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A story of Curiosities

A chance phonecall and conversation, an online post by West Cork People and the attraction of living on the beautiful Beara Peninsula to people all over the world has happily prevented one Irish restaurant from hanging up its gloves this year.

When Kim Ní Hlfeárnáin rang the West Cork People office in March she was desperate to save her and her partner's business. The Curiosities Emporium in Castletownbere, like so many other businesses in the restaurant industry in Ireland, was facing huge challenges, with low margins, rising costs and the struggle to find staff contributing to the pressures.

According to The Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI) over 300 restaurants have closed in Ireland in the past six months with another wave of closures still expected.

Kim Ní Hlfeárnáin and Michael Donaghy had been in business for less than six months when their chef hung up her apron last January. After the advertised position received no response, Curiosities was forced to close its door.

But this is a good news story! Refusing to give up easily, the couple put their heads together and decided to offer free accommodation and board as part of the benefits of the position.

"We felt why wouldn't someone jump at the chance to live in this beautiful part of the world," they explain. "It's like winning

the lotto living here!"

Hopeful that some news outlet would pick up the story, Kim started emailing and phoning around, even going so far as to contact the New York Times.

Eventually, after talking to local paper West Cork People, the story was posted online, offering one lucky person the opportunity to live and work on the beautiful Beara peninsula free from the cost of accommodation, food and utility bills for one year.

The successful applicant would be responsible for the daily management and running of the kitchen of the quaint tearooms and antique shop in Castletownbere.

All that was required was 'a passion for cooking, a want to live a more mindful way of life down the beautiful Beara way, and the availability to start from

April 1.'

Within 24 hours, Kim's inbox was flooded with over 400 applicants from all over the world – New York, Singapore, France, the UK. They kept on coming.

Then local and national radio picked up the story.

But it was the very first applicant's letter from someone



Kim Ní Hlfeárnáin and Michael Donaghy



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



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living in West Cork that made a lasting impression on Kim and Michael.

From the Basque Country, Laura Leoz Wilce, 35, was volunteering with CECAS, an environmental organisation in Leap, when someone drew her attention to the post on West Cork People's social media.

"I thought this sounded like an amazing opportunity but I tried not to get too excited," she shares.

"When Kim called me the following day, that was when I began to feel butterflies."

Laura went to Castletownbere for the first time to meet with Kim and Michael at The Curiosities Emporium. "Chatting with Kim was like talking to someone I'd known for a long time, as we work very similarly and have the same passion for food," says Laura.

Kim echoes these sentiments. "I tend to go with my gut and I got a very good feel from Laura."

Laura enjoys cooking with the seasons, showcasing local, fresh food, basing recipes on traditional dishes but adding a flourish of inspiration from the people, cultures and dishes she has experienced on her travels.

With her passion for food and experience in running a large cafe in Scotland, after a very successful trial weekend, Laura got the job, starting this Easter

weekend.

She's excited and enthusiastic about starting a new life in Castletownbere with her partner, who will be joining her. "We both love hiking and I'm looking forward to joining the local drama group and checking out the library," she says. "And of course I'm looking forward to getting to know the menu at Curiosities and working with Kim and Michael."

Relatively new to the area themselves, Kim, originally from Cork City, and Michael from Dublin, relocated to the Beara Peninsula just over a year ago after they came across a sign advertising the restaurant lease while on holiday in Castletownbere.

Neither were working in the food industry at the time but living by the sea and running a restaurant together had been a long held ambition for both.

"This opportunity came up two years earlier than we had anticipated but it was too good an opportunity to turn down," shares Michael.

"I felt that life is short so sometimes you have to take a leap of faith," says Kim.

A professional tennis coach who had in the past run a busy pub serving food, Michael shares how one of the things tennis coaching has taught him is that it's the feeling that people walk away with that matters.

"The same goes for a restaurant," he says. "People want to sit down in a restaurant that's warm, that's comfortable, that has great food and a nice ambience."

Both Kim and Michael were passionate about creating a place that would encourage conversation between people.

The space is intimate and inviting, the tables set with pretty white lace and vintage tableware, an eclectic mix of antiques – all promoting a nostalgic atmosphere.

"The plan was to create a tea-rooms where Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan wouldn't feel out of place," laughs Kim.

Inspired by her grandmother, food has always been Kim's passion. Curiosities reflects this – the menu is mostly seasonal and local, marrying modern influences with the likes of ham hock and crubeens giving a nod to traditional Irish dishes.

A traditional breakfast potato cake made with crubeens is stacked with black pudding and topped with an egg. The signature soups are bacon and cabbage and creamy turnip.

A take the New York Reuben sandwich, The Curiosities Reuben is served with spiced beef and onions that have been caramelised using Guinness and brown sugar.

As well as launching a new menu, Kim and Michael are

starting a monthly supper club, combining supper with a show. First up is an evening with well known storyteller Pat Speight on May 3, followed by fun and food with Reggie from Blackroad road, who will be "reaching out to the people of the Beara Peninsula, without touching them, unless they're absolutely gorgeous" on June 7. "We're very excited about bringing something different to the local community," shares Kim and Michael. "The future feels bright."

FIANNA FÁIL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Christopher O'Sullivan TD

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SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Holly Cairns TD

In 2018, Ireland finally ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Shamefully, the very last country in the EU to do so.

The international treaty placed an obligation on all States who signed it to take steps to ensure disabled people can enjoy their human rights. For example the right to health-care, independence, access to employment, and education. But six years on disabled people still cannot hold the State accountable for their failure to uphold their human rights. Because Ireland has not ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention.

The Optional Protocol is poorly named, far from being an optional addition it is a crucial

Uphill battle for disability services

tool for the implementation of the Convention. When States fail to uphold Disability Rights, the Optional Protocol allows individuals and groups to hold the State accountable by bringing complaints to the UN.

Several weeks ago, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar gave me a firm commitment that his Government would ratify the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the next 12 months. The commitment to a timeline was welcome, and I will be pushing the new Taoiseach to recommit to setting a firm date. But the question has to be asked, four years into this Government, why on Earth has it been left this late?

One of the issues raised with me almost every day by people in Cork South West is the appalling lack of disability services – from personal assistance hours and essential therapies, to supported housing and assessments of need. Why is it that disability services and disability rights are shoved to the bottom

of the priority list again and again by this Government?

And to add even further insult to injury – Minister Humphries introduced a proposal to replace the disability allowance, invalidity pension and blind pension – currently paid to around 225,000 people – with a so-called personal support payment. Under her plan, disabled people would be subjected to a medical assessment and put into three separate categories. Those with no capacity to work will get a slightly higher weekly payment – the others will be expected to take up training or find a job.

This insulting proposal is a carbon copy of a system that was introduced in the UK under austerity measures in 2008. It is the same discredited policy that led to a disabled man starving to death after his out-of-work and housing benefits were stopped. His emaciated body was discovered by the bailiffs who came to evict him. Is this really the model that our Government wants to emulate?

Disabled people face an up-

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the April edition of West Cork People,

This issue is out a wee bit early to be in time for Easter. It's been a bit of an odd month: With St Patrick's Day and Easter falling back to back, school holidays, continued bad weather and clocks springing forward, it's definitely felt like March madness. As we head into the traditional month of showers, here's hoping they're light, especially for the sake of our farmers, and we get some sign that summer isn't too far off!

This is the month that things really get going in West Cork, events and festivals kick off and businesses prepare for the busy tourist season ahead. We are currently putting together our popular annual visitor guides for the area which, combined with our explorewestcork.ie website, promote why West Cork really is 'a place apart'. Many people return year after year to re-experience the peaceful rhythm of our beautiful area, where it has been said the people really do notice how fast the grass is growing! If you are a business in West Cork and would like to promote yourself to the visitor market, please do get in touch with us in the next couple of weeks.

We were really delighted this month to be in a position to help out a business in Beara in danger of closing its door. With a little help from our wonderful West Cork People readership, who shared their story all over the world, The Curiosities Emporium in Castletownbere is now back in action and looking forward to heading into a busy summer season. You can read more about their story on pages 2 and 3.

At the other end of West Cork, two sisters, Aislinn and Nicole O'Shea, are breathing new life into a local beach location, Owenahincha, with the renovation of the old motel there. The sisters have put in a tremendous amount of hard work over the past year and are about to open phase one of their renovation, the impressive Swim Club, a space where people can hang out in comfort and get something to eat, at newly named 'The Little Island Resort'. More on this on page 5.

Following on from his article on the Palestine question last month, Kieran continues to shed light on key issues of this enduring conflict.

Lorraine Dufficey continues her fascinating series on inflammation, this month looking at how the brain is affected and its possible relationship to mental illness.

Our new sports writer Niamh Coughlan interviews local athlete Phil Healy, who is getting ready for the Olympic Games in Paris this year. We look forward to following Phil's journey.

The environment and animal welfare is an issue that's very important to all of us here at West Cork People. Inside this issue we focus on some of the Irish farms dedicated to animal welfare, sustainability and encouraging biodiversity on their land.

I was very sad to hear of the passing last month of much-loved market trader Dave Louks or 'Chicken Dave' as he was fondly known by. I had the pleasure of spending some time with Dave and his wife Tina last August, when they talked to me about their commitment to being foster parents. Over almost 30 years, Dave and Tina shared their hearts and their home with so many children in need of love and guidance, their own respect and love for each other a shining example for all. On page 22 of this issue you'll find a tribute to Dave, put together by some of his fellow market traders. He will be much missed.

It's almost Easter and we are lucky enough to have some fantastic local chocolatiers who focus on creating fair-trade, organic and sustainable products. Please consider choosing quality over quantity this Easter and support local.

Happy Easter and, as always, I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary



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Sisters breathe new life into Owenahincha with opening of ‘Swim Club’ at newly named ‘The Little Island Resort’

Whether you know it as the Castlefreke Motel, the German motel, or simply the motel, the fact is that Owenahincha’s last remaining motel has been closed for longer than it was ever open. That is soon set to change, however, as two sisters, Aislinn and Nicole O’Shea, prepare to reopen the motel under a new name ‘The Little Island Resort’.



The motel pool prior to renovations

Known locally as the German Motel, due to its being built and run by famous German architect Klaus Kirsten, this was one of three thriving hotels in Owenahincha during the heydays of the 60s and 70s, when crowds of eager holiday-goers thronged the town’s blue flag beach during the summer months. However, economic decline and the closure of the Ford and Dunlop factories served as massive blows to the area, and the rise of holidays abroad was the proverbial nail in the coffin for the seaside town.

Yet that all is set to change, as Aislinn and Nicole O’Shea can attest. “It’s such an amazing location, with a bit of something for everyone” they claim, adding that “on a sunny day you could be anywhere in the world.” But where could be better than West Cork, a far cry from their hometown of Maynooth in Co. Kildare. The enthusiastic pair explain how they began their adventure in June 2022 with a visit to see the old motel, declaring love at first sight. That is despite Nicole likening the abandoned, barbed-wire-ridden motel to a prison on first viewing. After a successful offer and six months of intense planning, which involved relocating to nearby Rosscarbery, the pair got the keys and began the first phase of the renovation, which has taken just over a year to complete.

The Castlefreke Motel was built in 1963 by Clonakilty native Charlie Cullinane who worked closely with the German architect. Perhaps

inspired by his time working on the motel, Cullinane went on to found West Cork Travel, which saw him bring busloads of tourists to West Cork. This year marks 60 years since the motel first opened its doors, and the O’Shea sisters plan to celebrate by doing the same. Easter Weekend will see the opening of their Deli Pizzeria that they have aptly named Swim Club.

The name takes inspiration from the Motel’s in-ground pool – a novelty that would have been virtually unheard of in Ireland in the early 60s. The whole complex gives off an air of Americana with its palm trees and mid-century architecture, and the sisters admit that they have leaned into that in their designs. “We want to stay as true to the building as we can,” Aislinn states, “it is something special and it’s obvious that there was a lot of thought behind the design and build. There’s purpose behind every choice.”

Swim Club boasts an impressive combination of indoor and outdoor seating that can cater to more than 70 people at a time. The space is split into two distinct areas; the expansive Swim Club Deli which is nearly 100 square meters and houses the deli bar, the table seating, and a cozy lounge with a log-burning stove and relaxed seating. The second space is the Swim Club itself, a contemporary space with board games, bar seating, and access to the pool and leisure facilities. “We really wanted to create a space for people to hang out and get comfortable, rather than just somewhere to eat,” Nicole

explains. Although it is primarily somewhere to eat, offering everything from your morning coffee and croissant to pizza, sharing boards, and that all-important glass of wine in the evening. Swim Club Deli serves as a delightful all-day option for both locals and tourists alike. “The focus is on good, fresh food” Aislinn states, “everything is prepped in-house, and we use local produce as much as possible.” It is new territory for the Kildare natives, whose previous experience in hospitality extends to the coffee van that they opened at their gates in December, which has by all accounts been a wild success. They have amassed over 700 social media followers in that short space of time, with everyone eager to see what they have done with the place. “The community here has been amazing, and we’ve met so many people over the last three months who

have come out to show us their support” Nicole explains “It’s been a lot of blood, sweat, and tears up to this point so we’re excited to finally be able to share it”.

And while they don’t have anything in the works, the pair do plan on sharing their journey. “We’ve recorded everything from the first viewing... our camera skills have improved a lot over the last year” Aislinn reveals, “everything is content now! There’s not a meltdown that goes undocumented” Nicole adds with a laugh. Although with their ambitious renovation plans, it’s hard to see when they will have time to do anything with their content. The sisters reveal they are already planning for second phase works to begin, hoping to have the motel’s original 24 en-suite bedrooms up and running by next summer.





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Sandoz acquires remaining shares in Rowex

Building on a legacy of a successful 30-year joint venture in Ireland with Rowa Pharmaceuticals, Sandoz Limited has acquired the micro-chipping, a leading supplier of

prescription and non-prescription medicines.

This acquisition strengthens Sandoz European leadership through a wholly owned business in Ireland and demonstrates

the growth potential of Sandoz as a standalone company.

Rowex, based in Bantry, has decades of expertise in developing products for the prescription and non-prescrip-

tion market. Sandoz intends to continue to invest significantly in the business, launching further affordable medicines to address patient needs and create more highly skilled jobs. The Irish business will continue to operate in Bantry with all its staff remaining with the company.

Sandoz is the world's largest generics and biosimilars company, headquartered in Basel Switzerland.

Diane DiGangi Trench, Country Head and General Manager for Sandoz UK & Ireland, said "We are delighted to expand

fully into the Irish market after a long and successful joint venture. We have ambitious plans to grow the business and see a huge opportunity for the Irish healthcare system to have better access to more affordable medicines. Access to off-patent medicines is below the European average in Ireland, with Medicines for Ireland estimating that the greater use of these medicines could save the Irish healthcare system an extra €200m per year that could be reinvested in frontline services, improving patient health."

Brigitte Wagner-Halswick, owner of Rowa Pharmaceuticals Ltd., said "For over thirty years, Rowex Ltd., has performed incredibly well in Ireland. The Company started operations in 1993 and has grown to be a significant presence in the Irish market providing high quality and cost-effective medicines to healthcare professionals and patients. I am excited for the future of the company and I would like to wish Sandoz and all the team at Rowex Ltd. every success in the years to come."



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European Elections Candidate: Cynthia Ní Mhurchú

Tá Cynthia Ní Mhurchú, an t-abhcóide agus iarrchraoltóir RTÉ ag rith I dToghcheantar Éire Theas i dToghcháin Pharlaimint na hEorpa. Beidh sí i dteannta Billy Kelleher, Feisire reatha de Pharlaimint na hEorpa, ar an ticéad do Fhianna Fáil.

Bean phósta í Cynthia agus beirt pháiste fásta aici lena a fear céile John Kavanagh.

Tá croí Cynthia go smior i gCeatharlach agus san Oirdheisceart agus cónaí uirthi i gCeatharlach. Ach tagann Cynthia John agus an clann gach bliain I Mí Lúnasa chuig Dún na Séad chun coicíos a chaitheamh ar an tsráidbhaile agus ar tabhairt cuairt ar na hoileáin – Oileán Cléire agus Inis Earcáin. Ar ndóigh tá Cynthia dhátheangach ó bhí sí óg agus an-ghrá aici don Ghaeilge, don chultúr agus do na healaíona.

"Is aoibheann liom Iarthar

Chorcaí" a dúirt Cynthia atá ag teacht go teach saoire in Ostán Rolfs i nDún na Séad le tríocha bliain anuas, "tá na daoine, an dúlra agus an fharráige thar cinn. Níl áit ar bith níos fearr ná a bheith i do shuí ar stól taobh amuigh de Tigh Tábhairne Bush's nó de Jacobs Bar, ag cabaireacht le daoine agus an féachaint ar na báid ag teacht is ag imeacht, agus an ghriain ag dul faoi."

Chuir Cynthia tús lena gairm mar mhúinteoir bunscóile i gCeatharlach, a háit dúchais, agus mhúin sí ar feadh bliana i nGaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuririr. Lean sí ar aghaidh go dtí RTÉ ag craoladh beo ar an gclár "Cúrsaí" agus chaith sí deich mbliana ag obair mar chraoltóir agus iriseoir dátheangach d'eagraíochtaí éagsúla meán, ina measc RTÉ, Raidió na Gaeltachta, the Sunday Independent agus the Sunday Tribune.

Agus, ar ndóigh tá cuimhne mhaith ag an bpobal uirthi as an gComórtas Eoraifise, a raibh taispeántas cáiliúil "Riverdance" mar chuid de, a chuir Cynthia agus Gerry Ryan i láthair i mBaile Átha Cliath in 1994.

Tá Cynthia ag obair ina habhcóide faoi láthair agus ó 1997 I leith – ag plé le dlí claimne go háirithe. "Is maith liom daoine a chabhrú tríd na fadhbanna deacra a bhíonn acu, i mbealach gairmiúil ach tuisceanach, agus i gcónaí dírithe ar leigheas fadtéarmach a fháil dóibh, trí chomhoibriú agus tuisceant."

"Is mór an onóir dom é go bhfuil mé roghnaithe ar an ticéad Fhianna Fáil in Éire Theas sna Toghcháin Eorpacha" a dúirt Cynthia, "tá tráth de mo shaol gairmiúil sroichte agam anois ina gereidim go mbeadh fiúntas mór ag baint leis an taithí fhairsing, tacar mór sainscileanna agus tréithe pearsanta atá agam i bParlaimint na hEorpa. Tá dea-theist bainte amach agam san oideachas, sna meáin agus sa chumarsáid agus sa dlí agus tá mé tiomanta go mór don Ghaeilge, don chultúr agus do na

healaíona.

"Beidh mé ag rith feachtas dátheangach, agus ag díriú ar an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn san Aontas Eorpach chun tacú le stádas oifigiúil na teanga i bParlaimint na hEorpa ó 2022."

"Is iad na tosaíochtaí atá agam do mhuintir Éire Theas ná a bheith i mo ghuth láidir don réigiún san Eoraip, díriú ar níos mó forbairt réigiúnach, mar aon le troid ar son aistriú cóir d'Éirinn, agus sinn ag iarraidh ár spriocanna carbóin a bhaint amach sna blianta amach romhainn."

"Tá spéis ar leith agam freisin sa Dlí Teaghlach agus i sábháilteacht idirlín do dhá chéad, dár n-aois óg go háirithe. Oibreoidh mé go dícheallach chun Éirinn agus an Deisceart a chur chun cinn san Aontas Eorpach agus cinnteoidh mé go gcuirfead beartais a bheidh tairbheach d'Éirinn agus dár saoránaigh chun cinn agus go mbainfead amach iad."

"Táim ag súil le tús maith a chur leis an obair agus a bheith ag bualadh agus ag caint le daoine faoin gcéis a bhfuil an Eoraip tábhachtach, agus mar is féidir lena cuid beartas an saol a fheabhsú do mhuintir agus do phobail Éire Theas. Beirimis bua le chéile."

Cynthia added "I don't think it will be difficult to go straight into politics on a European platform as having been a barrister for the last 27 years, I am well used to the law and, EU politics is driven by legislation."

"I have fought for clients for over 25 years in many different courts all over the country."

"The South needs somebody who is able and committed like myself, to best represent the interests of this region, of which I am so proud, in Europe."

"I have always embraced challenge and adapted to change and now relish the challenge and opportunity of becoming an MEP. I ask readers to give me their No.1 Vote in the European Elections in June. So Let's Go for it Together."



EUROPEAN ELECTION - IRELAND SOUTH

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Blondes and redheads in folklore



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.

Among Celtic peoples there was an ancient tendency to consider fair hair as especially beautiful, deriving from their belief that brightness was divine and darkness evil. Celtic heroes and druids brightened their hair-colour with lime. The greatest hero of the Fenian cycle of stories, Fionn Mac Cumhaill, was fair-haired; his very name, Fionn, means 'fair-haired'. His fair hair reflected his bright intellect; Fionn was a wise man as well as a heroic warrior.

'Other-world' women, who inspired the prophets and poets, always had fair-hair. In the 'Aisling' (dream, vision) poems of the eighteenth century, poets like Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin saw Ireland personified as a beautiful fair-haired maiden, who tells of her woes under foreign rule with all her heroes dead. She eagerly awaits the return of the Stuarts to free her from slavery and deprivation.

Accounts of the early Celts show that red hair was common among them. Gruaig rua (red hair) was also held in high regard, even though it was considered to involve a degree of danger. Red, of course, is the colour of fire, one of the most important elements, but also one of the most dangerous.

In a country like Ireland, with a background of 'forty shades of green', the colour red stands

out clearly to the eye. In any group of people one with red hair would be noticed. Many famous Irish people had the adjective 'rua' or 'fionn' attached to their names, e.g. Aodh Rua Ó Dónaill (Red Hugh O'Donnell), Eoghan Rua Ó Néill (Owen Roe Ó Neill) and the poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (Fair-haired Gofraidh Ó Daly)

Superstitions tend to centre on the unusual, so meeting a red-haired woman was considered unlucky. This 'piseog' (superstition) was very strong among fishermen who would turn back if they met one in the morning before going to sea. Because of the hazardous nature of their occupation fishermen had numerous 'piseoga' (superstitions). Farmers too thought it a bad omen to meet one on the way to a fair or market. A red-haired woman coming into a house when the cream was being churned was unwelcome also. The butter couldn't 'come'. In the northern counties and in Scotland where 'first-footing' was a custom on New Year's Day, no one wanted to be first footed by a red-haired man or woman. (the first person to enter the house on New Year's Day).

Red hair was also taken as an indication of a hot-temper. Strong and healthy hair, of whatever colour, was thought to indicate a high degree of health and strength. Conversely, losing one's hair was thought to indicate a general decline in well-being. To go bald was considered extremely undesirable. An old Irish proverb has it 'that baldness is most uncomely and only blindness is a greater affliction'.

In Ireland and in many other countries it was thought unlucky for a man to allow a woman to cut his hair or shave his beard, the danger being that he would thereby lose his strength. The most famous account of this is in the Old Testament of the Bible, when the strong man, Samson, lost his strength by allowing Delilah to cut his hair, whereby he lost his strength.

The ancient Celts wore their hair long in battle, in the belief that they were at their full power then. The Celtic custom of wearing hair long survived in Ireland for a long time. Wearing long beards was usual up to the century ago or later.

Long hair on women was understood to express freedom and informality and it was usually tied up after marriage. A

lock of hair was often given as a love-token. On formal occasions, such as going to church, no woman would allow her hair to straggle; it would be gathered up neatly as a mark of solemnity and respect and covered by a hat or headscarf. However, women allowed their hair to hang unkempt when keening the dead.

Superstitions tend to centre on the unusual, so meeting a red-haired woman was considered unlucky. This 'piseog' (superstition) was very strong among fishermen who would turn back if they met one in the morning before going to sea.

Since of its nature the hair can take on many shapes, its condition was much noted in folk divination. For example, the cow's lick, or tuft of hair standing up over the forehead, was taken as a sign of health and intelligence in a child. On the other hand, a pronounced forelock in a woman, with the hair thinning about it was called the widow's peak, and betokened the death of the woman's husband in the near future.

People were very careful not to throw their cut locks into the fire for they would feel themselves weakened as the hair burned. The best place to put discarded hair was a hole in the ground or a hole in the wall, from which it could be collected on the Day of Judgement. However, if birds discovered it and used it in the building of their nests, severe headache could result for the owner of the hair. Such pain could be remedied in popular belief and a cure for both headaches and head-colds was to discover the 'ribe tuathail', a particular strand at the back of the head, and pull it.

Red-haired women, evil eyes, hare witches: they were all part of the warp and weft of country life long ago. Farmers have been known to walk round and round familiar fields for hours without finding their way; others to drive for hours, only to find themselves back where they started.

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Statehood, Hamas and America: The Palestine question (Part II)



HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

Following on from last month's article on the Palestinian-Israelite question, Kieran Doyle attempts to shed light on some key issues of this enduring conflict.

Is it true that the underlining principal of Hamas is to destroy Israel? That's an oversimplification and indeed a line used by Israel as a *raison d'être* to occupy and destroy to Gaza to secure their own security. Let's be clear, there is no getting away from the fact that Hamas has used violence (and still does) to propagate their beliefs, just like the IRA did here or ANC in south Africa. And just like the aforementioned organisations, it too has turned to politics, but inversely, has not decommissioned their weapons. It has carried out military attacks against Israeli since the organisation's foun-

ation in 1987. Incredulously, this very group that Netanyahu has vowed to eradicate, was actually indulged by Israel and allowed to operate freely under the eye and tacit support of the Israeli state, so as to undermine the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The PLO at that time had the groundswell of Palestinian support to pursue its sovereignty and was seen as the greater threat. In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections and assumed administrative control of Gaza Strip and West Bank. And thus, for better or worse have been the representatives of the majority of Palestinians. In 1988, Hamas adopted a 32-article manifesto, which defines the movement, and outlines its aims. Article six states: Hamas strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned. In an interview with one of its leading members in 2017, there was certainly a suggestion of co-habitation with Israel based on the 1967 borders. (After the Six-Day War). Another leader Ismail Haleiyid speaking in October 2023, updated their demands announcing, 'Our objective is clear: we want to liberate our land, our holy sites, our Al-Aqsa mosque, our prisoners.

We have no hesitation about this'. The secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Gutierrez while condemning Hamas for the October 7 attack also stated, 'The attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum'. He declared that, 'The Palestinian people have suffered a suffocating occupation for 56 years' (which refers to the 1967 war, but in truth goes back to 1948). He also said that the events by Hamas on October 7 cannot justify the collective punishment of an entire peoples. He broadcasted these concerns on October 24. Since then, he could never have imagined that over 30,000 Palestinians would have been killed by the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) and now the whole territory is on the verge of famine.

Does Israel acknowledge the right for the creation of a Palestinian state?

Israel Zionist doctrine, at its core, claims only the Jewish people have a right to what they term 'Eretz Israel' (the land of Israel) and the Palestinians are interlopers in their land. Former Israeli president Golda Meir said in 1969, 'There was no such thing as Palestinians... they did not exist'. This ideology has been central to any negotiations with Palestinians. Part of the Israeli playbook is not allowing the idea of a Palestinian state be part of any

formal discussions, whereas it should be the foundation of any mediation. In 1974 the UN actually passed resolution 3236, that 'recognises the right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights, including the right to self-determination and the right of return (to their dispossessed homes/lands). They got closest to getting official recognition under the President Carter presidency at the Camp David negotiations in 1979. It was during that period that the PLO, representing the Palestinians, accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338 (essentially the 1948 borders), that 'recognised the right for Israel to exist in peace and security'. The Israelis refused to reciprocate a similar pathway for Palestine. In the 'Oslo Accord' of 1993, again brokered by the USA, all they got was minimal control in a divided apartheid West Bank. Israel has the audacity to cherry pick the UN resolutions that suits them, while flagrantly ignoring international law and all the UN resolutions that call for the withdrawal of all settlements in the Palestinian territories and the right to Palestinian sovereignty. You can easily find these UN resolutions for yourself online. Shamefully, as long as the USA backs Israel, the UN resolutions are impotent.

Are the Americans an honest broker that can bring this con-

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Alison Curry from Bere island, graduated from UCC with an MSc Sustainability in Enterprise. She is pictured with her children Rosa and Marley Sloyan and her father Prof Jim Curry UCD. Pic: Gerard McCarthy



People involved in ground-breaking research projects around the country were honoured at the Irish Cancer Society Research Awards in February including Academic Study Coordinator at UCC Cancer Trials Group Dr Erin Crowley who hails from Clonakilty. Erin was given the 'Support Staff of the Year' award.



Louise McCarthy from Caheragh graduated from UCC with an MSc in Interactive Media. Pic: Gerard McCarthy

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flict to an end?

The level of American political cynicism is nothing new in a long tradition of geopolitical interference in the middle east. The visually spectacular dropping of (inadequate amounts) of aid was a pathetic act, but Biden's call for building of a humanitarian sea corridor is nothing short of a blatant double-faced election stunt at the expense of millions of Gazans. He is taking his peace rhetoric up a notch to placate the groundswell of potential democratic voters who want a ceasefire, as well as attempting to woo ethnic Arab American voters in the swing state of Minnesota, where they form a significant chunk of voters. However, he has called for these measures while standing over a congress that fuels Israeli aggression with billion euro arms support packages for the IDF. America has played a long and malignant role in the middle east for decades and is the major reason why Israel has been able to treat the Palestinians with impunity.

There has been a lot of talk about how what Israel is doing amounts to genocide. Is it?

Let's look at the definition of genocide according to International Humanitarian Law. Genocide refers to 'acts com-

mitted with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group'. The word 'intent' is key. The South African case, taken to the international criminal court, will have to prove that there is an agreed policy that sets out to eradicate or reduce the Palestinian race. For those who have been following this conflict, the tactics of the IDF and therefore the Israeli Government, has been to attack all facets that make life liveable; from electricity to food to water to safe shelter. There certainly have been plenty of reports of ministers and members of the Knesset supporting the eradication of the Palestinians, but will it be enough to get a conviction? Will Israel even accept it? How will any conviction and sentence be implemented? Both Israel and the USA are not party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is supported by 123 countries globally, so they could just blatantly ignore it.

Without a doubt, Israel will have to face charges pertaining to the perpetration of war crimes. I have no legalistic background but if one looks at the five principals of humanitarian law, as defined by the Geneva Convention of 1949 (plus the additional protocols in 1977 and

2005) you can make up your own mind. For me it's blatantly clear that all of them have been breached. The ' Hamas tunnel argument' has been central to the Israeli argument, which not only gives them carte blanche to launch an attack any and everywhere, but lays the ground to circumnavigate the Geneva Convention They are defined as the following:

Distinction between combatants and civilians, which requires that belligerents must distinguish at all times between civilians and civilian objects on the one hand, and military objectives on the other. Attacks may only be directed against military objectives.

Proportionality in attacks, which requires that parties limit the anticipated collateral damage or harm to civilians arising from an attack.

The notion of military necessity, which permits armed forces to consider the practical requirements of a situation when planning attacks.

The requirement to take all feasible precautionary measures to avoid civilian casualties and to minimise the collateral damage and injuries caused by an attack.

The prohibition of means or methods of warfare that are "of a nature to cause superfluous

injury or unnecessary suffering;" or weapons that cause "widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment."

What can a regular person do in the face of such hopelessness?

It's not enough to be a passive observer if you feel something should be done. On the surface, it looks like Ireland is doing all it can, but our politicians' words have been louder than their actions. Take up the baton. Donate to charities that are on the ground helping people get through this living hell. Write to your TDs calling for the cessation of trade with Israel or the boycotting of Israeli goods. Or stop buying them yourself. (Check out the 'Ireland Palestinian Solidarity Campaign' website to see the goods that come from Israel. Their barcodes begin with 729). Don't go to Israel on holidays. Advocate that Ireland joins South Africa's case for genocide in the international criminal courts. Join the many weekend vigils that are calling for a ceasefire and make your voice heard, because there is a butterfly effect. You don't have to go to Cork City. Every weekend, local towns have vigils such as Bandon, Skibbereen and Clonakilty and more nationwide.

Write letters to newspapers so that debate is had and shared. It is often quoted in times of great crisis that 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of

evil is for good people to do nothing'. This is not the time to sit idly by.

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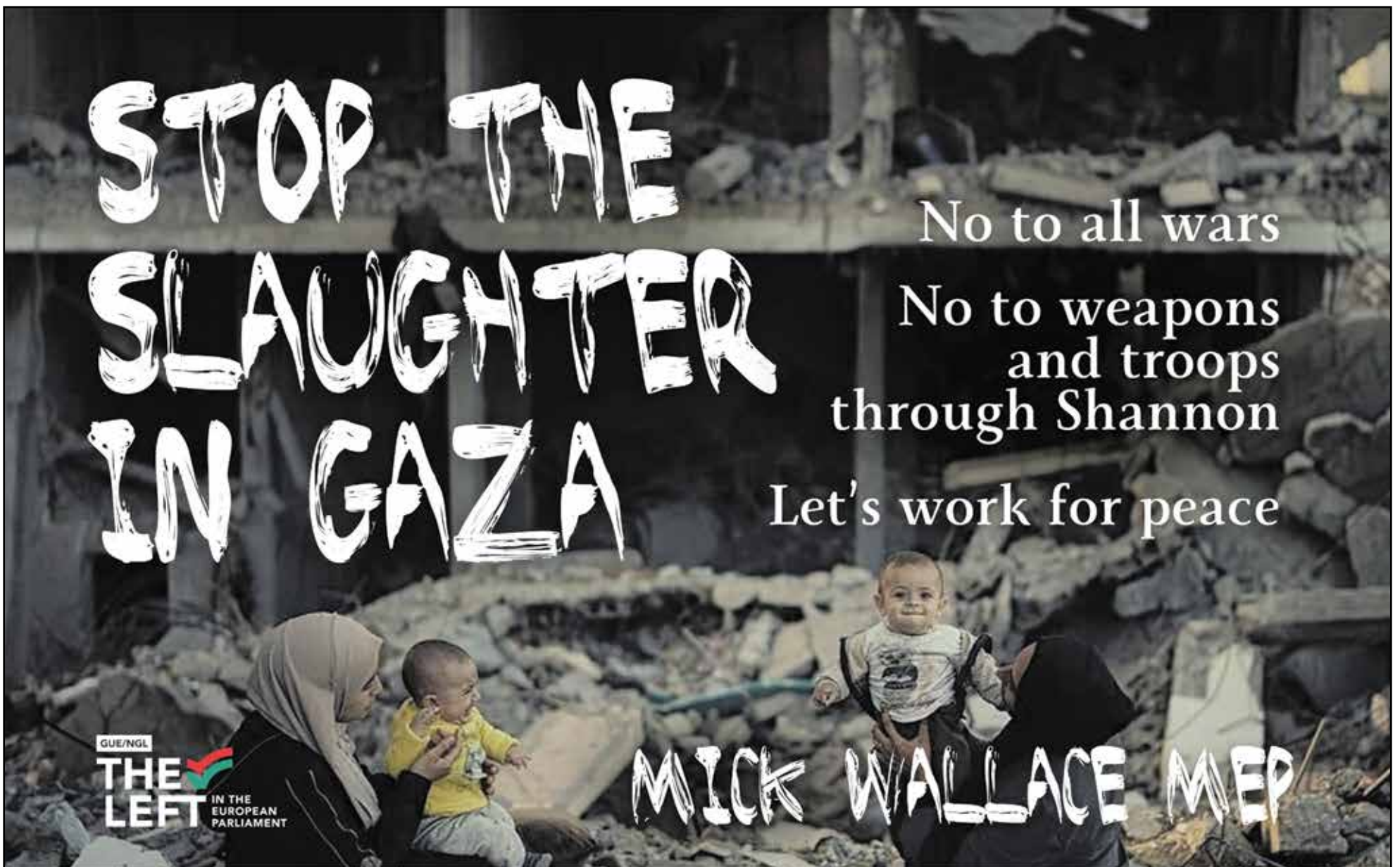
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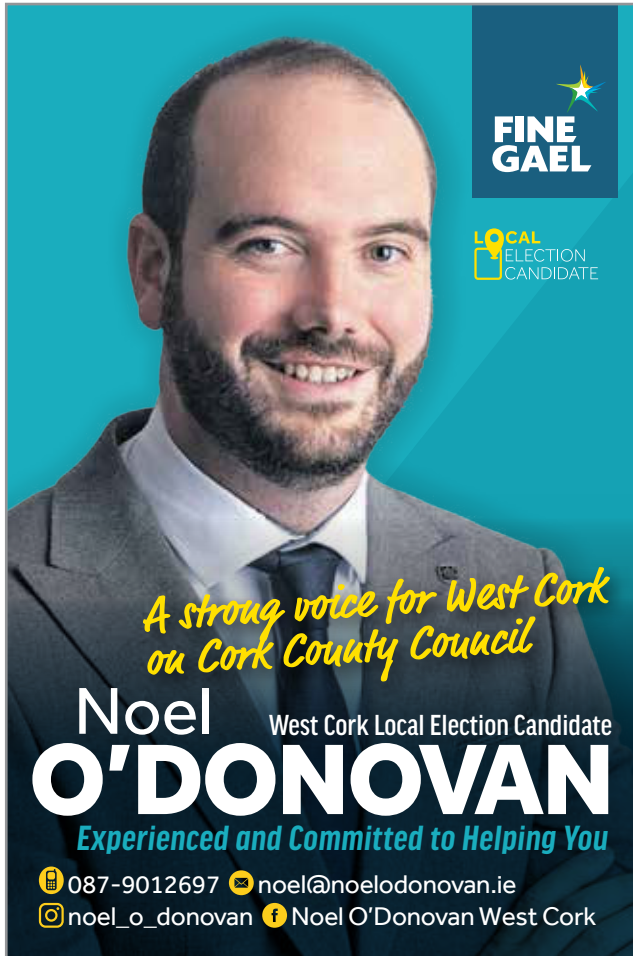
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Tánaiste opens new headquarters of McCarthy + Co Solicitors on International Women's Day



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Ann McCarthy, Founder of McCarthy + Co. Solicitors LLP, with her husband Joe McCarthy, Solicitor and the whole team.

On International Women's Day, Friday, March 8, 2024, An Tánaiste Micheál Martin officially opened the new offices of McCarthy + Co Solicitors LLP at the West Cork Technology Park in Clonakilty. The day was fitting, as McCarthy + Co was founded 37 years ago by a truly pioneering woman, Ann McCarthy.

Not satisfied with having had successful careers as a theatre nurse and a transatlantic flight attendant in the 1960s and '70s, which were ended by the



Tánaiste Micheál Martin, TD with Flor McCarthy, Managing Partner and Mags McCarthy Financial Controller at the official opening. Pic: Dermot Sullivan.



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marriage ban then in force, Ann went on to requalify as a solicitor in 1984 and set up her own business as McCarthy + Co in 1987, all while raising a family of four young boys.

Ann was encouraged and supported by her husband, Joe McCarthy, who had qualified as a solicitor in 1969 and practiced in West Cork for over 40 years. Their four sons now carry on Ann's vision for the business today. Flor, John, and Joseph McCarthy are currently solicitors with the firm, and Paul McCarthy is training as a solicitor. The firm now also comprises a wider extended McCarthy + Co. family of extremely valued team members.

Headquartered in West Cork, the firm provides specialist nationwide services in medical negligence and personal injury through its online platform, mccarthy.ie. The firm's new state-of-the-art headquarters in the West Cork Technology Park are custom-designed to provide exceptionally well-appointed, ergonomic, and high-tech facilities, enabling its growing team to deliver an extraordinary customer experience to its client base across Ireland.

The young and vibrant team has grown to over 20 members since it was founded by Ann McCarthy as a sole pioneering female solicitor in 1987 and has already added four more

new members since moving to its new home at the start of the year.

Speaking at the launch, Managing Partner Flor McCarthy said, "We are extremely proud and privileged to continue Ann's legacy here in this wonderful new base for McCarthy + Co. This move positions us perfectly for further growth and will enable us to better serve the many great clients that make us all that we are. We are especially honoured that An Tánaiste has officially opened our new premises today on what is a very auspicious International Women's Day for the entire McCarthy + Co family."

More affordable homes on the way for Clonakilty

Cork South West TD Christopher O'Sullivan has welcomed the announcement of a further 35 affordable, cost rental and social homes at Beechgrove, Clonakilty.

Deputy O'Sullivan said, "This is really welcome news, the more affordable homes we can build in West Cork the bet-

ter, these will be for individuals, couples and families within certain incomes who do not qualify for social housing and there is a dire need for this type of housing in West Cork."

He continued, "This is in addition to the 22 affordable homes at The Miles, Clonakilty, which will shortly be online for application by Cork County

Council and I would urge all to visit Cork County Council's website to find out as much information as possible in relation to these schemes."

"West Cork has done very well in terms of delivering social housing over the last number of years, the focus now has to be on affordable housing."



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.

Captured as part of the Japanese invasion of Burma (now Myanmar), Ramree island was under the control of the Japanese army in 1945, when it came to the attention of the British who had military bases nearby and wanted to create landing spots for their planes.. The mostly flat 80km long and 32km wide island offered the perfect base for airfields, and the British under General William Slim decided to take the island by force on January 14, 1945.. Unwilling to relinquish the rights to the island easily because of its strategic importance, the Japanese fought a hard battle from January 14 until February 22. Part of the offensive on the Southern Front in the Burma campaign during the Second World War, the battle was conducted by the XV Indian Corps. The fighting on both sides of the campaign was brutal and resulted in the Ramree Island massacre, an event that was incorporated into the Guinness Book of World Records as the worst animal attack ever recorded.

The British effort in Burma was a masterstroke for Gen. Wil-



British soldier prepares a meal beside a temple on Ramree.

The Battle of Ramree Island

Liam Slim, who attacked Burma's Japanese garrison of 100,000 men with just 21,000 of his own, using superior logistics and mobility to reduce the Japanese to pockets of resistance. These pockets became undersupplied, causing the Japanese soldiers to starve. Concentrated forces were attacked and the British stayed on the offensive. Slim's plan required the ability to reinforce and supply pockets of his own men via the air, even when they might be surrounded. Ramree Island's port, airfield, and proximity to the mainland gave his airforces range over almost the entire country, including Mandalay, the central plains and the capital of Yangon.

Japanese forces took no prisoners and those who were wounded were killed by their comrades in line with the Bushido code. An integral part of Japan's plan to gain victory over the West, Bushido instilled in Japanese soldiers that they should maintain their honour and give their lives for the Emperor and nation during World War II. Surrender was not an option and was seen as cowardice. According to the rules of Bushido, if a samurai felt that he had lost his honour (or was about to lose it), he could regain his standing by committing a rather painful form of ritual suicide, called 'seppuku'. This made the Japanese soldiers incredibly difficult to beat.

On Ramree Island, the British were able to fight the Japanese into another pocket. Although it looked as if this pocket might collapse at any moment, the two sides became stuck in a standoff until the British Royal Marines, along with the 36th Indian Infantry Brigade, outflanked a Japanese position. The manoeuvre split the enemy group in two and isolated about 1,000 Japanese soldiers. The British then sent word that the smaller, isolated Japanese group should surrender.

With the unit trapped with no way of reaching the safety of the larger battalion, rather than accept surrender, the Japanese chose to make an eight-mile escape in the dark through waist-high water in a mangrove swamp. The deep mud and tangles of mangrove roots meant the force moved at a snail's pace. On top of that, they had to deal with scorpions, clouds of mosquitoes, and the most important factor – saltwater crocodiles. Saltwater crocodiles can grow to eight metres long and weigh as much as 1,000kg. The crocodiles in this particular swamp had been starved for vast periods of time during the war, as the noise prevented them from accessing their watering holes. In line with their Bushido code, even the threat of starving crocodiles did

not give the Japanese pause for thought in making their escape.

Saltwater crocodiles are the largest reptiles on earth, have the strongest bite force of any animal alive and are indiscriminate in what they will attack and eat. British troops followed the Japanese column in motor launches and heard the massacre unfold throughout the night.

Bruce Stanley Wright, a Royal Canadian Lieutenant Commander credited with inventing the idea of 'frogmen units' – scuba-diving soldiers who could spy on the enemy from the water – was at Ramree for the invasion of the island. He wrote in his book 'Wildlife Sketches: Near and Far' the following paragraph:

"The scattered rifle shots in the pitch black swamp punctured by the screams of wounded men crushed in the jaws of huge reptiles, and the blurred worrying sound of spinning crocodiles made a cacophony of hell that has rarely been duplicated on earth. At dawn, the vultures arrived to clean up what the crocodiles had left... Of about one thousand Japanese soldiers that entered the swamps of Ramree, only about twenty were found alive."

The story of the Ramree Island massacre was corroborated by Lieutenant-General Jack Jacob in his memoir, 'An Odyssey in War and Peace' when he recounted his experiences during the battle:

"Over 1,000 soldiers of the Japanese garrison retreated into the crocodile-infested mangrove swamps. We went in with boats and interpreters using loudhailers asking them to come out. Not a single one did. Salt-water crocodiles, some of them well over 6m long frequented these waters. It is not difficult to imagine what happened to the Japanese who took refuge in the mangroves!"

It is important to note that the assertion that 1,000 men were killed by crocodiles has also been disputed. In 1974, a journalist, George Frazier, reported having asked the Japanese War Office about the crocodile attack and being told that they could not confirm that it had happened. Sam Willis, a historian, reported that he had found documents indicating that the Japanese soldiers mostly drowned and/or were shot and that crocodiles scavenged on their corpses afterwards. The exact amount of Japanese soldiers killed by crocodiles is still slightly ambiguous and is up for debate. However, the night that the Japanese retreated into the mangrove swamps and the resulting casualties signalled the end of the invasion. The British army encountering no more resistance and were able to take control of Ramree Island.

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Local Election Candidate for Skibbereen - West Cork



Local Elections Candidate: Donnchadh Ó Seaghdha

Donnchadh Ó Seaghdha from Dromadúin, Loughine, Skibbereen is the Sinn Féin candidate for the Skibbereen West Cork County Council electoral area, which also includes the towns of Clonakilty and Dunmanway. He was previously elected to Skibbereen Town Council from 2004 until 2014. Following the abolishing of the Town Councils in 2014 he stood for the County Council elections and stayed in until the ninth count, receiving a vote of just over 1,400 votes. His running mate Paul Hayes was elected on that occasion for Sinn Féin.



Donnchadh was a teacher with the VEC for several years which also involved education through the medium of Irish and adult education. As well

as his political activism on various issues he now presently does part-time farming and is a member of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Organisation.

Donnchadh has been active in several cultural and sporting organisations over the years: Comhaltas, Conradh na Gaeilge, Ból Chumainn and the GAA.

He was chair of the Ó Donnabhain Rosa centenary commemorations in Skibbereen in 2015 when President Higgins unveiled the monument at the memorial park and is currently chair of the Kilmichael and Crossbarry commemoration

committee, which the North's now First Minister Michelle O'Neill attended in 2022.

Donnchadh's priorities include: campaigning for major upgrading of roads infrastructure, building more social and affordable housing, facilitating the transition towards renewable energies to achieve a cleaner and healthier environment, supports for local business, fishing and farming, retention of and investment in rural services and incentives to halt the emigration of our youth.

23,000 previously unavailable Cork County burial register records now available online

Cork County Council's Skibbereen Heritage Centre has uploaded a further 23,000 previously unavailable Cork County burial register records from 18 graveyards to its online database. This brings the total number of burial records now available on their website www.skibbheritage.com to over 82,700, all of which are available to access free of charge from anywhere in the world.

This latest upload includes graveyards from West and East Cork as well as the Macroom

and Carrigaline areas, with some records from North Cork available for the first time too.

The digitisation project is supported by Cork County Council and the small team at Skibbereen Heritage Centre have been diligently working on it for some years now, bringing these records into the public realm for the first time.

Speaking on the importance of making this information accessible, Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn said, "We have received a phenome-

nal response to this project, with many people discovering their ancestor's forgotten final resting place. It really means a lot to those researching their Cork ancestry from around the world, and many of these enquiries have brought visitors to the area to visit their ancestral burial ground."

All of the information is on the Skibbereen Heritage Centre website www.skibbheritage.com, including a map of all the sites covered to date as well as a searchable database. With the

support of Cork County Council, Skibbereen Heritage Centre hopes to continue this project over the 2024/25 winter period to upload more records next spring, primarily from the North Cork area.

Skibbereen Heritage Centre staff have also produced a series of genealogy podcasts which cover how to search for burial records not included in this database. These podcasts are also available to access free of charge on the Skibbereen Heritage website.

A day that rocked Cork city

One hundred and five years ago, on the evening of April 28, 1919, an explosion rocked Grattan Street in Cork city. Many people were injured but only one fatally, IRA Lieutenant Michael Tobin from Ballineen, who had been in the secret IRA bomb making factory at No.33. **Pauline Murphy** has researched what happened on that fateful day.

No. 33 Grattan Street was an ordinary looking three-storey tenement building with a shoe shop on the ground floor. The shop's proprietor, Andy Ahern, was an IRA volunteer and so allowed a bomb factory to be located in his backroom. At the time Grattan Street, which is located in an area of the city known as The Marsh, was brimming with laneways and tenements; it was also a hive of Republican activity.

Michael Tobin lodged at 15 Bachelor's Quay, just a stone's

throw from Grattan Street.

Having moved up to the city of work, the 26-year-old Ballineen man was employed as a draper's assistant and also volunteered with the IRA's G Company 1st Battalion Cork No.1 Brigade.

On that Spring evening in 1919, Tobin was in the bomb factory with fellow IRA volunteers Jer Downey, Timothy Hegarty, Paddy Varian, Dick Murphy and Sean O'Connell, along with Cumann na mBan member Bessie Moore. As the comrades were transferring 28 pounds of black gunpowder, from tins into coarse linen sacks, a build-up of heat caused the powder to ignite.

Volunteer Sean O'Connell later recalled in his witness statement for the Bureau of Military History: "Dick and Michael were holding a bag and I was emptying one of the tins into it when all of a sudden a terrific explosion occurred."

All of the occupants of No.33 Grattan Street were injured in the blast, including the woman who lived above the shoe shop. This unfortunate lady, along



Coverage of Tobin's funeral cortege leaving the Mercy.

with all the others, was taken to the nearby Mercy Hospital. Michael Tobin was admitted with serious burns to his hands, face and legs.

The Ballineen man lingered in the Mercy until May 21, when he took his last breath. His remains were removed first to the Church of St Peter and Paul before travelling through the city in a large funeral procession, led by the Cork Volunteer

Pipe Band with an honour guard consisting of IRA, Cumann na mBan, Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Citizen Army. Thousands of people thronged the route to pay their respects.

Michael Tobin's remains then travelled westward to Ballineen, on a final journey to the family grave in the grounds of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, where he was laid to rest.

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Our striking heron

At the Branch's last outing to Timoleague in early March, **Nicholas Mitchell** shares how they enjoyed excellent views across the estuary to Kilnamanagh Wood wherein, high up in the canopy, Grey Herons could be seen sitting on nests. Given that these long-legged birds can be up to one metre in height, it was not surprising that there was a certain amount of incredulity that they nest so high in the treetops. This seemed a good starting point for an article about the two members of the Ardeidae or Heron Family that are resident in Ireland, the Grey Heron ('Ardea cinerea') and the Little Egret ('Egretta garzetta').

A very distinctive tall species with its grey, black and white plumage, Grey Herons are often seen standing statuesque-like alongside rivers, estuaries, loughs, flooded fields, and even waiting patiently for the frogs to arrive in my pond! When I first drove into Clonakilty twenty years ago it was along the estuary road from Ring. It was low tide and I remember counting a dozen or more Grey Herons standing like sentinels, stock still, equally spaced along the channel, some with necks outstretched like angle-poise lamps, staring intently at the water waiting for a fish or eel to come within striking distance of its dagger-like bill. Its common name in Irish is 'corr réisc'. 'Corr' is used variously

for herons, cranes and storks, while 'réisc' means marsh or bog. It goes by many other Irish names, but the one I like is 'corr scréachóg' or screeching crane, which is exactly what it does when taking to the air, spreading its two-metre wingspan and letting out a harsh 'kraaank' call.

For most of the year this is a solitary bird but, as seen in Timoleague, in the spring they nest in colonies, building large nests high up in mature trees. Known as heronries, some will have been in use for more than a hundred years. The Grey Heron is an early breeder, laying one clutch of three to four grey green eggs in mid-March, but sometimes earlier. Both parents share the duties of incubation and the chicks hatch within

four weeks. They are born with little or no down feathers, closed eyes and are incapable of leaving the nest. It will be seven weeks before they fledge. Only one quarter of these juveniles will survive to reach breeding maturity in two years. Mature birds are distinguished by their distinctive white centre crown and forehead with black side crown and nape plume. The typical lifespan is about five years, but a ringed bird was recorded by the British Trust for Ornithology at 23 years and nine months!

The Grey Heron's smaller 'cousin' the Little Egret, like me, is a 'blow in'. Although previously an occasional visitor to Ireland, it only started breeding here in 1997. Since then, it has expanded its range to almost every coastal county, as well as inland. Standing at a more diminutive 60cm with its white plumage, black legs and bright yellow feet, it shares similar habitats and diets to the Grey Heron, living on small fish, frogs, snails and insects. Unlike the Grey Heron though, it has a more active hunting style, and can often be seen walking in shallow water, stirring with its feet as it moves forward, ready to strike anything that it disturbs.

Little Egrets also nest with Grey Herons in their heronries. During breeding they form two elongated neck plumes and the grey area between their eyes and bill, the lore, turns a reddish colour. They start breeding slightly later than the Grey Heron, laying three to four pale greenish-blue eggs that both parents incubate over three weeks. The chicks are covered in white down and have a pink bill and legs which turn blue grey. After three weeks they can climb out of the nest, and can fly after five weeks, when they follow adults and learn how to feed themselves.

The sight of both Grey Heron and Little Egret can be enjoyed at most of the estuaries along the West Cork coast, and its many lakes and rivers. The photos with this article were taken at Rosscarbery.



Grey Heron & Little Egret together and a Grey Heron eating an eel at Rosscarbery. Both pics: Nicholas Mitchell



BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch News
Upcoming events being held by the Branch are:
Sunday April 21: Old Head of Kinsale – Spring migrants
Sunday May 12: Esk Estate, Glengarriff – Dawn Chorus
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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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Cork Nature Network launches Ballydehob Biodiversity Action Plan

Cork Nature Network, in partnership with Ballydonut and the Ballydehob community, launched the Ballydehob Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in March on World Water Day. The launch at the Ballydehob Community Hall included presentations from Maggie McColgan, Cork Nature Network, Mark Robins Ballydonut, Moze Jacobs, Ballydonut/West Cork Doughnut Economy Network, Stephanie O'Toole, Streamscapes, Ann Haigh, Ilen River Nature Mat-

ters, Cllr. Caroline Cronin and Nikki Keeling Green Economy Foundation.

Funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland, the Ballydehob BAP, has been developed to provide direction and create a framework for future actions aimed at preserving and enhancing the local biodiversity, with a special focus on the Ballydehob estuary. This plan signifies a collective effort between Cork Nature Network, Ballydonut, a local group promoting sustainable practices

under the West Cork Doughnut Economy Network, Ballydehob Tidy Towns, Ballydehob Community Council and the community of Ballydehob.

The Ballydehob BAP outlines a comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation, including actions for habitats, insects, water, and community engagement. Key initiatives include protecting existing estuary habitats, enhancing hedgerows for wildlife and pollinators, and involving local schools and community groups in biodiversity projects. The plan also emphasises the importance of water quality, proposing the establishment of a Ballydehob Water Group to monitor and improve the estuary and surrounding water bodies.

Tara O'Donoghue project manager with Cork Nature Network said, "Our chosen launch date, World Water Day, underscores the BAP's focus on the estuary, highlighting the critical importance of water in sustaining biodiversity. The



Ballydehob estuary is a vital habitat for a diverse range of species and plays a crucial role in the ecological well-being of the area."

Moze Jacobs of the Ballydonut Group said, "We can't wait to engage the community and carry out more actions for nature such as Biodiversity Walks, a Sand Martin 'Wall', maintaining the grass verges in certain areas in the village for more biodiversity and last but not

least, celebrating the high quality of the rivers that run through Ballydehob into Roaring Water Bay. She added that: Working with CNN on the Biodiversity Plan for Ballydehob has really sharpened our focus, as well as strengthened our ties within the community. What has emerged above all is how eager people are to do things for nature if the opportunities can be found."

Extensive community engagement including online surveys, and a dedicated

community event in November 2023 brought together local groups, experts, and residents to share ideas and contributed greatly to the plan's development. Cork Nature Network is incredibly grateful for the support and enthusiasm shown by the community of Ballydehob, their partners, and everyone who contributed their time and expertise to create this action plan.

Join Cork Nature Network and partners in celebrating this pivotal moment for Ballydehob's environment, and learn more about the BAP and how you can get involved in safeguarding our precious natural heritage. Together, a lasting impact can be made on the biodiversity of Ballydehob.



Claiming SEAI grants



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.

This month, I wanted to provide you with a step by step guide on how to claim individual grants from SEAI for upgrades to your

homes. While some people will want to do a 'deep retrofit' and may have access to finances to do this all in one go, we know that for many people taking a step by step approach may be more suitable. So I'd like to share a step by step guide in this article.

If you want to manage the upgrades yourself, you can do so and claim the grant back from SEAI.

For more information on individual energy grants from SEAI go to seai.ie.

The Individual Energy Upgrade application process is for homeowners who want to carry out one or more energy upgrades and manage everything from grant selection, grant application and submission of relevant paperwork.

1. Choose your energy upgrades: Contact a BER assessor, building contractor, architect or energy advisor to discuss suitable upgrades. Check the BER register for information on completed Building Energy Ratings in Ireland. If you don't have a BER it would be a good starting point.

2. If you want to install a heatpump: If applying for a heat pump grant and your house was built before 2007, you will need to complete a technical assessment, which is completed by a SEAI registered techni-

cal advisor. There is a €200 grant towards the cost of this assessment.

3. Choose an SEAI registered contractor: Ensure the contractor provides a contract before commencing any work. This contract will be necessary for the grant application.

4. Apply for the corresponding grant(s): Apply online via the SEAI website or submit a postal application. Online applications receive immediate grant offers, while postal applications receive offers within five working days. Accept the offer within 30 days of receiving it.

5. Have the work carried out: Ensure all work is completed within an eight-month period. The grant offer letter specifies the final date for completing the work. Use an SEAI registered contractor for the work. Pay the contractor or arrange financing. Complete a BER assessment and publish the BER certificate.

6. Receive the grant: Fill out and submit a Declaration of Works form. These forms are sent by the SEAI via post. One form is required for each upgrade. Fill in the forms with your contractor and BER assessor. Payment is usually deposited into your bank account within four weeks of form submission.

by **Gavin Jeffrey**,
CHERIS project manager,
Ludgate Hub Skibbereen



In the picturesque region of West Cork, a beacon of community-led innovation has emerged. The CHERIS Community Home Energy Retrofit Information Service, a pilot initiative funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, has successfully concluded, leaving an indelible mark on the local community.

The project was a collaborative effort between Ludgate, RetroKit and The Wheel funded by the Community Climate Action Programme. Its objective was clear: to pilot an information service that would guide householders through the initial stages of their home energy upgrade journey. This service was not just an end goal but provided a blueprint and a toolkit for other communities nationwide.

From its inception in October 2022, to its conclusion on

March 31, 2024, CHERIS has been a model of community capacity building and leadership. The project's outputs were impressive, including the development of a comprehensive digital toolkit, videos, leaflets and case studies designed to facilitate 'Home Energy Upgrade Clinics'.

These clinics were a cornerstone of the project, providing free, invaluable advice to local residents. The community's response was overwhelmingly positive, with 100 per cent of attendees recommending the clinics and an average rating of 8.57 out of 10 for their usefulness.

The mentors of the CHERIS Project were the linchpins of the community's journey towards energy efficiency. Drawn from diverse sectors within the community, including Credit Unions, Cork ETB, Sherkin Island SEC, Carbery Housing Association, and private businesses, these individuals brought a wealth of knowledge and a shared passion for sustainable living. Their training went beyond the conventional, as they were equipped not only with the technical know-how but also with the soft skills necessary to engage and inspire homeowners. Their role was pivotal in translating the project's vision into actionable steps for the local residents, ultimately fostering a culture of environmental stewardship within West Cork.

The project's success was also aided by the robust stake-

holder engagement strategy. A selected group of advisors including MaREI, SE Systems, Local SECs, SEAI and The West Cork Development Partnership, ensured that the project was co-designed with the community's needs at the forefront. Their contributions were pivotal in shaping the services and tools that would resonate with and empower the locals.

As we look back on the achievements of the CHERIS Project, it's clear that it has set a precedent for future community-driven initiatives. The project has not only met its targets but has also provided a platform for continuous learning and adaptation. The positive environmental impact, increased knowledge capacity among community leaders, and the heightened confidence of residents in making energy-efficient home improvements are testaments to the project's profound influence.

The CHERIS Project stands as a shining example of what can be accomplished when a community comes together, united by a common goal of sustainable living. It's a narrative of success, collaboration, and hope for a greener future, one that the people of West Cork can proudly share with the world.

To find out more about CHERIS, please come to the event organised by Rosscarbery Tidy Towns on April 12. Some of the CHERIS mentor team will be on call to provide home energy upgrade advice.

Empowering West Cork: The success of the CHERIS Project

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

GRACE
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IT'S TIME TO TURN OFF THE
PLASTIC TAP AT THE SOURCE

We are producing too much packaging waste, with the responsibility to dispose of it correctly currently lying with the consumer.

I'm leading in the European Parliament as the Greens Negotiator of the **Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation**.

This piece of legislation aims to put the responsibility back on the producers of excessive waste - with reduction and reuse as a priority.

But there is pushback. Some political groups and big industry believe that they can pollute without paying. Your support is needed in upcoming weeks to ensure this vital piece of legislation is passed.

Follow my social media to take part in the campaign!

Plastic 'nurdles' washed ashore in Galicia, Spain. Nurdles are the ingredient for virgin plastic products.



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ADVERTORIAL

Power Your Home, Power Conservation: Celebrate Earth Day with a Competition to WIN a Conservation Pass to Fota Wildlife Park with Prosolar!

This Earth Day, Prosolar is proud to share our part in boosting the sustainability of Cork's beloved Fota Wildlife Park! We recently completed a project installing a 68-panel solar PV system with a powerful 40 kWh battery storage system for their new Education Conservation & Research Centre.

This innovative system utilises the sun's energy to generate clean electricity during the day, while the battery stores excess power for use later. It even allows the centre to charge their batteries with cheaper night-rate electricity, saving them money and reducing their reliance on the grid!

Inspired by Fota Wildlife Park's commitment to a sustainable future? You can make a difference at home too! Prosolar can help you reduce your carbon footprint and enjoy significant savings on your electricity bills with a solar PV system for your West Cork



home. The Irish government offers grants that can substantially lower the initial cost of solar panels. **In fact, you can save up to €4,000 with an SEAI Solar PV grant worth up to €2,100 and 0% VAT!**

Here's how solar panels can benefit you and our beautiful environment:

- **Reduce your carbon footprint:** Solar energy is clean and doesn't produce harmful emissions, making it a fantastic way to fight climate change, right here in West Cork.
- **Save money on electricity bills:** The sun's energy is free! Once you've recovered the initial installation cost, you'll enjoy long-term savings on your energy expenses.
- **Support our local sustainability goals:** By switching to solar, you're contributing to a cleaner, greener West Cork and helping Ireland achieve its ambitious climate action targets for 2024.

Ready to join the sustainability movement?

Enter our competition to win a family pass to Fota Wildlife Park and take a step towards a greener future for your home and our planet!

Together, let's harness the power of the West Cork sun and shine a light on sustainability, one solar panel at a time!



A photo for Fota – How it works:

To enter simply e-mail your best Irish nature photo to photo@prosolar.ie before Friday 19th April 2024.

We will share the best photos on our Instagram page [@prosolarIE](https://www.instagram.com/prosolarIE) and photo with the most likes at 23:59 on Sunday 21st April 2024 will WIN!

The winner announced and contacted to receive their prize on Earth Day Monday 22nd April 2024.

Prize includes:

Conservation pass for FREE ADMISSION to Fota Wildlife Park for the pass holder + guests (see website for more details www.fotawildlife.ie/tickets-membership) PLUS Free admission to Dublin Zoo, 1 visit per year to Edinburgh Zoo, Highlands Wildlife Park, Belfast Zoo, Paignton Zoo & Newquay Zoo.

€50 gift voucher to spend at Fota Wildlife park.

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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Would you know a rhinograde from a rotifer?



THE ANIMAL WORLD

Dr. Jeremy A. Dorman

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

One of the most memorable lectures I attended at university was given by the late Professor Robert Blackith, renowned entomologist and anti-nuclear activist. At the time, he was studying tridactylid grasshoppers, but this particular talk was on a group of extinct mammals called rhinogrades. They were first described by the Swedish explorer Einar Pettersson-Skämtkvist in 1941, and were found only in one small Pacific archipelago. There were 189 species of rhinogrades, all descended from a shrew-like creature which had lived originally on one island. This ancestral rhinograde managed to reach other islands within the group, each with distinct habitats, and just as Darwin's finches evolved different beaks when they moved onto new islands in the Galapagos, so the

rhinogrades developed strange and modified noses that took on other functions, such as catching food (with nasal secretions) and acting as an extra leg (rather like a kangaroo's tail, but at the front).

Unfortunately, rhinogrades vanished, along with their islands, after American nuclear tests in the 1950s, but we know about them from Harald Stümpke's 1961 book, *Bau und Leben der Rhinogradentia*.

I could keep on describing these fascinating mammals, and most readers would probably never realise the truth: rhinogrades never existed. They, and Harald Stümpke, were invented by the German zoologist Gerolf Steiner, partly for fun, but partly to teach about evolution. They often appear as April Fools jokes – the American Museum of Natural History even published an article about them in 1967.

Other imaginary animals have been used to play similar pranks. I remember Éamon de Buitléar, in a radio broadcast many years ago, announcing the discovery of a mermaid; few would have been fooled by that. Mermaids were a mix of mythology, wishful thinking and trickery (the 'Feejee mermaid', for example, was a monkey's head and torso sewn onto a fish's tail). In previous centuries, such weird creatures frequently fooled the gullible. 'Jenny Haniver' was the name given to monsters crafted by imaginative sailors, often from rays, which were sold as sou-



Jenny Haniver

venirs; some even appeared in zoological text books.

Cryptozoologists spend their lives searching for animals that probably don't exist. An ape-like creature, the yeti, has long been part of Himalayan folklore. Footprints in the snow and samples of fur have been found, but most have been deliberate hoaxes or misidentified bears. A monster has supposedly been lurking in Loch Ness for centuries; most sightings are probably due to mistaken identity, or whisky. The only good photograph, from 1934, was a fake.

The most infamous biological hoax was Piltown Man, described by amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson in 1912. Thought to be the 'missing link' between man and ape, it was later proved to be a human skull with the jaw of an orangutan and teeth of a chimpanzee. Only two months ago, a 280 million-year-old fossil lizard, discovered in the Italian Alps in 1931, was shown by scientists from UCC and Italy to have been mostly paintwork.

A few real animals seem so strange, they were once considered hoaxes. When the duck-billed platypus was first described in 1799, some insisted it was the work of a taxidermist who had attached the beak of a duck and the tail of a beaver onto something like a giant mole. That the platypus supposedly laid eggs made it quite unbelievable. The okapi was thought to be a sort of African unicorn, until 1901 when Sir Harry Johnston, then a colonial officer in Uganda, obtained the first skull and



skin of the creature – the skull resembled that of a giraffe, the legs and haunches were striped like a zebra.

The average person, regrettably, knows little about any animals, real or imagined. How many readers could distinguish, for example, a herring from a pilchard, a fulmar from a gull, or a shrew from a vole? How about a wasp from a hoverfly? For the harmless and helpful hoverfly, that is often a matter of life and death. Even fewer could identify a rotifer or a tardigrade. There are over two million described species of animal, most of them completely unknown to the non-zoologist. You might argue: "We know nothing about okapis, fulmars or rotifers; you know nothing about banking, the law, or the workings of the motor car." But bankers, lawyers and motor cars are not endangered, unfortunately. And strange as it might seem to modern man, the planet would go on quite happily if none of them existed, which it wouldn't do without so many animals that are vital components of long established ecosystems.

Not only does every organism have its place in the world, nearly all were here long before us. They are our neighbours, every worm and fly and sparrow. It is terribly bad manners to push them out of the way, squash them, poison them, foul up their homes so they can no longer live there, without, in most cases, even knowing their names. (But then good manners are in danger of extinction too.)

Biodiversity is a trendy word

today, but who really knows how diverse the biological world is? Few politicians do – they are mostly concerned with economic growth, which, as anyone with half a brain should realise, is one of the main causes of the biodiversity crisis.

People nowadays rarely seem to notice wildlife. I walk to a little cove every day, to an environment that interests me now as much as it did when I was a child. But I never see any children there; they prefer staring at screens to peering into rock pools. Passing hikers are either talking loudly or have their ears plugged into something, so they probably never see the seals and foxes, or hear the choughs, peregrines and buzzards, the beautiful yellowhammers and goldfinches; the great northern diver fishing in the winter, the noisy sedge warblers in the tangled foliage beside the stream all summer.

Very little zoology is taught in schools, so unless parents encourage children, they will never learn. Instead of phones and computer games, why not buy your child binoculars, and perhaps a telescope (how many stars can they name?) or even a microscope? I remember the first time my father showed me the beauty of a magnified dragonfly wing, and decades later, the fascination on the faces of my pupils when we found a rotifer in a sample of pond water, its two crowns of cilia whirring like an electric razor, its pharynx grinding up food like a bird's gizzard.

The incomparable Sir David Attenborough has done so much

to show us the wonders of the natural world, but even his documentaries are not enough. Once, on a fast ferry to Hong Kong, I was pleasantly surprised to see 'The Blue Planet' on the cabin's large TV screen. The particular episode was about sex-changing wrasse – an intriguing topic, and the fish in question, the Asian sheepshead wrasse, is one of the most magnificently ugly fish in the sea. Yet not one other passenger was watching, all preferring to stare at their damnable phones. That was China, where so much of the environment is already devastated. But it is the same here – on the local bus to Clonakilty, my fellow passengers rarely look out of the window at all the birds in the estuary – the herons and egrets, curlews and godwits, and in the winter, the widgeon, teal and mergansers.

Every day, often every hour, on TV and radio, there is news about boring business and unimportant sport (and on RTE, relentless adverts for cars), but very little from the real world. Perhaps, instead of reports about overpaid ignoramuses kicking balls, or how many fractions of a percentage point the stock exchange has moved since the day before, we should be given regular updates about endangered animals. They could be presented in a manner appealing to sporting types: Chinese humans 1,410,000,000, tigers 50; African humans 1,280,000,000, black rhinoceroses 5,600; or, closer to home, Irish humans 5,281,600, natterjack toads 10,000. More April foolery, you think; but anything to get nature into people's heads.

Wandering along a beach or strolling through a wood is good for the body; listening to and observing the animals who live there is good for the mind. A love of animals makes a kinder, more caring person; a proper knowledge and understanding of zoology explains our very existence. If everyone, not just the few nature lovers, knew more about the beautiful, fascinating, often hilarious creatures with which we share the planet, they might not be so eager to desecrate it with motorways and housing estates, factories and mines.

Either people change their attitude to wildlife, or humanity's expansion, its so-called development, will never stop, and the natural world will continue to shrink – you can't have both. And for your grandchildren, thousands of animal species, from toads to tigers, will be as mythical as the rhinogrades.

WANTED

Have you seen a flapper skate egg washed up in Co. Cork? We want to hear from you!

Donal Harrington

Help us identify the first nursery ground for this Critically Endangered species in Irish waters

Email Dr Danielle Orrell dorrell@ucc.ie

ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Clochán Uisce: The river Argideen and Shannonvale sewage flood

Advocating for clean healthy rivers is the foundation of Clochán Uisce's work. Our local rivers face a multitude of problems and some are more complex than others, but one such problem the river Argideen has been subjected to for over 25 years is not complex at all, yet the consequences are immense. It is not complex because it has been known as far back as 1998, to Cork Co Council, and their successor organisations, Irish Water and Uisce Eireann that untreated sewage has been escaping from a failed sewage treatment system into a public park in the village of Shannonvale, Clonakilty. The area is situated on the north bank of the river Argideen, upstream from the point where Uisce Eireann extracts drinking water for the entire Clonakilty municipal water supply.

Despite the evident threat to public health and the ecological impact on the river system and its biodiversity, the problem

still exists to this day. There is also a real concern that this could cause THMs in the water supply of Clonakilty. THMs are a chemical compound that forms when organic particles from bacteria and plant matter that remain in the water after filtering in treatment plants react with chlorine disinfectant. They are of concern for human health and the environment as some studies have suggested that long-term exposure to high levels of these chemical compounds in drinking water may pose risks such as cancer, in particular bladder cancer

and colon cancer, and cause gastrointestinal problems and skin irritation.

Once released into the environment, THMs are toxic for aquatic wildlife, disrupt freshwater ecosystems and contribute to the formation of 'dead zones' in river estuaries by encouraging excessive growth of algae. This problem of sewage seeping into the river Argideen can be solved very easily by upgrading the failed sewage treatment plant in the public park. The Clean Water Clonakilty team and Clochán Uisce are campaigning to get

Uisce Eireann to address this issue and put a stop to this health and ecological hazard that has been going on for far too long. Our river deserves to be healthy, as we too expect our drinking water to be healthy.

We are appealing to everyone who reads this article to sign the petition on my.uplift.ie (search for 'stop the Shannonvale sewage flood') and help stop the Shannonvale sewage flood.

Follow @clochanuisce on Instagram

Have you come across a skate egg case?

A research project is underway at UCC to study the potential for interactions between megafauna species (cetaceans, elasmobranchs, turtles, and seabirds) and offshore renewable energy devices. As part of this project, Dr. Danielle Orrell is studying flapper skate and other cartilaginous fish in Courtmacsherry Bay. Her research includes fitting rod-caught skate with satellite and acoustic tagging equipment to gather data on their movements, behaviour, habitat preferences, reproductive health and parasites.

We can all help this project by looking out for skate egg cases that might be washed up on the shore. They are huge, but are much the same colour as some seaweeds. If you find one, please keep it, and contact Dr. Danielle Orrell at dorrell@ucc.ie.

BARRY O'MAHONY
INDEPENDENT
FOR WEST CORK

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ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

Nestflix: new live stream for nature lovers from NPWS

Members of the public can now tune into two new livestreams which show two Chough pairs as they go about building their nests in West Cork. The Chough (pronounced CHUF) is a member of the crow family, larger than the jackdaw and distinctive for its bright red beak and red legs.

The livestreams are an initiative of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Cork Region. There are up to 900 pairs of Chough breeding in Ireland, with 30 per cent of the national population found in County Cork. Fifteen Special Protection Areas (SPA) offer protection to breeding Chough around the country, with four of those SPAs located in Cork.

In recent years, NPWS Conservation Rangers based in Cork have observed some Chough pairs moving from their traditional coastal sites, where they mainly nest in crevices in sea cliffs, to building their nests further inland in old buildings – including cattlesheds, haybarns, derelict cottages and even bridges. Research by NPWS staff suggests that around a third of the Chough population in Cork is now nesting in buildings.

The livestreams have been

set up in Clonakilty and on the Mizen to allow further monitoring of a sample of the Chough population during the nesting season.

Chough may face additional challenges in their new surroundings; their eggs and chicks appear to be more vulnerable to predators such as rats and crows. Human activity can cause some disturbance to their nests and sites may be lost due to buildings being renovated or collapsing. In order to overcome some of these threats, NPWS is erecting Chough nest boxes at particularly vulnerable sites.

Clare Heardman, NPWS District Conservation Officer said:



“The livestream ‘Nestflix’ can will allow better understanding of some of these factors which impact on the Chough population, and how we can protect this Annex 1 population in the future. The breeding behaviour of Chough is normally hidden from human eyes because of their traditional crevice-nesting habit so the cameras will provide a rare glimpse into all stages of breeding from nest-building to the chicks fledging.”

Livestreams: Search YouTube for ‘LIVE Irish Chough Nest | Mizen Peninsula’ or ‘LIVE Irish Chough Nest | Clonakilty’

West Cork schools take top prizes in national 3D printing challenge

Two West Cork primary schools in Cork have been named the winners of a national design competition that used 3D printing to respond to sustainability challenges within their schools. Ballinacarriga National School and Drinagh National School, have been named the winners of ‘Manufacturing a Healthy Future’ 2023 – a 3D printing design challenge. The competition is part of a European programme that gives teachers access to the latest information and technology and sparks interest in STEM in the classroom.

The project, supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology - Manufacturing, challenged young pupils to give a ‘second life’ or a ‘life extension’ to something that might otherwise be thrown away, by improving it with 3D printed parts.

Fifth and sixth class students from Ballinacarriga National School designed a solution to extend the life of the chairs in their classroom; while fourth class students from Drinagh National School brought old puzzle games back to life by 3D printing the missing pieces. Both schools were awarded €500 in education supplies for their school. They have also won the opportunity to visit the Stryker

manufacturing facility in Cork, where they will witness firsthand the innovative work being done in additive (3D) manufacturing.

Barry O’Driscoll, teacher at Ballinacarriga NS, said: “‘Manufacturing a Healthy Future’ is a great initiative that I would recommend to all teachers. 3D printing allows students to use their imaginations and fosters creativity in a fun way. The programme also inspires children to consider pursuing careers in STEM in the future.”

Melissa Swanton, fourth Class teacher at Drinagh, said: “The students were so excited to be named a winner in the ‘Manufacturing a Healthy Future’ competition. 3D printing incorporates many key skills for students, such as teamwork, design, maths and art. The competition also educates the children around important themes of sustainability. It was very rewarding to see the pupils working together and developing problem-solving skills.”



Gary Bennett and Chloe Walsh, Ballinacarriga National School with a 3-D printer

Waste Not, Want Not: Clonakilty update and love your bread!

This month the ‘Waste Not, Want Not’ team has been busy meeting with producers, farmers, businesses, community groups and schools to listen, learn and begin developing pilot projects. These pilot projects, aimed to reduce food waste throughout the food chain in our community, will be presented at the official launch

event on April 25, from 7-9 pm at O’Donovans Hotel. All are welcome to take part, please register your interest at www.voiceireland.org/wastenotwantnot

In the meantime, we have two lovely events this month as part of the Lifelong Learning festival. **FUNKY**, A free pickling workshop with chef

Caitlin Ruth will take place on Saturday April 13 at 3pm at O’Donovans Hotel. Learn how to make delicious pickles from food that may have previously hit the bin! Be sure to register by email as places are limited.

On Tuesday, April 16, at 12pm, we will be co-hosting a ‘Waste Not, Want Not’ Skill share with the Clonakilty Women’s Shed. Come along to the Clonakilty ETB for a fun and interactive workshop to discuss ways we can make delicious dinners and treats with foods that otherwise might be binned. What do you do with your leftover bits of bread, fruit that is past best or with those bits of leftovers in your fridge? Bring your recipes, ideas or just come along to be inspired – and feel free to bring some ‘Brack’! Register for workshops by emailing: allison@voiceireland.org

Bread – The staff of life
Often overlooked, the bread we waste is a signal of a cultural shift that has slowly taken place over recent decades and

is now normalised. Bread, once considered sacred, is now binned with little to no regard. The situation of bread wastage is actually alarming, with over half of the bread produced being discarded; raising serious economic and environmental concerns. Much of this waste occurs at the consumer level, representing about one-fifth of all food wasted according to a Dutch study.

The good news is that this also means that there is a high potential for impactful change at individual level. This issue is one we can really do something about!

We throw away perfectly edible bread for various reasons, it may go out of date, get too hard or we might just not want to eat the crusts! As a culture we consistently undervalue this once revered resource and the more it has become commonplace and inexpensive, the more we seem to waste. We discard the ends of loaves and overbuy due to misconceptions about freshness, and if we don’t store our bread properly it goes

mouldy so quickly.

Are you ready to tackle bread waste and start celebrating this delicious food source? Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- **Embrace the Ends:** We must overcome our aversion to crusts, don’t leave the nub until last, eat it first!

- **Proper Storage:** Freeze bread and only thaw what’s needed. Alternatively, purchase whole loaves and slice as required, storing in cloth to maintain freshness.

- **Creativity in Staleness:** Stale bread can be revitalised

by toasting, making croutons or breadcrumbs to use as a casserole topping...I like to pop any hard bits of bread lingering in my bread bag into the oven anytime I’m cooking up something else to make double use of the energy!

- **BYO (Bake Your Own!):** There’s nothing like the appreciation of homemade bread to get us inspired to treat it with the respect it deserves. Save money, save resources – love your bread!



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Wagyu Irish style

An Irish family run farm reckons that Irish Wagyu is even tastier than Japanese Wagyu because of its grass-fed diet and the beautiful native Irish herbs the Irish Wagyu cattle feed on. Located just outside Millstreet, at the foot of Ballvouskill Mountain and surrounded by lakes, waterfalls and forestry, Finnow Farm is an organic Irish Wagyu farm, where the animals are predominantly raised outdoors, only coming in for the winter months. They are fed on a predominantly grass-fed diet, supplemented with home grown organic barley.



Conor Sheahan, whose family have been farming for over 80 years, is the third generation to farm here. After a house fire and health scare in 2018 forced him to look at his lifestyle and work-life balance, Conor shifted from dairy to organic beef farming. He began breeding Wagyu – a breed of cattle originating from Japan, and selling beef directly from farm to fork. “We look after our Japanese cattle the Irish way,” shares Conor. They do however maintain some of the Japanese traditions on Finnow Farm, such as massaging. “We have a massage brush, which the cattle absolutely love to use. It relaxes them and keeps their coats clean and shiny.”

Renowned for an intense marbled appearance, which results in a tender, melt-in-the mouth meat with a distinctive and

delicious flavour, Wagyu meat is low in cholesterol, high in iron and protein, and packed full of essential amino and fatty acids including Omega-3 and Omega-6.

When the animal reaches 28 months the marbling gene kicks in and the fat stores are evenly distributed through the animal.

As members of the Irish Organic Association, Finnow Farm values animal welfare and natural, chemical-free farming methods. This gives the beef a fuller, meatier, natural flavour, as well as high levels of vita-



mins and essential fatty acids.

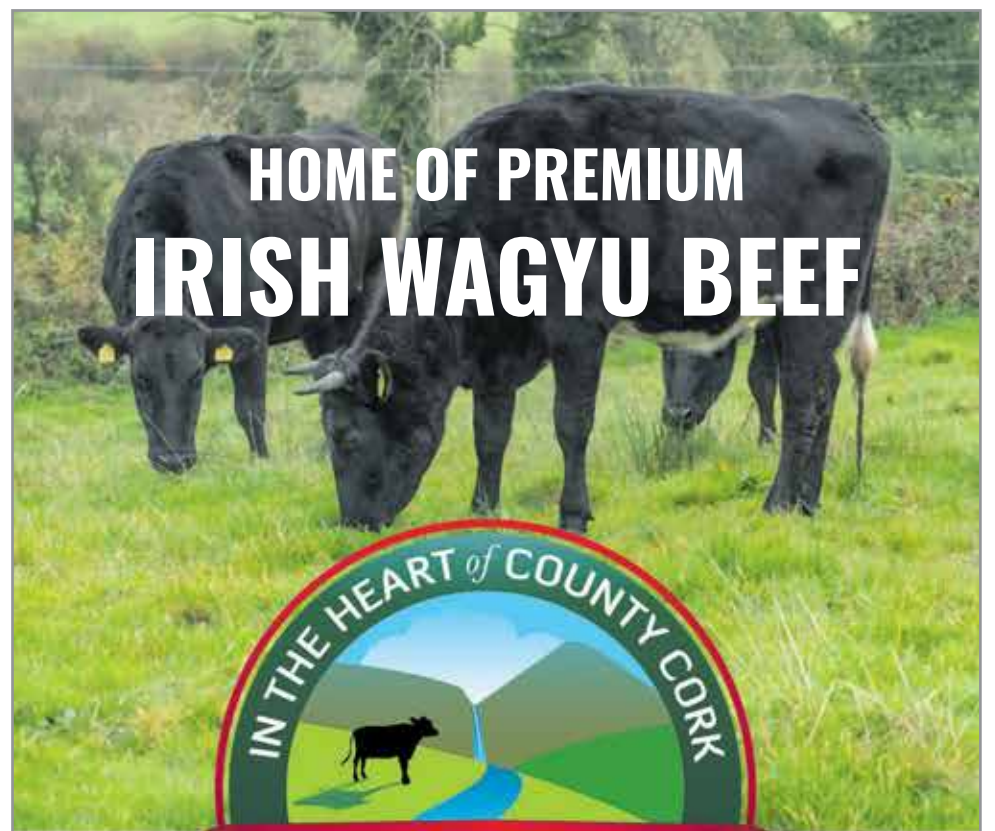
The Sheahans have dedicated almost 20 years to perfecting their beef’s appearance, ensuring quality breeding, quality genetics and a quality Irish product.

Organic farming is also more sustainable and much kinder to the environment than conventional modern farming methods.

“We maintain the level of stock that our land can cater for,” says Conor “eliminating the need for chemical fertilisers. We sell one complete animal before slaughtering another, reducing food waste and ensure the freshest Irish Wagyu produce for our customers.”

Finnow Farm’s iWagyu meat is processed in Cork and distributed straight to your door.

For more information go to www.finnowfarm.ie



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Organic farming matters

Set in 30 acres of West Cork hills, Camus Farm is a certified organic producer of beef and vegetables supplying on-farm restaurant, The Field Kitchen. Animal welfare, sustainability and enhanced biodiversity come together at Camus Farm, as organic farming allows greater space for the domesticated cattle and, correspondingly, allows greater space for nature.



The beef comes from the Camus Farm herd of pedigree Dexter Cattle, a dual-purpose breed, traditionally reared for both milk and beef. The breed is native to Ireland and, like Kerry Cattle, are descended from the predominantly black cattle of the early Celts; first documented in 1842 by Scottish agriculturist David Low, who described Dexter Cattle as 'remarkably round and short legged'. Dexter Cattle are typically around 110cm in height, weighing around 350kg. In comparison, modern, scientifically-selected breeds are significantly larger and heavier.



Dexter cattle are hardy animals, easily kept and fattened on grass. Because of their size, they are light on the land, preferring life outdoors with some shelter in winter, and grazing a variety of vegetation. Dexters are renowned for the quality and taste of their beef, which is marbled with a distinctive gamey flavour.

As a certified Organic Farm, very strict animal welfare standards are enforced at Camus covering, for example, stocking density and animal housing. In addition, being a closed herd, the risk of disease being brought onto the farm is greatly reduced. Organic also means no synthetic herbicides, pesticides or fertilisers, no genetically-modified feed and no routine antibiotics.

In addition, the cattle are not castrated or dehorned, reproduce naturally and, as a suckler herd, the calves remain with their mothers until fully weaned (around nine months). Farm Trails allow visitors to access the landscape and to get up close to the cattle and the wild-life around the farm.

Organic farming has led the way for providing food with minimal environmental footprint, achieving the highest quality through fair production and careful processing. This approach also increases the abundance and range of biodiversity on the Farm. With a diversity of grass varieties such as sweet vernal, timothy, meadow fescue; wider field margins with oak trees and hawthorn hedgerows; regular wild-life visiting the farm includes grasshoppers, butterflies, bees, falcons, kestrels, buzzards, moths, bats and owls.

Aged for 28 days, Camus Farm Dexter Beef is quite distinctive with its dark purple colour. The fat is yellow as a consequence of the cattle being grass-fed. Low food miles are assured as the beef is processed locally.

The restaurant produces the minimum of waste as vegetables are harvested fresh to supply the number of reservations on the day. Any residual waste is composted on the farm. Other sustainability measures on the farm include sourcing water from an on-farm well, power from solar electric panels, hot water from solar thermal panels and heating from log burning stoves.

Animal welfare, sustainability and biodiversity are complementary values at the heart of everything at Camus Farm.

Consumers' mindset will shape future of animal welfare

Established in 2019 to campaign for improved conditions for farm animals, Ethical Farming Ireland's mission is to promote sustainable, ethical farming methods whilst standing against animal cruelty, specifically factory farming and live export. A small group, its volunteers work with a number of groups across Europe to lobby for changes in legislation.

"Our food system is broken," says the group's founder and director Caroline Rowley. "Since the end of the second world war, farming has become more intensified with little regard to either the welfare of the animals being farmed or the devastating impact on our planet. We are in a biodiversity decline, with polluted waterways, and animal welfare has become second place to profit."

Ireland's 1.7 million pigs are mostly hidden away in large sheds, never experiencing the outdoors, with sows in cages too narrow to turn around in. Pigs are kept in crowded pens, on slatted floors with no straw bedding and no stimulation, which is why 99 per cent have docked tails, to prevent biting. "Pigs are intelligent animals with an inherent need to root and forage, which they can't do in a barren shed," says Caroline. "It's a truly miserable existence."

The good news is there are a growing number of free range farms in Ireland. "These farms allow pigs to live outside where they can carry out natural behaviours, so tail biting isn't an issue," says Caroline. "There are no sow stalls, enabling sows to nest build and nurture their young. Most of these farms sell direct or at local farmers



"However many free range farms are not all they are made out to be," shares Caroline (above), who stresses the importance of looking for a local supplier. "The smaller the farm the more likely welfare will be of a higher standard."

markets."

In Ireland, egg laying hens and chickens for eating are largely reared intensively in sheds, unable to carry out natural behaviours like dust bathing and pecking for grubs. Fortunately there are a growing number of free range farms with their produce now more available in supermarkets. "However many free range farms are not all they are made out to be," shares Caroline, who stresses the importance of looking for a

local supplier. "The smaller the farm the more likely welfare will be of a higher standard."

Ethical Farming Ireland's main focus is live export. "There are two main issues," says Caroline, "one being the export of unweaned male dairy calves."

To produce milk a cow must produce a calf, which is removed soon after birth. The females are kept as replacements, but the males have little value because breeds good for milk production aren't good for beef. A large number are exported, mainly to veal farms in the Netherlands, at just a couple of weeks old.

"It takes 18 hours on the ferry to get to France, where the calves are unloaded and fed at a control post before they set off again," explains Caroline. "When you factor in travel time to and from the ports, the calves are stuck in the truck for over 24 hours with no food. It's not possible to feed them because they are on a milk diet and you can't feed 300 calves milk in a truck. Veal farms are also incredibly cruel places, the calves never go outside and are slaughtered at just five to eight months old."

The other issue, according to Caroline, involves long sea journeys of 10 to 16 days to countries like Libya, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and Algeria. "Not only do the young bulls (largely from the dairy sector) suffer from respiratory illness and leg injuries, due to the high humidity and ammonia fumes and heavily soiled pens, but the destination countries have appalling animal welfare standards, particularly at slaughter, with little in the way of legislation to protect them. This

is the 21st century, we have refrigeration, we do not need to ship live cattle halfway round the world!" Ethical Farming Ireland are currently running a billboard campaign to highlight these issues.

"There is an answer," continues Caroline, "and it's growing in popularity across Europe – calf at foot dairy farms where the calves stay with mum and the males are kept for beef. There are dual purpose breeds like the Flekvieh and Red Poll that are good for both milk and beef production. This would mean a complete overhaul of the dairy sector, but it is the only way to do dairy humanely. We don't have any calf at foot farms in Ireland yet, but hopefully that will change. It would certainly be a unique selling point if any ambitious dairy farmers out there want to give it a go!"

But the main issue lies with us, the consumer. Caroline is adamant that we need to change our mindset and stop expecting cheap food, all purchased in one location. "There is no such thing as cheap food, we just can't always see the cost. Current levels of consumption of meat and dairy cannot be met by high welfare systems, so we need to cut down, and stop supporting intensive farms."

"The key to good welfare is the ability to carry out natural behaviours. All animals deserve a life free of hunger, pain and stress and they should be able to fully carry out all their natural behaviours, including caring for their young. This means getting animals out of the factories and back into the fields where they belong."

IRISH DAIRY BULLS...

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ILLNESS AND DISEASE

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Happy cows make for happier consumers

The peace and calm of a happy herd – sisters, mothers, aunts, and granies – all grazing in the field on a sunny springtime morning is one of the highlights of the year for Niall Moynihan and Emer Fahey, who run an organic farm on 90 acres in Boherbue, Co Cork. Mainly farming Dexters, Dulhallow Organics strives to supply its customers with the highest quality traditional breed beef. Dulhallow hens and pigs are also pasture raised.

When Niall took over the over 200-year-old family farm in 2003, his aim was to keep it commercially productive and environmentally sustainable. He converted to organics with the Irish Organic Association in 2006 and started selling their organic produce direct to consumers in 2009.

“By being organic, we can achieve our aim of being sustainable, accountable to nature and the animals, hold our animal welfare to the highest standards, as well as creating a rich biodiverse farm,” he explains emphasising that animal welfare was one of the initial reasons why they started down the road of organic farming. “This ethos relies on a natural regenerative approach so that agrochemicals such as herbicides, pesticides or synthetic fertilisers are not needed. Niall favours a more holistic approach. “Just as we all try to make a sustainable work-life balance, so does the soil and our animals,” he explains. “A healthy soil grows healthy nutritious plants.”

Smaller stature cows, Dexters are native to Cork and Kerry so are very appropriate to the farm and the area. “This breed went



into decline with the industrialisation of farming over the last century but happily they are making a comeback for numerous reasons including the high quality and flavour of the meat,” shares Niall.

The animals are smaller because they are grown slowly through a 100 per cent natural diet of grass. This benefits the taste and texture of the meat, as well as giving the herd a gentle and happy life. They are strip grazed, which means that they are moved to fresh grass on a daily basis. This method also protects the soil from sun scorching and allows the grass to grow back faster.

Medicinal plants and herbs growing in the field mean that the animals are healthier, which helps avoid the use of routine medicines and antibiotics. During winter Niall tops up their silage with a sprinkle of dried seaweed, which he says the animals love. The animals

are housed over the winter months when the weather gets very cold and wet in his newly refurbished spacious shed.

“However we’re keen to get the cattle out as early as possible in the springtime for their own benefit, as well as saving on our own costs,” he shares.

The numerous hedgerows and trees that they have planted over the past 20 years help to provide shelter – especially with the extreme weather events now occurring – along with nutrition for the animals at certain times of the year. Niall believes that tree diversity going forward is important. “We have lost a lot of trees with Ash dieback and so we plan to replace these with more diverse native species.”

This year he started hedge laying some of the earliest hedgerows planted. “This is an old method of rejuvenating hedgerows and making them stockproof, but it also works for wildlife, as it thickens the hedges and provides great habitats for our birds and mammals,” explains Niall, who is planning on making it an ongoing winter project.

Niall and Emer work and co-operate with a number of other organic farmers in our region to ensure that they have enough space and grassland to finish their animals. This approach allows them to share to workload with other similar-thinking farmers who work in similar environments.

Right now the couple are looking forward to the arrival of new babies in the herd in April. “Most Dexters are full of personality and vigour, so calf by themselves without any intervention,” shares Niall, “often finding a quiet secluded corner of the field to have their babies. We like to leave them in peace to bond on their own.”

Dulhallow beef has a beauti-

ful ruby red colour and is a rich and unique flavour owing to the traditional Dexter breed, as well as their unique diet of grasses and multi-species swards. The meat is aged for up to four weeks and is then expertly cut by craft butchers.

Dulhallow Organic’s Grass finished Purebred Dexter beef is couriered nationwide directly to

customers through their website www.dulhalloworganic.com. Insulated delivery packaging has recently been changed to cardboard boxes and wool insulation, which Niall says sits much better with their ethos of sustainability. They also supply a few shops in the Cork and Kerry region including An Tobairín organic store in Bandon

and Organico in Bantry.

Niall and Emer have applied for approval to plant over 25 acres of agroforestry on their land, which they hope to begin planting at the end of this year. They have also taken on some bees and are looking forward to an exciting and challenging year ahead.



Niall at 086 1901180

www.dulhalloworganic.com

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Medicinal plants and herbs growing in the field mean that the animals are healthier, which helps avoid the use of routine medicines and antibiotics.

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Kale dressed with poor man's parmesan



A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

We arrived home from India to a very grey and wet Ireland and, although twenty four hours before we had been complaining about the heat, this was not what we were wishing for. Days slipped into each other and our tans and the newfound recipes became the reminder of warmer days.

The garden looked pretty much as we had left it, wet and bedraggled but our guinea pigs had a very comfortable winter. We had moved them into one of the tunnels for protection and they thought they had landed in the Bahamas. They munched their way through any greenery there and then tunneled under the barriers and ate the spinach and salad seedlings that I had set before I left. Only stumpy stems remained as evidence that they had ever existed. There is now an eviction order in place for these furry rodents.

The spuds just about made the Paddy's day deadline and are sitting snugly in their ridges and the glasshouse is filling with seedlings so the growing cycle is back in action. Even though it's the same each year it's always exciting to get going again.

There are still bits and bobs to harvest and eat – kale, leeks, purple sprouting broccoli, the odd cauliflower and all sorts of

salad bits.

Kale loves the Irish climate and, unless there's a prolonged heavy freeze, it soldiers on from one spring through to the next. We pick it every month except December and January. As soon as the days begin to lengthen the growth kicks back in. Fortunately kale, which is one of nature's superfoods, has many uses. One we go back to again and again is stir-fried kale. We cook it with a few fennel seeds, chilli flakes and some garlic. It's delicious with pasta, beans and bakes or, as I recently discovered, tossed with the aforementioned, spread out on a baking sheet and given a quick hot blast in the oven. This produces super kale crisps, which can be eaten as is, or scattered over anything that would benefit from some savoury crunch.

There are several varieties of kale out there. My favourite are the softer kales but curly kale seems to be the most commonly available. The soft kales only need be stir-fried but curly kale benefits from a quick blanching, as it's much coarser.

This month's recipe is an old favourite. Kale with Orecchiette and Pangratto.

I am always surprised how tasty it is!

Pangratto, which translates as breadcrumbs, is also known as poor man's Parmesan. It is an excellent way of using up old bread. There's a big campaign to create zero food waste, rightly so, and this is a handy trick. I always find the high humidity in Ireland makes it difficult to get bread to dry enough to make breadcrumbs. It's more likely to grow mould than dry, so I use a food processor to break up the old bread into a crumb. Making pangratto is the perfect next step, as the breadcrumbs are fried until crispy which skips the drying step.

Pangratto is easy to make, gives an interesting flavour and texture and is especially good



for vegans to finish pasta dishes. I must admit I usually go the full Monty and add Parmesan as well.

Orecchiette with Kale and Pangratto

Ingredients:

- 500g kale, stems removed
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp fennel seed
- 1tsp chilli flakes
- 2 slices old bread*
- 75mls olive oil
- 25g butter
- 500g orecchiette
- 150g grated Parmesan to serve (optional)

Method:

If you are using curly kale begin by putting a large pot of water to boil. When it's boiling add one tsp salt and the kale. Submerge the kale with the back of a spoon and when the water returns to the boil drain the kale and refresh under a cold tap.

Squeeze any excess water from the kale and slice into thin ribbons.

If you are using softer kales, gather the leaves together, roll up like a cigar then cut into skinny ribbons

Cut a clove of garlic in half. Rub the bread all over with the cut side of the garlic. Remove the crusts from the slice of bread then buzz to crumbs in a food processor.

Heat a frying pan, add 25g butter and 25mls olive oil, and when the oil and butter bubble up, throw in the breadcrumbs and toss well. Cook the breadcrumbs on a medium high heat until golden and crispy.

Put aside. If you are cooking a vegan version, omit the butter and double the oil.

Peel the garlic and slice thinly, chop once or twice and put aside.

Bring the large pot of water back to the boil. Add one tbs salt and the orecchiette. Give them a good stir then set the timer. Cook according to the instructions on the packet, the timing differs with the different brands.

Heat the frying pan, add 50mls olive oil and the garlic, fennel seeds and chilli flakes. Cook on a gentle heat for a few minutes then stir in the shredded kale. Increase the heat and stir until the kale melts down then reduce the heat and cook gently for a couple more minutes until the kale is tender.

Strain the pasta into a colander reserving a little of the cooking water. Tip the pasta into a bowl and then stir the kale through. Loosen with a couple of spoonfuls of pasta cooking water if it's too dry.

Drizzle over a little extra olive oil and sprinkle the crispy breadcrumbs over the top.

Serve with freshly grated Parmesan.

**If you are gluten free use gluten free bread, it works equally as well.*

Spring greetings!
Karen

Lettercollum Kitchen Project,
Timoleague
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www.lettercollum.ie
023 8846251

Market traders and friends pay tribute to the much-loved late Dave Louks

A comrade at the West Cork markets recently passed away. Dave Louks, or 'Chicken Dave' as he was best known, was a stalwart at the markets with over 20 years of trading under his belt. He sold chickens, breasts, giblets, wings and eggs but it was the unrivalled banter that accompanied a sale where you really got your money's worth.

At one point Dave was chairman of three West Cork markets, his delicate ego never able to resist being nominated for such high office. This thankless job nearly drove him around the bend but he always carried himself with varying degrees of aplomb.

He will be sadly missed and, as a hobbled-together but loving tribute to his legacy, a number of market traders have put their memories of him to verse. You will find the combined verses below, hence, the varying rhythms of rhyme but all wrote with genuineness, the way Dave, his family and many friends, it is hoped, may appreciate.

R.I.P. Chicken Dave

(with contributions from Mark Stewart, Connie Burns, GIK Kelleher, Nathan Wall and many traders and friends of Dave's)

Ode to Chicken Dave

"Good morning, young man." / "Are you well, young lady?" / Dave's favourite forms of address / Even if you had just turned eighty

He would start his market day off in the AM / Chuckling to himself at his week's favourite joke / The punchline would regularly serve to evade him / His dwindling audience would slowly watch him choke

Not too concerned with the clock / He'd come back with some more / Reduced to the 'knock knocks' / Or some simple joke of yore

Dave set up his stalls / He would come out to sell / in storms, gales and squalls / even if the weather was hell

Often on the wild and windy days / Stalls without weights began to float / Some poor traders all left in a daze / Their cover all spangled up like a goat

Dave had a set-up that always remained rigid / Never a giblet, a chicken nor egg went flying / Allowing him to assist stalls that were unfitted / Or some struggling trader who ended up crying

Our beloved Chicken Dave / He was generous, took in loads of lodgers / He never found time to shave / And strolled around like Kenny Rodgers

Chicken George once told Chicken Dave / Go fly our flag wherever you can / Your ancestors weren't no slaves / You be our one and only SHARP DRESSED MAN

His favourite joke was the marmalade and jam / If you know it don't dare tell your Gran / We used to make fun of his silly, garish but colourful ties / Little did we know we'd be wearing them when he dies

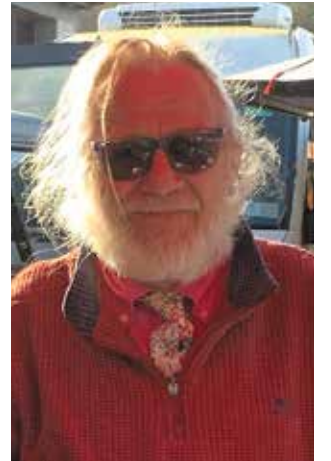
On some of his busier weeks / He liked to pluck a chicken or two / Why he did this naked / No one ever really knew

A lovely man with colourful shoes / Who liked a bit of jazz and also the blues / His eggs were delicious with a bright orange yolk / When the clock struck eight / he'd slip off to the shed for a smoke

Now his stall may be passed on / Wonders never cease / Maybe to the next generation / May he rest in peace

Chairman Dave is gone / but his legacy lives on / in the camaraderie and banter / that is the Farmers Market song.

Dedicated to his wife Tina, his family and his friends R.I.P.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Avoid leaky gut symptoms this Easter

We're all prone to a little indulgence at Easter, but rich food and overeating in general can play havoc with digestion, leaving you bloated and uncomfortable and with symptoms of a leaky gut. Nutritionist **Michelle Ryan** explains what steps can be taken to avoid this type of inflammation.



On average a person consumes 4,000 calories on Easter Day alone – two times the recommended daily intake – therefore it's not surprising why this holiday period creates more tummy troubles than the rest of the year, with typical symptom including a burning sensation or feeling of indigestion in your stomach, and maybe an uncomfortable feeling of fullness in your

stomach.

Some may suffer ongoing symptoms and not just on the holidays. It's important to note what is not working for you.

You might often eat more than you usually would throughout a day, putting pressure on the digestive system.

You might be drinking a lot more when you eat – whether it's beer out or red wine on Easter Day – this dilutes stomach acid, making it harder to properly digest your food.

Eating more rich, creamy foods than you're used to can trigger heartburn or reflux or worse.

A leaky gut is when the structure of intestinal lining is compromised, the tight barrier cells can slightly move away from one another allowing larger particles of food to get past and enter the bloodstream, causing havoc. The immune system quickly detects this foreign matter and signals to the body to produce antibodies to help manage this mistake giving rise to an allergic-like reaction, bloating and inflammation in the gut lining.

However it doesn't have to be this way if you follow my tips to trouble-proof your tummy this Easter and beyond.

Use your senses

The first step in the digestive process is often overlooked, but it's a really important one. Known as the cephalic phase, it's triggered when you see or smell food. You are literally whetting your appetite.

When you start thinking about the lovely meal you are getting

your digestive juices flowing.

The enzymes in your saliva help you break down your food more easily, so when the time comes, your body is actually ready to start digesting food before you have even cut the first slice – never mind actually put anything in your mouth.

It may sound an incredibly simple step – and it is – but these days we are often so busy that we don't make the time to think about our food in this way. If you find you're always eating on the go, throwing a sandwich down your neck at your desk or having a TV dinner, this is a vital step you are missing out on. One trick is to be mindful and try and spend a few minutes thinking about your tasty lunch before you eat it to get the digestive juices going.

Chew your food

Remember what Mum used to say. Well, she was right! Chewing your food (the second phase of digestion) is key when it comes to good gut health. With proper chewing, you are mechanically breaking down the food into smaller pieces, so that there's a greater surface area and the digestive enzymes can get to work more easily, doing their job.

And the bad news... If you're not chewing properly, it's highly likely that you're not digesting your food properly. And that means you won't be absorbing the vital nutrients either. Not chewing also means the food you eat takes much longer to break down and, as it hangs around in your digestive system, it can start to ferment, causing uncomfortable wind,

gas and bloating. Don't worry about chewing a certain number of times – that all depends on what you are eating and various other factors.

Instead try this test: chew your food enough so that if someone asked you to spit it out, they wouldn't know what you had been eating. Another sign you need to chew more is if you start to see undigested food in your stools.

Balance your stomach acid

Sales for heartburn tablets are skyrocketing because so many people wrongly assume that their digestive troubles are because of too much stomach acid. What nutritionists like me find more frequently in clinic is the total opposite! Getting older, stress, and some over-the-counter medications can make your stomach acid levels drop to the extent that you don't produce enough to digest food sufficiently.

Why is this important? The stomach acid you produce not only kills any bacteria in the food you are eating, it also breaks down the protein in your meal. If you're not properly digesting the protein element

in food, it can start to ferment, creating gases that force up the esophageal sphincter muscle (a type of muscle flap) and what little stomach acid there is can escape. So the burning feeling, especially if accompanied by smelly gas, can be a sign your digestion isn't working as well as it should be.

One solution is to have a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar. It's important you choose apple cider vinegar with 'mother', rather than one you can buy in the supermarket (that's for your chips). There are people who genuinely produce too much stomach acid and, if you try the apple cider vinegar trick and it seems to make things worse, you can neutralise the acid by taking a little bicarbonate of soda.

Time out

It's important to space out your meals so the digestive system actually gets a chance to rest. This might require some self discipline if your house is routinely full of bowls of nuts or towers of chocolate boxes.

Eating every three to four hours is a good benchmark to aim for, and gives the body

enough time to completely digest the previous meal and have a break before you put it to work again. Of course there will be days when your eating routine falls out of whack, but don't beat yourself up. Just try and get back on track the following day.

Try these tips out for yourself this Easter and see if any of your symptoms improve. If you have been struggling with digestive problems for a while, consider booking in a consultation online or onsite. I can help you understand what might be going on in your gut and take greater steps towards a resolution. I promise that everybody can achieve better gut health, increased energy and overall better health: 'Make the right food choices for your body, the results can be life changing'.

Call Michelle on 087 6704930 to enquire about a taking a test. You can also email your query via email wellness@bwellhive.ie or visit www.bwellhive.ie for more information.

✂ CUT-OUT & KEEP RECIPES

Pea and spinach soup

Nutritionist **Michelle Ryan**, of bwellhive.ie shares her recipe for a nourishing green soup.

Serves 4

Ingredient

- 150g quinoa
- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 3 shallots or 1 onion, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, sliced
- Salt and pepper
- 1 litre of vegetable bouillon stock
- 500g peas
- 300g spinach, roughly chopped
- 1/2 tbsp ginger, crushed
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- Handful of basil leaves

Cook the quinoa, drain and set aside.

Melt the coconut oil in a frying pan then add the onion or shallots and celery.

Salt and pepper lightly, then toss and stir for 5 minutes, until the onions are transparent. Pour in the vegetable bouillon stock

and bring to the boil.

Add the peas, spinach, ginger, garlic and cooked quinoa and simmer for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat before adding the mint and basil.

6. Blend to a smooth consistency or leave some texture if you prefer. Enjoy!







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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Your mind matters...mental fitness and metabolism

In my last article, I explored the impact of visceral fat on our health, how it leads to inflammation in the body and chronic age-related conditions. However, it is not just the body but also the brain that is being affected by inflammation.

With depression and anxiety rates rising exponentially in western society, it seems we

are in the midst of a mental health crisis, one which we feel powerless to remedy. Against this backdrop however, a new theory has emerged to bring hope. Dr Chris Palmer, who is an assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and a leading expert on the relationship between metabolic and psychiatric disorders,

has formulated the argument that rather than mental illness being genetic and unavoidable, it can be resolved metabolically. According to his radical new theory, mental illness is a symptom of metabolic disorder, in much the same way as diabetes and obesity. Mental illness is the brain malfunctioning metabolically so therefore it can be treated metabolically. It is an exciting perspective and one which is yielding many positive outcomes in numerous trials being carried out across the world.

Metabolism is essentially all the chemical processes that occur within a living organism in order to maintain life, and today metabolic health and aging are at the cutting edge of medical research. Many hugely significant discoveries regarding metabolism have been made in recent years, particularly with regard to one extremely important cell structure, the 'mitochondria'. It is these components which can be so negatively impacted by what we put in our bodies and how we live our lives.

Mitochondria are organelles (small specialised structures) present in every cell in the body; originally known as the power house of the cell, their sole function was thought to be that of converting glucose to energy in the cell. In recent years however there has been a quantum leap in our understanding of what these tiny structures do.

Mitochondria are responsible for the production, release and control of key neurotransmitters; the most familiar sounding ones to us being serotonin and dopamine, but these are just two of many. Mitochondria are responsible for regulating our epigenetics, in other words they are responsible for which inherited genetic traits get switched on or not in our systems. They are responsible for the production, regulation and control of the steroid hormones such as cortisol, oestrogen, testosterone and progesterone. They play a key role in switching inflammation on and off and they orchestrate macrophages, which are the immune cells deployed in wound healing. And still, not all the functions of mitochondria are known, there are a myriad of signals that playing a role in the functioning of our cells, that have yet to be decoded.

Their importance is such that it has been said that mitochondrial dysfunction may be the cause of all that ails us. If our brain cell mitochondria are damaged or underperforming, it means the neurotransmitters



MOVEMENT MATTERS

Lorraine Dufficey

With 20 years of experience in the fitness industry, Lorraine Dufficey is trained in the classical True Pilates method, is a qualified Neuromuscular therapist and a Fascial trainer, and has a lifelong interest in health and wellbeing. As 'West Cork Pilates', she has been teaching mat classes in Clonakilty since 2005 and has a private studio in Rossmore where she teaches Reformer, Cadillac and Wunda chair for both fitness and for rehabilitation.

may become imbalanced or dysfunctional, thereby leading not just to low level anxiety or depression but to more serious mental health conditions right across the board.

If we have vulnerable cells in our brain where the mitochondria are not functioning effectively or are perhaps just functioning intermittently – think of a flickering electrical circuit – our brain circuits become underactive or overactive and this is what impacts our mental health.

Factors which make our brain cells vulnerable in the first place are: exposure to trauma, disrupted sleep, poor diet, insufficient exercise, high stress, consumption of alcohol or drugs, hormonal issues, environmental toxins and insufficient levels of natural light. We are all pretty familiar with this list and, indeed it reads as a list of normal pressures of modern living. These factors are assaults on our metabolism. Most of us may have had some or all of these factors to a greater or lesser extent contributing to the deterioration of our mitochondria throughout our lives, from conception to present day, and as a consequence we have this inbuilt vulnerability. We are walking around with this perhaps undisclosed vulnerability in our brain, maybe not feeling our best, but functioning

if we are lucky. But if our brain circuitry isn't the most robust, we may not have the metabolic resilience to cope with unexpected life events, which can tip us into anxiety and depression or trigger more serious conditions.

This new unifying theory of mental illness being a metabolic issue affecting the brain is yielding some astonishing results. Through the application of very specific diet and lifestyle changes people are seeing resolution of symptoms from chronic depression to more serious mental illness such as schizophrenia. In some cases complete remission of conditions can arise whereby medication is no longer needed. At present there are many trials underway to test this hypothesis but according to Dr Chris Palmer we are at a new dawn in the treatment of mental illnesses.

What is this groundbreaking treatment? The main component is the use of fasting and/or a fasting-mimicking diet, which initiates a process called autophagy, which is the body's process of reusing old and damaged cell parts. The regeneration of the mitochondria specifically is known as mitophagy. This process of the breaking down of old defective cell components in order to make new ones, or cellular recycling was only recently discovered in 2016 and was considered so important that its discovery merited a Nobel Prize.

What stimulates this process is fasting, for at a minimum 12 in 24 hours. Mitophagy provides us with an opportunity to regenerate our mitochondrial circuitry and restore our mental resilience. It is a return to health.

There are simple steps we can take on our own to bring about this healing if we wish to improve our mental health but for those with diagnosed mental health conditions or those on medications for such, it is imperative that you both discuss and work with your mental health practitioner if you wish to implement these suggestions as medication requires supervision.

What changes can we make to boost our mental health and brain function?

Dietary: For many it may be enough to eliminate junk and processed foods from the diet, particularly the high fat and sugar combinations that are so damaging to our metabolic health. Your brain benefits as much as your body when they are eliminated. So doughnut and sugary treats begone! Implement a 12 hour fast

daily, which is as simple as not eating between 7pm and 7am for instance. It is estimated that we are putting food in our mouths on average 19 times a day...the body needs a break from food processing in order to carry out repair works!

If bigger guns are needed one could adopt a ketogenic diet, which is a high fat, moderate protein and low carb diet, where the body uses fat rather than sugar for fuel. This is known as a fasting-mimicking diet. There are some remarkable results being seen in the mental health field among others with this dietary treatment. I'll explore this further in a future article.

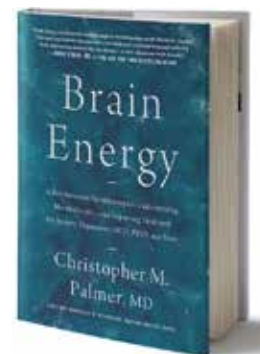
Exercise: As I mentioned in the last article, take up resistance training to build muscle is a key player in a healthy metabolism. Remember muscles make myokines which dampen down inflammation.

Walk daily. It doesn't have to be a long walk, 30 minutes is sufficient and do more if you can, but do it daily. Make your practice consistent and show up for yourself.

Sleep: Aim for seven to eight hours per night if possible and if you're someone who struggles to get out of bed in the morning it means you need to go to bed earlier at night time. And avoid all screens an hour or two before bedtime.

Abstain from mind-altering substances: Avoid alcohol and drugs for 90 days as a start... both are known depressants, both have negative impacts on brain metabolism, effectively shutting down the mitochondria. There can be no mitochondrial renewal while we continue to imbibe, as these substances lead to neurotoxicity and inflammation. And if you use these substances in order to take the edge off your stress or anxiety, just ask yourself whether you'd prefer to numb your pain or remove it?

If you are interested in further exploring this topic do check out Dr Chris Palmer's new book 'Brain Energy: A Revolutionary Breakthrough in Understanding Mental Health – and Improving Treatment for Anxiety, Depression, OCD, PTSD, and more'.



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Everyday solutions to cold hands and feet



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

It amazes me how many people with cold hands and feet think it's something they

have to put up with. The old cure of a 'hot toddy', helps but it isn't the only way to resolve this issue whereby circulation, cardiac function, and, consequently, quality of life is all improved.

Firstly, it's important to stay at a healthy weight because being overweight can make it harder for blood to flow through your legs. The next thing on the list is to eat a balanced diet, which means eating a lot of fruits and veggies, especially leafy greens.

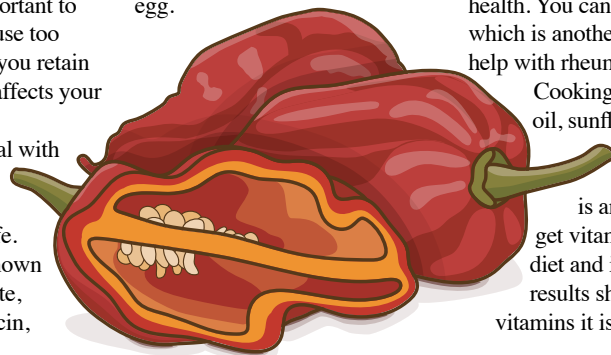
Blueberries are a great way to strengthen blood vessels and eating foods like salmon, flaxseeds, chia seeds, almonds, and walnuts that are high in omega-3 fatty acids can help your heart and blood-flow also.

It is especially important to limit salt intake because too much of it can make you retain water, which in turn affects your circulation.

Another way to deal with poor circulation is to include some herbs in your daily life. Cayenne pepper is known for having a spicy taste, but it contains capsaicin,

a chemical that makes blood vessels wider, thus moving more blood around the body. In the same way, garlic, which is used in a lot of different types of food, has chemicals that help control blood pressure and widen blood vessels, thus improving circulation. Ginger is known for reducing inflammation, and it also widens blood vessels, which makes blood flow and oxygenation better. Other kitchen spices include turmeric, as its active compound, curcumin, has anti-inflammatory properties that can support circulation.

Dark chocolate with a high cocoa content (70 per cent or more) contains flavonoids that may also improve circulation, so this is the perfect excuse to purchase a really good easter egg.



Also on the list is green tea as it contains catechins. These support circulation and heart health in general. If you find green tea on its own to be a bit tasteless, add a leaf of mint to the brew. Always remember to let the boiling water cool for about 10 mins before adding to the herbs.

Supplements made from plants like hawthorn and ginkgo biloba also help the blood flow. Ginkgo biloba extract, which comes from the ginkgo tree's leaves, has been shown to improve blood flow to the limbs and the rest of the body. Hawthorn is known for being good for the heart. It helps the heart work better and improves blood flow to the rest of the body, which is good for general heart health. You can also use yarrow, which is another plant that can help with rheumatism too.

Cooking with hazelnut oil, sunflower oil, wheat germ oil, and other nut oils is an easy way to get vitamin E into your diet and if recent blood results show a lack of B vitamins it is wise to take a

supplement for a while.

Another traditional dish in May is having three meals of nettles and this of course supplements iron stores in the body, which have been depleted after the long winter.

Finally, drink water. Keeping well hydrated is essential for circulation and needless to say, exercise is needed also. Aerobic workouts such as walking, swimming, and cycling increase blood flow, strengthen the heart,

and improve overall cardiovascular function. To fully benefit from increased circulation, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week.

In summary, introducing a regime of diet, herbal teas, supplements, and exercise should be able to resolve the issue of cold hand and feet. If no improvement, further investigations are warranted.



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April skincare edit

In the bustling world of skincare, amidst the array of creams, serums, and masks, there lies a crucial yet often overlooked task: the skincare edit. Just as we routinely declutter our wardrobes or tidy up our digital spaces, so too should we regularly assess and update our skincare collection. It's easy to forget that skincare products, like all consumables, have a shelf life. Over time, their efficacy diminishes, and in some cases, expired products may even cause adverse reactions. Among the most critical products to keep in check are those containing SPF (Sun Protection Factor). SPF not only shields our skin from harmful UV rays but also plays a pivotal role in preventing premature ageing and reducing the risk of skin cancer. However, its potency wanes over time, rendering expired SPF ineffective in safeguarding our skin against sun damage. Start by examining each product on your skincare shelf taking note of its expiration date and disposing of any items that have surpassed their shelf life, as their effectiveness may be compromised. Your skin will thank you!

What's hitting shelves:

Skingredients – New from Skingredients, Retinol 0.6pc + B3 Serum and Retinol 1pc + B3 Serum are the brand's most transformational formulas yet. "Retinol is dubbed the holy grail in skincare by dermatologists, pharmacists, cosmetic chemists, facialists and clients alike. Many are wary of it, and many adore it, and so we are here to deliver pure retinol in a controlled manner that garners undeniable physical results with confidence to match," explains Skingredients Founder and CEO Jennifer Rock. Four years



INSIDE OUT BEAUTY

Sherna Malone

Skincare and beauty expert Sherna Malone shares her knowledge and expertise of all things beauty – from skin care do's and don'ts to the latest products out there.

in the making, Skingredients enlisted a group of 40 panellists aged 20-50 years-old, to aid the development stages of this new anti-ageing must have. What makes it unique? It's potent, pure, and clinically proven and it's been used by their panellists for over three years and has been created to be safe and effective for Irish skin. With four powerhouse ingredients in one – namely vitamin A (pure retinol), B3+ (niacinamide), hyaluronic acid and humectants it offers a list of 10 key benefits for the complexion, think firmer, smoother more even, radiant skin. And the sophisticated encapsulated delivery system means less chance of irritation while also protecting retinol from degradation and oxidation. Skingredients retinol rocks! Retinol 0.6pc + B3 Serum, 30ml, €49, Retinol 1pc + B3 Serum, 30ml, €55, available online from www.skingredients.com and Skingredients stockists nationwide.

Brow Aid Masterstroke Brow Trio – This three-in-one Longwear eyebrow filler has been meticulously crafted to revolutionise your beauty routine, ensuring that your brows are nothing short of perfection in three simple steps. With over

20 years in the beauty industry, Brow Aid founder, Kim O'Sullivan has redefined the brow industry by combining artistry, expertise, and luxurious formulation to create a truly transformative brow experience. The Masterstroke Brow Trio is a true game changer for anyone looking to achieve flawless, natural-looking brows. Formulated with the finest ingredients, carefully selected to nourish, and enhance the overall look and feel of your brows, this multi-tasking product is available in three universal shades: Taupe, Brown, and Granite and has a micro tip pen to fill, a pencil to shade and a brow brush to blend and comb. The brow brush bends, fluffs, combs, and shapes your eyebrows. The waterproof flat tip eyebrow pencil shapes and shades allowing you to fill in gaps where desired. Brow goals, €32 available online from www.browaid.com

Dr Hauschka Apricot Day Cream – Nurture your skin back to a velvety, plump, and rosy glow with the new lightweight Apricot Day Cream from Dr Hauschka. It nourishes and revitalises intensively, without feeling heavy, while every ingredient contributes to the health and wellbeing of your skin. Organic apricot kernel oil, which contains high

levels of Vitamin A and E, encourages collagen production and supports skin elasticity. Organic avocado oil hydrates the skin and promotes moisture retention, its high content of Omega-3 and Omega-6 helps to support a healthy skin barrier while fermented wheat extract, a unique ingredient helps to balance the skin's natural flora and make your skin glow. All of these components work together to support the needs of dry and dull skin to help restore overall balance and vitality. Tara O'Rourke (Dr. Hauschka Trainer and Holistic Wellness Coach) says "With its delicate fragrance and texture can be used for infants very dry skin until comfort is restored." Works well with Translucent Bronzing Tint for the ultimate glow with a hint of bronze and it's the perfect base for makeup too, €35.95 available online from www.drh.ie and Dr Hauschka stockists nationwide.

BPerfect Full Impact Complete Coverage Concealer – Say goodbye to disappointing, short-lasting concealers that leave you wanting more and prepare to be captivated by the magic of the new BPerfect Full Impact Concealer. A soft matte, complex coverage concealer specifically formulated with intense pigment. Designed with

a unique applicator for instant, seamless, even coverage in just one swipe. Full Impact concealer is enriched with niacinamide which helps accelerate skin healing, promotes a more even complexion, and helps reduce dark circles while glycerin hydrates, plumps, softens and fortifies your skin's barrier.

"After years of hard work to tweak and perfect the formula – the final product is here... and it's a total game-changer that honours and celebrates the beauty of individuality" says Brendan McDowell, Founder of BPerfect Cosmetics. A concealer that isn't playing games, it's a long-wearing, crease-proof powerhouse that delivers round the clock coverage From Light through to Deep Dark, find your match and experience the ultimate coverage perfection, €17.95, available online from eu.bperfectcosmetics.com and BPerfect Cosmetics stockists nationwide.

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Purifying Shampoo, €29.99, with key actives, Pro-Vitamin B5, Vegan Keratin, Aloe Vera is formulated to gently cleanse and purify without stripping, whilst revitalising, replenishing, and building shine. Lightly lather and moisturise your way to healthier, softer, more vibrant hair. The Nourishing Vitamin Conditioner, €29.99, is an ultra-hydrating and repairing luxurious cream conditioner that uses an advanced nutrient molecule delivery system to deeply infuse hair and scalp with restorative and shine-enhancing actives, Vitamins C and E, Vegan Keratin and Argan Oil. Designed to build scalp health, detangle strands and add a surge of moisture to give you glossier, smoother, silkier hair. No more bad hair days! Available online from eu.jshealthvitamins.com

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



IMAGE

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

Do you want a more interesting 'look'?

requires stepping right out of your comfort zone, it takes effort, energy and commitment. We make the time to research home projects or recreational activities, but how many of us allow ourselves the time to do a complete revamp or overhaul? It's Spring, it's clear-out clean-out time, so I'm asking you to give yourself permission to be your own 'Spring Project'.

The word 'excuse' is a funny old word. The dictionary says that it 'releases us from a duty or requirement. Please don't make an excuse 'to stay wearing the same look forever! You have a duty to yourself to bring out your absolute best look.

If your budget is the problem, then there is no problem, there are plenty of well-stocked charity shops the length and breadth of this country and lots of cheap and cheerful shops too. If you believe that your weight is a problem, then make a commitment to do something about it – choose a well-researched and safe option – or seek out plus-size influencers on social media for bundles of ideas and options, save your favourite ones to help you when you go

shopping. If you simply don't know where to start, research! Put in the time online googling looks, seek out fresh new ideas and check out shops that you have never gone into before. No one and I mean absolutely NO ONE gets it right style-wise without teething problems.

Age comes up a hell of a lot of the time, as in, 'Am I too old to wear a certain look?'. The general guideline (in order to age gracefully) when it comes to style is 'not too much boob, not too much leg, not too much pleather, leather or stonewash and always invest in incredible underwear.'

As we age we get 'stuck' with certain 'looks', sometimes it's our confidence that has dipped, maybe our weight has changed, the dreaded 'flab-by skin' is hard to control... whatever the reason, we are all the same, we tend to stick to an overall style from when we were at our happiest. In the same way that you know it's time to repaint a room in your house, it's now time to repaint yourself. Do you wear jeans every time you go out? Well, not next time, make that

commitment to 'up your game'. It doesn't mean that you have to get very dressed up but it does mean that you have to put a little thought and time into planning an outfit. From a psychological perspective, making little changes like this will really benefit your mood and you will look so much better. Denim jackets are the absolute bomb! You can wear one with anything and they are the best way to 'tone down' an otherwise dressed-up look. Do you have a lot of dresses that you never wear? Throw on a pair of runners, a cross-body bag, a pair of runners, sunglasses and any of those dresses and off you go. It really is that simple.

There are three key design elements involved in elevating your look. If an outfit is not interesting through colour, then it has to be interesting through shape. If it is not interesting through shape, then it has to be interesting through texture. If it is not interesting through texture, then it has to be interesting by cut. Colour, texture and shape should become your style bible. Trousers and a blouse can look pretty basic until you wear

red trousers and a red blouse together – that's a real 'wow', then add a strong pink 'long' coat over it – sensational. Also, a certain colour might make for a pretty bland outfit but if the shape is unusual or hugging you perfectly in every way, then that's a winner too.

Blazers are certainly not going anywhere soon and I love them. How about a snugly fitting cardi underneath and a little silk patterned neck scarf to add some pizzazz? A simple navy blazer with a lavender/lilac cardi, multi-coloured silk scarf that has both of those colours, some big sunglasses, jeans, sunglasses and a statement handbag – hard to beat that look!

Jeans, jeans, jeans... which shape suits best? What do you think of the barrel leg? I found a gorgeous pair in Free People – they are quite exaggerated, have a lovely turn up and are for wearing very casually with a fitted top. Here are a few guidelines that might help in choosing jeans!

High-rise and wide leg are great for balancing out the 'mid-section'. Slim bootcut are

great for lengthening the leg. A high-rise mom jean gives great support around the mid-section and they are very comfortable. A sharper skinny pair, very comfortable, whether you are a size 10 or a size 18.

Choose a lovely mid-blue colour, perfect to match summer tops. Double-denim is a 'thing' this year and what I mean by that is wearing a denim shirt with denim jeans. The denim doesn't have to be exactly the same shade but similar looks best. This is a very cool look when you throw on a long coat over it or likewise with a pair of runners and a brightly-coloured bomber jacket. The same idea will work with a long denim skirt – and there are plenty in the shops at the moment!

Have some fun with your clothes, be brave and adventurous, outrageous even, but do commit to making a few changes. Life is way too short to wear boring clothes.

"Playing dress-up begins at age five and never truly ends."
Kate Spade

Feeling a bit stuck and stuffy? Have you found that you are wearing the same old stuff for the last few years, wearing them the same way with the same accessories and then just replacing those items with 'new' more of the same? Fret not, we all do this from time to time. We find a 'look' that we love, a look that gathers many compliments, feels comfortable and gives us a lift, especially when we need it. It's human nature after all. Change is hard, change

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Addressing post viral fatigue through herbal medicine and nutrition

Medical Herbalist **Geri McGann** and Nutritional Therapist **Gwen Bastian-Enright** share how nutritional therapy and herbal medicine, both individually and combined, provide an effective way to address post-viral fatigue (PVF).

Fatigue is a common symptom of many different infections and is a normal part of the body's response to fighting an infection. It usually goes away once the body has dealt with the infection. Post-viral fatigue, however, can linger for weeks or months after a person has been ill with a viral infection, such as the flu, or as in most recent times, COVID-19, where 'LongCOVID' is being experienced.

It is not fully understood why post-viral fatigue occurs. When the body is fighting off a virus, the immune system releases chemicals called cytokines, which promote inflammation

to fight the invading virus (and cause many of the classic symptoms of viral infection, for example tiredness, aches and pains, malaise and so on). This normally stops once the virus itself has been dealt with. However recent studies suggest that in some cases, levels of cytokines fail to return to normal, pass through the blood brain barrier in circumventricular organs such as the hypothalamus, leading to prolonged symptoms of fatigue.

Symptoms of fatigue, that are not relieved with rest and are associated with physical symptoms and generally feeling unwell, can include, loss of energy, muscular aches and pains (myalgia), depressive symptoms, loss of concentration/ability to process and retrieve information, short-term (working) memory impairment and non-restorative sleep.

Addressing post-viral fatigue through herbs, diet and lifestyle

When supporting patients with PVF through herbs and nutrition we are looking to support or strengthen the immune system after it has been compromised and encourage good immune health; while also dealing with any lingering virus and increasing resistance to stress, which can further compromise immunity; and dealing with other symptoms such as enhancing memory and concentration, relieving anxiety and alleviating joint or muscle pain.

Herbs: there are a number of actions that herbs provide when looking to address PVF, including:

- **Adaptogen** – herbs that help the body adapt and produce an increase in bodily resistance and

vitality

- **Nervines** – herbs that have a beneficial effect on the nervous system. PVF tends to follow an acute viral infection when immunity has been compromised by factors such as depression or stress.

- **Anti-microbial/viral** – help the body destroy or resist pathogenic microorganisms such as, viruses, bacteria and fungi

Diet: a tailored approach is best when it comes to addressing PVF through diet, some considerations may include eliminating or reducing refined carbohydrates; white bread, pizza dough, pasta, pastries, white flour, white rice, sweet desserts, and many breakfast cereals. Reducing saturated fats from foods such as cakes, biscuits, fatty cuts of meat, sausages, bacon, cured meats and so on. Supplements to support the immune system and increase energy can also be taken such as; coenzyme Q10, Magnesium, B vitamins and zinc.

Lifestyle: Quality rest – short rests throughout the day, every day and gentle exercise; stretching, short walks, increasing slowly and carefully.

Case Study: Adam*, age 34, got a severe viral infection two years ago and had to be hospitalised. Since then he has experienced severe fatigue, chest pains, as well as compromised lung functionality. Before this he was very active but since his illness, he hasn't regained any consistent energy and some days can only manage short walks, even cooking a meal can be too much.

Treatment protocol: Adam's herbal tincture specially focused on building energy and lung support, alongside herbal tea

that provided lung and cardiovascular support. His prescription included herbs such as:

- **Astragalus;** a potent herb specifically indicated for post-viral support and energy

- **Echinacea;** for deep immune support, helping to increase the activity of white blood cells

- **Lime Flower;** providing endothelial protection while calming the nervous system.

Other measures included reducing mucus generating foods e.g. wheat, flour and sugar and increasing garlic for its antimicrobial properties and warm water intake.

Within six to eight weeks of starting, Adam noticed improved energy levels as well as reduced chest pain. Adam continues to improve through herbs, diet and lifestyle recommendations.

**Not the patient's real name*

The Beara Holistic Clinic, located in the Bantry Bay area of West Cork, specialises in herbal medicine and nutritional therapy. They provide the opportunity for individuals to address health problems holistically, in a safe, supportive, and professional environment. Both Geri and Gwen are professionally trained and fully qualified healthcare practitioners. To find out more visit their website www.thebearaclinic.ie or their Instagram page [thebearaholisticclinic](https://www.instagram.com/thebearaholisticclinic).

To arrange a herbal consultation call or WhatsApp Geri on 083 812 8308 or email: thebearacinicherbs@gmail.com

To arrange a free discovery call with Gwen contact her on 087 657 8307 or email: thebearaclinicnutrition@gmail.com.



Nutritional Therapy Gwen Bastian-Enright MSc, DipNT

Nutritional Therapy looks at nutrition/ diet, lifestyle as well as supplements (where indicated) and can include testing and interpretation of blood test results with subsequent recommendations.

Herbal Medicine Geri McGann DipHerb, MIRH

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W.I.L.D for women

A wellness information lifestyle day being organised in Clonakilty in April aims to promote women's participation in outdoor sports, health and wellbeing in West Cork

W.I.L.D will include demonstrations, talks, activities and giveaways from various organisations, shops and charities with information from leading professionals in nutrition, sport and lifestyle coaching, as well as information about in being safe in the water.

A charity event, W.I.L.D will take place in the Clonakilty Parish Hall, on April 21, from 10am to 4pm.

The event is being run by photographer Roo Mathieson and local surfer Nina Van Der Sluys after finding a lack of



general participation by women in outdoor pursuits.

All proceeds from this event will go to the organisations keeping our coastline safe and accessible to all.

Any further information or enquiries about W.I.L.D can be made by emailing W.I.L.D@outlook.ie.

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



HEALTH

Hannah Dare
Organico Bantry

The power of bitter: Why you should embrace bitter foods in your diet

Salus Haus is a German company, known in Ireland for their very effective Floradix Iron tonic, but they also offer a range of nutritional juices, which are about as far as you can get from the sugary juice drinks we're all exposed to most of the time. Salus Haus employs a specially developed cold pressing method, which extracts the full spectrum of active ingredients in its most biologically available form. These juices were developed by renowned pharmacist Walther Schoenenberger.

While sugary juices overload your system with fructose, pure herbal juices offer a concentrated dose of health benefits from plants you might not eat regularly (globe artichoke) or find easily (dandelion greens).

The juices are all bitter flavours, which may be unappealing at first, but they signal the presence of beneficial compounds. Our modern diet, dominated by processed and bland foods, lacks these bitters, essential for good digestion.

The importance of bitters for digestion

Bitter taste receptors line not just our tongue, but also our digestive system, including the

stomach, liver, and pancreas. When stimulated, these receptors promote healthy digestion by increasing digestive secretions, leading to better nutrient absorption, liver detoxification, and even stress reduction through the gut-brain connection.

Bitter foods encompass a wide range, including vegetables like kale and Brussels sprouts, fruits like cranberries, and beverages like green tea. Ideally, we should consume a small portion of something bitter before large meals, a tradition in some cultures. I personally start my day with a Green Tea (preferably in bed when I can get it!).

Getting started

The range of Salus Haus plant juices is quite extensive with 25 juices in the range. This could be a little overwhelming so I have chosen three that we have found to be very popular and effective in Organico. Here are three that will help you incorporate bitters into your diet in an easy to take effective way as you just need to take a small sip every day:

Salus Dandelion Juice: Notorious for their bitterness,

dandelion leaf juice is great for digestion and supporting liver function. Take this juice once or twice a day, before meals.

Salus Artichoke Juice: The Globe Artichoke is a powerhouse vegetable, known for its bitterness, supports liver function and sluggish digestion. It stimulates bile production, aiding in fat digestion and nutrient absorption. Take 10-20mls before your larger meal (neat if possible – you'll get way more benefits!)

Salus Stinging Nettle Juice: Has been shown to be effective as an antihistamine, reducing the impact of seasonal allergies; also in reducing some inflammation and easing joint pain. It may also help reduce inflammation in the bladder or urethra and encourage urine flow, potentially aiding with bladder infections and urinary stones. This juice makes a great Spring Tonic, and if you suffer from hayfever, try taking this juice twice a day for a few weeks in the spring.

A word of caution: Consult

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your doctor before consuming bitters if you have or suspect a stomach ulcer.

Embrace the bitter! It can be a key to better digestion, liver health, and overall well-being. If you'd like to try adding one of these juices to your routine, we have 20 per cent off the range for the whole of April, both in Bantry and online at www.organico.ie.

In other health news... we are thrilled to announce we are

hosting renowned author Patrick Holford again in May this year. Patrick has recently published a book on Brain health (called Upgrade your Brain) and he's coming to Bantry as part of his book tour, on Sunday, May 12. Tickets will be available online and through Organico. For more information, make sure you are subscribed to our newsletter (www.organico.ie/subscribe).

Disability activist Evie Nevin calls out County Council for failing disabled families

Evie Nevin, a prominent disability activist and candidate for the Labour Party in the upcoming local elections in West Cork, has strongly criticised Cork County Council for its inadequate support of disabled families in West Cork. Nevin's concerns stem from the recent implementation of a radar key system for the wheelchair swing in Clonakilty playground.

The original lock on the wheelchair swing posed a significant obstacle for people with disabilities. Families had to physically collect keys, creating an unnecessary burden. However, the recent change has introduced a new challenge: families must order a Radar key from the Irish Wheelchair Association's website for €34.50 to access the swing. This financial barrier compounds the existing physical one, further excluding disabled children and their families.

Nevin highlights that the signage around the swing has not been updated to inform users of the new process. This



lack of communication exacerbates the feeling of exclusion. Many disabled families already experience isolation due to poor footpaths and a lack of ramps – issues that fall squarely within the Council's responsibility.

Despite contacting the Accessibility Officer in January regarding the swing and its lock, Nevin has received no response. This lack of communication compounds the frustration felt

by disabled families seeking equal access and inclusion.

"I am calling on Cork County Council to prioritise accessibility, remove the lock on the swing, and address the pressing needs of disabled residents. As the local elections approach, I will continue to advocate for the most vulnerable in our society and highlight the challenges faced by West Cork's disabled community."

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



MENTAL HEALTH

Leo Muckley

Leo Muckley, MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy, offers psychotherapy and counselling sessions in person in Glengarriff and Skibbereen, online and also by walk and talk. He is a member of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP).

I distinctly remember the moment, over a decade ago, when I became acutely aware of how I could be so hard on myself. High standards and striving for perfection, although very useful ways of being for a long time in my life, had become burdensome. Along with that, I realised I had an inner dialogue, which was harsh, negative and berated me for my imperfect humanness. It took me a number of years, and many sessions of psychotherapy and counselling, to discover that that dialogue was my self-critic. It then took a number of years more to work on that part of me. As I sit here writing this month's article I can't help but think back on those times in my life when I was my very own worst critic. That part of me would be sitting front and centre waiting to heckle me in life and give the worst review... to myself. What an internal

The self-critic – friend or foe?

battle to experience, me versus me, with the only loser being me! Stephen King wrote in his book 'Everything's Eventual' that "Writers are often the worst judges of what they have written": this strikes me as true of life in general when it comes to the self-critic.

Sitting here today, upon reflection, I am glad that I took time to develop a mindful awareness and self-compassionate attitude, which has been a soothing balm and ongoing support when dealing with my self-critic. My self-critic is now more like a good friend that gives me a nudge of support when I need it most, rather than kicking me if I am feeling down. I don't think I have ever encountered a person in my life, or a client in my therapy room, who has not experienced an inner voice that is harsh, berating, or critical in some way, shape or form. This negative inner voice is often referred to as the self-critic, inner-critic or inner-saboteur.

You might be reading this and wondering what exactly this experience is like or thinking you have never come across this before, that's ok too. However, you might also be reading this and thinking, how relatable! I often hear the self-critic popping in to say hello in other people's day to day lives. It raises its head in daily speech quite often, for example someone might start their sentence with "This sounds stupid but...". Sometimes, I might sit with a client who is about to share something of importance but will preface it with "I feel so weird saying this but...". This sounds quite simple and you

might even recognise this in yourself or others in your life, yet, it is often the self-critic prefacing the sharing of something so that if it is rejected then it doesn't hurt because it has already been announced as "stupid", for example.

Self-criticism affects everyone to some degree and, for some, it can have a profoundly disruptive impact on their life. Research in 2013, and in 2020, found that self-criticism more often than not leads to many mental health challenges such as anxiety, burnout, breakdown, depression, eating disorders, self-harm and sometimes even suicide. This makes sense as it is quite a negative internal experience to berate oneself or drive oneself towards standards that are unrealistic. Furthermore, the self-critic is smart and usually kicks down the door to pay a visit when a person feels the most vulnerable. That can be when someone is hungry, emotional, ill or tired. These are usually times when a person may not feel fully safe in a physical or psychological sense. Therefore, the first thing to note in identifying the self-critic is that it usually appears when a person is feeling vulnerable or unsafe.

In 1943 Abraham Maslow developed 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', a well-regarded and referenced psychological framework to understand how needs

impact on people and drive our behaviours. His needs framework is depicted as a pyramid; at the top he placed the need for spirituality and altruism calling it transcendence, a lofty peak to achieve for any person! Right at the bottom, the foundation, which all needs rest upon, are the most basic physiological needs, such as food, water and shelter. However, in relation to the self-critic, right above the most basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid sits 'safety'. Safety needs are physical, such as a need for job security, health and safe environments. Yet, these needs also apply to psychological and emotional safety, which are required for our mind, body and soul to feel connected and at ease.

The second important thing that can be supportive in identifying the self-critic is knowing where it came from – it didn't just appear for no reason! Even though the self-critic is focused on current life, it is usually shaped by events and relationships from childhood. In a child's upbringing, the self-critical voice likely played a constructive role, where the ability to read changes in the surroundings and the capacity to shift in and out of different aspects of oneself were essential in dealing with a challenging environment and getting needs met. Once the self-critic has established a presence in a

person, it can grow and develop over time. A person can become aware of it and find it frightening or offensive to their sense of self. Furthermore, it can feel like carrying an internal burden or enemy and can be exhausting.

Yet, a useful way to look at this, that often is quite helpful in therapy, is to consider that the self-critic is more like a very well-intentioned friend, a part of oneself that simply lacks the capability to carry out its protective intention in a healthy way. It does a job of keeping a person feeling safe, even if that means feeling down or depressed and so on, as that is better than feeling unsafe or re-experiencing feelings from an earlier time in life. What a tough job to do! Viewing the self-critic part in this way is often referred to as inner child work or parts work in psychotherapy and counselling. By changing one's view on the self-critic to one of friendliness and curiosity one is trying to understand why it works so hard to do what it does, this can be referred to as self-compassion.

In her book 'Daring Greatly', Brené Brown writes "Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance". Such a beautiful way to frame

self-compassion, the balm to the self-critic, as a sense of accepting oneself and feeling like one belongs in the world through being vulnerable. Yet, at the same time, that in itself can be a challenging thing to do, it takes great courage and strength to be vulnerable. Psychotherapy and counselling can be a space in which to learn and grow and a space for the self-critic to learn how to take a break. Working with a self-critic part, in which a client can be guided and facilitated by an experienced mental health professional, can lead to more acceptance and processing the unsafe feelings that the part may have originated in. Deciding to undertake self-development and personal growth work such as this can be difficult and require the conscious decision to be courageous in looking at oneself. The good news is that the more attention one might pay the self-critic with self-compassion, then the less loud it can be. Maybe one day it might decide to change its tone or even go into retirement!

For more information on Leo's services, phone: 085 1300573 email: info@leomuckley.com web: www.leomuckley.com social Media: @leomuckleypsychotherapy

Measles vaccination clinics open

In response to a rise in measles cases, the HSE is providing MMR catch up clinics to protect people who may not have been vaccinated before.

The campaign focuses on delivering the MMR vaccine to key groups, who may have missed their vaccines in the past: Children; Young adults; Health and care workers born after January 1, 1978 who may have missed MMR vaccination, or those born outside of Ireland, are advised to schedule a vaccination; Anyone born in Ireland after January 1, 1978, who may have missed an MMR vaccine, is also advised to schedule a vaccination

Current public health advice indicates that people born in Ireland before 1978 are likely to have been exposed to measles as children and therefore, unlikely to require MMR vaccine.

Dr Michael Hanrahan, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine, said: "I want to emphasise the importance of getting vaccinated against measles. Measles is a highly contagious virus that can cause

serious illness. Symptoms include high fever, cough, runny nose and a rash all over the body. In severe cases, it can lead to complications such as pneumonia and brain swelling, which can be life-threatening or cause life-long disabilities.

"The free MMR vaccine clinics offer a safe and effective way to protect yourself and your community from measles. The MMR vaccine also protects against mumps and rubella. Recent outbreaks of measles in Europe and the UK mean that travel can put you at risk of exposure. Getting vaccinated not only keeps you safe but also helps prevent the spread of measles in our communities. Don't wait - make sure you are vaccinated to protect yourself and your family from measles."

If you are not sure if you have had the MMR vaccine when you were a child or cannot find your vaccination records, it will not harm you to have the MMR vaccine again.

A vaccine portal is now open to book an appointment for

MMR in community settings at www.hse.ie/services/mmr-vaccine. This is open to people aged five years and older (under 16s must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian). Catch-up clinics will be held across Cork and Kerry and new dates are being added regularly.

Further information about vaccination is available at www.immunisation.ie

Signs and symptoms

The symptoms of measles include: Cold-like symptoms such as aches and pains, a runny nose, sneezing and a cough – sore red eyes that may be sensitive to light.

A temperature of 38 degrees celsius or above, which may reach around 40 degrees celsius. Small greyish-white spots in your mouth, loss of appetite, tiredness, irritability and a general lack of energy. Rash, which usually appears on head and neck first and spreads to rest of body.

If you have these symptoms, please seek medical advice. Phone ahead to inform the healthcare professionals that you have these symptoms, so they can make necessary arrangements.

Measles spots in mouth



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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Celebrating life

A former English teacher and Adult Education Coordinator, after doing a Post Grad in Counselling and Psychotherapy Norma McElligott set up what is now a busy practice working with individuals, teenagers, couples and families. Also a fully accredited Humanist Celebrant and a registered Solemniser, Norma shares more about this role with **West Cork People**.

Passionate about offering an alternative to religious ceremonies to mark important milestone events in

people's lives, for Norma being a celebrant "gives voice to my own belief that all human beings matter and they deserve to

celebrate their lives and events that matter to them".

As a Humanist Celebrant she officiates at a wide variety of



ceremonies, including Wedding ceremonies, Naming ceremonies and Funerals.

She has seen a rise in demand for Memorial Services, particularly around the scattering of ashes after a cremation or to mark a year after a death. Also popular are Renewal of Vows ceremonies, to mark an anniversary or simply after going through a rough patch in a relationship. "These ceremonies are especially meaningful and can take place in one's own home or wherever the couple desire," shares Norma.

Increasingly popular are Coming of Age ceremonies, which provide an alternative to communions and confirmations for children who may feel excluded in an educational setting where the majority of their classmates are partaking in religious ceremonies of their own.

"I believe that all milestone events in our lives are important and deserve to be marked," says Norma, who shares that working with individuals in creating a ceremony which is unique and personal to them is her favourite

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part of the job.

Most memorable ceremonies though have to be marrying her sons and doing Naming ceremonies for her grandchildren. She has also done ceremonies for some very famous people but on those her lips are sealed!

Hugely passionate about her work, Norma says it's a joy for her to meet and work with so many interesting people.

"I feel so privileged to be invited into peoples' lives to

help them put together a unique and personal ceremony, be it to welcome a new child into the family, to say goodbye to a loved one, to celebrate their wedding or to celebrate their love in a Renewal of vows... the possibilities are endless. It's about celebrating life and our humanity."

Norma can be contacted by email normamcelligott@gmail.com or phone 086 3225624.



Offering an alternative to mark important milestones

Norma McElligott

* Humanist celebrant & Solemniser *

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END OF LIFE MATTERS

Melissa Murphy

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

It's been a little while since I've written specifically about what a doula is and does. While one such person varies from the next in terms of offerings (not unlike other providers or supports in our lives) each differs in skills, abilities, and interests. I wanted to offer this synopsis and hope it's helpful –

particularly to those newer to this column.

The word doula comes from the Greek word *doulē* meaning 'female helper or maidservant'. Doulas may seem like a new or progressive idea but they're likely as old as humankind. In many cultures throughout history, doulas have been called upon to offer a fundamental service to their communities for birth, the postpartum period, and during sickness and at the end of life. Ancient civilisations had versions that may have been in the form of an elder, shaman, or spiritual leader in the locality. The thresholds of birth and death were very much community events until the early 1900's with the advancement of medicine. Today there are doulas for the full spectrum, many of whom continue to be community-based, recognising birth, death and other transitions as natural, sacred cycles of life. I'll focus on doulas for the end of life, as this has been my path. Such a doula has re-emerged as a grassroots movement in recent decades to make space for end of life care that has become a very medicalised experience. At the same time, end of life care should be prioritised in the same way that healthcare is. For example, discussions and

questions about end of life are of great benefit, informing our priorities and wishes and need to be initiated far earlier.

My call to become a doula came about eight years ago when I specifically heard this term 'end of life doula', while attending a talk at a historic cemetery in New York City. (Such an activity isn't unusual for me!) I was familiar with the term birth doula having had a friend who was periodically on call for women preparing for all aspects of birthing. 2016 was a time when I was in transition from being a long time social worker preparing to move to Ireland. Recalling the meaningful years of work with hospice care in particular, I felt that being an end of life doula could enhance my previous experience and be mutually beneficial. I loved my role with hospice, but it was fast-paced and caseload-based, leaving limited opportunities to engage deeply with people; whereas now I have time and flexibility to be with people before, during and after death. Together we imagine the most meaningful, personal and authentic end of life possible.

WHAT: End of life doulas are non-medical holistic supports around death and dying. We are also known as death doulas,

guides, companions, thana- (the study of death)- doulas and more. Presence is the essence of the doula. Deep listening without judgement, advice, feedback, or solutions. We accompany and witness; offering advocacy and resources, education, information and choices. We are steadfast in our accompaniment – as desired. Basically a doula has your back. And as Michael J. Fox (actor, longtime Parkinson's disease activist) says "this message is so simple, yet it gets forgotten. The people living with the condition are the experts."

WHO: End of life doulas serve caregivers, those with life-limiting illness, people approaching end of life, or the simply curious, wise pre-planners. Our time spent together may be around end of life planning, death education and grief support after death – or at any time. Other doulas such as myself have additional experience with advanced care planning, children's grief, pregnancy and infant loss, holding space for abortion and more.

WHERE: End of life doulas work with people and/or their caregivers/support network in many settings such as the place they call home, hospices, hospitals, care homes and virtually. End of life doulas are not yet part

of a recognised health care team, but I increasingly feel hope in this regard having recently seen a quote by a physician that read "the partnership between doctors and end of life doulas will change the landscape of end of life care providing more options, more peace of mind and more empowered endings." It seems that the future will hold a place for end of life doulas, as medical settings are long overstretched and doulas can help to fill in gaps with practical, emotional support. I have already experienced this working alongside local hospice and palliative care teams. As an end of life doula, I complement – never replacing the network that's there; creating a solid circle of care and support. I have also recently received queries from people in nuanced situations such as someone seeking grief ritual and support at a workplace in a case of sudden death. Another was looking to connect about coping with ambiguous loss (loss without closure) in their wish to honour a missing person. I believe there are more possibilities for end of life doulas, as globally we're not only living longer (so more hands on deck are needed!) but also to engage with our rapidly changing, grieving world.

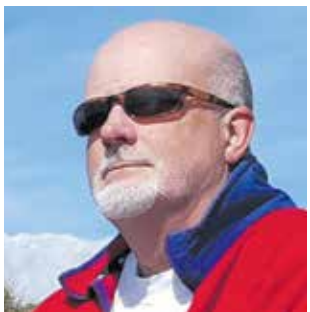
HOW: Whether someone has

been diagnosed with a serious illness, is undergoing treatment for a terminal illness or is approaching end of life- (including early planners)- there is a lot to unpack when it comes to these essential, tender topics. Without exception, a great deal of shock, fear and questions arise. End of life doulas can provide the time and a safe space to explore and connect. We help create plans to support feeling safe, comfortable and connected. We are informed with resources and tools to build community and affirmation.

Finally, a little plug for The Doula Association of Ireland, CLG. I'm delighted that this community exists to acknowledge and promote the development and support of doulas including birth, postpartum, fertility, abortion, pregnancy and infant loss, menopause and end of life. To make a connection with a doula around the country (and beyond) for yourself or someone you care about, have a look at www.doulas.ie to see the range of care available.

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.

DNA-based regional modelling for Munster



THE DNA OF WEST CORK PEOPLE

Mark Grace

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

There will be many testers living in West Cork who have found that they are essentially '100 per cent Irish' in origin and probably '100 per cent Munster'. My wife's latest update shows 97 per cent Munster (actual range 92-100pc) so essentially 100pc. On first look this does not necessarily provide more insights, except for perhaps connections to the wider Irish diaspora in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Ancestry testers will get the most insight from this type of result as that company have sub-divided Munster into a number of communities or regions. Again, it is worth considering what 'Irish' means as defined by Ancestry themselves, and

I quote: "Primarily located in: Ireland. Also found in: Channel Islands, Faroe Islands, France, Iceland, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Scotland". In reality, it means my wife matches more people who come from Munster than any other region, but not exclusively.

These top-level definitions do cause confusion (and for many, concern) when results do not match expectations. Many people think of recent history, but your DNA goes back thousands of years.

Personally, I remain baffled by the percentage of 'Scottish' I have in my DNA. Again, there is a wide range of seven to 27pc and the definition is 'Primarily located in: Scotland. Also found in: Channel Islands, England, Faroe Islands, France, Iceland, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland'.

Since I do not have any known Scottish ancestors, and certainly not since my 3x great grandparents at least, my best guess is that my Irish heritage in County Mayo and surrounding counties has, in part, some much earlier Scottish ancestry, i.e. before 1800. It could be a very old DNA signature from the wider British Isles at a tribal level and not relevant to the genealogical timeframe most of us are researching. You will find a lot of your DNA is non-attributable in that way and cannot be used for confirming your most recent family history.

My wife has five communities within 'Munster' defined by Ancestry, the largest area on the map. Four are all within the boundaries of the sub-region named 'South West Munster'. The 'Beara Peninsula' region

is also subdivided into 'West Beara Peninsula', the area west of Castletownbere. The area west of Bandon is defined as 'West Cork' and within that 'South West Coast of Cork' (Rosscarbery to Innishannon).

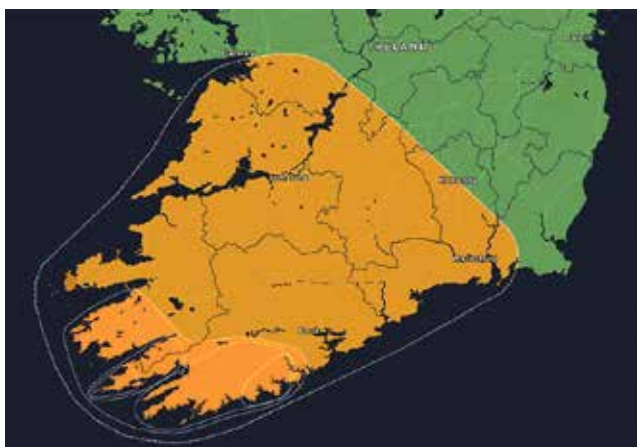
Over 1.54 million AncestryDNA testers are grouped as having Munster heritage.

On Ancestry, you can view which parts of your DNA are and which side (paternal or maternal) for the various top-level regional definitions. You can compare these to DNA segments shared with cousins and those you know a little more about. As I will describe in a future article, there are ways you can copy these DNA origins from Ancestry's across to your own DNA mapping project.

In Ancestry, you can now also view 'DNA inheritance'

by region on a map for either/ both parents ('communities by parent'). This clearly indicates for my wife that her maternal ancestry falls 100pc within the Beara part of the map (the multiple generations of LOWNEYS and SULLIVANS) and her paternal ancestry wholly within 'West Cork' (the O'NEILLS, DONOVANS, FITZPATRICKS and BRIENS, etc.). Her DNA supports what evidence was available from church records, which allows local geography to help explain some genetic connections.

Questions for future articles or private client services can be emailed to DNAmatching-projects@gmail.com. Follow the West Cork DNA projects on Facebook 'My Irish Genealogy & DNA.'



All ancestral communities (source: Ancestry)



Paternal Ancestral community (source: Ancestry)



Maternal ancestral community (source: Ancestry)

FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Rosscarbery student is Munster regional winner of Oireachtas Essay Competition

Mount Saint Michael Secondary School student Cormac Fulton Wygers secured the prize for best essay in Munster at the Oireachtas Essay Competition prizegiving in Leinster House on March 1.

The competition, sponsored by book publishers and distributors Eason, Folens and CJ Fallon, was devised by Independent NUI Senator Rónán Mullen (pictured centre with Cormac and his father Gysbertus Wygers) with the sup-

port of An Ceann Comhairle and the Oireachtas Education Unit. Senior Cycle and AS/A Level

students across the Island of Ireland were invited to submit essays in Irish or English on the

theme 'Parliamentary Politics Matters for Peace' or 'An Pharlaimint agus an tSíocháin'. Over €4,500 in prize money went to the winners, out of a €6,000 prize fund. Students whose essays were "Highly Commended" will receive certificates and cash prizes at a ceremony in their schools.

The judges praised Fulton Wygers for the very good structure of their essay and for the nature of their argument which was discussed within a historical and theoretical context.



Addressing pelvic floor dysfunction



Amanda Roe

Acupuncture and Clinical Hypnotherapist

Advanced female pelvic floor dysfunction can become life-limiting forcing women to stay close to home in case of accidents, lowering libido and reducing the ability to lift and move things for fear of making it worse.

Yet that doesn't have to be the case, as with the right interventions women can regain bladder control, lift pelvic organs back up into place and renew their sex life at any age.

Women can have mild level dysfunction for years, even decades, and not even know

what it is.

It might start as vaginal flutment during yoga or a small amount of leakage on the trampoline or when running.

This can develop into a heavy dragging feeling down below, discomfort wearing tampons or a sensation that your insides are falling out.

It is common for women to reduce activity and exercise in the hope that rest will improve symptoms. Unfortunately lack of exercise, aging, pregnancy, vaginal delivery or surgery can lead to the condition progressing to urinary incontinence or a pelvic organ prolapse.

There is a lack of education and genuine open conversations around women's menstrual and pelvic health; globally women are typically unaware of what their own healthy pelvic anatomy looks and feels like and how to keep it strong and subtle.

To reduce pelvic floor dysfunction our teenage girls should know their vaginal anatomy and learn how to strengthen and relax it from puberty.

There seems to be a taboo or embarrassment around this topic, yet we are never too young

or old to become intimately acquainted.

Typically education around pelvic floor health seems to be on a need to know basis after childbirth or significant dysfunction has developed. Treatment options include Kegel exercises, medication, the insertion of a ring to keep pelvic organs in place, or surgery.

Many women find Kegel exercises ineffective and want to avoid medical intervention, so thankfully there are other holistic techniques to rehabilitate the pelvic floor. Surprisingly the most effective start with understanding the dynamics between your breath and your pelvic floor.

The pelvic floor can be too tight or too loose and your breath is an effective tool for relaxing, strengthening and lifting these muscles back into place.

Acupuncture is also an effective treatment for pelvic floor dysfunction. There are more than 36 muscles in the pelvis and pelvic floor – acupuncture treats pain in this area and common conditions like incontinence and pelvic

prolapse.

Amanda Roe is a clinical hypnotherapist and acupuncturist who uses a range of holistic therapies including dietary guidance to improve fertility, emotional and mental health. Supporting 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 6331898

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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

A
WEST CORK
LIFE

Tina Pisco

It should be simple. How many times have you heard: That's illegal! You should sue. Go to court. Just this week I heard of a woman who found her landlord sitting in her kitchen without warning. He is also putting up her rent by 50 per cent. A judge would probably rule in her favour if she went to court. But here's the rub. She and her son need a place to live. She isn't exactly rolling in money. She works full time. She doesn't have the resources to go after her landlord even if she's sure to win. She needs to

use her time and money to find a new place to live...Sound familiar? Though we may be in the right, we are too often at the mercy of dodgy landlords, sloppy tradesmen, unscrupulous solicitors, and greedy banks. We are in no position to seek justice.

Over the years I have had my fair share of similar situations. Most times I have been too burdened trying to raise four daughters, too short on time and money to pursue justice. The most disastrous was with my first publisher who ripped me off in too many ways to list here. Though elements of my contract would be immediately struck out by a judge, I had neither the means nor the support to pursue them in court. Thanks to help from my agent, I was lucky to get the copyrights to my novels back. It did, however, set back my career in a way that never recovered.

Today my girls are grown, and I am more financially secure than at any time in my adult life. Which is why when

I was brazenly ripped off by a local painter five years ago, I decided not to let it go. Regular readers of the West Cork People will remember my excitement back in the spring of 2019. Here is a little reminder: 'This summer I will finally have a home improvement that I can show off. I am having the house painted. After 26 years of dull, lifeless, grey plaster, we are getting a makeover...It will take a few weeks, but if you are around my neck of the woods, pop around so that I can show off. We will be the big, old, RED house on the hill.'

What I didn't mention in my column was that my dad had just died and that he had planned to have the house painted for me that summer. I decided to go ahead in memory of him. I was vulnerable and grief-stricken, which is the only excuse I have as to why I handed over four thousand euros to a man who promised to paint my house. Five months later I wrote:

'Before you ask – No my house has not been painted yet. Every week this August we have looked forward to D day the following week, only to have our hopes dashed by heavy rain, or the disappearance of our painter who was busy finishing up some inside work that he had taken on when it was raining the week before. It seems we have entered a twilight zone loop (think Groundhog Day) where we get to go back to where we were ten weeks ago every week. I'm not quite sure what

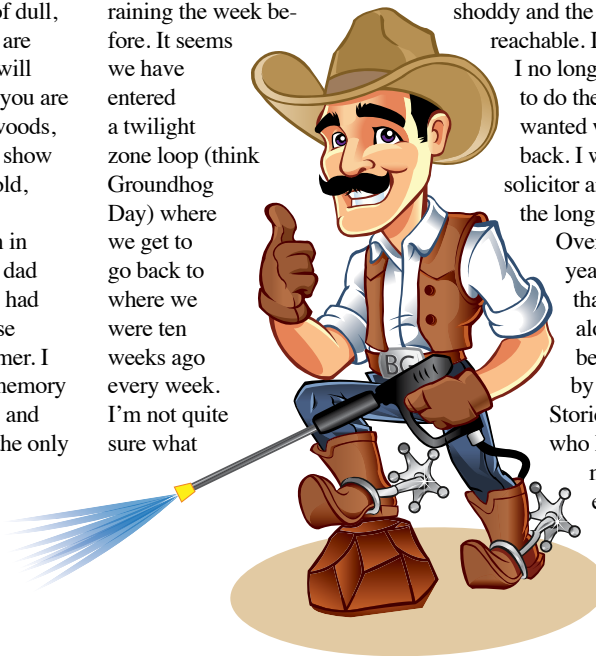
to do.'

That was in August 2019. Fast forward to January 2020. The house was still not painted, and my four thousand euros had evaporated. I had suffered a year of excuses and broken promises. My house was now a patchwork of painted and unpainted bits. The work was shoddy and the painter unreachable. I'd had enough. I no longer wanted him to do the job. What I wanted was my money back. I went to see my solicitor and started on the long road to court.

Over the next four years I discovered that I am not alone in having been ripped off by this painter. Stories from others who handed over money and never saw the job finished have come to light. That only made

me more determined to seek justice. I know that it is stupid to hand over a large sum before a job is done, but it shouldn't be. My nature is to trust that a professional will do the job and I hate being mocked for being naïve.

Long story short, the painter spent the last four years ducking and diving, hoping that I would give up. He has made promises over and over, which he then broke. He has been in court three times this year alone, each time coming up with only a part of what he owes despite the threat of jail. I refused to give up and hopefully next month the final installment will be paid, and the whole sorry business can finally be over. If I had less time and money, a less understanding solicitor, or less of a need to seek justice, this cowboy would have walked away with my money. Justice will finally have been served, but it will have taken five years. And my house is still not painted.



Accepting what is with R.A.I.N.



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.

What we resist, persists. We can waste so much precious time and energy wishing things were different to how they are in this moment. In my view developing an attitude of mindful acceptance is one of life's greatest gifts and a doorway to personal growth and meaningful change in our lives. This does not mean accepting bad habits or behaviour in ourselves or others but more an acceptance that we are ordinary people, not perfect, and that when we grow in the skills of mindfulness, we can expect to uncover even more imperfections, as we meet

our deeper layers.

Self-acceptance involves taking a balanced and objective view of ourselves, perhaps in a similar way to how we would view another person and being willing to see the honest facts in front of us. It's a practical approach to life, seeing things as they are and not how we might wish them to be, feel they should be, or how we might plan or predict them to be. Each of us prefers things or experiences we like, as well as aspects of ourselves. And we can tend to resist or push away things we don't like, including aspects of ourselves and our experience. Preference is a key concept in mindfulness training.

We can explore the concepts of preference and acceptance in any everyday situation, for example, what is real and honest for me, as I write this, is that I am feeling a little unwell. At this moment in time, I would prefer not to be feeling this way. This is not how I would wish to spend a bank holiday weekend, but I can use my experience as a small, 'live', example of how life can go easier on us when we accept, rather than resist what is. The four step R.A.I.N. method, associated with world-renowned meditation teacher, Tara Brach, is very helpful for practicing acceptance and for dealing with difficult emotions

as they arise.

R, in the acronym, stands for recognise, so we acknowledge what is present for us in our experience. So, taking my example of being stuffed up with a cold, I recognise that I have been quite good in accepting the fact of being on a low par, but now, a week later, being truthful, I feel impatient and fed up of it, while wishing that I wasn't feeling those emotions. Then we follow with A, for acceptance. If we can allow our experience to be there, just as it is, we can give ourselves the space to feel our feelings without judging them and we learn to soften rather than hardening towards ourselves. This does not mean wallowing in our feelings, just an opening more fully to how we are. I have a rotten cold and it's ok to feel a bit impatient and fed up in this moment.

The letter I in R.A.I.N. usually invites a little bit more investigation into the difficult emotions now that we've acknowledged and accepted them. We check in by using the four foundations of mindfulness, that is, mindfulness of the body, feelings, thoughts and how we are relating to our experience. In this example, bringing mindfulness to the body, I notice all the physical feelings, particularly at my ears, nose, throat and limbs. I notice a general feeling of low

energy. Bringing mindfulness to feelings, I'm not noticing any particularly strong emotions at this moment, just a kind of neutral emotional state, perhaps writing this process is helping!

Mindfulness of thoughts helps me to notice predictive thoughts like, "This will probably last another week," "Oh no, I'll have to cancel work" and deeper, recriminatory thoughts like "how did I get sick when I've been doing all the right things?" It really helps to notice the kind of thoughts that are spinning around while being sick, a kind of self-blame. It helps to take a step back and ask your mind if this is true?

We notice then how we are relating to the whole experience. There is a difference between what I would like to be experiencing and the reality of what I am actually experiencing. I am not loving being sick, but neither am I resisting it, minimising, or exaggerating it. I ask myself is how I'm feeling solid or changing? Does it feel permanent?

The N of R.A.I.N. practice stands for either non-identification or nurture. We can loosen our grip on strong emotions or over-identifying with our experience and inquire of ourselves, for example, "is having a cold all of who I am, or is this just an experience moving through

me?" I really like the nurture version of the R.A.I.N. acronym by Tara Brach, we can nurture ourselves with self-compassion. It is my intention to rest now and nurture this cold, as well as minding those challenging thoughts, feelings and emotions that will no doubt continue to come and go alongside it.

Monthly mindful journaling workshops are running at CECAS on March 30, April 27, May 18 and June 22. Each two-hour mindful journaling workshop will combine mindfulness meditation practices, reflective questions, poetry, and embodied writing techniques. Join me on Saturday, March 30, 4 – 6pm. €35 includes printable worksheets and audio recordings for listening at home.

Weekly drop-in mindfulness sessions continue at CECAS, Myross Wood, Leap on Tuesday mornings through-out the year (April 2, 9, 16 and 23) from 10am – 11am. €12. All are welcome to join this wonderful community of practice.

For more information, phone: 087 2700572 or email: susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com
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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Dr Paula Stanley
drstanley@westcorkpeople.ie

“Dr, my daughter suffers terribly from her periods, but then, I was the same at her age...”

Adolescent or teenage gynaecology is a relatively new area of medicine. Teenage girls may not feel comfortable talking to their friends or indeed their mum about their periods. It is up to us as parents and medical practitioners to identify if there are any issues. You will only find out if you ask.

What is normal?

Menarche is the term for the onset of menstruation or the age that a girl starts her periods. This usually happens between the ages of 14 and 16 years. Earlier than age 14 is considered early. For the first six to 12 months the cycles are anovulatory, which means she does not produce an egg in those cycles. Her periods during this time tend to be irregular and not happen every four weeks. Once ovulation starts to occur, the periods fall into a pattern, the commonest being every four weeks, although this can vary by up to a week in either direction.

Menorrhagia is the medical term for heavy bleeding but how heavy is too heavy?

Whether her mum or her GP, we need to be specific when asking a teen about her flow. Asking a non-specific “how are your periods?” question will be swiftly met with a reply of “fine, doctor!” or “normal, Mum!” as the teen is at that point is desperate to change the subject. However, what is fine and normal for one girl is not for another. What we need to ask is:

- How often are you needing to change your tampon or pad?
- Do you ever have accidents/flood through your clothes?
- Do you sometimes need to double-up: tampon plus pad or double pads?
- Do you ever get blood clots

Time of the month

- bigger than a grape?
- Do you bleed for more than seven days?

If she is changing pads at intervals of two hours or less then she has clinically very heavy flow as the usual is four to eight hourly changes.

Large clots, flooding, doubling-up and periods of more than seven days duration are similarly all markers of very heavy flow.

Dysmenorrhoea is the medical term for period pain. The pain is caused by contraction of the muscular wall of the uterus or womb. This is not a type of pain the teen has ever experienced and can be quite frightening when it first occurs. Dysmenorrhoea can be primary, when there is no underlying disease, or secondary. Fifty to ninety per cent of teens will experience primary dysmenorrhoea and this starts to happen once cycles are ovulatory, which is usually more than six months after menarche. The term secondary dysmenorrhoea is used when there is an underlying medical condition. Period pains can occur before the onset of bleeding, tend to be worse in the first one to four days of flow but can persist through to the end of the period.

How bad is bad?

If a teenage girl is missing school or avoiding social activities because of her periods, this is a medically abnormal period.

Assessment

My approach to managing a patient with heavy and or painful periods is always the same step-wise approach.

As well as taking a history to elucidate the nature and heaviness of flow, type and severity of pain, I also want to know:

- Are you getting pelvic pain, like period pain, that happens at times other than when you bleed?
- Are you experiencing any urinary symptoms or indeed have had recurrent urinary tract infections, UTIs?
- Are your bowels normal/variable? IBS or irritable bowel syndrome is common in teenage girls and the pain can feel a bit like period pains. It can also, however, be a normal premenstrual symptom to have a change in bowel action, bloating, and appetite changes in the week before a period. I also ask about other premenstrual symptoms such as mood changes. I commonly see young women or older teens with severe PMS plus painful, heavy periods.

**Investigation**

I do an abdominal examination to rule out any obvious abdominal/pelvic masses. A vaginal examination is not appropriate for teens and clinically not necessary.

If flow is heavy, I check blood tests to rule out anaemia as teenagers with flooding periods are often anaemic.

A pelvic ultrasound will reassure mum and I that there are no structural abnormalities or ovarian cysts.

Treatment

Non-hormonal treatments:
I start with anti-inflammatory type painkillers called NSAIDs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories, such as ibuprofen. An NSAID specifically very good for preventing uterine contractions is Mefenamic acid, brand name Ponstan, with which some readers might be familiar. Mefenamic acid also has the added effect of making the bleeding up to 30 per cent lighter. Another medication called Tranexamic acid works by affecting the coagulation or clotting processes for the blood in the womb, resulting in lighter bleeding. I usually prescribe both together and treatment is most effective if started before onset of bleeding, if possible.

Hormonal treatment:

However, if the teen is missing school every month because of pain and/or heavy bleeding, I go straight in with the combined oral contraceptive pill or COC, providing there are no contraindications. What COC does is switch off the teen's ovulation and therefore her periods. COC can be taken back-to-back to avoid the usual pill bleed that occurs in the week off the pill. I

usually recommend taking three packets without a break, then having a short four-day break before restarting. COC also has the lovely added effect of eradicating the teen's premenstrual phase of her cycle, which she will thank you for.

I advise the teen and her mum to keep a menstrual chart on bleeding and pain month-on-month during treatment and I arrange to see her again in about four months to review management.

“Doctor, could it be endometriosis?”

A small proportion will turn out to have endometriosis.

Endometriosis is a gynaecological condition characterised by deposits of endometrial tissue, which is the lining of the uterus that sheds each month, in locations other than inside the uterus.

Certain features are linked with this condition such as early menarche, under age 14 and proven family history of endometriosis. Another marker of endometriosis is failure of the first line treatments described

above. As well as having severe period pains, patients with endometriosis often complain of pelvic pain that can feel like period pains, at times other than when she is bleeding. Urinary symptoms can occur if there are deposits of endometrial tissue on or near the bladder. Endometriosis can cause ovarian cysts, so I want to know if the teen has ever been diagnosed with a cyst before.

A diagnosis of endometriosis can only be made following a procedure called a laparoscopy performed by a gynaecologist. It is not seen on a pelvic scan.

This is an invasive procedure that requires a general anaesthetic and understandably many mothers do not want to go down that path.

The major concern about endometriosis is that it can affect a woman's fertility. Unfortunately, endometriosis is often diagnosed late. If a woman has endometriosis that might impact her ability to get pregnant, she wants to know in her late 20s so she has the opportunity to explore all her fertility options. She does not want to find out

at the age of age 38 after years of trying for a baby that she has endometriosis as her fertility options are much more limited at that age.

So, my approach to teens, their mums and indeed adult women with severe period problems, be that pain, bleeding or both, is to never say never. I counsel my patient and her mum that it might turn out to be endometriosis. That the treatment approach I am taking will be the same as that of a gynaecologist in hospital: try NSAIDs and the pill first. If that does not help, then consider referral to see a gynaecologist.

Bottom line: if you are having period pains/heavy periods that cause you to miss school or work – go see your GP.

Mums and their daughters might find useful information on the British Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecology website (britspag.org).

As ever, I hope this was helpful. Do please email me with any queries. If you wish to book an appointment to see me, phone Bantry Bay Medical Centre on: 027 20022.

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PETS



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.

How important is it to give your dog a vet check, a proper handling session on a regular basis? I can tell you that it's right up there with teaching your dog the basic obedience commands.

After a particularly windy day when Saffron and I had been out walking and playing footie, I noticed that her eyes were slightly red and oozing a bit of mucus. She needed drops to counteract any infection or cold from the gales. I popped

The importance of handling your dog

the drops in each time with very little hassle. She didn't like having it done but she didn't resist.

Another day, I noticed a few drops of blood on the floor. She allowed me to check under her tail in case there was any bleeding from her back passage. Fortunately, no. And then I inspected each paw to find that she had torn a nail. It was no big deal and didn't cause her any ongoing problem.

But, I was so proud of her in each instance that she trusted me to perform these inspections. I believe her relaxed demeanour was due to the fact that from the time she came to me as a young puppy, I'd regularly examined her all over.

All my dogs have behaved in the same manner. Each time they may have gone lame due to a stone between the toes or a thorn in the pad, they will stop, lift that paw, turn to me with a look that says, 'Fix it!' And I duly do.

Puppies: As soon as you welcome your new puppy into your home, that's the time to start giving him an examination so that he's relaxed with being handled.

There's so much you can

teach your puppy to get him comfortable with being touched. I don't mean stroking but an inspection that is rather daunting at the beginning. If you do it properly, this regular examination will turn into 'no big deal'. More importantly, he won't get uptight when a vet gives him the once over.

So you begin with an overall examination of your puppy. You watch the way he gets up off his bed to ensure he's sound on all his limbs, his tail is wagging, his head is up and he's curious about his environment.

Call him over and sit him on your lap with him facing outwards so he can't latch onto you with his sharp little teeth!

Practice long strokes from his head to tail. Most dogs love this. Your intention is to find any hot spots on either side of his body. Hot spots are unusual patches of heat which may indicate pain or tension.

Once you've done that, then you gently look in his ears to see if they are red or there's any gunge inside. You give him a treat if he allowed you to do that with no hassle.

Check his eyes. Is there any discharge from them or around

his nose? Give him a cuddle as a reward.

Next, handle his feet. If he pulls away, don't make an issue of it by holding onto a paw so that he turns to bite you. Instead, gently, stroke the paw and give him a treat. Then touch each toe and reward him if he stays quiet. Leave him be until the next day and then start the foot inspection all over again, but this time you try stroking in between his toes. You reward him each time he's quiet until you can part each toe to ensure there are no cuts or foreign bodies lurking.

Tap his pads and inspect them. A cut pad can be really difficult to heal but also dog's are protective of them because they can be very sore.

You should be able to handle your dog's tail with no adverse reactions. Lift it up and down, move it from side to side to ensure all's well.

And finally, inspect your dog's private parts – those places where he shows resistance to being handled.

All the above may seem to be excessive but in the long run, you will be very happy if you can check your dog if he's hurt

and, more importantly, if your vet can do the same without fear of being bitten. There's nothing worse than having to muzzle your dog for each vet visit. It becomes an ordeal for everyone.

Rescue Dogs: It's not quite such a simple chore with adopted dogs because you're not certain of their backgrounds. But, it's just as important.

The first thing to do is to gain his trust until he feels comfortable with being handled all over. Then you start doing the same things as you would with a puppy but you need to have much more patience and really take your time.

It's very rewarding when your dog trusts you to help him and it could be very important.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Haiku in Clonakilty

Poetry seems to be universal. It is practised in all languages, all cultures, maybe throughout the ages. And in many different ways. It doesn't have to rhyme, for example. Nor does it have to be complicated. The Japanese genre of haiku is well-known in the West but also in the Middle East and in Brazil, India, Armenia. And, of course, in Ireland. Dictionaries suggest that the form is very rigid: 'A poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five.' "There are several schools of haiku," Sébastien Revon shares with Moze Jacobs. "Some people want to strictly adhere to those rules. Many others, including myself, take a freer approach."

Sébastien Revon is the next featured guest at DeBarra's Spoken Word in Clonakilty. A Frenchman who has been living in Ireland for 15 years and loves it. "I feel connected to this country. Yet I wouldn't want to live in a city. I need to be close to nature. And there is plenty of

that in West Cork. Fortunately, the community aspect seems quite strong as well. I am a pharmacist so I know a lot of people." But that is his day job. Seb, who's also been active as a drummer, among others in the Clonakilty Jazz Collective, is a writer in whatever free time he has.

"I am a member of the local writers' group, which meets bi-monthly in the local library. One day, I opened a library book, Poems that will make grown-up men cry (100 men confess to being moved to tears by poems that haunt them). One of the poems I found had a real impact on my life:

"my little dragonfly hunter / I wonder how far / he has gone today..."

"A haiku, written by Chiyo-Ni (1703-1775), who is considered one of the greatest haiku poets in Japan. I immediately found it emotionally powerful and felt there was something more to it. Later, I discovered it was about her son, who died in infancy. She

started writing poetry at the age of seven, published two poetry collections, and would become a Buddhist nun. Not much else is known about her life but we can imagine that her son loved dragonflies, and chasing them. After his death, when put into this context, he has gone very far. Somehow it poses the question, where did he go?

It really made me wonder, how can a few words encapsulate so much? How on earth does this work? It set me off on a quest. Haiku is like a path and I became really obsessed with it. A passion, if you like. The point for me is to create an emotion for the reader.

"In September 2020, I was varnishing the floor of our bedroom, all shiny. It was below a window and suddenly, something passed in the sky above:

"Reflecting / On the freshly varnished floor / A flight of wild geese"

It took me three-and-a-half years to finish this poem. Originally written in French, it didn't work in English until I found it again by chance and did a lot of tweaking. Then it was ready to be submitted to a journal. Does it evoke an emotion? Surprise and contemplation. Haiku often lets you look at mundane things

and you get an 'Aha' moment as you do so. It can make you sad and happy at the same time. They say that a haiku is good if you can remember the exact moment when you wrote it. Such poems are like photographs but better."

Haiku in Clonakilty with Sébastien Revon, DeBarra's Spoken Word at the back of DeBarra's Folk Club, Pearse street, Clonakilty, April 24, at 8:30pm



Sébastien Revon

Subsidised pet micro-chipping in April

Every year large numbers of pets go missing. When these pets are found by members of the public the first step is to check for identification, the most obvious of which is a collar with a tag or where no visible ID exists, a microchip. Unfortunately many pets have not been microchipped, and tags or collars can get lost or be removed. In some cases where microchips exist, the information on the database may relate to the breeder or previous owners, or it turns out the current owners have moved and failed to register the changes. This makes reuniting the pets with their owners very difficult.

All means of identification help rescue groups to reduce the number of 'stray' animals they have to take in, opening up spaces for animals in genuine need of a rescue space.

RAWR is reminding the public that it is a legal requirement to microchip your dog. Microchipping is a permanent method of identification that ensures your pet can be traced back to you. Your pet can be microchipped at your veterinary practise and it is fast and painless. If your pet is microchipped, but you are not sure if it is registered call into your vet's office to have your pet's chip checked.

Microchipping costs may vary. Your local vet will be happy to discuss their fees with you. Many practises run discounted microchipping at various times of the year. Subsidised microchipping is also offered by some organisations.

RAWR are joining up with The Veterinary Clinic in Bantry (027 53639) and will be providing subsidised microchipping for just €20 per animal on each Saturday in April from 11am-1pm only. Booking is essential so please phone to arrange a slot as places are limited. If you are in a position to donate a little extra towards the work RAWR does it would be greatly appreciated. The importance of ID far outweighs the cost. It is the only way your pet can be reunited with you. And don't forget you are also legally required to have a current dog license for each dog you own.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

A cut above the rest

As the cafe and gallery in Ahakista prepares for the busy summer season, Annabel Langrish is excited to be launching her new Laser Lab, offering a range of beautiful products cut from sustainably sourced birch plywood and hand painted.

Possibly best known for her beautiful handprinted wildlife ceramic decorations and homeware, after 20 years of ceramic raku firings took a toll on her lung health, Annabel recently switched her focus from ceramics to laser cutting.

“My favourite are my wildflower stems... fuchsia, montbretia, foxgloves and honeysuckle... in boxes, vases or suitable just as simple decorative rings for the wall,” shares the artist. “Then there are ragged robin, bluebells, snowdrops, heartsease, violets, primroses...”

Her larger pieces are unusual and colourful animals for the wall – folk art-inspired foxes, horses, hens, fish, using some of her raku designs and shapes. “My art will always include wildlife, although I am on a different tack at the moment, so there are laser cut hares, badgers, owls, puffins, seals...”

It’s a team effort: Annabel’s



husband Klaus excels at making the stands and flower boxes and is on hand to provide technical assistance with the impressive Thunder laser machine when needed. “I drew a flock of sheep with the idea of popping them out of wooden postcards, and Klaus, who is just as excited about the laser machine as I am (but would never admit to this!) has cleverly worked out how to create these and designed the display stands,” says Annabel.

It’s a discipline that seems to suit Annabel’s spontaneous and impatient nature. “I can have an idea in the morning, draw it on the i-pad, make it laser-friendly – ie decide what to engrave and what to cut out, print and cut it – paint it, and hang it on the wall all in one day!” she explains.

Happiest when creating and with a love of wildlife and flowers, Annabel’s first business

was making landscapes from pressed leaves. Her work has been through several reincarnations since then but wildlife and wildflowers have featured in different ways throughout.

Annabel grew up in Barbados in the days of sugar cane harvesting. Her memories include donkeys and carts, standpipes at the side of the road and cargo ships with masts off-loading at the careenage. She left to go to art college in the UK but desperately missed the countryside until a trip to Ireland with her father to see his retirement house led her to relocate there. “I fell in love,” she shares, “looking out from the bedroom window with a view of magical misty Lough Key.” She moved to Sligo in 1976, where she finished her art education, taught art for a number of years and met her husband Klaus, a composer and musician. Travelling



around the country with Klaus’ samba band, they discovered and fell in love with West Cork.

After moving to Sheep’s Head in 2005, Annabel and Klaus set up the Heron Gallery, café and garden with the idea of creating a home around their lifestyle and interests... a job that’s still ongoing today. They filled this space with quirky and innovative projects hoping

to inspire visitors to their little piece of paradise with its colourful flower borders and wildlife friendly habitats. They also grow their own vegetables, supplying as much as possible to the cafe. As well as the home gallery in Ahakista and the gallery in Kenmare which, unless another premises is found will unfortunately have to close, they wholesale most of their

products to other shops.

Although set in the midst of peaceful countryside, The Heron in Ahakista is a hive of activity. Annabel and Klaus live upstairs above the gallery and café – a small house but with lots of outbuildings. The office is in the garden, as are the many sheds for storage and Annabel’s painting studio.

“I’m often asked how I manage to do everything that I do,” says Annabel. “Well the simple answer is that I don’t. I have an amazing team beavering away behind the scenes.”

On busy days, the team has lunch together in the kitchen upstairs, often exchanging ideas and progress reports.

Although Annabel and Klaus have both reached pension age, the couple have no intention of slowing down just yet. They spend one month every year in Barbados, where Annabel runs an art retreat for local artists and paints a body of work herself but their main focus now is on making this new laser project as much of a success as their ceramics business.

www.annabellangrish.ie

Kurt Cobain 30-year anniversary show at DeBarras Clonakilty

With April marking 30 years since the death of Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain, Cork-based alternative rockers Paradox will return to DeBarras’s Folk Club in Clonakilty on Saturday April 13 playing a full set of Nirvana tunes spanning their entire catalog. They will be joined by West Cork fuzz rockers Screenreader fronted by singer songwriter Brian Casey. Both bands are no stranger to the DeBarras stage having played many full house shows over the past few years.

Originally formed in 1997 by brothers Pete Mac and Mike Mac, the early Paradox sound was heavily influenced by the grunge era of the 90s. The band have released four studio albums

to date along with numerous singles.

Paradox have toured both Europe and the US over the years, as well as playing support to the likes of Therapy?, Kerbdog and Shonen Knife and more recently sharing the stage with fellow Irish bands Fangclub and Bitch Falcon. 2023 saw the release of Pete Mac’s second full length solo album ‘Hiber Nation’. The band returned to playing live in 2024.

Screenreader came into being with the release of their debut album ‘Disconnect the Dots’ in January 2012. Burning a trail from start to finish with mechanical samples, high-impact dynamics and fuzzed-up electronic textures, the album has received

high praise from critics, as well as a quickly growing fan base, resulting in consistent national radio airplay from the likes of 2fm’s Dave Fanning and Dan Hegarty, along with airplay from regional and local radio stations.

Singer Songwriter Brian Casey has focused on his solo ventures over the past few years with the release of various tracks and two full-length EP’s. More recently Brian has been working as a producer in his own recording studio, Wavefield Studios in West Cork, producing various releases for many established acts and musicians.

Join both Paradox and Screenreader for a night of Nirvana tunage on Saturday April 13.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Epiphanies, traces and equations: graphic surprises at Gallery Asna



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.

Surrealist collages, conceptual infographics and performative drawings mirror and complement each other in a surprising exhibition titled 'Interconnections', currently on show at Gallery Asna, Clonakilty. It is a surprising exhibition, not only for its imaginative content, but because it presents three radically different creative approaches, the results of which sit harmoniously together. One might think that a conceptual infographic of carbon emissions would have little to say to a surrealist collage of a polar bear on a satellite wing, or that a charcoal rubbing of rock strata would be worlds away from an image of a bird balancing the earth on

its beak. But these contrasting images do, in fact, speak to each other, and are bound together, both thematically, and in certain ways stylistically.

The obvious point of connection is thematic: each of the artists in the exhibition addresses life on earth, its fragility and beauty, and the threat it faces through global heating. The theme of the earth is omnipresent in the digital collages of Karolina Kaja Kant, all-pervasive in the charcoal rubbings and impressions of Aoife Nolan, and directly addressed in the infographics of Johanna Legnar. The second point of connection is stylistic. Clean graphics, strong colours and circular motifs underpin all of the collages, infographics and drawings. Lines sing together, shapes mirror and echo each other, but each artist arrives at their destination differently, even if they share a certain sensibility.

To specifics: a polar bear stands on the wing of a satellite, an endless starry cosmos spreading out behind her. All is in greyscale except for a portal of bright gold balanced on the wing's tip. The portal is in the shape of a tree's cut profile, its rings alive with another dimension, a golden cosmos, a link perhaps back to the secrets of the earth, or a gateway to another world entirely. This is 'Stellar Sanctuary of Sensitivity,' a digital collage by Polish artist Karolina Kaja Kant, one of seven, in her series titled, 'Chemistry of the Mind,' in which incongruous displacement and poetic juxtaposition surprise us into moments of

epiphany.

Hanging opposite Kant's collages are the performative drawings of Aoife Nolan. In one work titled 'Skin to Skin' an abrasive charcoal rubbing from rock is transformed into a stellar ring by the artist having shielded the centre of the drawing with a circular stencil, forming a clean circle into which the charcoal does not transgress. An eruptive trail of copper ink also perambulates the inner circle, careening through the charcoal rubbing, like a contrail through deep space, or like the liminal light of an eclipse. Copper is a conduit of energy linking the earth to the heavens, linking earthly granite to the rocks of space, linking human skin to the crusty skin of the earth (hence the title: 'Skin to Skin').

On the adjacent walls hang the conceptual infographics of Johanna Legnar, in which the plight of the world's climate is made colourfully and graphically clear. In one work, 'Consequences', Legnar uses the format of a graph together with interventionist typography to illustrate the threatening trajectory of global warming we all find ourselves on. 'Time' is the horizontal measure and 'Temperature' the vertical. 'Global' is typed horizontally in the sunset colours typically employed in heat charts, whilst 'warming,' staggers upwards at a gradient worthy of Everest, its colours going deep red as it rises. Superimposed onto the last four letters of 'warming', is the word 'stop', in black. The effect is jarring; this is not just another forgettable scientific chart, but a typographic protest. Tied to the



Stellar Sanctuary of Sensitivity, a digital collage by Polish artist Karolina Kaja Kant.

protest against global warming is a protest against global war, as the last four letters in 'warming' are obscured by 'stop'. It is a clever wordplay, linking geopolitics to the climate crisis. In this work Legnar deftly teases the boundaries between graphic design, art and activism.

Circularity is mirrored in the works of Kant and Nolan, which face each other in the gallery. The inner blank circles of Nolan's charcoal impressions 'Skin to Skin,' and 'Interconnected', mirror Kant's images of the earth in works such as 'Circularity of Infinity', and 'Root System of Balance'. Kant's positive space fills Nolan's negative. Legnar also conjures the contours of the world in 'The Earth's Lung', a graphic in which the outlines of South America and Africa are joined by the outline of a trachea to form an image of a pair of lungs. Within the continental 'lungs' we see two malignant black holes, large and jagged, against an otherwise comforting background of blue. Above the image, in a fun cursive font, runs the popular lyric, 'you take my breath away'. Legnar employs irony and humour to

powerful effect.

Typographic word-plays, performative drawings, and surrealist juxtapositions offer us multiple angles by which to look, both into the world of graphics and into the world of ecosystems which support life on earth. Kant offers us something sublime, epiphanic; a vision of wonder at life and its place in the cosmos. Nolan offers us the very trace of the

earth and conjures its relationship to the heavens. Legnar balances the equation, offers us a graph of time and temperature and implores us to hit the breaks. They are images for our time, as diverse in their means as they are united in what they have to say. Epiphanies, traces and equations: parabolas charting lines of fire through earth and cosmos.

COMPETITION

Cork Proms return

'The Cork Proms', the popular orchestra festival that brings together some of Cork and Ireland's finest musicians and performers to celebrate a mix of contemporary and classical music, will return this summer at Cork Opera House in association with Cork Midsummer Festival.

Classic Irish rock music, an exciting selection of musical theatre greats and a programme of classical music inspired by America will be realised by three separate shows titled, 'Heyday', 'There's No Place Like Home' and 'New World Symphony and Rhapsody in Blue' respectively.

"The Cork Proms is a celebration of everything that is great about Cork – of living in a city that has such an incredible musical legacy, and continues to be home to some of the world's most exciting musicians," says Cork Opera House CEO and Artistic Director, Eibhlin Gleeson. "It's such an incredible privilege to be able to bring Proms to our community, a festival of music that is for everyone.

We have a pair of tickets to give away to Heyday, which is celebrating all things brilliant about Irish Rock music, presenting new arrangements of beloved songs by artists and bands such as Sinead O'Connor, The Cranberries, The Pogues, Thin Lizzy and many more. Joining the Cork Opera House Concert Orchestra conducted by John O'Brien will be soloists Jack O'Rourke, May Kay and Lucia Evans with more to be announced.

Heyday June 12 and 13
New World Symphony and Rhapsody in Blue June 15 and 16
There's No Place Like Home June 19 and 20
 All at www.corkoperahouse.ie



To be in with a chance of winning two tickets to 'Heyday', email your name, location & phone number to info@westcorkpeople.ie before April 20.

Please put 'Cork Proms' in the subject line.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Folding Light: Roseanne Lynch at O'Connell Gallery

by Róisín Foley

I am looking at images of Roseanne's work on my laptop screen.

I take a few minutes to think before writing. I am trying to think like Roseanne might think. I get a little lost. The rain goes "ting, ting, ting...". The droplets the rain makes are both dark and light, given the angle of the earth to the sun, and given how gravity effects each individual droplet. Water pools at the base of each droplet. The window is a double-glazed rectangle, its edges are white PVC. My mind frames the sum of the moments in which I examined the droplets. It is disorientating. The image carries a visual code, but also a memory of sensation which in itself carries feeling from that day, in my kitchen thinking about how to think like Roseanne.

I go to Stephen's gallery to visit Roseanne's work.

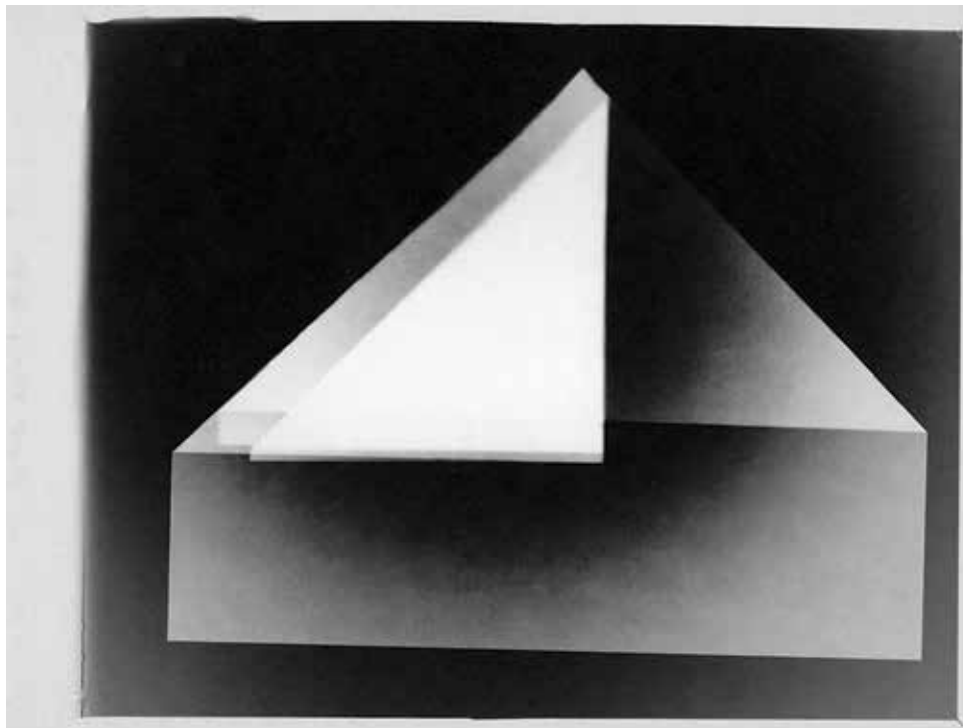
First, I spend time with the triangles. They float. They are very much unlike the images I looked at on my screen. They are lighter; all that I can feel is light, light folding. The contrast with the darkness makes this so. Suspended in the elegant frames are images of folds, these are the triangles. I am quietly making triangles. My hands and arms can feel them as I fold the invisible paper. Is invisible paper pure light? What is light? I sense them, the triangles now folding themselves slowly in the dark.

Next, I visit the circle with the squares. The circle is more of a suggestion of the shape which is heavy and hovers. It tells me it can, but it chooses not to exit the frame. I can't say whether it is a circle or a sphere, it is somewhere in between, or both, or

on the cusp of one or the other. I have a knowing of the sound of its seemingly grinding motion, suspended on the tonal grid. My teeth, my bones, my otoliths tense and crunch, my fingers grasp imaginary cylinders. I am moving atoms, I am human geology. I find relief on the grid. The delicate tonal grid.

I chat to Stephen, I ask him about the work: "Stephen? Now, are they luminograms or photograms?" We discuss the difference between a luminogram and a photogram. These are the titles given to the two photographic processes that Roseanne applies to her work, aside from "traditional" photography. Roseanne is not a digital photographer; she works in the dark room as opposed to on the screen. Luminograms and photograms are ways of making photographic work in the dark room. I try to remember my brief time in the dark room at college, and can only sense the feeling of place. The technical data has gone. But I catch moments of the considered playfulness I shared with friends and tutors.

On this day Stephen has two more pieces by Roseanne on display. I turn to be with them. Form and light are composed in such a way that it is difficult to settle into them; it is like having a conversation with a puzzle. I strive to know more about what each work is offering. I find familiarisations in each piece which holds me. The architecture from which the works are made is doing what it is supposed to do. Its universal qualities are exercised as intended through the works. Something limitless is given freely from the architecture which is now the essence of the works. In each



piece I am anywhere but also somewhere.

I speak to Roseanne online.

She tells me how happy her work is in Stephen's gallery. She tells me she is a maker. To Roseanne the camera is a tool, which she acknowledges as an extension of herself. Like all tools the camera can only do what it can do. A maker works with material. Roseanne's materials are light and form, and time. In her work she wants to know what the camera can do. She speaks about the integrity of material. The camera is the way in which she explores this. She explores light and form and time. She exposes the true nature of these materials within the limitations of her chosen tool.

The two pieces I stood with before saying goodbye to Stephen were of the interior of

the Bauhaus main educational building. Roseanne had been on residency there in 2019. The circle and the squares came from this time too. She spent a lot of time with the materials from which the buildings and their interiors were made. She spent a lot of time looking at how they hold the buildings together,

and the sort of language that emerges from these material relationships. Johannes Ittens' teachings at the Bauhaus became important to Roseanne during her time on this residency also. Specifically, his preliminary course which encouraged experimentation, and the consideration of the makers subjective

feelings as part of the process in making work.

The triangles are from Banff. Roseanne stayed there at the very start of the covid pandemic in 2020. There was a large window that looked beyond the buildings and onto a snowcapped mountain-scape. In Banff the light was very white. The quality of this light which was being reflected from the sun, through the clear cold air onto the snow differentiated, depending on the composition of the rocks holding the snow on the peaks in place. Snow which is solidified water.

I write at home.

I am framed by the same window. Today there is no rain, the rain has been so harsh it has made the window clear. I have never thought about this window so much before, in so many ways. I am here just thinking about the window and me.

Feeling and being in the world is something so particular to each self. Makers like Roseanne can show us how dynamic this process can be.

Roseanne's work can be found at O'Connell Gallery, 29 Ashe Street Clonakilty

Concert in Castletownshend

St. Barrahane's Church Festival of Music, in its 42nd year, presents Peter Stobart, tenor and Matthew Breen, organ, on Thursday April 4, 8pm., in St. Barrahane's Church, Castletownshend.

Peter Stobart is the Director of Music of St. Finbarr's Cathedral, Cork and was also appointed as artistic director of the Cork International Choral Festival in 2020. Peter has established a strong link between the cathedral and schools in the diocese, with the aim of securing the future of sacred choral singing. He holds a degree in music and is a prize-winner for choral training and choral conducting. He has vast experience as a soloist.

Matthew Breen is a graduate of the Royal Irish Academy of Music attaining First Class

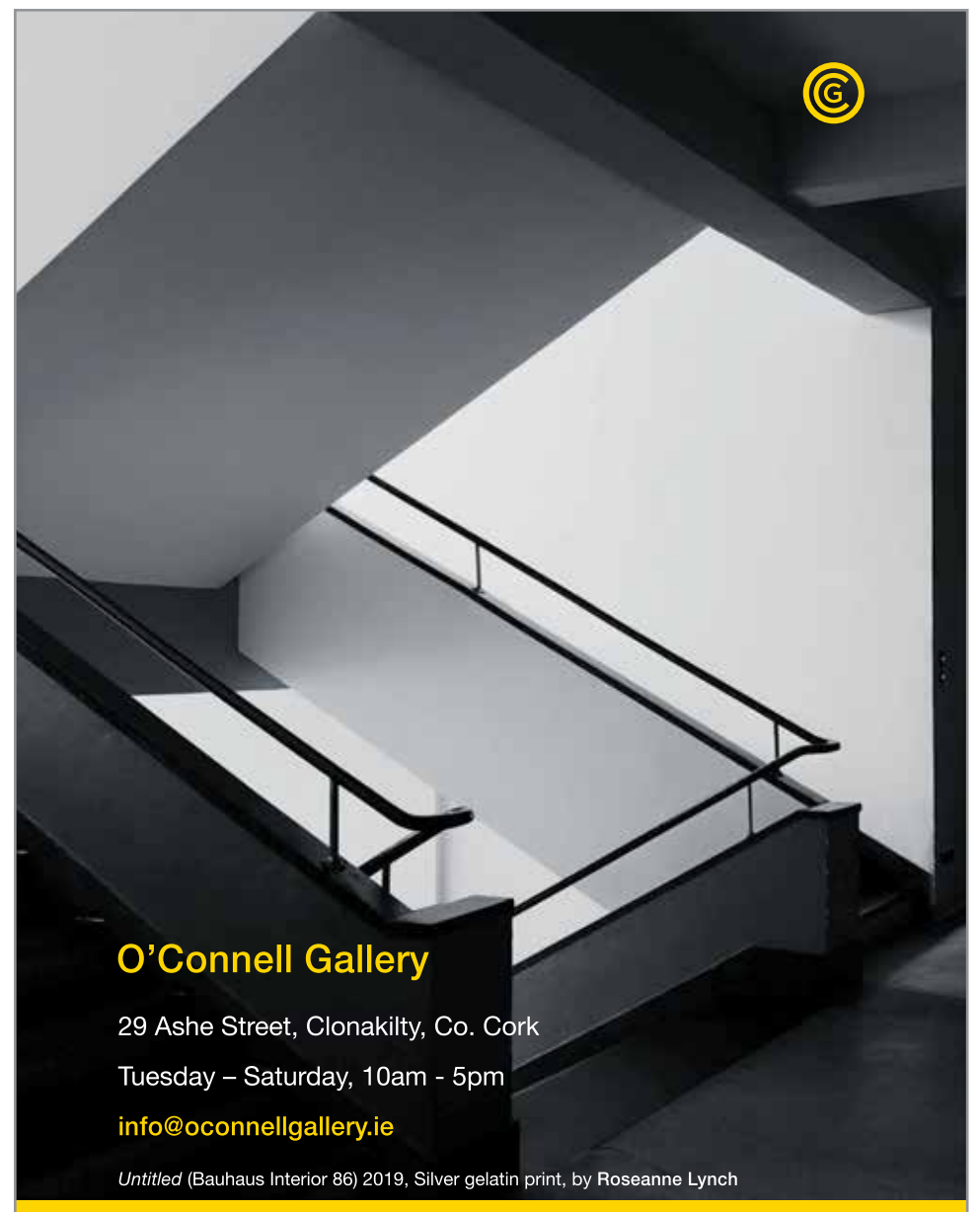


honours and is also a regular prize-winner at competitions, including Feis Ceoil and the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. He was welcomed as the new Assistant Director of Music of St. Finbarr's Cathedral in 2023.

The delightful programme includes works by Bach, Dow-

land, Schumann, Frescobaldi, Greene, Purcell and more.

Tickets: €20. online with Eventbrite; Thornhill Electrical, Skibbereen; at the door on the night; text/call 086 2264797; more information from: www.barrahanemusic.ie



O'Connell Gallery

29 Ashe Street, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Tuesday – Saturday, 10am - 5pm

info@oconnellgallery.ie

Untitled (Bauhaus Interior 86) 2019, Silver gelatin print, by Roseanne Lynch

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Craft Corner

This month **Natalie Webb** is showing us how to make painted herb stones for the garden.

“Now that Spring is here, and our garden herbs are growing, I thought it would be fun to make little stone markers for them. If you don't have herbs don't worry...these are still pretty designs to have on your windowsills!”

Materials:

- Small stones or pebbles



- P.V.A. glue
- Pencil
- Paints (I used acrylic) – as many colours as you like.
- Varnish
- Paint brushes...including old ones for the glue and varnish!

Method:

First think about what herbs you would like to paint, do you have any in your garden or on your window-sill?

Make sure your stones or pebbles are clean and dry.

Mix together a small bit of white paint with the glue and paint onto your stones to prime them for your design.

Lightly draw out your design and the name of the herb on each stone.

Paint your design on, try and keep it quite simple so that you can read the name of the herb.

Once your paint is dry if you are putting your stones outside in the garden you can varnish them, you should get an adult to do this as varnish isn't very nice!

When they are dry you can put them in your garden, or in your plant pots or on your windowsill. I hope you are all having a lovely Easter holiday!

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

4					9	8		
5		3	9		2	7		
				7				
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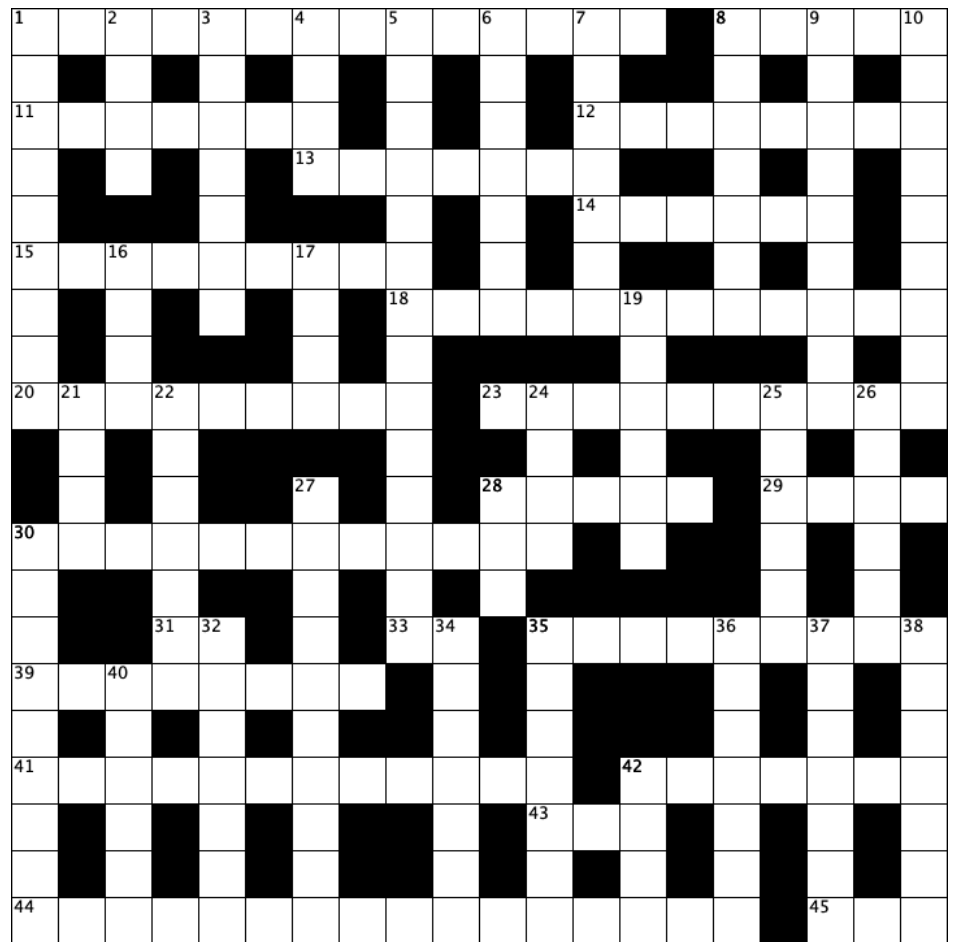
Difficulty: moderate

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#39541

Difficulty: hard

In the news Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Trademarked as 'Botox' (9,5)
- 8 Dutch painter or appliance maker (5)
- 11 Rechargeable metal that derives its name from the Greek for 'stone' (7)
- 12 Hot gospel writer is feeling half-hearted (8)
- 13 Rod-shaped bacteria? (7)
- 14 Firm kiss for a Russian coin (6)
- 15 Hyacinth relative eaten as a spring delicacy (9)
- 18 Regulation that prevents monopolies forming (9,3)
- 20 Scrounger (9)
- 23 80s TV series following the adventures of a stuntman (3,4,3)
- 28 Uniform item that might have been worn by 5. Down (5)
- 29 Author of 'The Magic Faraway Tree' (4)
- 30 Scandalously expensive, say, of the stars (12)
- 31 Ailment also known as consumption (2)
- 33 Boat prefix once indicating that it was powered by steam (2)
- 35 Nickname of Navalny's final arctic penal colony (5,4)
- 39 Person responsible for weaponry on film sets (8)
- 41 Waived (12)
- 42 Illness found in spot check? (7)
- 43 Tina's ex-husband (3)
- 44 Texan festival that is subject to boycott (5,2,9)
- 45 Heavy drinker (3)

DOWN

- 1 Tabletop game (9)
- 2 Former Yugoslav tyrant (4)
- 3 They just hang around (7)
- 4 Unfeeling (4)
- 5 Richard Harris once played this Roman emperor and philosopher (6,8)
- 6 Lavish, luxurious (7)
- 7 Clandestine, or forbidden by law (7)
- 8 Blacks of Kinsale for example (7)
- 9 Ignites a car's engine (5,4)
- 10 'The Old Man and the Sea' author (9)
- 16 Cougar that appears on runners (4)
- 17 Swallow noisily (4)
- 19 Strange affair - it's binding (6)
- 21 A pride's new arrivals (4)
- 22 Fluctuation in the pitch of a note (7)
- 24 Fisherman's catch (4)
- 25 Stay out of sight (3,3)
- 26 Bathroomware used in famous 1917 'Fountain' sculpture by Marcel Duchamp (6)
- 27 In a pushy way (10)
- 28 Mai _____, rum cocktail (3)
- 30 Big bird lost as bra malfunctions (9)
- 32 Rub to a shiny finish (7)
- 34 Toy dog originating from Tibet (4-3)
- 35 Overly prim and proper (7)
- 36 Gangster film sound (3-1-3)
- 37 Doc Holliday & gang (7)
- 38 Irish circus family (7)
- 40 Surroundings, location or setting (6)
- 42 I repeat, it could become viral (4)

Across: 1. Botulinum toxin; 8. Bosch; 11. lithium; 12. lukewarm; 13. bacilli; 14. coveck; 15. asparagus; 18. anti-trust law; 20. scavenger; 23. The Fall Guy; 28. hmc; 29. Emd; 30. astronomical; 31. TB; 33. SS; 35. Polar Wolf; 39. armour; 41. relinquished; 42. measles; 43. lie; 44. South by Southwest; 45. sor.
Down: 1. billiards; 2. Tito; 3. lovers; 4. numb; 5. Marcus Aurelius; 6. opulent; 7. illicit; 8. prndish; 9. spark plug; 10. Henningway; 16. puma; 17. glug; 19. raffia; 21. cubs; 22. vibrator; 24. haul; 25. the low; 26. untral; 27. forcefully; 28. tai; 30. albatross; 32. burnish; 34. stih-tzu; 35.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Drawing a new course for Bantry

Work Shop is a new drawing studio fostering creative activity in Bantry.

Who are Work Shop?

Work Shop are Mark Wickham, a designer and illustrator and Tara Kennedy, an architect with a visual arts background. We moved to Bantry from Dublin last Summer with our two daughters. We both have family connections in Cork, Tara's parents live in Cork city and mine are in Bantry, I grew up here. Passing on our love of the outdoors to our kids was obviously more suited to living in a more rural setting. Apart from the natural beauty right on your doorstep, Bantry has a lot to offer so it wasn't a very difficult decision. As well as design work, we are both involved in teaching. Tara lectures at Cork Centre for Architectural Education and Mark teaches an illustration module at NCAD.

What inspired you to set up Work Shop Bantry?

We were initially looking at potential spaces to work from in town. We shared a studio space in Dublin; and were curious to see what was available. When we first looked at the space on William Street about a year ago, we instantly thought it would be a perfect place for a drawing studio and to run workshops from. It's a striking early twentieth century shopfront and inside is a large room, bright with lovely big windows and a really nice ambience, and space for all our books and drawing materials! Drawing is part of our everyday work life and we both also teach



Saint Patrick's Festival Snake Race at Animal Art Club at Work Shop

in different colleges so setting up a creative space and offering drawing workshops was a natural choice. We decided not to overthink and jumped straight in to see if there was an appetite and so far the feedback has been really positive.

What do you offer?

We have been running our popular Animal Art Club and Comic Club on weekday afternoons since we started last Autumn, along with a number of evening courses for adults including Illustration and Drawing. Recently we have also been enjoying our Saturday morning Movie Drawing Club and a new Digital Drawing course for teenagers. We ran a busy Easter Art Camp and bookings are open for next term courses and Summer Art Camps.

Tell us about the space and how it lends itself to art and craft making?

Since we've started running

the courses and workshops, the space has really come into its own. It's just the right size to fill but still have room to move about. We like to get the kids to act out the poses they're about to draw; how we think when we draw is a big part of what we teach so getting up and about during the workshops helps channel the energy into our drawings.

We have fitted it out with a big shared table that can be moved for floor based drawings, desks along the walls and some higher drafting tables. And of course nice lighting! There is also a small office out the back which is essential for other work, and sometimes for hiding when not wanting to be part of street life.

What age groups do you teach?

So far everyone from age six upwards, as well as some casual all ages events like Monster Doodle with smaller kids accompanied.

Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, a public realm design project in Cork, and closer to home working on the design of an exciting community-led project for Bantry Marine Activity Centre. Mark is designer for Ireland's longest-running Irish language periodical Comhar, and Inis Mara, a recent book he illustrated, was chosen for World Book Day. Mark does all the heavy lifting teaching at Work Shop! Our long term plans include making our other projects more visible in Work Shop and showing how fulfilling a creative career can be.

What is your favourite part of what you do?

Engaging with people who are eager to learn is key. Getting people excited about learning and enjoying the act of drawing itself is our passion. We also love the creative variety and the possibility of going in new directions.

Do you have any examples of feedback from participants?

"Work Shop in Bantry has been a wonderful and much needed addition to West Cork. My son has always had an interest in

drawing and arts but we didn't have the resources locally for this creative outlet for him. He's engaging in something he loves, is flourishing and learning from fantastic teachers." Fiona O'Shea

"Work Shop provided a lovely intimate setting, full of creativity, an inclusive round table experience, and a bit of science too! Would highly recommend." Sinead Spillane

Do you have any future plans?

We are working on developing some collaborations. Recently we had our first non-drawing workshop series in the form of a Geology course focusing on the landscape of Bantry Bay, run by Ronan Hennessy. It was really well received and we're hoping to run it again in the coming months. We also plan on working with various festivals in town. We have just received some support from Cork County Council and Creative Ireland to start a retail element selling some prints and drawings also, so watch this space.

For bookings for new courses and workshops visit: www.workshopbantry.com

Mill Cove Gallery celebrates 25 years of showcasing Irish ceramic excellence

Mill Cove Gallery in Kenmare is celebrating its 25th anniversary, marking a quarter-century of dedication to promoting and highlighting the exceptional craftsmanship of Irish ceramics.

Since its inception, Mill Cove Gallery has been committed to independently curating and showcasing exquisite ceramic artworks, introducing them to a broader audience while championing the talented ceramic artists of Ireland.

As the premier destination for Irish ceramics, the Gallery has continually demonstrated its commitment to excellence. Under the stewardship of John Goode, the gallery has become synonymous with quality and exclusivity in the realm of ceramic art. Goode, a renowned

authority in the field, has authored three definitive books on Irish ceramics, solidifying Mill Cove Gallery's reputation as the foremost authority on the subject.

What sets Mill Cove Gallery apart is its dedication to fostering relationships with the finest ceramic artists in Ireland. The gallery proudly commissions unique and exclusive pieces, ensuring that each artwork is a testament to the artist's skill and creativity. With an unwavering commitment to showcasing ceramics of the highest calibre, Mill Cove Gallery stands as the sole destination in the country for experiencing such exquisite and

exclusive works of art.

As Mill Cove Gallery celebrates this significant milestone, it reaffirms its mission to continue promoting and elevating Irish ceramics on both national and international stages. Through its exhibitions, publications, and collaborations, the gallery remains steadfast in its support of the vibrant ceramic arts community in Ireland.

Join Mill Cove Gallery in celebrating 25 years of excellence in Irish ceramics, and experience firsthand the unparalleled beauty and craftsmanship that define this extraordinary art form.

millcovegallery.com



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Exciting times ahead for Oisín Leech



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.

Having just released his debut album 'Cold Sea' last month, Navan folk musician Oisín Leech is set to tour the month of April with a rake of gigs that will see him perform across the island – north and south, followed by some UK dates and a highly anticipated Paris gig. He chats to **Lauren Guillery**.

Currently supporting Supergrass frontman Gaz Coombes in England, Oisín Leech is no stranger to the music scene, having toured extensively as one half of Irish folk duo The Lost Brothers, a collaboration with Tyrone songwriter Mark Causland. Together, The Lost Brothers have released seven albums to date, recording with Brendan Benson (The Rascals) wearing the producer hat, and opening for the likes of Billy Bragg, Elvis Costello, and even the Arctic Monkeys in Japan.

But after 15 years together, Oisín explains that it feels quite

healthy to take a hiatus from The Lost Brothers and focus on his own career. His first solo offering 'Cold Sea' was recorded last autumn and came about rather unexpectedly. For a few years now, Leech has been running a folk club – the Joey Procida's Folk Club in The Lantern pub in Navan. International musicians Willy Mason, Steve Gunn, and Irish musicians Declan O'Rourke and Lisa Hannigan among many others have all left their mark there over the years, with Oisín playing a tune or two before welcoming the first act and spinning vinyl between performances. "I thought it would be nice to start singing original material to introduce the folk club," he explains. During the pandemic, Leech spent a lot of time in Donegal writing and studying poetry from Seamus Heaney and Patrick Kavanagh and learning to play with open-tuning on his guitar. Inspired by the Donegal landscape and the sound of the ocean, the body of work that he developed for the folk club didn't feel quite like The Lost Brothers. A friend got hold of his demo material and sent it to a record label in Canada, which promptly responded that they wanted to put a record out.

And so, the quest for a music producer began, with Leech making a list of people he would love to collaborate with. First on the list was Steve Gunn, the versatile guitarist from Brooklyn who over the years has collaborated with the likes of Bill Nace, David Moore, and Kim Gordon to name a few. Enthusiastic about the idea of producing Oisín, Gunn responded with a resounding 'yes'. The two musicians had previously met in New York when Oisín recorded in the same studio as Steve for a Lost Brothers album. "I love Steve Gunn's albums and the way he embraces a certain kind of strangeness," Leech remarks. A few emails back and forth and it was agreed that they would rent out a house in Donegal for

a few days and set up their own recording studio. While scrolling through Airbnb, Oisín's wife came across an old schoolhouse up for rent near Malin and the deal was done – Steve would fly over from the States and they would hire or borrow the equipment to record there.

Over the course of four days, the tiny schoolhouse became a working studio and the birthplace of 'Cold Sea'. Gunn and Leech spent most of the first day setting up the equipment in the front room overlooking the ocean, Steve meticulously moving microphones around to catch the perfect sound. The kitchen was aptly renamed 'Mission Control', and it is at this large table that Gunn would sit, headphones on, recording on his laptop.

Like a lot of records that they both love, including Bob Dylan's 'Freewheelin', early Joni Mitchell, or Van Morrison's 'Veedon Fleece', it was decided that Gunn's main creative as the producer was to let the songs breathe. "It was a case of capturing a moment and not overthinking it", Oisín Leech shares. "Steve is such a brilliant artist that he kind of approached the album like a painter, and he knew what colours we were going to use. He brought a great subtlety to the album." The minimalist nature and warm tone of the album evokes Nick Drake a lot of the time, and with contributions from both Steve Gunn and M. Ward on the guitar, and stellar musicians Dónal Lunny on bouzouki, Róisín McGrory on the violin, and Tony Garnier on the bass, it is no wonder that 'Cold Sea' is a beautiful debut, bringing Oisín Leech the recognition he deserves.

Fresh from playing a gig at Rough Trade and a BBC 6 Music live session with Cerys Matthews at the famous Maida Vale studios in London, Leech was invited to open for Supergrass superstar Gaz Coombes at the end of March. "It's a big mystery how he booked me,"



Oisín confesses. "I think he may have heard a song on the radio and then somebody got in touch. I went to see Supergrass when I lived in Liverpool, and my wife and I went to see Gaz play in Belfast and Dublin. He has a big band and I love his solo records so I can't wait to hang out and meet them".

Positive reviews for 'Cold Sea' are pouring in since its release in March, but the most surprising of all is the reception the album is getting from French publications. "I'm delighted because I love France, so I could be big in France", he says jokingly. With one date so far booked in Paris in early May, a support to psychedelic folk English songwriter Vashti Bunyan in London, and a main stage appearance at the Another Love Story festival in his native Meath this summer, one can expect big things shaping up for Oisín Leech over the next year.

A self-taught guitarist, Leech is an avid music geek and will happily talk about music all day long. In fact, he hosts a show on RTÉ Radio 1 called 'Caravan Radio' inspired by his childhood holiday trips in a camper van from Navan to Bunrana with his family. Growing up he was surrounded by music: both his parents sang, his grandmother

from Donegal played the piano, and his father the violin, so it's no wonder he himself turned his focus to music. He studied theatre and film at Trinity and spent a lot of time busking as a young man. "I was learning about all these great playwrights like Sean O'Casey and Arthur Miller in the morning, and in the afternoon I'd go sing Waterboys songs on Grafton Street," he shares. "So, I was kind of learning my performance and my theory at the same time."

And busking did take him all over the world. With his four-piece band The Fluid Druids and a generator through which the boys powered their amp, he spent a lot of time playing the streets of Naples and Liverpool where he lived for some time. They even got invited to back up Neville Staples of The Specials around Europe, playing 'Ghost Town', 'Too Hot', and 'Message To You Ruddy' in packed up bull rings in Spain. "We rehearsed at Barleycove beach in West Cork for that tour, actually," he recalls. "We rehearsed in the sand dunes through that generator in the middle of the grass. People thought we were nuts!"

Thankfully, things are a little more composed these days. Oisín plays his songs accompa-

nied live by Graham Healy, and this is who he will be joined by at Levis' on April 19. "Graham is a great double bass player who also plays with Saint Sister and Fionn Regan," he says. "The songs work really well with voice, guitar and double bass. It kind of has that Fred Neil feel to it, which I love."

Ten dates are booked for Oisín Leech's upcoming Irish tour, his 'Maiden Voyage Concert Series', and for three special dates in Dublin, Galway, and Letterkenny, Leech will be backed up by his album collaborators Steve Gunn, Dónal Lunny, Róisín McGrory, and Tony Garnier. The artwork for the album, an oil painting by Inishowen-based Donegal artist Sinéad Smyth will be projected on the stage in Letterkenny. "I loved her painting instantly when I saw it", Oisín shares. "It captures the darkness of the majestic beauty of the landscape up there where my mother is from. Her beautiful charcoal drawing is at the back of the vinyl too". There's no doubt Oisín Leech's 'Maiden Voyage' across Ireland, the UK and beyond this summer will bring a bit of Donegal wherever it stops. Make sure to not miss it.

Oisín Leech plays Levis Corner House on April 19

West Cork Choral Singers perform opera in Skibbereen

West Cork Choral Singers' production of the concert version of 'Dido and Aeneas', a tragic Baroque opera by Henry Purcell, will be performed at the Town Hall in Skibbereen on Sunday April 28 at 7.30pm.

The opera, in three acts, recounts the love of Dido, Queen of Carthage, for the Trojan hero, Aeneas, but, despair ensues when he abandons her, resulting in her taking her own life. It is one of Purcell's foremost

theatrical works.

The choir is directed by Susan Nares and the principal soloists are: Deirdre Moynihan; Alan Leach; Orlaith Horan; Seamus Ludden. This beautiful work is yet another new departure for the choir and a most enjoyable performance is assured.

Tickets: €20; €15. concession; free admission to children; Thornhill Electrical, Skibbereen; call 086 2264797; choir members; at the door on the

night.

'Musical Interludes' – a performance of light classical music by young and older musicians, will be held at St. Matthew's Hall, Church Cross, Skibbereen, P81 TH29, on Sunday, April 7, from 3-5pm. Cakes will be sold; tea/cakes will be served as a fundraiser for the choir on what promises to be a fun afternoon!

www.westcorkchoral.ie

April Gig Listings

Compiled by Lauren Guillery

- Apr 1 DMac Burns | *Levis Corner House*
- Apr 6 Campbell Jensen | *Levis Corner House*
The Galway Baytones | *St Matthews Baltimore*
- Apr 12 Fanny Lumsden | *DeBarra's Folk Club*
- Apr 14 Carsie Blanton | *DeBarra's Folk Club*
- Apr 19 Oisín Leech | *Levis Corner House*
Pa Sheehy | *Connolly's of Leap*
- Apr 21 The Henry Girls | *DeBarra's Folk Club*
- Apr 25 Stephanie Rainey | *DeBarra's Folk Club*
- Apr 26 Cass McCombs & Steve Gunn | *DeBarra's Folk Club*
Rhub Cunningham | *Levis Corner House*
- Apr 28 Harry Bird | *DeBarra's Folk Club*

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



James Waller.



Julia Mitchell (top) and Damaris Lysaght,



Clair Halliday, Klair Lambert, Jacqueline O'Driscoll, Petrina Shortt and James Waller, whilst upstairs will be a solo show 'Code Orange' by Michael McSwiney and in the Boiler Room will be 'Seisún', a photography exhibition by Geoff

Greenham and Melanie Black. These shows run until Wednesday, May 8.

Spring at Blue House Gallery

Blue House Gallery in Schull will open its 2024 season with a group exhibition of gallery artists including Catherine Weld, Oonagh Hurley, Damaris Lysaght, Julia Mitchell, Ian Humphreys, Shane O'Driscoll, Geoff Greenham, Etain Hickey,

Wendy Dison, Dick Richards, Helen O'Keeffe and many more. Beginning at the end of March, this show will run until Wednesday, April 17.

On Friday, April 19 three new exhibitions will open at the gallery; downstairs will be a painting exhibition with artists

'Colour Theories' at Cnoc Buí

West Cork artist Lesley Cox will be showing her current collection of paintings titled 'Colour Theories' at Cnoc Buí Arts Centre in Union Hall from April 16 to May 9.

The work is informed by research into colour theory and an exploration of particular chroma and their effect on the hues around them.

"For the last year, I have been working on gaining deeper understanding on the use of colour within my work," shares Lesley. "When I introduce a colour, these are the questions I am trying to answer: Are they working tonally, are they compatible, should they be, is there a conversation happening, is there a connection made?"

"The work is further informed by research on colour theory, how we as humans perceive colour and the subliminal connections we make as we



view a painting."

Mark Rothko, Vincent Van Gogh and Matisse all used colour theory to maximise the impact of their paintings.

After years of painting landscapes in relative detail, this is a different approach for Lesley. In this series the landscapes have been simplified, allowing the colours and textures to speak in place of drawing and detail. "Since I started to simplify shape and form in my paint-

ings, I feel more of a connection to both the landscape and indeed the painting: all superfluous detail has been eliminated and only my connection and response to place are left. I feel these paintings are my authentic and instinctive reaction to my environment."

Lesley says this new approach has relaxed her process leading to some really interesting outcomes. "My palette is one of

blues, greys, ochres with a pop of accent colour, which will be tonally matched to the original pigments. My process is one of layering paint using a palette knife to apply colour and to scrape back, this reveals under painting and textures and has an element of chance which is exciting and unpredictable."

The opening night of 'Colour Theories' takes place on April 18.

Celebrating Bandon's stars at Grey Heron

Audrey Cantillon's exhibition 'Shine' is on at Bandon's Grey Heron Gallery for the month of April. Audrey's work is a celebration of some of the most talented people of Bandon, recognising those who are excelling in the world of sport, adventure and the arts.

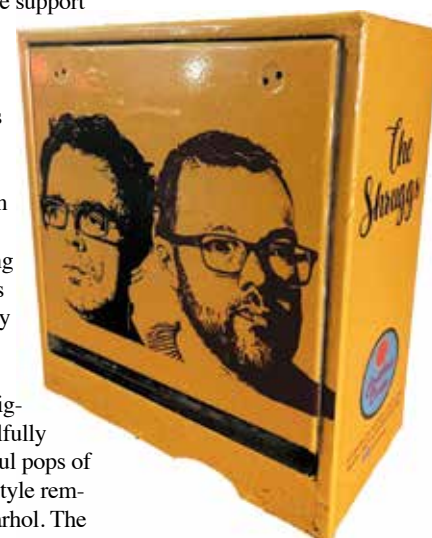
This exhibition follows on from the artist's 'Bandon Treasures' portrait project that was commissioned by Creative Bandon and Bandon Tidy Towns, with the support of Cork County Council's Arts Office to shine a light on the achievements of Bandonians. Audrey's portraits adorn ESB Boxes on South Main Street and now she is taking her originals indoors to exhibit in the Grey Heron.

In her creative process Audrey's original portraits are skilfully digitised, with playful pops of colour applied in a style reminiscent of Andy Warhol. The

'Shine' exhibition will also showcase Audrey's talent for animal portraiture, sensitively drawn in pencil.

This will be Audrey's first solo exhibition of originals and prints. She subscribes to the idea, voiced by Nelson Mandela, that "as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same".

On all month at the Grey Heron on Bridge Street, Bandon.



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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

April Sun Signs

April is probably the most astrologically dynamic month of 2024. We have three powerful events that signify big change with dramatic longer-term results. The Solar Eclipse is on April 8 then Mars joins Saturn on April 10 and Jupiter joins Uranus on April 21. All this happens during a Mercury retrograde!

This month begins with Mercury entering a three-week retrograde phase on April 1. This could turn out some of the best April Fool's jokes in a long time. Be aware though that things could backfire under this influence. Mercury in Aries is a fast-paced combination with an urgency and drive to get things happening. This planet represents communication, information, commerce and connections so there may be frustrations, mistakes and delays in these areas. Things may get rushed through with important details overlooked as a result of this sense of urgency. During the first half of this month, it will be hard to know what is reliable or genuine. News items, people and situations could be exaggerated, misrepresented or have key facts withheld. This is not a time to make rash shopping choices, decisions about upgrades,

major purchases or implement action plans. If you must go ahead be certain to double-check your sources for reliability beforehand.

Venus joins with nebulous Neptune on April 3 before she moves in to Aries on April 5, eventually travelling through to Taurus on the 29th. The Neptune influence clouds judgement and can also obscure vital details. Venus and Neptune can bring us a delightful romantic energy when they work well together and this could initiate some highly compassionate actions or deep spiritual understanding. Usually an easygoing planet, Venus gets fired up in the feisty sign of Aries. There is a strong sense of passion with this placement and the urge to take action is aroused. Risk-taking can become a problem when this passion is the primary driving force. In the haste to achieve desired outcomes, personal goals or ideals, it is easy to override any consideration for the needs of others. There is often a fierce backlash to any roughshod or hurried implementation of plans.

The next big event and the headline news is the Solar Eclipse on April 8. This dramatic Eclipse is the most powerful in the USA and

it will be visible during its entirety. Eclipses of this kind bring a radical redirection. In worldly (mundane) astrology, the Sun represents high office, government and ruling elites. In historical times it was thought to be an omen for the 'death of a King'. In modern times this can translate to a shift in power or an unexpected turn of events that creates a new 'head of state'. As the Sun's light is temporarily blocked, this allows things to be taken down and replaced. The results are often seen only months later. This Eclipse lasts over two hours indicating it will take over two years to totally fulfil. On a personal level, you may experience a sudden impulse to make revolutionary changes in your goals, home life, appearance, relationships and so on. It will likely take time to take full effect but any life-altering decisions made now will come to fruition over the next couple of years.

As the excitement of the Eclipse wanes, the overall planetary energy does not. On April 10, the two 'Bad Boy' planets come together. Mars, planet of confrontation, joins with Saturn, a planet of order and tradition in the water sign Pisces.

Mars insists on immediate action and wants movement. Saturn has a slow, relentless and determined nature. This combination happens every two years and we may feel some frustration with the slowness of progress when action is being blocked by bureaucracy or stubbornness. Water-related events could be a feature around these few days also.

A major astrological event of 2024 occurs on the 21st when Jupiter joins with Uranus. This only happens every 12 to 14 years and the last time it was in the sign of Taurus was May 1941.

These two planets are powerful agents of change. Jupiter is the feel-good planet and brings abundance and the ability to expand into the higher, improved or more spiritual aspects of our experience. Uranus takes us beyond what is already known. It brings sudden insight, enlightenment or inspiration. Keywords could be 'major breakthrough' or 'great awakener'. The energy of this transit will be felt from early April through to May at the least and the effect will be indefinite.

We can expect this event to bring

positive advancements in areas of life related to the sign Taurus.

This is about our physical experience, our body and the material world. Taurus represents our natural resources, food, money and everyday comforts. We can expect to have some new information, insight or sudden realisation about our natural world or our physical existence. This can create a turning point in the direction of our future, something that will influence our choices and way of life. There may be a breakthrough or sudden comprehension that once understood cannot be withdrawn. Don't expect this to change things overnight but we can expect the unexpected so be prepared for a positive shift in awareness. Uranus brings the illumination of divine wisdom. Jupiter brings optimism and the opportunity to live as the best version of ourselves. This event offers us the energy dynamic to become both an evolved human being and an integrated spiritual being.

April has a New Moon Solar Eclipse in 20 degrees Aries on April 8 at 7.20pm and a Full Moon in five degrees Scorpio on April 24 at 12.48am



Aries: With the New Moon and Solar Eclipse in your own sign, you may feel more self-conscious or concerned with appearances than usual. You might get pushed forward or promoted to appear in a good light in a group or social gathering. New ideas get your attention and you can expect personal relationships to feature strongly now. This is a good time to let go of old habits and anything superficial. It's time to be authentic. You'll want to turn away from the outer world and meaningless experiences to focus on deeper personal and inner changes. There is no room in your life for either dependency or lack of depth.



Taurus: Sacrifices made during this New Moon and eclipse phase will be more than repaid during the coming weeks. Your current mood of humility and understanding allows you to appreciate and value goals which reach beyond the personal. You desire a more inclusive world and want to create a harmonious environment by dissolving barriers. By mid-month the focus on social connections, relationships and partners has you looking for equality, not control. You'll easily put up with minor inconveniences and irritations for the sake of what is really important in your life and in a significant relationship.



Gemini: Now is the time to make your ideals a reality. Social issues and altruism in general get extra attention during this New Moon. You may find yourself moved to co-operate with others on community-driven projects as people around you unite to make long-term goals and dreams possible. This Eclipse is also a time for a personal resolution to put into practice your own heartfelt desires. You're able to really get down to what is important when it comes to making decisions affecting your material welfare. You find that daily responsibilities and commitments are easily undertaken.



Cancer: During this New Moon, you become aware that an understanding attitude on your part could have far-reaching effects on your own life path and general direction. A little long-suffering and restraint now could really pay off later. There is a lot of support for you to make job-related and practical decisions. Your ambitions receive encouragement from those around you. Your creative imagination gets you excited and your practical insight may be at a high. As the Eclipse passes, you can see what needs to be done and just how to go about doing it. Keep the long-term rewards in your sights and take aim.



Leo: This New Moon is good for deep thinking. It's time to consider the long-term view and lasting values. This disregard for superficiality finds you straight to the point, interested in the truth of things. Expect encouragement to be honest. Perhaps a rekindling of personal philosophical and spiritual thoughts is required also. The foundations of belief you lay down during the Eclipse phase are there to be built on in the future. Concentrate on essentials and focus on the essence of your situation. Taking care of your 'soul' is the key to present action.



Virgo: This Eclipse is a time for stripping away and discarding non-essentials or memories of things past. During the New Moon phase, you can separate the valuable from the novelties. This current situation requires some mental or physical housecleaning on your part and there's no place in your life for outworn or flimsy goods, ideas or relationships. You can be unsentimental about all of this. Concentrate only on important things that have supported you over time. New and possibly unconventional approaches to being productive or making money are possible now. Your response to life becomes more original and innovative.



Libra: This New Moon and Eclipse is likely to be a very busy time, during which you receive all kinds of support from those around you. Relationships are very much in focus and are nourished by extra attention. You can love and care both for yourself and others. This is a time for turning away from your personal experiences by responding in a more inclusive and socially minded manner. You can handle your own resources and you want to share any surplus that you have. By relating to others you can fully appreciate your own value and worth.



Scorpio: Attend to nagging details or unfinished jobs just to get them out of the way during this New Moon phase. This Eclipse is a good time for you to practice discrimination and self-examination. Any effort on your part to improve your self or physical condition gets full support from others now. Sort through the experiences of the last several months. Integrate only what's truly worthwhile and simply let go of the rest so you can move forward in your own style. An unexpected inner drive may find you out and about and enjoying the social scene. Expect important relationships to take up more of your attention now.



Sagittarius: The trend for you this New Moon is to be more creative and expressive. Others may urge you toward a more self-confident and outgoing attitude. You love and value real-life drama that excites your imagination. After the Eclipse you can enjoy a dawning of an awareness of who you are and what you have been through these last months. You have truly lived and experienced something of value. Soon your mind will turn towards matters that need deep reflection as you take stock of your current situation. Meditation or quiet time alone can provide a welcome contrast to the colourful whirl of daily life.

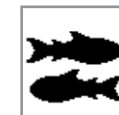


Capricorn: Your home and private life could be very satisfying during this New Moon. You can set down roots and create a base to build on. Your feelings and desire for security prompt you to seek seclusion or lose yourself amongst the familiar. The next phase, after the Solar Eclipse, marks the end of uncertainty or feeling your way in the dark. From a secure position, know what your limits are and then move forward. This is a creative time for you and you can expect to reap rewards for your patience or recent efforts. Soon you can put your

experience and feelings into words and may be at your most witty and dramatic.



Aquarius: Your ability to communicate in general is enhanced as you find the needed support or backing from those around you during this New Moon. Your ideas and thoughts may be very deep and rich. Personal memories are especially vivid. You are exploring and searching, looking for meaning, linking things together, following up connections, and seeing where the ends meet or fall short. This Solar Eclipse brings you full circle so be ready to shine out or put your stamp on the world once more. Consider what aspects of your past to put behind you and then begin to build the future that you envisage for yourself.



Pisces: You may receive extra support from the people around you over this New Moon. Younger people, and women especially may contribute somehow to improve your financial situation. Fresh ideas and ways of seeing or new understanding give you a footing on which you can build a solid foundation. You gain a sense of real security with some backup or reserves. Gather your resources or exploit your talents as you begin to explore the possibilities being presented. This Eclipse marks the time you let your true heartfelt desires and sincere faith in life carry you forward. Continue to do this from now on.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘That They May Face The Rising Sun’ to be released nationwide in April

Capturing a year in the life of a rural, lakeside community in Ireland in the 1970s, ‘That They May Face The Rising Sun’ is a film adaptation of the final novel from John McGahern, one of Ireland’s greatest novelists.

Directed by renowned West Cork director Pat Collins, the film had its World Premiere at BFI London Film Festival 2023 and won Best Irish Film at the Dublin International Film Festival. It has been nominated for 11 awards at the Irish Film and Television Awards 2024 (IFTAs) including Best Film, Best Director and Best Script.

Joe and Kate Rutledge have returned from London to live and work among the small, close-knit community near to where Joe grew up. Now deeply embedded in life around the lake, the drama of a year

in their lives and those of the memorable characters around them unfolds through the rituals of work, play and the passing seasons as this enclosed world becomes an everywhere.

“It was my favourite of McGahern’s novels,” shares Collins, when asked what drew him to making a film of this novel. “For me, it was, I felt, the book that best captured the world I had grown up in. The characters, the landscape, the rhythm and rituals and the pace of living that I had experienced, the interactions of neighbours, the kindness and love, the sudden bursts of anger or the thunderous silence of what goes unsaid.”

The film, which will be released in cinemas nationwide from April 25, stars Barry Ward (Jimmy’s Hall, Bad Sisters) and Anna Bederke (Soul Kitch-

en, Sterben) in the lead roles. Lalor Roddy (Grabbers, God’s Creatures), Sean McGinley (Michael Collins, Braveheart), Ruth McCabe (Philomena, Joy Ride) and first-time actor Phillip Dolan make up the rich cast of supporting characters.

Since 1998, Pat Collins has made over 30 films. He has made films on the writer John McGahern, the poets Michael Hartnett and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, the singer Thomas McCarthy and the Connemara-based writer and cartographer Tim Robinson. His last film ‘The Dance’ received its world premiere at the BFI London Film Festival 2021 and was the Gala Screening at Cork Film Festival 2021. The Irish Times listed his films ‘Silence’ and ‘Song of Granite’ in the top twenty ‘Best Irish films of all time’.



‘Poor Things’ at Clonakilty Film Club

national Film Festival and four Academy Awards, including Best Actress in a Leading Role for Emma Stone, Best Production Design, Best Costume Design and Best Makeup and Hairstyling. A steam-punk inspired, visually stunning film.

‘Poor Things’ is the incredible tale and fantastical evolution of Bella Baxter (Emma Stone), a young woman brought back to life by the brilliant and unorthodox scientist Dr. Godwin Baxter (Willem Dafoe). Under Baxter’s protection, Bella is eager to learn. Hungry for the worldliness she is lacking, Bella runs off with Duncan Wedderburn

(Mark Ruffalo), a slick and debauched lawyer, on a whirlwind adventure across the continents. Free from the prejudices of her times, Bella grows steadfast in her purpose to stand for equality and liberation.

“A unique blend of bizarre ideas and imaginative storytelling, delivering an entertaining film with top-notch acting and production.”

All are welcome, no membership required. Films start at 8.30pm at Clonakilty Park Cinema, Screen 2. Doors open from 8.20pm. €10. Follow Clonakilty Film Club on Facebook for updates.

Just as the Spring season of Clonakilty Film Club ended with a packed house for ‘After the Fall’, a surprise extra film was announced for Tuesday April 9 – Yorgos Lanthimos’s ‘Poor Things’ which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Inter-



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TG4 documentary follows ‘forefathers’ of Trad

For those of a certain age, The Bothy Band is synonymous with the ‘birth’ of trad and folk music worldwide and that generation of all things Celtic will relish the prospect of once again seeing and hearing this unique group of musical talent when they perform together for the first time in almost forty years on Easter Sunday, March 31, on TG4 at 9.30pm.

Formed in 1975, The Bothy Band travelled extensively to many countries in their short three-year existence, leaving

a musical legacy which still resonates and influences many [if not all] of the present day traditional and folk musicians not only in Ireland but throughout the world.

Following surviving members Matt Molloy, Dónal Lunny, Tríona Ní Dhomhnaill, Kevin Burke, Paddy Glackin and Paddy Keenan in their coming together for the first time since 1978 to rehearse and reflect on the music they made together and the impact it had on each of their lives and those of

former members, this one-off, never-to-be-repeated performance-led spectacular concert, shot in Dublin’s inner city where the band first performed, will be layered with interviews, behind-the-scenes rehearsals and never before seen personal archives from friends, family and fans, as the story is told of one of Ireland’s foremost traditional music bands and the enormous contribution they made at home and abroad.

Playing ‘in the round’, surrounded by an audience which

included such notable musicians as Paul Brady, Moya Brennan, Dr. Liz Doherty and actors Patrick Bergin and Stephen Rea, the band have recreated and performed a full repertoire of music and song which viewers at home will be excited to see and hear. This observational documentary will also be offering the music choices and personal interviews captured in the filming of the rehearsals over the five days prior to the concert.

The show will elicit new information and insight from



band members, personal stories of their own music and cultural influences, what brought them together and continues through the rise, demise and fall-out, as the band went its different,

spectacularly successful ways and how they now reunite for a special performance and poignant opportunity to reflect.

Tune in to TG4, Easter Sunday, 9.30pm.

MOTORING

Futuristic design makes Nissan Ariya a real looker

Nissan were the first car company to introduce an affordable electric car to Ireland, but the range in the Leaf was poor. However, I have seen some Leaf cars still being used by taxi drivers in the greater Dublin area.

The Leaf is fine for urban

driving, but now Nissan has joined the big hitters in the electric car sector with the Ariya, which is competing with the likes of the Hyundai Ioniq6, Kia's new EV9, Volkswagen ID.5 and the Skoda Enyaq.

My test car came in very attractive burgundy colour.

Inside it was so bright, you could wear sun glasses. The seats were cream and overall the interior was so bright and cheerful.

At night you get to see what initially looked like three air vents lighting up in the dark. They are located on inside of





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CAR REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

is a sliding divider which also acts as an arm rest. The boot a decent size, but sadly as is common with all electric cars, no spare wheel is provided.

The dash is dominated by an easy-to-use infotainment screen. And while I liked the old-style button for the radio volume control, the touch-sensitive buttons with haptic feedback on the dash for the A/C controls took a bit of getting used to.

At first you might think the buttons won't work as they are embedded into the dash, but they do work very well. It's a really clever way of using and adorning the space below the infotainment screen. These primary controls vibrate when touched, but they are only visible when the car is turned on.

The first two questions I always get asked when driving an electric car are the price and the range. With a 63kWh battery you should get over 320km on a full charge. With an 87kWh battery the range should get up to 530km.

When Nissan launched their Ariya two years ago the starting price was around 48k. Now they have reduced their prices and you can get an entry level Exchange version for €43,500. Road tax is €120. I think it's accepted that the price was too high first time round. Now the



Ariya offers good value for money.

I liked the high driving position and so did all the family who available of that spacious interior on a recent trip to the airport. The reimagined interior allows for an entirely flat floor, resulting in a wide, open lounge-like experience and a very spacious cabin. And we all had plenty of room in the boot for luggage.


Seamus Morgan Nissan MD for Ireland said: "We are delighted to secure stock of this much sought after car for 2024. Our pricing is extremely competitive for a family car of this quality. The arrival of the Engage grade allows drivers to step up and switch into a more luxurious EV without compromise."

the front doors and down low near the pedals. But they are not air vents. The system is called the Kumiko Pattern and Nissan are using this new design pattern to convey the Ariya's Japanese heritage and influences. I haven't seen anything like it before and it really brightens up the interior at night.


Externally it's also quite a looker with its sleek lines and smoothed curves

It's a massive car with lots of extra leg space available for front seat passengers. There is also plenty of leg and head room for three well-built adults in the back seat.


For front passengers there




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Meeting held to discuss the potential of a trial one way system for Kinsale's 'the Rock'

Cork South West TD Christopher O'Sullivan recently arranged a meeting between the residents of Abbeyfort estate, Kinsale Manor estate and other estates to highlight the safety concerns for pedestrians who walk from Kinsale via 'the Rock' to the different estates in the area.

Deputy O'Sullivan said, "I want to firstly thank Cork County Council Engineer's and

staff for meeting with residents, it's important that they hear the valid concerns I commend the Council for being so responsive."

"One of the potential options discussed was a trial one way system at 'the Rock' with a pedestrian safe zone included to protect the pedestrians. This is something that the Council will look at and I would certainly hope that this would be consid-

ered."

"There has been a lot of development in this part of Kinsale, we now need to put a focus on putting proper infrastructure in place, so that students and families can walk safely from school or Kinsale town to these different estates. We also discussed the potential of street lighting in this area and I am really hopeful of progress in this regard."

MOTORING

Bandon Motors welcomes Peugeot to the stable

Founded in 1988 by Bob Clarke, Bandon Motors has been a stalwart of the business community of West Cork for the last 36 years and recently embarked on a new chapter. With Bob's son Seán having recently returned from Dublin to take up the position of Operations Manager at the family business, the company has also become the new Peugeot dealers for West Cork, adding a dedicated Peugeot showroom to their existing Ford dealership.

“We are very excited about the new showroom and proud to represent the Peugeot brand going forward,” says Seán. “It’s great to be able to offer our customers some fantastic deals on Peugeot cars; where they can purchase cars with finance starting from 1.9 per cent, the lowest available.”

“With the Peugeot range, over the last six months and for the next 12 months ahead, every vehicle will have had either a new launch or a facelift.”

The news that Ian Carey is working in the showroom is music to the ears of anyone who has known him during his 20 years of selling Peugeot cars,

giving him unrivalled expertise in the quality French marque.

“Peugeot has never had such a strong line-up with every model getting a fresh new look for 2024,” Ian confirms.

Dealer Principal Bob Clarke said that they were “very proud to have secured the Peugeot franchise in the Cork region. As a business, we pride ourselves on the customer-first approach. We have proudly served the people of Cork over the course of the last 35 years and look forward to continuing to do so, representing the Peugeot brand in the area.”

“We employ over 30 people in the business,” says Seán, “and we’re still expanding and

currently recruiting... we’re a one-stop-shop too – we do sales, service, parts and finance and we also have a large commercial range.”

Bandon Motors has always prided itself as a company that puts customers first, something that has been recognised with a President’s Prize for Customer Service for their Ford dealership. As the new Peugeot dealership begins, that commitment to people is already front and centre.

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(l-r) Ian Carey, Sean Clarke and Bob Clarke of Bandon Motors



FARMING

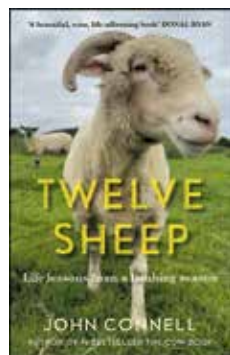
Rituals of farming life embraced in ‘Twelve Sheep: Life lessons from a lambing season’

For John Connell, the lambing season on his County Longford farm begins in the autumn. In the sheep shed, he surveys the dozen females in his care and contemplates the work ahead as the season slowly turns to winter, then spring.

The twelve sheep have come into his life at just the right moment. After years of hard work, John felt a deep tiredness creeping up on him, a sadness that he couldn’t shrug off. Having always sought spiritual guidance, he comes to realise that, in addition to the soothing words of literature and philosophy, perhaps the way ahead involves this simple flock

of sheep. In the hard work of livestock rearing, in the long nights in the shed helping the sheep to lamb, he can reflect on what life truly means.

Like the flock that he shepherds, this book is both simple and profound, a meditation on the rituals of farming life and a primer on the lessons that nature can teach us. As spring returns and the sheep and their lambs are released into the fields, skipping with joy, John recalls the words of Henry David Thoreau, reminding us to ‘live



in each season as it passes.’

‘Sheep, and sheep farming, are far more interesting than you think.’ Tim Flannery

John Connell is a multi-award-winning author, film producer, investigative journalist and farmer. His documentary programs have won over a dozen international awards. His number-one bestselling memoir *The Cow Book* was awarded Popular Non Fiction Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards. He lives in County Longford.

€1 million investment announced for agricultural shows in 2024

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, last week announced an investment of one million euro to support 122 agricultural shows right across the country.

West Cork agricultural shows to benefit from the funding include Bandon, Bantry, Barryroe, Carbery, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Leap and Schull.

As part of the initiative, each show will receive a grant of €6,000-€11,000 depending on their size.

This will support each committee to prepare for the upcoming show Season, which takes place over the summer

months.

Minister Humphreys made the announcement as she launched the 2024 Yearbook for Irish Show’s Association (ISA). “These shows are the threads that build bridges between our towns and villages, and the hinterlands that support them.

“They act as a platform for local producers to showcase their products and have become a key date in the calendar for the farming community.

“Our shows sum up all that is good about country life and I’m delighted to support them, once again, through this substantial investment.”

The Department, together with ISA, are encouraging

participating shows to be more environmentally aware in delivering their shows.

Initiatives in the areas of waste management, responsible printing, use of single use plastics, and appropriate traffic management should all be considered with a view to showcasing best practice in the area of event management and becoming more sustainable.

“I would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the show committees, volunteers, sponsors, local businesses and local organisations that play a role in each of these shows. The shows would just not happen without their support.”

FARMING

FARMING
IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

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I think it's safe enough to say that March came in like a lion and went out like one too. It's not so much that the winter has felt so long but that the rain hasn't eased much since the beginning of last summer. Since June last year, January at 80.9mm has been the driest month recorded on the Met Eireann station on Sherkin island. It feels like, aside from a few sporadic hours sunshine, we've been locked in rain and mist most of the last nine months.

This has impacted on everything else and put pressure on farmers of all enterprises in some form. Second cut silage wasn't the best quality in general because weather made it difficult

Rain rain go to Spain



A calf finds shelter as the rain pours down in Tommy Moyles' farm at Ardfield, Clonakilty.

to make it. Much of the silage cut from July onwards had lower dry matter and, when it came to feeding, a higher quantity of it was needed to have the same impact. As a farmer put it to me simply, they were feeding three low dry matter bales to get the value of two high quality ones. That, combined with stock being housed earlier, meant fodder stocks began to dwindle faster. The other issue was that slurry tanks began to fill earlier: Even when farmers were able to get slurry out, due to incessant rain they now have tanks filling again and ground is either too wet or has too much of a grass cover on it to get it out. Calving is winding down on most farms in the region but it's been challenging to get cows out for a sustained period of time.

That's just some of the in-yard issues. Spare a thought for anyone trying to get crops or veg into the ground. It was difficult

last year and, as a result, some grain crops were late at planting and there was no opportunity to harvest in the autumn. Straw is like gold dust in parts of the country because of that challenging harvest. Windows to get winter crops in were scarce too and, as we head into April, there has been very little ground work done, as it's been too wet. This will put added pressure on farmers and contractors over the coming weeks and if rain persists into April, it will put added pressure on the harvest later in the year. Hopefully, things will turn around weather-wise for everyone's sake.

The last year has been a great example to anyone who farms, that no matter what scale they are at, farming isn't for the faint-hearted. Yes, there are great days but there can be many too when things don't go your way. It's one of the challenges of dealing with a business that is so depen-

dent on so many uncontrollable. When things aren't going great, I always remind myself that the rain always stops some time. There's been days recently where I was questioning that. A bit of sunshine can do a lot to lift the mood.

I try to prepare for all eventualities that weather can bring on my own farm. It has proven difficult and a few things have been tweaked in order to adapt to conditions. a

We had three days in mid-March where a strong north easterly wind blew hard across the headland; stinging though it was, it was a major help. Unfortunately, the rain from a few days before St Patrick's day undid all that drying. Controlled improvisation is probably the best way of describing the management system for now and all plans are extremely flexible at the moment. It's a win some, lose some approach.

Some of the yearling heifers were let out last Sunday week, as slurry pressure was coming on; they had a washout and were back inside for St Patrick's day. They did a good bit of walking and damaged the paddocks they were in even though they had shelter. A few older heads might have settled them. Never underestimate the power of a few older cows to knock sense into young stock. They know where to stand and where the best shelter is. The younger ones can be a bit more clueless.

It could easily be April before all of them are back out again. To balance this out a bit, it means ration is now part of their daily diet. I want at least some of them to go in calf in May and June and, at this stage, with some grass walked in and not enough dry matter in more of it, this is the option I'm taking.

Some of the calved heifers had been out for a week but

came in before St Patrick's day too. They could be in for a while yet too. A decision was made to hold them at home this year and send older cows only to the out farm. Our senior stock bull has proven to be a serious operator and sending the older cows there with him means we could hopefully get another year or two from him. All the cows know the ropes at that farm too, which will make management easier.

What that means is the calves going there are the priorities to get out and get toughened up a bit. There's only a small number of cows and calves out and keeping shelter to them has been tricky, as winds have hit from north, south east and west over the last ten days and sometimes within 24 hours.

The changing wind and rain has proven difficult to work with and a blast of sunshine would do us all the power of good. Fingers crossed we get it.



GROUNDED

MEP Grace O'Sullivan

Farmers have been making themselves heard loud and clear across Europe in the lead-up to the European elections. And they are right to do so – so much of modern agricultural policy is rooted in the laws created within the European institutions.

Agriculture has been feeling the pinch for much longer than the European Green Deal has been actioned since 2019. The real culprit is plain to see: years

Farmers need not fear the Green Deal
– it's the status quo that has failed them

of neoliberalism that has created unfair competition both from within and outside the EU, putting European farmers under pressure.

Conversely, without these European-wide measures to tackle our climate and biodiversity crises, it will be farmers who pay the ultimate price with sporadic weather patterns, a collapse in pollinators and resulting yields threatening their livelihoods.

So what has brought us here? Over decades the EU's Common Agricultural Policy has been shaped to benefit big farms while underfunding greener and smaller plots. Independent observers have said it best: current

CAP subsidies are exacerbating, rather than reducing income inequality among farmers.

Decades-long policies shaped by those in power have also allowed the agro-industry and retail sectors to make huge profits along the food value-chain at the expense of farmers. On top of that, they have exposed farmers to incredibly dangerous pesticides, and even today, they renew the use of glyphosate for years more to come.

Last but not least, these political groups have promoted unrestrained free-trade that has exposed European farmers to unfair competition from outside the EU, where labor costs and farming standards differ vastly.

Even today, most Conservative and Liberal representatives continue to pursue the flawed EU-Mercosur deal. Yet, all farmers' organisations – large and small – oppose it. Not only would this deal aggravate the European farming crisis, it would also threaten sustainable development in the Mercosur countries or Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina.

Scapegoating the Green Deal will only push European farming over the edge

The Green Deal is not to blame. Quite the contrary: the Green Deal is the only desirable future for European farmers, our food systems, and food security.

We need to jointly achieve a sustainable food system – one that will also have the benefit of providing millions of jobs and reenergising rural areas.

Trying to solve the current farming crisis by canceling green policies is as absurd as antagonising farming and ecology. If we do not protect the resources that farmers need – be it water, pollinators, healthy soils, a climate that is fit for agriculture – then farming has no future. If we do not reinvent a trading model that upholds the green transition and fulfills sustainable development goals, we will fail farmers and our Global South partners.

In recent years we have

seen record upon record being smashed in our broken climate system; on January 25, 2024 it was 30 degrees Celsius in Spain.

We cannot close our eyes to this. Climate change and biodiversity loss will aggravate the farming crisis by degrading soils, decreasing pollinators, disrupting yields...Farmers need the European Green Deal.

Likewise, there will be no Green Deal without farmers.

What farmers have brought to the fore in the current protests are things that Greens and environmentalists have been shouting for years. The agricultural transition cannot be incumbent on them alone, and a lot has

Continued on next page...

FARMING

A West Cork Farming Life: Paul McCormick, Skibbereen, Farming for Nature ambassador.

This month, **Tommy Moyles** speaks with Paul McCormick, who along with his partner, Jacinta French, is a Farming for Nature ambassador. The couple run a herd of rare breed cattle and agroforestry on their farm near Skibbereen.

Describe the farm

It's about two miles north of Skibbereen and there's 30 acres in total. We bought it in 1994. It was wild back then, as it was neglected for a long time but that was the attraction for us. There were a lot of mature trees and a bit of wild scrub ground. There's probably 16 acres of grass and the rest is trees or scrub under the trees but there's grass there too.

You run a small herd of Droimeann cows. How did you get into them?

I had heard about a cow in Co Kerry called Big Bertha and she was a Droimeann. She held the world record for the oldest cow in the world. They are a native Irish breed that are a small- to medium-sized breed. They vary in colour ranging from nearly all black or red to white with dark ears and muzzle. More often they are dark-sided red black or blue with a distinctive

white back and underside. They do better than other breeds on poorer forage, which they convert easily to milk and meat. When I moved here first, I couldn't get them anywhere no matter how I tried. About eight years ago, one of my neighbours started breeding them and formed a breed society. Some had small percentages of Droimeann, so with backcrossing the genetic pool was built up, we brought some from him and built from there. There's six calving down this year, four cows and two heifers, we usually calf in May and June. There are three bullocks and two of last year's calves here too. All of them are registered with the society. We sell the beef to friends and relations. Beef gets a bad rap from some people but I think it's a health food, as it's one of the most concentrated foods in terms of vitamins. They're out-wintered. That gets difficult sometimes, this winter has been very tough.

You're a practitioner of Agroforestry, how did you get into that?

It was accidental agroforestry at first. There was a lot of wild trees when we got here and we planted a few more since. We put in a few nut trees and they worked really well. We have a good few Sweet Chestnuts and we're getting a good crop off

them. We tried heartnuts and cobnuts as well. I've found a type of Japanese walnut that works well here and we have Hazel too. The crops are sporadic but we get more nuts than we can eat.

We used to run a tree nursery specialising on fruit and nut trees. I will get back in on a small scale because there's so many people still asking me for them. We have a couple of species of trees that do well here and we might specialise in those. We had a charcoal enterprise for a few years but it was that was before barbecues really caught on here, so we missed out on that and now there's big demand.

Farming for nature

It's a great way to part-time farm. My main interest all along was the wildlife. I wanted to be able to feed myself and the family and have a nice place to live with the wildlife. We cleared a few areas. We dug a few ponds and that's been interesting. They filled with water after about three months and they've been full of frog spawn this spring.

I've never used fertiliser since we've been here and we were organic for years. I still am in terms of how I practice farming but we're not certified anymore. This is because it's hard to source organic feed down here.

been put on their shoulders. Other actors, such as agro-input dealers, agro-processors and retailers, should contribute their fair share. This requires big changes in the economic model of our food systems. Farmers must also be supported by enhanced and targeted use of agricultural support to enable them to achieve the transition, including through national and European budgets. Changes should be pre-planned as much as possible, not rushed brutally.

While agreement was found at European level in the 90s that a change in the rules for the use of nitrates were necessary to protect water; several national governments including Ireland used derogations for decades and only started to acknowledge the need to implement them in the last year, almost setting them up for failure. Even now we still have elected representatives calling for the derogation to stay, to the detriment of our water quality and putting false hope in the fading, unfair farming



system that has developed until today.

The future of farming lies in ecology. And that is why, in truth, the green and farming communities have been overlapping since the birth of political ecology.

I was proud to meet with people at the Ploughing Championships last year under a 'Green Party - The Nature and Farmers Alliance' banner. That is the only route we can go down to solve the challenges ahead for our country.

Certain stakeholders have

simply waited for an opportunity like this to generate opposition to necessary green transition policies and scrap them, and to keep going down the road of extracting every single cent out of our natural resources and farmer's livelihoods. Nature is being pushed to the brink under this model.

Every farmer knows this: no nature, no food.

We won't let those that have created the farming crisis tell anyone otherwise. The Green Deal is the future of farming, not its enemy.



Paul McCormick and Jacinta French's Droimeann cows are outwintered. To help break down some of the briars and scrub, hay is rolled out and the cattle eat it and trample in the briars allowing more space for grass to grow or for trees to be planted.

Our swards are being managed for the diversity. In the swards there's Birdsfoot trefoil, Knapweed, very little ryegrass, most other grasses. Around the edges, we have a lot of wild flowers. I bring the fence out for the spring so they don't graze that. This gives it a chance to seed and, over time, it creates a varied sward. If it gets a chance to flower once it can get away. I'm very interested in regenerative grazing and our rotations

can be 45 to 60 days long.

You use some of the trees as feed for the cattle how does that work?

The cattle browse some of the leaves. Willow is especially useful as a winter feed; they're cut every few years and the new shoots are used as winter feed. It's very labour-intensive but I like messing around. I'm trying pollarding now too.

That's cutting the trees regularly

to form a head of branches. They re-sprout above where the cattle can reach. Doing that we get a crop of fire wood and the cattle can graze up the trunk of the tree. They feast on leaves. Ash was excellent for that; they were a great pasture tree, as they didn't throw too much shade and they provided firewood and fodder. It's a shame they've been killed off with Ash Dieback.

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HOME & GARDEN

Gardening in April

In April we welcome longer days and hopefully drier, sunnier weather after a long winter of frequent heavy rain

and high winds. Now is the time to assess areas that have had waterlogged over long periods and rectify this by improving

drainage before the onset of next winter. Constant water-logging can lead to root borne diseases and fatalities of your plants. I will discuss shade and damp-tolerant plants later in the article.

Before growth takes off, check stakes and ties on trees, replacing stakes that are no longer sound and adjusting ties according to the girth of the tree.

Houseplants and Greenhouse

As the days lengthen and we get more sunshine hours, increase the watering frequency of indoor plants. Water early in the day and don't allow water to remain over 10 minutes in trays or saucers. Indoor plants should now be fed with a liquid feed on a weekly basis.

Ventilate the greenhouse on warm, sunny days. If you are out all day consider installing an automatic vent opener. Apply shading to the greenhouse, especially if you are getting long, sunny days. Damp down the greenhouse floor to cool the building down. As well as cooling down the greenhouse, this will also increase the humidity, which will reduce the likelihood of pests such as red spider mite, which prefer warm, dry conditions, getting a hold.

Watch out for vine weevil, the little white grubs that reside in the compost and eat roots, easily going unnoticed until you see the plants wilting. Use a biological predator to control them. These can be ordered by mail order and watered into the pots.

Continue sowing of half-hardy annuals. Transplant seedlings into cell trays or pots, watering well after transplanting. Shade young seedlings from strong sunshine until they get established and pot on young plants as they develop.

Sow tomatoes, celery and celeriac for planting outdoors in late May or early June. Sow

courgettes, marrows, pumpkins, squashes, sweetcorn, French and runner beans under cover at the end of the month. Sow 1 seed per pot – ideally a biodegradable pot 10cm in diameter. These can be planted out after thoroughly hardening off in late May or early June.

Vines

Tie in vine rods. Vines growing inside will be galloping away now and it is essential to keep up with tying in and pinching out growths, otherwise the vine will get out of hand. Fruiting stems should be pinched back to one or two buds beyond each flower truss and all side shoots from these stems removed.

Plant tomatoes in grow bags. When choosing a grow bag, go for the deepest you can obtain. Shallow grow bags dry out and run out of nutrients too quickly. It is a good idea to bring the grow bag indoors a few days prior to planting to allow it to warm up. Make provision for supporting the plants attached to the framework of the greenhouse or use stout bamboo canes or posts – strong enough to support the plant as it develops in growth and fruit trusses. Watch out for frosty nights and low temperatures. A thermostatically-controlled fan heater is a good idea.

Remove side shoots from older plants at regular intervals. If they are not removed you will end up with a jungle of growth and poor quality fruit. Commence liquid feeding as soon as the first fruits form, using a seaweed-based, organic liquid feed.

Weeds

Hoe soft, annual weeds early in the morning with a sharp Dutch hoe. Hoe on a dry, sunny morning for most effective results. Keep on top of weeds so they don't go to seed. Consider a mulch of bark mulch to prevent seeding weeds from growing –

available locally in bags or bulk. Target perennials with a focused and determined approach. Don't put down bark mulch until you have eradicated perennial weeds thoroughly beforehand.

Plants for damp shade

Cornus – Dogwoods are great for wet sunny or shady areas in the garden. Dogwoods provide vibrant, bright stem colour throughout the winter. Prune hard in March every other year. Hostas have superb foliage and are ideally good in the ground or in pots. Some come with scented flowers.

Hemerocallis Day Lilies are available in a beautiful array of colours. Plant in the ground for flowering in July and August.

Rodgersia, with leaves similar to a Horse Chestnut, is a perennial plant, producing tall elegant flower stems in pink, white or red. They are beautiful plants for ground cover.

Primula candelabra flower in late Spring and come in lovely pastel shades. They gently seed around and look lovely alongside streams, ponds and flower beds.

Astilbes produce masses of fluffy blooms in July. Divide and replant every three years to keep them vigorous and free flowering. White varieties help brighten up dark corners

Alchemilla mollis (Lady's Mantle) makes a superb edging plant with green leaves, which form stunning displays when covered with water droplets and green flowers. Cut back after flowering to prevent seeding and encourage repeat flowering.

Angelica is a good choice to add a bit of height in shady beds, as it will stand above most other plants. After flowering the dried stems are useful in indoor displays throughout winter.

Ponds

Feed large aquatic plants. Waterlilies are big feeders especially if not divided. Con-



GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

tinue dividing or cutting back marginal and bog garden plants if overcrowded.

Roses

Tie in climbing and rambling roses. Feed all Roses this month with a rose food, taking precautions against blackspot, mildew and rust.

Lawns

Mow lawns when necessary. If you have bulbs in your lawn, wait at least six weeks after flowering before you mow the area to allow the bulbs to build up for next year. Repair bumps and hollows and apply a spring lawn fertiliser. Use a spring-tined rake to remove old plant debris clogging up your lawn. Add grass clippings to the compost heap in thin layers. Sow a new lawn where weather and ground conditions permit.

Fruit

Feed blackcurrants, blackberries and hybrid berries with a high nitrogen feed. Follow the directions on the package. Control weeds around cane fruit and protect early flowering fruit trees and bushes against frost damage. Prune figs

Vegetable Garden

Continue with successional sowings of lettuce, radish, beetroot, peas, broadbeans, salad onions and turnips.

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Teagasc launches tree planting booklet

Teagasc has launched a new booklet, 'Your Tree Planting Companion', which explains the key stages to successfully planting and looking after trees.

Support for the establishment of new forests is available in the form of grants and premiums under the new Forestry Programme 2023-2027. The afforestation scheme under this programme offers landowners a choice of 12 different attractive forest establishment types, cov-

ering a broad range of planting options. It also offers increased premium rates ranging from 46 to 66 per cent, alongside a longer premium term of 20 years for farmers, compared to 15 years for non-farmers.

Teagasc Forestry Development Officer, Steven Meyen, the author of "Your Tree Planting Companion" said: "This booklet takes the mystery out of planting and looking after trees. Not only will it tell you how to plant trees, but it also describes

how to look after them to ensure successful and strong growth. This guide provides plenty of inspiration on where to plant trees. And if you're not too sure what tree would suit, the tree selector table gives you the confidence to choose the most suitable tree: is the soil dry or damp, acidic or alkaline, are you looking for a large or small tree, or maybe a tree that has beautiful autumn foliage. This booklet will help you. The trees you plant now, can give many

years of enjoyment to you and the people around you."

This new Teagasc booklet, is available from your local Teagasc Forestry Advisor, and can be downloaded from the forestry section of the Teagasc website www.teagasc.ie.

Teagasc Forestry Advisors are available to support landowners and to provide advice on all forestry-related issues, including the new Forestry Programme 2023-2027.

HOME & GARDEN

A touch of glass

This year, it is all about show gardens for Peppermint Farm Glasshouses, the highlight being the show garden at Bord Bia Bloom, for which Hendrik Lepel's design has been accepted. With Hendrik's background in construction and landscape design, similar to last year Peppermint Farm will also be designing and implementing a show garden at the Home and Garden Festival in Mallow, where they will take the opportunity to display the very special Euro Rustiq glasshouse.

“This is a very special glasshouse, as it combines the practical aspects of gardening with the pleasure of an airy outdoor oasis,” shares co-owner Lisa Rauch. “With its elegant 45-degree pointed roof creating a focal point as well as sense of space, it would make an elegant and classy addition to any garden.” The extra-high, hinged door offers the comfort expected from a greenhouse, which comes in different widths of 2.36m and 3.09m and various lengths up to 6.77m. There are many options to individualise the Euro Rustiq: You can specify a colour, the glasshouse

can be decorated with narrow, 36cm-wide panes and/or a Victorian roof ridge decoration and it can have double doors. It can also be put on a wall.

Based in West Cork, Peppermint Farm offers turnkey garden solutions, supplying and installing freestanding greenhouses, lean-to's, conservatories and pavilions to customers nationwide. Originally started by Achim Hoffmann, on his retirement he passed the helm to another German living in West Cork, Hendrik Lepel, who took over the company with his partner Lisa Rauch in January 2022. Peppermint Farm has a display area with a large range



of different models near Bantry and Hendrik and Lisa pride themselves on offering innovative glasshouse solutions with exceptional quality and service. Planning for a glasshouse can

be a big task, which is why Peppermint Farm also offers call-outs or consultations on-site to help with the decision-making process. www.peppermintfarm.com

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SPORT

No room at the top table for football's benevolent cave man

It's hard to imagine another Neville Southall in football today. In his 2012 book, the Binman Chronicles, **John Coughlan** says we meet an honest, unvarnished man, all heart, and rough edges. Coughlan reviewed Southall's book with his co-host Al Bond for their podcast, 'The Ademola Bookmen Podcast', which reviews footballer's autobiographies.

As someone whose football consciousness started around the mid-90s, I was familiar with later Southall; the heavy-set Southall, the one who looked like he was the last survivor from a bygone era of the football of handlebar moustaches and shorts that were barely perceptible to the human eye. And in many respects, he was that era's last survivor, at least as a player.

But that is only one of the things that makes Southall an outlier.

With 751 games under his belt, there is not a single Everton player who has come within 200 appearances of his record for the club. He managed that in a 17-year period that included two league championships, two FA cups, and a Cup Winners Cup. And yet when he left the club, he did so under a cloud; sidelined by Joe Royle, he ended up going down two divisions to Southend. The episode is, well, very-Neville Southall. Royle didn't want him to leave shortly before when Chelsea came in for him. Frustrated by his lack of playing time, Southall just said "fuck it, I'm off", and he left for the first team he could as soon as Royle agreed to let him go. No Chelsea, fine; Southend is close enough, isn't it?

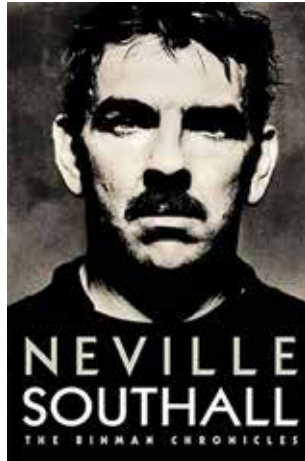
Southall says in his book that with the exception of Mike Walker and the Welsh FA, there was no one in football he didn't like. Despite the fact that Royle ended his Everton career, Southall even liked him, calling in to radio phone-ins to defend Royle's record as manager. Unfortunately, that didn't stop Royle, himself an Everton playing legend, from later devoting an entire chapter in his book to attacking Southall. The result, according to Southall, is that the two Everton giants end up sitting awkwardly at gala dinners, each of them looking the other way, with little to say to each other.

Southall's book itself starts slowly, as so many football autobiographies do. In the early chapters, I feared the worst. But as I laboured through descriptions of games that were before my time, and references to players I hadn't heard of, I couldn't

help but fall for Southall. What an unusual chap he is. An uncut diamond; a rough, gem of a man.

Southall's first stint in English football was with Bury, where he was voted player of the year. His performances there bought him his ticket to the big leagues, to Everton and the First Division. But being Southall, he decided he'd just keep on living in Bury, because he and his wife liked it there.

He was initially able to cadge a lift off his new manager, Howard Kendall, who was commuting from Blackburn. He eventually realised that getting your manager to go miles out of his way to bring you to and from training wasn't the done thing. Because he couldn't drive, this meant public transport. From the old Everton training ground Bellefield, this was a bus to the local train station, a train to Liverpool, another to Manchester, and a third to Bury before another bus home. Ridiculous and unconventional. Classic Southall. And it wasn't youthful naivety either, when he left Everton almost two decades later to wander through the football wilderness, he went back to four- and five-hour commutes, albeit by this time he had learned to drive.



One of the most telling Southall stories was when he got a call from Alex Ferguson in the late 80s, as Everton's heydays were getting smaller and smaller in the rearview mirror. Thinking it was his former teammate Andy Gray having him on, he told Ferguson to f#%* off and hung up. When Ferguson called back, he realised it was a tap-up, not a wind-up. He told Ferguson to speak to his agent, but the exchange appears to have been enough to give Fergie second thoughts. He bought Schmeichel instead.

I'm sure Ferguson has no regrets. And maybe Southall doesn't either, he doesn't seem the sort. But I feel some regrets on his behalf.

That opportunity passed him by and although he beat Ferguson and Schmeichel a few years later in the '95 FA Cup Final, it was an up in a career that ended mostly with downs. By 1992, Everton were finishing twelfth, the next year it was thirteenth, and by the time Southall was being frozen out, they were surviving in the Premier League just by the hairs on their chinny,

chin, chins.

Everton's problem was one of timing. They'd been good in the 80s, great even. The Heysel ban meant they missed out on Europe for the most part. The team broke up, with some going abroad for European football. By the time the 90s rolled around and money started raining from the Sky, other teams were talking sports science while Everton were arguing with each other over Chinese takeaways, firing footballs at the faces of the YTS lads, and waiting for their 100-year-old Chairman John Moores to loosen the drawstrings on his penny purse.

Southall spent the twilight of his career as a football nomad, to use his own description. Having been Everton's longest serving player, for his last years, he jumped from club to club, Southend, Stoke, Torquay. After one more appearance in the Premier League for Bradford, after which he was widely berated for his weight, he turned to coaching, both as a goalkeeping coach with teams like Huddersfield, and then as a manager with much smaller teams, like Dover Athletic, if you've ever heard of them.

It was a strange end to a decorated career and for a man who appears to have been widely accepted to have been the best goalkeeper of his time.

Before he ever made it in England, he travelled to Germany with his local team in Wales. He was offered a place in the Dusseldorf academy but turned it down, saying he "couldn't be bothered". One can't help but think that it was this side of

Southall that sent his career in the direction it went in the end. He applied twice for the position of Wales first team coach and despite being told he did the best interview the second time around, he learned on the radio that his old team-mate, Mark Hughes, got the job.

He liked everyone in football, but it seems that everyone in football did not like him.

In our eighth episode, we reviewed Peter Crouch's How to be a Footballer. The book itself is okay. The world Crouch describes – one of sleeve tattoos, camouflage Bentleys, and 800-pound Kashmir jumpers – is so far from the world described by Southall that I find it difficult to reconcile the two. The fact that their playing careers briefly overlapped makes it all the more mind-boggling.

Crouch describes a profession that is shallow, vapid, and ultimately just dumb. And although Southall appears to have been dismissed by people in football as such, he is anything but dumb.

If anything, Southall seems to be an oddity in football for the very fact that he is capable of thinking about things other than matches and money. He's been in the news recently for engaging people on Twitter on issues he admits that he doesn't understand, asking trans teenagers to explain things in a way that is openminded and every bit as out of place on social media as he is in the world of football. In this, Southall is the anti-Barton. Sadly, in the Bizarro World of the internet, it's the Bartons who get the attention.

Even Crouch, as likeable as

he is, has managed to forge a stellar post-football career by leaning into his role as master of ceremonies of the bantz parade. Southall may have taken to the training pitch on a pre-season tour of Sweden in nothing other than his gloves and boots, but he was no bantz man.

He says one of the reasons he wrote his book was to show people that he wasn't mad or stupid. He says he hoped that it might even open doors back into the game for him. But in the years since, I don't think it did.

He remains a playing legend, but legends fade. Banished from the world of football, he ended up training underprivileged kids, eventually setting up a consultancy that aims to use football as a way of providing opportunities for people who have struggled in formal education. Happily, he says he finds joy in what he does today but it's clear that he misses football. At least the game's loss is to the benefit of others who are much more in need of help.

Southall is undoubtedly one of football's good guys. Sadly, football doesn't seem to have a place for him anymore, other than at gala dinners awkwardly ignoring Joe Royle.

The Ademola Bookmen Podcast is on Spotify, Apple, Google Podcasts, etc. Our review of the Binman Chronicles is available from March 20.

You'll find John and Al on Twitter and Instagram, and they welcome feedback and book recommendations at ademolabookmen@gmail.com

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Lyndsay Clarke from Coláiste Muire, Ennis and Kate Nolan from Sacred Heart Clonakilty Sacred Heart Clonakilty ahead of the Pinergy Munster Schools Senior Girls.
Pic Michael Mac Sweeney/Provision



The Lucitt family from Gaggin at the start of a recent fundraising walk in aid of St Michael's Centre.

SPORT



PEOPLE IN SPORT

Niamh Coughlan

Niamh Coughlan is currently completing a Masters in Journalism and Digital Content Creation at Munster Technological University. Growing up, she played camogie and football with Glen Rovers, and one of her passions is sports.

Less than 48 hours after arriving back in her home village of Ballineen in West Cork, Phil Healy is still beaming when she talks to Niamh Coughlan after a weekend of mixed emotions at the World Indoor Athletics Championships in Glasgow.

The Irish 4x400m relay team, consisting of Phil Healy (Bandon AC), Sophie Becker (Raheny Shamrock AC), Roisin Harrison (Emerald AC), and Sharlene Mawdsley (Newport AC), finished fifth in their respective relay final with a time of 3:28.92, just fractionally outside the national record. What would have been an amazing start to International Women's Week, unfortunately wasn't to be for the girls. The team didn't come home with a medal but Phil is still full of energy and smiling, "I think I'm just high on tiredness," she says.

The Bandon Bullet grew up playing a variety of sports. "Football, hurling, camogie, swimming, Irish dancing, you name it. I did it all!" Phil originally only took up athletics to keep her older sister, Joan, company. It wasn't until she was 17 that she became fully focused on athletics. "I definitely was a late developer to athletics, and it wasn't until I was 18 that I realised I had potential in the sport." She joined her local club Bandon AC and it took off from there. At first, it was more about taking part and having the craic. "As a kid, it's not all about winning, it's about having fun,

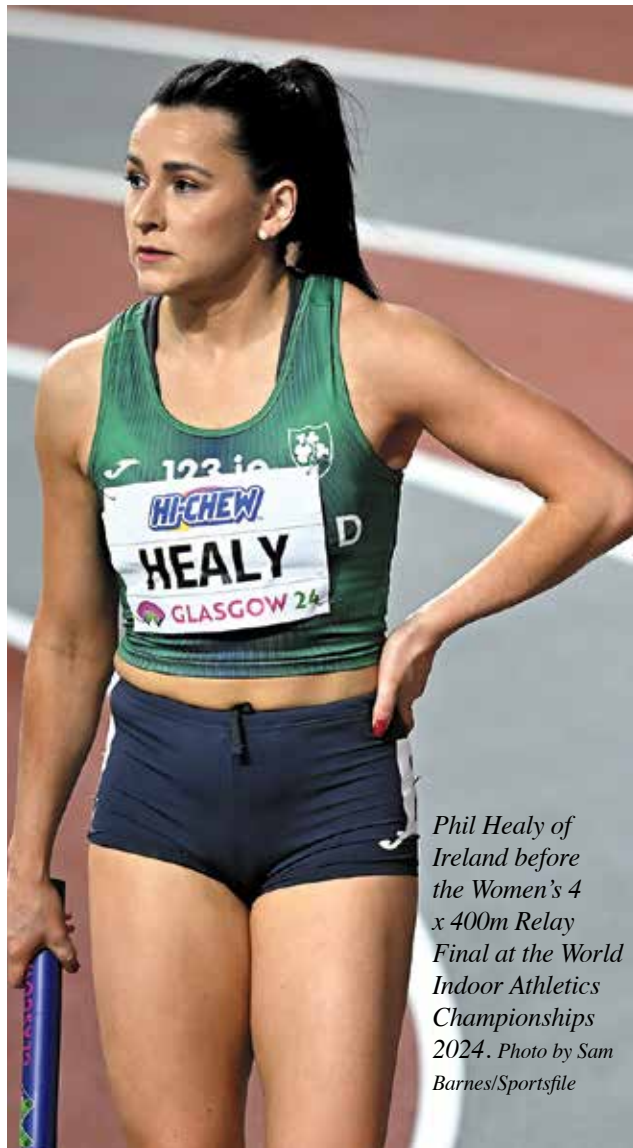
trying so many different events. It wasn't until I was much older that I actually started winning."

The late Catherine Duggan was Bandon AC's Head Coach and Club Vice-President. She played a vital role in pushing Phil to reach her potential. To make her first Irish International at age 18 was a real boost, having just finished the Leaving Certificate. "I went in ranked high in the 20s, so I had no real expectations, but I actually came up fourth at the championship, so for me that was a massive boost of confidence." It was only then she thought to herself: "I can actually perform at this level. I still didn't realise what an Olympics were, or where I could actually go in the sport, but I kept training and it all fell into place for me."

Between sport and simultaneously building a career, it's been no easy puzzle for the software engineer. How does she balance it all? "It does take a lot of sacrifices. Dedication, hard work, and discipline are key. Especially as an individual sport because everything is dependent on you. The thing about athletics is that it's you out there. It's you who's accountable. I know if I put in the work, I'll get the rewards of what I do." Training six days a week is the norm for any professional athlete today. "Currently I have three days on the track running and three days in the gym. Strength training is complementary to running: one is as important as the other."

Qualifying as a software engineer has set Phil ahead for when she eventually does retire from the sport. "I've done the 'full-time athlete' and I've done the 'balancing college on the side,' whereas now I think I'm at a point in my athletic career where I realise sport isn't going to last forever, and I need to give it my all while I have it." And when retirement eventually does come round, she will naturally transition and progress in her chosen career.

An injury in 2019 meant Phil had to take a long time off running, which was an extremely challenging time. "I broke my foot and I didn't think I was going to be able to race at the World Universities that summer. The race was 12 weeks from the day that I broke it and it was always my aim that summer to win a medal. I remember leaving the hospital in crutches and being so upset." But plan B became plan A. She knew she would have to be patient and compromise as much as possible in the lead up to the summer. Instead of being on the track, she was on the



Phil Healy of Ireland before the Women's 4 x 400m Relay Final at the World Indoor Athletics Championships 2024. Photo by Sam Barnes/Sportsfile

bike. She worked with coaches, which meant her progress was monitored accordingly. "Nutrition was a big thing as well. The doctors didn't expect me to come back as quickly as I did. Recovery is key; rest, supplements and time." To her delight, Phil ran her race that summer – injury free and back to herself.


Athletics is one of few sports which has both a team element and an individual element. There were six Irish girls in Glasgow in March 2024 but the six individuals are constantly changing, so the athletes have to earn their spot. With a relay team comes added pressure. "You want to give it your all for the team, you want everything to align the right way and obviously it's disappointing for the girls that don't make the running four but we've all been in that position and were all equally working hard to earn our spot. We know we have to work together and there is a close bond between the team."

The girls even perform team bonding exercises – "silly scribbler" being a favourite of Phil's. "You have to wear glasses with a pen attached to the snout and you have to draw with your nose. It's a bit of craic!" To go from racing with your teammates to racing

against them is familiar territory for her. "You really have to focus on your own lane and your own race. You just have to switch on: your lane, your race, and once that gun goes, everything else naturally takes over."


All eyes are now set on Paris 2024. Phil's first experience at an Olympic Games was in Tokyo in 2020, where she finished fifth in her 200m sprint. But with no regrets, she is now confident about what needs to be done ahead of the qualifications for the summer games. "First up we will have the relay qualification, which is the first weekend in May at the World Relay Championships, when we have to come in the top 14 to earn a spot. Everything is geared towards that for now. Once the relay is done, everything will be focused on the individual." Will the same quartet run in May? "Rhasidat Adeleke, who was ruled out last season due to injury, may join the squad, but the majority of the team will be the same. There are also spots for the mixed relay and the 400 metre sprints."

What's the biggest challenge Irish athletes face today? "Support and funding, I think. You have to do the performance before you get the funding and



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the max funding you'll ever get in Ireland is €40,000. And that's if you're considered a pro, so I think the system is a bit flawed in that way."

Athletics is a niche sport, and competing against so many nations makes it harder to get the results. Some people are full-time athletes but others can't afford to be a full-time athlete. Phil considers herself to be very lucky to have a lot of support outside of that, with different sponsors who made a massive difference to her career. Phil has had sponsorship deals with Kinetica Sports based in the UK, and Nyhan Motors in Bandon.

Facilities wise, she says Irish athletes are lucky: "We have everything, but it would be great to have an indoor track down in the South of Ireland which would make things a lot easier." More than half a million people watched the World Indoor Championships last month, which is a big improvement on previous years. "We never get airtime on television and it helps get athletes names out there, especially younger athletes. Children are not exposed to the sport as much as they would be to GAA, rugby or soccer which are constantly shown on the TV."

There was also a large Irish presence in the stand in Glasgow, which is a rare occurrence because competitions are usually held in far off destinations. "The cheers definitely spur you on so well. So that was great to have this weekend".

A 2023 survey by Sport Ireland found that around 30 per cent fewer girls are involved in

sports at secondary school than in primary school. Although various factors contribute to the drop, Phil says body image and a lack of confidence are up there with reasons as to why girls choose to no longer participate: "I think body image is definitely a big thing for people dropping out. Even if you just look at athletics, the pressure is on body image and the outfit that we wear – everybody has to wear a crop top or shorts. Full-length singlets are available but then you're deemed to be the odd one out." The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) college system in America rules out wearing crop tops and everybody has to wear a full singlet, which is standardised across the board.

Phil also refers to peer pressure, the view that 'I don't look good in this picture', or my friends are going out and you feel like you don't fit in or you're different to the others. "I think everyone needs to focus on what they want and what makes them happy. And if that means doing a certain sport, then you do that certain sport because you don't want to look back when you're 35 or 40 and have regrets." Sport Ireland have their 'HERMOVES' campaign, which is aimed at inspiring young girls to try new forms of movement and make more sports visible to them.

After a week of rest and recovery, Phil is determined to get back to her usual training schedule. All eyes are set on the summer season ahead in Paris.

OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK

West Cork Campus held an Employers Event recently, where a sample of local employers who recruit and facilitate students on placement gave a personal account of their career/life journeys.

Pics: Anne Minihane

Back from left: Máire O'Sullivan (Coordinator of the West Cork Campus), Hayley Milthorpe (The Cultured Food Company), Carolyn Cotter (Irish Wheelchair Association), Mary Hodnett (West Cork Distillers), Celine Vaughan (Irish Wheelchair Association), Helen Ryan (Principal, Morrison's Island & West Cork Campus)
Front from left: Margaret Thomas (Hairdresser), Margaret O'Connor (Irish Wheelchair Association), Amy Cotter (Ballydehob Community Playgroup), Karen Kelly (CHN Administrative Coordinator, Network 10, HSE)



Back from left: Máire O'Sullivan (Coordinator of West Cork Campus), Cameron O'Leary, Noreen Evans, Karen McDermott & Breeanne McDermott (Business Students)
Front from left: Ava Dolan (Business Student), Mary Hodnett (West Cork Distillers), Karen Kelly (HSE & Former Graduate), Judy Sexton (Coordinator of Business)



From Left: Karina Holichenko, Adriana Santos (Hairdressing Students), Caroline Keohane (Coordinator of Hairdressing – West Cork Campus), Margaret Thomas – Hairdresser (Guest Speaker), Jessica O'Driscoll & Anastasia Shapran (Hairdressing Students)

PRAYERS

Call to/post to our offices – Old Town Hall, McCurtain Hill, Clonakilty with details of your prayer. Prayers: €10 each. Cash or Postal Order. No bank cheques please due to charges.

PRAYER TO ST. ANTHONY

O Holy St. Anthony, gentlest of Saints, your love for God and Charity for his creatures, made you worthy, when on earth, to possess miraculous powers. Miracles waited on your word, which you were ever ready to speak for those in trouble or anxiety. Encouraged by this thought, I implore of you to obtain for me (request). The answer to my prayer may require a miracle, even so, you are the Saint of Miracles. 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 ever yours. E.D.

NOVENA TO ST. MARTHA

O St. Martha, I resort to thee and to thy petition of faith, I offer up to thee this light, which I shall burn every Tuesday for nine Tuesdays. Comfort me in all my difficulties and through the great favour thou didst enjoy when our Saviour lodged in thy house. I beseech thee to have definite pity in regard to the favour I ask (mention Favour). Intercede for my family that we may always be provided for in all our necessities. I ask thee St. Martha to overcome the dragon which thou didst cast at thy feet. One of Our Father and three Hail Marys, and lighted candle every Tuesday and the above prayer made known with the intentions of spreading devotion to St. Martha. This miraculous saint grants every thing before Tuesdays are ended. No matter how difficult. 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. L.O'D

MIRACULOUS INVOCATION TO SAINT THERESA, LITTLE FLOWER

Oh glorious St Therese, whom Almighty God has raised up to aid and counsel mankind. I implore your Miraculous Intercession. So powerful are you in obtaining every need of body and soul, our Holy Mother Church proclaims you 'Prodigy of Miracles... the Greatest Saint of Modern Times.' Now I fervently beseech you to answer my petition (intention here) and to carry on your promises of 'spending Heaven doing upon earth ... of letting fall from Heaven a shower of Roses.' Henceforth dear Little Flower, I will fulfill your plea 'to be made known everywhere' and I will never cease to lead others to Jesus through you. Amen. M & J

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MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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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. S.M.

MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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