow colour is used throughout the interior making for a very bright décor.

When you sit in the views of the road ahead and your surroundings are really brilliant. I think it should make for safer driving and no driver is ever going to say that they didn't see you as the car is so bright.

The I.D. Buzz is 4.7 metres in length, which means you need to be careful when driving. But it's very easy car to manoeuvre and there is an excellent reversing camera. At the front it really has that retro look of the VW K2 mini bus from the sixties and the classy-looking alloys certainly added to the overall appeal. It has been described as

the most head-turning car that VW has ever built.

The grandchildren loved it, the colour, the interior space and the two sliding rear doors in the top of the range Max version. I was going to say they also liked the mini trays on the back of the front seats, which can be used to hold a laptop. But I don't think the trays were ever used; you only need a hand to hold a mobile phone.

We are told that that a seven-seater version will be available next year. I reckon that the seven-seater is unlikely to have as much luggage space as the current five-seater version, but it will have a better battery. There are two levels in the massive boot and the top one can take five bulky cases and you can squeeze in a few carry-on cases and bags underneath. Prices for the five-seater start at €69,770 which is certainly not cheap. Road tax is €120.

The official range for the I.D. Buzz with a 77kW battery is 409km but once I got up to 80 per cent the charging slowed down. At 90 per cent my range had increased to 340km, so I reckon that at 100 per cent should get you 360km. But at that stage the taxi driver in the queue behind me was getting a bit impatient.



Our grandchildren were visiting from Denmark recently and knowing a few weeks back that they were on their way, I had booked the seven-seater VW Multi Van. However, there was a slight technical problem with the Multi Van and VW gave me their five-seater electric I.D. Buzz instead.

I'm not a huge fan of electric cars, but I was probably more disappointed that it was a five-seater, as a seven-seater was what I needed for the grandchildren. However, we managed even if it meant taking two cars on various tourist trails instead of one.

The I.D. Buzz was voted Continental Irish Car of the Year for 2023, but I hadn't driven the car or mini bus for almost

SPORT

Bandon GAA turning out the leaders of the future

An initiative taking place at Bandon GAA club – the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative (DEYLI) – is aiming to turn teenagers into leaders. Club PRO Liz Gleeson shares her delight with **Matthew Hurley** that such a project is coming to fruition.

Since 2014, the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative has seen young GAA members complete the yearlong programme, gaining a level six third level qualification in Youth Leadership and Community Action for their efforts. The initiative is a tribute to the Roscommon legendary footballer Dermot Earley, who passed away in 2010 and has been brought to life in a collaboration between the Gaelic Athletic Association, Faoige and NUI Galway.

“We started the project on February 9, 2022. Before that there were a number of facilitators who came together through Paddy Duggan and we did some training. That was through the GAA and NUI Galway, delivered by Faoige and we each got a foundation diploma in training education,” explains Liz.

“We set up a healthy club initiative in Bandon, which is basically a hub in our community, looking after people’s health and their wellbeing. It is open to all aspects of the community to get involved. We were looking at running a programme that would motivate, encourage and develop skills. We were used to seeing the kids playing on the pitch and we could see that there were leaders among them but we wanted to take them off the pitch and enhance those skills. We heard about the Youth Leadership programme and we thought that it would fit into our ethos of health and well being in the community.”

Bandon is the only GAA club in Cork county to take on board this initiative, which runs over the academic year (September – June) and consists of three modules, involving 30 hours of workshops designed to develop the

leadership skills that Dermot epitomised on and off the field.

“We got the first programme started with 16 participants,” shares Liz. “The second programme was the following September and we had another 16 participants in that. Now we are in our third one and we have 19, our biggest number. It’s increasing each time and we are in the middle of module one. We have over 50 children now that are in the middle of or have completed the Dermot Earley foundation.”

The project promises to be a positive, not just on the pitch, but in other areas of the children’s lives.

“We’re looking at assessment skills, communication skills and listening skills. A lot of times we use analogies comparing things to their football or hurling teams. We were talking recently about how if your teammate is across the way and they can’t hear you shouting, you need to get a point across. I do think it will massively help on the pitch. All the skills we focus on are used and can be transferred into any area of our life,” the PRO explains.

The DEYLI has had over 1000 members aged between 15 and 18 taking part in the year-long programme nationwide.

“When you think back to who Dermot Earley was himself, he was an ambassador, a legend. Some say he was the greatest footballer to never win an All Ireland. He was very high up in the army. He was chief of staff in the defence forces,” Gleeson adds.

“A lot of these kids play in minor teams at the moment and to see them enhance as leaders, develop on the pitch but off the pitch too, that’s really important. The beauty of what we’re doing is we are developing skills on and off the pitch and developing values.

“I think Bandon GAA will develop hugely from it because a lot of young adults in particular who have completed it returned and started coaching the underage groups.”

The DEYLI has three modules for participants to complete. The first of those involves gaining essential leadership skills and focuses on them as an individual, building up self-awareness, communication and values.

The second module focuses

on the ability to lead as part of a team. There is an opportunity here to develop a research project in a small team to a large audience

The third module will test the independence of the participants. It is 20 hours of self-directed learning. They would go into a local club or community project and work for that time voluntarily.

“I feel it more in the room with the participants,” Gleeson acknowledges. “When they come in, they might be a bit nervous or unsure to begin with. Then over time, you can see with this group of 19 they have developed. We were doing communication skills recently. We were looking at leadership styles such as passive aggressive or assertive leadership styles. They were doing role plays. It was great to see them get into character and you can see them developing now as you’re sitting with them. They’re coming out of themselves.

“We put them in different teams in these sessions and you can slowly see leaders emerging. I love being present in it and seeing them develop as we go through the programmes,” she says.

Some graduates from this programme in the club have already received level 6 third level qualification in Youth Leadership and Community Action.

The results of the efforts are being felt in the club and across the community of Bandon.

The club hosts an All Stars event for kids with special needs on occasion with some graduates returning to coach it, as well as U9 and U10 teams too.

Other clubs in the county have been in touch with Bandon for advice on how to run such a programme: They see the benefits.

“We have eight facilitators at the moment. We all come from different areas. I’m a social worker myself. There’s engineers, teachers, nurses. We’re all involved in Bandon GAA and bring our own experiences into the programme. We’d love to see more and more kids in the next few years. If we were to get as many Transition Year students into the programme as possible to do an extracurricular activity, that would be brilliant.”



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Gleeson points out.

“There are a lot of people benefiting from this. Our community is too. They’re out engaging with different clubs, tidy towns and youth services. It’s great to see something that was a thought initially develop into this fantastic programme where we have touched the lives of 50 different young people.

“We as facilitators learn so much from the kids too. They keep us interested. We wouldn’t be doing it if we hadn’t met 50 young people from Bandon who have inspired us,” the PRO says.

The legendary Earley himself once said, “Your attitude is more important than your ability. Your motives are more important than your methods. Your courage is more than your cleverness and always have your heart in the right place.”

As time goes on that quote no doubt will come to be associated with Bandon GAA and the leaders it turns out both on and off the pitch.

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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. E.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. E.O.D

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

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. E.O.D

POWERFUL PRAYER TO ST MARTHA

I take refuge in your help and protection giving myself completely to you so that you may help me in my tribulation, and in proof of my affection and as an act of my thanks I promise to propagate your devotion to which I am already given console me in my tribulation I supplicate thee. By the great joy that gladdened your heart when you harboured in your home Bethany the so saviour of the world intercede for me and all of my family and thus remedy our necessities, especially those ones that now afflict us (request) as you did the dragon that lay at your feet. Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be. E.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. E.D.

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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. M.L.L

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. N.M.C.C

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. N.M.C.C

UNFAILING PRAYER TO ST ANTHONY

O'Holy Saint Anthony, greatest of saints, your love for God and charity for his creatures, made you worthy, when on Earth to process 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 be forever yours. Amen E.D

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Friday	22 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	23 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	24 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	25 Dec	CLOSED
Tuesday	26 Dec	CLOSED
Wednesday	27 Dec	CLOSED
Thursday	28 Dec	OPEN
Friday	29 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	30 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	31 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	1 Jan	CLOSED
Tuesday	2 Jan	OPEN

Business as usual from 3rd Jan

CLONAKILTY

OPEN: 9-12.30 & 1.30-4.30

Friday	22 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	23 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	24 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	25 Dec	CLOSED
Tuesday	26 Dec	CLOSED
Wednesday	27 Dec	CLOSED
Thursday	28 Dec	OPEN
Friday	29 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	30 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	31 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	1 Jan	CLOSED
Tuesday	2 Jan	OPEN

Business as usual from 3rd Jan

SKIBBEREEN

OPEN: 9-12.30 & 1.30-4.30

Friday	22 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	23 Dec	CLOSED
Sunday	24 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	25 Dec	CLOSED
Tuesday	26 Dec	CLOSED
Wednesday	27 Dec	CLOSED
Thursday	28 Dec	OPEN
Friday	29 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	30 Dec	CLOSED
Sunday	31 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	1 Jan	CLOSED
Tuesday	2 Jan	OPEN

Business as usual from 3rd Jan

DERRYCONNELL

OPEN: 9-12.30 & 1.30-4.30 (SAT: 9-1)

Thursday	21 Dec	OPEN
Friday	22 Dec	CLOSED
Saturday	23 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	24 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	25 Dec	CLOSED
Tuesday	26 Dec	CLOSED
Wednesday	27 Dec	CLOSED
Thursday	28 Dec	OPEN
Friday	29 Dec	CLOSED
Saturday	30 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	31 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	1 Jan	CLOSED

Business as usual from 2nd Jan

CASTLETOWNBERE

OPEN: 9-12.30 & 1.30-4.30 (SAT: 9-1)

Friday	22 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	23 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	24 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	25 Dec	CLOSED
Tuesday	26 Dec	CLOSED
Wednesday	27 Dec	CLOSED
Thursday	28 Dec	CLOSED
Friday	29 Dec	OPEN
Saturday	30 Dec	OPEN
Sunday	31 Dec	CLOSED
Monday	1 Jan	CLOSED
Tuesday	2 Jan	CLOSED

Business as usual from 3rd Jan

The management and staff of all the West Cork Recycling Centres would like wish all our customers and friends best wishes for Christmas & the new year.