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Fiadh Ní Mórdha, Katie Hourihan, and Donagh O'Shea get set for the Easter Open Singles at Glengarriff Golf Club, a fundraiser for Scoil Fhiachna March 29 - 31. Pic: Joya Kuin

## West Cork libraries celebrate International Women's Day 2024

Cork County Council will host a series of events in Cork County to mark this year's International Women's Day (IWD), which takes place on Friday, March 8, with libraries throughout West Cork hosting special events celebrating and supporting women, as well as book and information displays in branches.

Several libraries will present International Women's Day story-time sessions for primary schools, as well as marking the day with their local book clubs, knitting circles and creative writing groups. To encourage new writers to get involved, a creative writing workshop on the art of writing 'flash fiction' will be held in Dunmanway

Library, Kinsale Library will host an intergenerational music and dance workshop for grandmothers, daughters, granddaughters, and other children, Bantry library will host a make-up masterclass, Bandon Library have created a book display promoting the ideals of an inclusive world for all women and Skibberreen Library will host several local groups on the day.

The third annual IWD Flash Fiction short story competition will also be launched. Themed 'Together', entries are open to adults only and can be submitted in both Irish and English by March 31. Details and entry forms are available at your local library or online at [www.corkcoco.ie](http://www.corkcoco.ie).

Welcoming International Women's Day and the opportunity to celebrate gender equality, Cllr Eileen Lynch, Chair of Cork County Council's Women's Caucus said "This year's theme 'Inspire Inclusion' is particularly reflective of Cork County Council's work to ensure their services are inclusive and welcoming to all, such as our libraries being awarded Age Friendly status. Initiatives such as no membership fees, and My Open Library seek to make our Library Service more accessible, inclusive and welcoming to everyone".

For more information, check out your local library branch for events and booking details or email [cork-countylibrary@corkcoco.ie](mailto:cork-countylibrary@corkcoco.ie)

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# Getting back up when life knocks you down

In 1989, Annie King, age 35, hopped on her bike after the breakdown of her marriage and, on a whim, caught the ferry from the UK to Ireland for a two week cycling holiday. It was the first time she had ever travelled anywhere on her own. This impulsive action, which was to change the course of the young teacher's life, led to a career in street theatre and the purchase of a rundown cottage on five acres of land in Coomhola, which friends, family and wwoofers, joining together in the true spirit of 'Meitheal', helped her to transform. Just turned 70, the previous Director of Wwoof Ireland, who today volunteers with the West Cork Sudbury School, chats to **Mary O'Brien** about how her sustainable lifestyle in West Cork came about and why retirement doesn't really exist in her vocabulary.

Annie is a veritable force of nature. As a young separated mother in 1980s Britain, having secured bursaries for her two daughters to attend boarding school, she held down three jobs to make ends meet, working part-time in her local pub and delivering takeaways, as well as a full-time teaching position.

In 1989, a cycling holiday in Ireland marked the beginning of her passion for street theatre – after she experienced Clonakilty's famous busking festival and witnessed the energy and

creativity of celebrated street theatre group Craic na Coillte – and, with the purchase of a derelict house between Bantry and Glengarriff, the start of a new life in West Cork.

The following year she left teaching – reacting to the introduction of the National Curriculum in the UK, which she felt put too much emphasis on goal orientation.

While travelling back and forth renovating the cottage herself, Annie continued to work and study in the UK, completing an arts and administration

degree before pursuing a career organising street theatre festivals all over the UK.

Built in the 1700s for the manager of the local iron smelting works, Annie's house in Coomhola was a shell when she bought it, without electricity or running water. But there was a wildness and hope in the land and the people that drew Annie in. Inspired by the building knowledge she had picked up from her dad, a builder and quantity surveyor – "I was mixing cement at the age of five," laughs Annie – and with



"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

the help of a community of able and willing friends, fellow students, and family, over a three year period Annie breathed new life into the old house.

During the first year, a friend studying electronics took on the task of wiring the house. However, after he fell through the rotten roof on the second day and refused to continue with the electricians until a new roof was in place, Annie took on the roofing task, as well as lining the chimney.

The toilet was a trench dug outside and the house had no windows and more holes than boards in the floors but the group worked and played hard, with evenings spent happily around the fire in the old kitchen. "The girls camped upstairs and we used to pass hot milk up to them through a hole in the floor," she remembers smiling.

Aside from a dresser passed on from her grandfather and the appliances, the kitchen, built by volunteers, cost Annie the grand sum of £150, with all the wood salvaged from the local

dump. "My brother and sister were born during WWII and growing up we always mended everything and grew our own vegetables. We never had money to spare so it was nothing new to me," shares Annie.

Still working in the UK, Annie managed to secure a small mortgage to finish the renovations. However in 1996, age 42, and just three months after moving permanently to West Cork, she was involved in a bad car accident in Bantry. This brought work at the property to a standstill while she put everything into rebuilding her health, spending over a year recuperating at her brother's home.

Eventually back on her feet and back in West Cork but, with her health unreliable since the accident, managing a renovation and maintaining a five-acre property became quite daunting. That was until the arrival of the first wwoofers on the property, in the midst of a millennium party, on New Year's Eve, 1999. "I didn't know who the wwoofers were until everyone else had

gone home and she was the last one left – with an American accent!" laughs Annie. Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (Wwoof) is a global movement where people stay on organic farms to learn about organic growing and sustainable living through hands on experience. Annie still grows her own veg and, over the years, a constant flow of wwoofers have helped to clear the land and plant hundreds of native trees on the five acres.

With her daughters grown, Annie was able to settle full-time into the community in Coomhola. She formed her own company 'K2arts', which ran summer camps teaching environmental education through arts and drama and, as well as working on art projects including producing the pageant for the opening of Carriganass Castle in Kealkil in 2003, she undertook an MA in art therapy and started training to become an emergency foster carer.

Then, in 2004, life came to a standstill yet again, as she



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Annie discussing plumbing with her brother.

suffered another setback in the form of a stroke. “I felt this sudden pain behind my right eye,” she recalls. “I thought it was a migraine – just another symptom of menopause!” Annie lost all feeling in the right hand side of her body. While fortunately the damage wasn’t permanent, she developed agoraphobia. Not the type of person to take things lying down, Annie tackled the condition head-on by going off travelling for eight months.

While in South America she went on an Antarctic cruise and fell in love with penguins, met some more in the Falklands, before eventually ending up in New Zealand where she spent time wwoofing herself. It was here that the wheels were put in motion for her restarting Wwoof Ireland: While the organisation had been in existence since the early 70s, it had just been tagged on to the UK’s Wwoof Independents. Within a year of Annie heading up the Irish organisation, host numbers jumped from 100 up

to 400. She set the organisation up as an educational charity and employed personnel to help her run it. “At the time people were looking for a cheaper way to holiday but also a sustainable way of doing it,” she says. Annie became a director of Fowo, the international organisation that supports national wwoof groups, travelling all over the world to attend meetings. In 2019, she was nominated for a Volunteer Ireland Volunteer of the Year award in the Animals and Environment section.

While the dynamo did hang up her Wwoof Ireland administration gloves on turning 66, it certainly didn’t mean she sat back in life. Annie has since completed a Level 5 art qualification, become a proud Irish citizen and is very involved in the West Cork Sudbury School, a democratic school of self-directed learning, co-founded by her daughter Jessica Mason to foster creative thinking in children. “She’s fulfilling an education system that would

have always been my dream. I’m very proud of both my children and of my grandchildren,” shares Annie, who is the Chair of the Board of Management, as well as volunteering as a tutor at the school. “I can see the benefits my own grandchildren are gaining through the school.”

If anything it should be said that Annie King epitomises the quote “In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.” When she’s not tackling her garden, or an art or community project, she can be found working at festivals, or planning another trip. Her hope is to drive a little camper van across to Glastonbury this summer where she has made films for the Greencrafts Village for the last decade, before heading off for a holiday in the lake district.

“There isn’t enough time in the day...but I do think I should do a chainsaw course!” she adds laughing.

## Skibbereen to host Town Regeneration Officer to shepherd future growth

Skibbereen will soon have its own Town Regeneration Officer as part of the government’s first ever Town Centre First Plans, Cork South West deputy Christopher O’Sullivan says.

“This is a massive opportunity for Skibbereen. It’s an amazing town. It should be the centre of tourism in West Cork considering its location near Mizen head and Baltimore and the islands,” Deputy O’Sullivan said.

“Having a town regeneration officer really puts focus on Skibb realising that potential.”

The government published its first ever Town Centre First plans for 26 towns across every county on Wednesday.



The Plans, developed in consultation with local communities, represent the vision of local people for their area and contain proposals for a diverse range of projects such

as redeveloping derelict sites, creating community parks and walkways, boosting SME and tourism potential, and protecting historical landmarks.

Town Regeneration Officers have been appointed in every Local Authority to drive implementation of the new plans with the support of Government funding through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Town Centre First Heritage Revival (THRIVE) Scheme and the Historic Towns Initiative.






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# Sessions in Chiba

When Katie Sexton lay down her fiddle and moved to Chiba in Japan, she wasn't expecting to take it up again so quickly. To her surprise however she found a thriving Irish music scene in Japan with sessions, fleadh cheoil and céilí's a part of the popular subculture dedicated to traditional Irish music.

It wasn't long, writes **Mary O'Brien**, before the flame-haired Irish girl, who has been playing the fiddle since the age of four – later on a regular at the trad sessions in Charlie Madden's pub in Timoleague – was turning heads in Chiba's local Irish pubs. She now plays the fiddle with four bands in the city.

**K**atie, 24, grew up on a small self-sufficient farm in Timoleague. One of six children, five girls and a boy, she and her siblings are well-known in the local area for their musical and sporting talent, with Katie herself winning an All-Ireland bowling championship in 2013.

After studying languages at University, Katie moved to Japan on a graduate programme in August 2022. She currently works as Co-ordinator of International Relations at Chiba's City Hall.

About 40km east of Tokyo with a population of almost one million people, Chiba is as different to rural West Cork as you can get, with Japanese people typically quite reserved and working long hours.

"The people are very polite here and there are probably four different ways to say thank you and sorry," shares Katie "but they're also very welcoming like the Irish."

"The people are very polite here and there are probably four different ways to say thank you and sorry, but they're also very welcoming like the Irish."

As always, music creates a bridge between cultures and Katie feels so at home here that she hopes to make the move permanent. She's a part of the growing community dedicated to Irish music and dance in Chiba. "I never thought I'd hear a Japanese person sing 'The Boys of Kilmichael'" says Katie laughing. "We have great craic at the gigs."

Gaelic football is also popular with men and women playing in the Tokyo club.

Home is a one-room apartment close to Tokyo Bay with a spectacular view of Mount Fuji on a clear day. It's located in a Red Zone, where the tsunami hazard is classified as high and earthquakes are frequently experienced.

It doesn't seem to bother Katie. "We do a lot of disaster training and drills and all the buildings have been engineered to shake with the earthquake," she says pragmatically.

Chiba she says is "a wonder-



ful city known for having the longest suspended monorail in the world, as well as sandy beaches and medieval castles." The city also boasts an ancient lotus flower, believed to be over 2000-years-old, the oldest flower in the world.

"The best time of year to visit," shares Katie "is March to May when you'll get to see the Cherry Blossoms or October to November." The rainy seasons starts in May and summers are hot and humid.

When she's not playing

the fiddle, Katie is known for giving lectures on Irish culture around the city. She works with the Irish embassy promoting working holidays for Irish students. In the last few years, Chiba has welcomed increasing numbers of Irish people. "You



Katie on a translating assignment in the US.

**FIANNA FAÏL**  
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Christopher O'Sullivan TD

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can get a good pint of Guinness and you'll even find Clonakilty whiskey here now," says Katie. Aside from the pint of Guinness, which she says "will set you back at least a tenner", it's a lot cheaper to eat and drink here than in Ireland, with 'all you can eat/drink' buffet restaurants very popular.

Katie attends the same tradition session as Kozo Toyota, a well-known talented flute-player and founder of the Toyota Ceilí Band in Tokyo, which has competed at Fleadh Cheoil's in Ireland. "There's a big Comhaltas scene out here now and Mr Toyota is a great ambassador for Ireland here in Japan," she says. "He teaches the flute and the tin whistle." As well as the fiddle, Katie has taken up playing the

koto, or Japanese harp.

Right now, the young musician is busy helping to organise the St Patrick's Day parade in Chiba, which she says will have the entire city sporting green and getting into the Irish spirit with Gaelic football demonstrations and Irish music, dancing and pageantry. Katie will be representing Ireland in the parade with her fiddle before heading off on a session pub trail around her four Irish locals. Irish wolfhounds and Red Setters are popular in Chiba and, with pets still preferred over parenthood in Japan, you're more likely to meet someone pushing a dog than a baby in a stroller at the parade!

With a significant drop in young Japanese people deciding

not to get married and have families due to increasing financial pressures and a desire to live without social obligations, the Japanese government is now sponsoring dating apps and you can even take a course in dating skills in Tokyo.

On the dating scene however, Katie is playing her cards very close to her chest but she does mention that "the men are a lot shyer than they are back in Ireland!"

While she admits to missing her mammy's home cooking, her pet donkey Neddy and playing with her sister's at the regular Thursday night sessions in Charlie Madden's, Katie doesn't appear to be too homesick... Chiba has won her heart.



## 'Rebel Wife' – The untold story of Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa to screen at Fastnet

'Rebel Wife', a film highlighting the life of Irish revolutionary Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa, will screen at the Fastnet Film Festival in May, followed by a Q&A with the director-producer, her great-grandson, Williams Rossa Cole. The documentary delves into the significant yet overlooked contributions of Mary Jane to Ireland's fight for freedom alongside her more famous husband, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Cole's creation is driven by a commitment to illuminate the obscured stories of women in history, particularly those who played crucial roles in societal change.

The film narrates Mary Jane's life, from her controversial marriage at 19 to her emergence as a formidable public speaker and fundraiser in the United States, where she campaigned for the cause of Irish independence



and the plight of imprisoned Irish nationalists, including her husband. Despite her substantial contribution and the personal sacrifices she made, including raising 13 children, Mary Jane's efforts were largely unrecognised after her husband's death. Her strategic decision to hold Jeremiah's funeral in

Dublin, contrary to his wishes, significantly fuelled the momentum for the Easter Rising of 1916. However, Mary Jane's story did not garner the same recognition. Dying shortly after the Easter Rising, her contributions faded into the background, and she was buried in Staten Island, away from her homeland and husband. Williams Cole faced challenges in bringing her story to the screen, given the scant visual records of the 19th-century figure, relying heavily on family archives and dedicated research.

The film screening in May, and the subsequent Q&A with Williams, will shine a light on the underrepresented female perspective in historical struggles for freedom, with a growing acknowledgment of women's pivotal roles in history.

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

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



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## A woman's place is wherever she wants it to be



### GROUNDLED

MEP Grace O'Sullivan

It's time to update our constitution to reflect the society we live in, and for what we want it to be.

Since I was a young girl, the notion that my place in the world was already laid out or limited to certain roles just didn't sit right with me. It was probably one of the things that pushed me to go against the grain and be so competitive as a teenager – I couldn't let the lads have all the fun – and I think I held my own as a young woman in all the activities I partook in; surfing, sea-and-cliff rescue, other sports and farming

at home.

It was that attitude and those skills I learned that would eventually allow me to work in various roles on ships for over a decade, and while a woman working as a deckhand was a rarity back in the 1980s, it was an organisation like Greenpeace that wasn't afraid of doing things a little bit 'different' that allowed me to work in this area and give my time as an activist on various environmental campaigns.

Thankfully the world has changed rapidly since this time, and for the young girls growing up nowadays, the sky should be the limit as to their hopes and ambitions for their futures.

But we still have a few items to tend to.

The Irish Constitution has lived now for over 80 years, and through various referenda it has served as a living document that has been both amended and also interpreted to reflect the values and reality of the time of its reading.

Article 41.2 of the Constitution notes the contribution

of women's work within the home, and that work outside of it should not be needed for economic reasons in the case that they would neglect those duties within the home.

While there may be some fair arguments about ensuring that family time should not be eliminated by the need to work (which I think most people would agree with), the specificity of these home duties being only for women is really quite outdated and sexist – and in my opinion it's long overdue that we remove this wording from our most fundamental legal text. Indeed, women's groups and feminists have been calling for its removal since the Constitution itself was adopted in 1937.

And so finally, in 2024, we have a referendum being put before the citizens of Ireland on this issue.

The two amendments going before the public are aiming to address the reality of Irish society in the 21st century.

While legal provisions are in place to support the various types of families outside of the

## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the March issue of West Cork People,

With thousands rallying in Dublin and Cork this past month calling for an end to war in Gaza, people across West Cork are adding their voices and efforts to the cause with acts of solidarity and fundraising events being organised in towns and villages. In this issue, Moze Jacobs chats to Naser Al-Swirki, an actor, writer and director, born in Gaza, now living in Skibbereen, and others who are flying the Palestinian flag. Kieran gives us a deeper understanding of the history and politics behind the conflict in Gaza.

I chat with the lovely Katie Sexton, a young fiddle player from Timoleague, who is part of a growing community dedicated to Irish music and dance in Chiba, Japan. I also meet with previous Director of Wwoof Ireland Annie King, who talks about her sustainable lifestyle in West Cork; and sculptor and horticulturist Pete Little, who describes his hanging 'pods', which have been offering an incredible sensory experience since they were first introduced on the festival circuit in 2007.

Even while away on holiday our fabulous columnists are thinking of West Cork People readers. All the way from India this month, Karen dishes up an authentic Kerala dish that is sure to spice things up in West Cork's kitchens.

With a nice stretch in the evening and little pops of colour appearing as bulbs shoot up, spring has announced its arrival. In her Mindfulness column this month Susan O'Regan shares how mindful movement can help us tune in with our body, as well as clearing the mind.

With a clear mind, you can now start filling in your 2024 calendar, as West Cork events and festivals start kicking off. Check out Lauren's interview with American troubadour Steve Gunn, who is making his comeback to Ireland this Spring. He plays DeBarra's on April 26. A fundraising event in DeBarra's at the beginning of April, raising funds for Doctors without Borders, who are on the ground in Gaza, will welcome renowned musicians Peter Broderick, Susan O'Neill and Liam Ó Maonlaí and Little John Nee. Not to be missed! Committees all over West Cork are busy getting ready for the St Patrick's Day parades so be sure to come out and support your local town.

With the arrival of Spring comes nesting and breeding season, so a reminder that damage to hedgerows and illegal and uncontrolled fires that cause harm to our wildlife is not acceptable. Please remember that legislation prohibits the cutting, grubbing, burning or other destruction of "vegetation growing in any hedge or ditch" between March 1 and August 31. Any incidents can be reported to [wildlifeenforcement@npws.gov.ie](mailto:wildlifeenforcement@npws.gov.ie) or your local NPWS office.

For lots more see inside.

I hope you enjoy the read,

Mary

institution of marriage, the fact that our Constitution does not recognise these families is quite shocking.

The first amendment aims to broaden the definition of family.

And while it will mostly be a symbolic change, it will be an important one to the hundreds of thousands of family units in this country that are no less valuable than their neighbours due to their make-up.

I should know.

After my marriage ended, I returned to Ireland with my three daughters where we lived as our own little family unit in Tramore. We worked well together, and were no less a family than any other in the country.

The second amendment will open up our definition of whose

responsibility caring duties lie with within the home, and how the state should strive to ensure that the value of this care is protected and assured. "Care" is a very broad term that covers the various relationships which can exist between family members for various reasons, and this updated provisions will now include all of these relationships.

There are both some very valid and very misconstrued concerns about this referendum. But looking at its purpose – the removal of the outdated Article 41.2 – I hope that Ireland can see the need for these updates; to finally bring our most fundamental legal document into the 21st century.

And to allow a woman's place to be wherever she wants it to be.



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# West Cork cries for 'Peace for Palestine'

A fundraiser for Gaza organised by DeBarra's Spoken Word with special guest Naser Al-Swirki will take place in March. Naser lives in Skibbereen where a 'Peace for Palestine' rally has been taking place on Saturdays since early November 2023. An actor, director and writer, who can always discern a fresh angle on Palestine, he is usually one of the speakers at the rally. **Moze Jacobs** meets with Naser and others around West Cork who are flying the Palestinian flag in solidarity with the people of Gaza.

Naser was born in Gaza but moved to a refugee camp in Jordan at the age of seven with his family, visiting Gaza every summer thereafter. Eventually, he founded his own production company in Jordan, where he met his Irish wife.

The ongoing carnage in Gaza affects him deeply. "I lost so many family members. Their houses destroyed, having to flee from one area to the next." Naser believes that the fundamental problem is the Zionist idea born in 1948 to create a 'home' exclusively for Jews in a land where Palestinians already lived. "We are as attached to our land as the Irish," he shares. He is writing a screenplay, 'The Seventh Door'. "It is about understanding and appreciating Arab women. I had a mother, I have sisters and I wanted to comprehend the meaning of love. I'm finally mature enough to realise that I cannot live without it for one moment. As Palestinians, what we learned from our enemies is how 'not' to hate. They are brainwashed from an early age. How else can you kill over 11,000 children? The world needs to stop them, they cannot stop themselves."

As the gruesome onslaught continues, more and more people are taking action across Ireland, from Baltimore to Belfast, including the 80,000 people who marched in Dublin on February 17. The Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign ([www.ipsc.ie](http://www.ipsc.ie)) lists what will be happening where.

"It's a humanitarian issue," says Donnchadh O Seaghdha, a former Skibbereen town councillor who also attends the weekly gathering around Skibbereen's Maid of Eireann statue. "By coming out, we can make a difference, empower people. You need the grassroots to pressure the government to do more. The trauma and suffering is unbelievable. They want to level Gaza completely. Let's take an international perspective

and advocate for world peace, harmony, empathy, compassion, justice."

Another regular, Annie de Bhal, came from Germany 17 years ago and married an Irishman. She was raised in a Jewish Zionist family. "I was always the weird kid wrapped in a keffiyeh (Palestinian scarf). At the time, this was met with amusement rather than hostility. They thought I'd grow out of it," she says. She didn't. An active member of Jews for Palestine (Ireland), she passionately strives for peace. She is very critical of Zionism and its role in the current conflict but understands "what lies beneath".

"When you grow up in a German Jewish family, you are told, on a daily basis, that everyone is against you and you are going to die. My great-grandfather committed suicide in 1932, as he could see what was coming." She believes there should be sanctions on Israel, similar to those on Russia, and in the past South Africa.

Sam Simpson is a Tús supervisor who grew up in Cork City and has recently trained as a human rights monitor reporting to the UN. He went to Palestine in 2016, having studied the area for years. He has a degree in history and is always providing useful background information, for instance, around the idea that what we are seeing is colonisation, exactly what happened in Ireland, America and Australia,



Naser Al-Swirki speaking in Bantry

to the detriment of the indigenous populations. "It's all about more land and less Arabs. And to do that 'properly', these people need to be dehumanised. This happens in the Israeli education system where, even in kindergarten, children get the message that Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular are a threat and are less-than-human."

Ahmed, who has a barber shop in Skibbereen, and his wife Rasha, are among the millions of Palestinian refugees who live outside their ancestral lands. Rasha grew up in Syria. Following the civil war in 2012, she escaped to Lebanon where she met Ahmed. They were granted a visa for Ireland and went directly to Skibbereen. "It was hard in the beginning because I had no family, but now I have my community. We support each other. And I like the Irish weather! Rain and cold are great; you can protect yourself against it. In Syria, it was impossible to escape the heat," shares Rasha.

Ahmed was delighted that people started to get together out of concern over what was happening in Palestine, shocked by what they saw on television and social media. "Somebody told me there was a protest and I said, Oh perfect! Gaza is the biggest 'open' prison in the world. It's great to get such a turnout in a small town like Skibbereen." He always tells the people who turn up how much their support is appreciated by the Palestinians. "To know that someone out there cares."

The women who started and drive the protest are strongly motivated. But they are often also affected emotionally.

Toma McCullim has always been working actively for peace and to empower people. "I was involved in anti-apartheid pol-

itics. What happened in South Africa gave us hope."

Susy Cremers has been fundraising for Gaza since 2020 through an independent local team, Takeru, started by a man named Bilal in 2015. "He described his life in long conversations. Displaced, bombed, a BA in sociology against a 90 per cent unemployment rate. He was arrested, mistreated, interrogated. He ended up living in a tent with his wife and four young children. What blows me away is Bilal's humanity and warmth. He has become like a son to me; he named his daughter after me. I am trying to figure out how to bring them to Ireland."

Melanie Furniss organised a fundraiser with therapy sessions as prizes. She has also been raising money for Bilal, his team and family. "Even when I sent just €25 he would send back a photo to show what he'd bought and a thank-you message held up by one of his kids. Then sometimes he'd be gone for days. We didn't know if he was alive or dead."

L. McCarthy feels like "I'm on a massive learning curve. The whole idea of occupation and colonialism has become clearer. It's like clouds parting. This is a cry for humanity. And an exposé of those who cause human suffering all over the world."

Trish Lavelle says she feels "a sense of burning injustice. Disbelief that such collective brutality can occur at this point in history. On the plus side is the feeling of being part of something bigger: a solidarity movement."

Becky Firmage describes how she tried to focus on politics and the situation in Gaza in the past but only after a massive shift in her own trauma work could she begin to take it in. "During one of the marches in Bantry, a man came up to me with tears in his eyes and asked 'Are you able to hold this much grief?'. I replied, 'Yes, I can. Because I have taken care of mine. Just in time.'"

Peace for Palestine (a fundraiser for MAP) with special guest filmmaker Naser Al-Swirki will take place at DeBarra's Folk Club in Clonakilty on March 13, 8:30pm.

The film 'Gaza' will be shown in Bantry Cinemax on Thursday March 14, 7:30pm, with speakers and Q&A afterwards.



Gaza Skibbereen protest. Pic: Dolph Kessler



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## HISTORY & POLITICS

Kieran Doyle

The Israel invasion of Gaza has caused a huge reaction worldwide. Yet despite the tens of thousands of civilian deaths, it has been allowed to run for five months unabated. Over the next two issues, I want to explore the history and politics of this conflict, to bring a deeper understanding of all the factors that have brought us to the precipice, of what many are calling genocide.

### Who started this conflict and what has been the response so far?

This latest conflict was sparked by the Hamas attack on Israeli villages on October 7, 2023, which resulted in the slaughter of 1,200 Israelis and the kidnapping of 253 of their people.

# Zionism, antisemitism and the Palestine question: Explained (Part I)

The Israeli Defense Forces have since responded using air attacks, artillery shelling and a ground invasion of Gaza resulting in 27,000 deaths, 70 per cent of whom have been civilians. But the conflict has its roots from as far back as 1917 when a British minister, James Balfour, announced that, 'His majesty's Government, view with favour, the establishment in Palestine, the national home for the Jewish people.' Interestingly, the statement also declared, 'That nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. Whether the latter clause was a genuine pursuit or merely window dressing, it has failed to materialise.

### In the Bible, the Jewish homeland was situated within that geographical area in ancient Israel. Surely it makes sense that the Jewish people want to live there?

If only history was so simple, and time stood still. The bible is a tricky document and defies a single categorisation. It's a religious codex, a historical document, a propaganda tool to spread religion (Judaism - Old Testament/Christianity - New Testament), a template for living, a work of parables. But what it's not, is a legal document or land registry. While it is true that there were strong

pockets of Jewish settlements in 1917, there were also Christians, Greek Orthodox and Bedouin nomadic tribes. But at that time, 94 per cent of those lands were occupied by Arab people. The Ottoman Empire held together all these disparate peoples until it was dissolved with its defeat in World War One. However, the ancient pull to this land runs deep for the Jewish people and Orthodox Jews and, many mainstream Israelis believe in the Old Testament doctrine that it's their land. In the book of Genesis, God tells Abraham, 'I will assign this land to your offspring.' Incredulously, references like these have actually formed Israeli settler policy and incursion into the west Bank over decades. However, the sands of civilisation and nationhood had shifted out of all recognition over the last 2,000 years since there were significant Jewish settlements.

### Has the place Zion got anything to do with Zionism and what exactly does that term mean anyway?

Yes it does. Zionism is a political colonial movement that was established in 1897, by Chaim Weizmann, who was born in Russia, and later became president of Israel. It called for a movement for re-establishment of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel. The word 're-establishment' is worth noting. Zion, according to the Bible, was a fortified city in Jerusalem, inhabited by a tribe of people called Jebusites. King David dislodged them in a great battle and Jerusalem then became an economic, cultural and religious centre for the Jews. We must remember, long before Hitler's 'Final Solution' to rid the world of Jews, they had been targeted for centuries. The Christian crusaders, on the way to the Holy Land to battle with the forces of Islam, would routinely rout and massacre Jewish settlements on route. They were a ghettoised people, as students of the Merchant of Venice will remember. When the Spanish expelled the Islamic Moors from Spain in 1492, they expelled the Jews too. The Russians Tsars in the early 20th century, inflicted years of pogroms on the Jews. This list goes on. A search for a homeland, a safe space, was the driving force for this movement, against the backdrop of antisemitic forces that were rife in Europe for centuries. Yet Zionism only works through colonisation, which is why it has been an ongoing project by Israel for 75 years. What makes

Zionism particularly potent is that unlike other colonial models such as British Kenya, or French Vietnam, the Israelis don't rely on the indigenous people for their means of production. Jewish immigrants, as well as Palestine expulsions, have ensured complete control over the lands they have occupied, and this is at the heart of Zionism. The Gaza conflict is a continuum of a Zionist project that pushed the indigenous people from the land.

### Has antisemitism any correlation with being anti-Israel?

Absolutely not. Anti-Semitic is a type of religious sectarianism. To be anti-Semitic is to be prejudicial and discriminatory, against people who practice Judaism. For many it also means a hatred of Jews. The Israeli state, while being a nation where Jews live, is in its own right, a political and military entity, as well as a physical place. To be against the state of Israel's military and geopolitics clearly has no correlation with antisemitism. The politicians of Israel however try to make a connection between the two, to sling mud on opponents who question their policies. That may not stick here, but in nations with significant Jewish diasporas such as the USA, that accusation can damage careers, not to matter how erroneous it is. The latest example of this from an Irish context was when one of the Israeli basketball team players Dor Saar, stated, 'it's known that they [Irish people] are quite antisemitic, and it's no secret.' This comment was made by her, when it emerged there was a strong campaign building, to support a boycott of the fixture. Clearly voicing concern about the escalation about the war is not anti-Semitic, but taken by Rotberg, Saar and co, to be just that. It seemed a very strange comment from John Feehan, chief executive of Basketball Ireland that sport and politics shouldn't mix when, in the week coming up to the game, the women's Israeli basketball team posed for photographs on the playing court with a member of the Israeli Defense Forces, including a picture of guns on the courts. It was a disingenuous comment from Feehan to suggest sport and politics don't mix given how Russia's current expulsion from sporting events is running parallel to this situation. Unfortunately, the team had to play, as it did not receive any support from the governing body, FIBA, to cancel the game. Thus far,

the Israeli team has not been sanctioned for the photos. I do wonder what would have been the response if say, an Iranian or Syrian team did the same?

### So how come Israel has nationhood, yet Palestine amounts to two (occupied) territories?

You've probably all heard the two-state solution being discussed on the airwaves and in the press. This is nothing new. So why not just allow the two peoples to have their own state? On November 29, 1947 the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 that divided Palestine and Israel into two separate territories and in 1948, Israel, backed by the USA declared itself a state. Palestine did not get the same treatment and hence officially is not a sovereign state. The Oslo agreement in 1993, merely gave the PLO (a forerunner before Hamas) some limited autonomy to run the Palestinian territories but superseded by Israeli law and control. To come to this agreement, the PLO, representing the Palestinians, finally accepted the UN resolution that recognised Israel's right to nationhood. In turn, Israel had to accept the Palestinian territories. It was the beginning of what would develop into what has now been categorised by human rights groups (but denied by Israel and the USA) as an apartheid state. Speaking in 2022, Michael Ben-Yair, a former attorney general of Israel, said that "it is with great sadness ... I must also conclude that my country has sunk to such political and moral depths that it is now an apartheid regime". This is particularly true of the West Bank

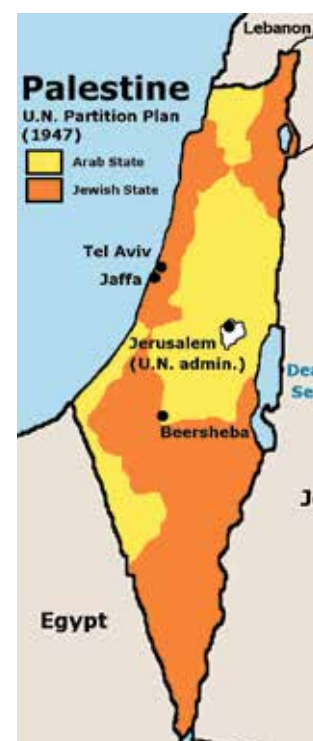
where the Oslo accord has been flagrantly ignored and blatantly broken by decades of Israeli incursion into Palestinian territories in the West Bank, which has deliberately weakened the idea of two states, rendering it an impossible solution. This is not the work of some renegade Israel citizens. It has been supported by continuous Israeli governments that have presided over this land grab and financially backed by the USA. In 1947, Jerusalem was officially deemed an 'international city', but now is under Israeli control and recognised under the Trump regime as the capital of Israel, despite it being in contravention to UN policy. (And still is today in the USA)

### So is the Israel territory, recognised by the UN in 1947, the same country today?

Not at all. It's unrecognisable. Since 1948 Israel has expanded its territory, at times occupied parts of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria (it still occupies the Syrian Golan Heights) and of course much of the Palestinian territories, enabling them to reach beyond its official state borders. For from being defensive manoeuvres, the state of Israel has engaged in war for over 75 years, to expand its territories, thus increasing its land territory and occupying 78 per cent of the region formally known as Palestine. The important thing to note here, is that they didn't merely occupy the land, but forced 720,000 Palestinians from a population of 1.3 million from their homes – which Palestinians today call the Nakba. In Cromwellian fashion, the Israeli militia actually massacred men, women and children in some villages, promoting a massive exodus of Palestinians for fear of similar treatment elsewhere. They were never allowed back to their homes, which were appropriated by the 'settlers' over time.

Next month I will look at the long decades of wars and massacres that have been visited upon the Palestinians and examine if the accusations of war crimes or genocide against the state of Israel are genuine.

*Just a quick shout out for Ellen McWilliams a local West Cork woman who has published a beautifully written memoir/history, called 'Resting Places – On Wounds, War and the Irish Revolution', which is now on sale. McWilliams now lives and lectures in Bristol and brings a unique perspective to the era.*



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## FACT & FOLKLORE

Eugene Daly

A retired primary teacher, West Cork native Eugene Daly has a lifelong interest in the Irish language and the islands (both his parents were islanders). He has published a number of local history books and is a regular contributor on folklore to Ireland's Own magazine. Eugene's fields of interest span local history, folklore, Irish mythology, traditions and placenames.

# Single combat and faction fights

Single combat was a high point of many of the old heroic stories in the Fianna Cycle and Ulster cycle of Irish Mythology. In the Táin conflict between Ulster and Connacht, Cúchulainn fought and killed many of Queen Maeve's warriors. Finally Cúchulainn was pitted against his closest friend, Ferdia, who had joined the Connacht warriors. After three days of terrible fighting Cúchulainn finally defeated his friend and wept tears of sorrow.

From the seventeenth century onwards, heroism in combat came to be expressed by the native Irish population by faction fighting. These contests usually took place at fairs and places of assembly, and involved a large crowd wielding blackthorn sticks or wattles about three feet long with a hard knob at the end. It was similar to a duel with swords, with the stick being used for defence as well

as attack.

The origins of the factions are impossible to trace but they seem to have been a tangle of local loyalties and family feuds. For example, on the afternoon of a fair day, when most of the business was done and, usually some alcohol consumed, a few leading figures belonging to rival factions, would begin to taunt each other. Insults would

be traded, leading to a clash in which increasing numbers of followers would become involved. Terrible injuries, and sometimes even deaths, would occur, and inevitably the losing side would challenge the visitors to fight again on the next fair day.

be traded, leading to a clash in which increasing numbers of followers would become involved. Terrible injuries, and sometimes even deaths, would occur, and inevitably the losing side would challenge the visitors to fight again on the next fair day. In 1802 a faction fight between the O'Callaghan family and a branch of the O'Donovan Scairte took place in the townland of Cooladreen, east of the village of Leap in West Cork. One man died of his injuries; in folklore it is still remembered as 'The Battle of Cooladreen'. Factions had their ritual challenges, their own mocking-songs on their opponents, and even their own battle cries, like 'Fág an Bealach', meaning 'clear the way'.

Just as pointless was the common practice among Anglo-Irish gentry of duelling with pistols. The actual pistols owned by celebrated duellists were sometimes given nicknames – all of which suggested sudden death – such as 'Bás gan Sagart' (Death without a priest), 'Súth an Deataigh' (Soot of Smoke) or 'Crochaire an Chorda' (Hangman with a Cord). Some families were said to have their own hereditary set of pistols handed down from one generation to the next. Also, sets of pistols used to be kept for the convenience of guests, ready to be used if they were needed. In such a case, a gentleman had a drunken quarrel with another and there was a challenge to a duel. Before retir-

ing to sleep he would leave the order: 'Pistols for two, and breakfast for one'.

Those who were fond of duelling were known as 'fire-eaters'. One of the most famous was a Clare man, Seán Bui Mac Conmara (c 1780-1836), who acted as a second for Daniel O'Connell in his famous duel in 1815. He was known in English as 'Fireball' Mac Namara. He was said to have fought no less than forty-five successful contests and, like many expert marksmen, could shoot an apple off the head of a person at quite a distance. He had an estate in Co. Clare and, according to legend, he lost all his property at card-playing, whereupon, he went to Dublin to try his fortune there. He had one good suit of clothes left and he put it on and went to a great ball, at which he saw a man insulting a noble young lady. With drawn sword, Fireball challenged the man, who imprudently trod on Fireball's shoes as a sign that he was accepting the challenge. In the ensuing fight, Fireball killed him, and then left in a hurry lest he be apprehended. The young lady, however, had fallen in love with the dashing stranger, and she enquired after him all over Ireland. Eventually she arrived at Burren Head, Co. Clare, where he was hunting. They married and lived happily together, she using her money to restock his estate with cattle.

Sometime later, she read in a newspaper that her elderly father was challenged to a duel in England by an expert gunman, who was a cousin of the man slain in Dublin by Fireball, and was thirsting for revenge. Fireball travelled to England hurriedly and arrived on the field as the opponent was complaining 'that the cowardly old beggar' had not come out yet. 'Well' said Fireball, 'why not excuse the poor old man?' The duellist reacted angrily. 'One would think', he snapped, 'that you were going to take his place!' 'On the spot', said Fireball. He had been forbidden by law to give a challenge but could accept one, so they squared up to each other. The challenger had the first shot, but missed. Fireball advised him to withdraw, but this request was ignored and Fireball shot at him with devastating accuracy. Fireball left the field immediately, and soon met his wife's parents coming sorrowfully to their downfall, as they thought. 'The



most generous lord to the poor in England is going to his death today', moaned the old lady, 'and all because of a disobedient daughter in Ireland'. 'Not so' said Fireball, 'the business is already completed!' They did not believe him so he returned to Ireland. When they arrived in the field, however, they saw for themselves what had happened and they surmised that the stranger they had met was none other than their errant son-in-law. They sent messengers to search the length and breadth of Ireland until they discovered where he lived at Burren Head. Every year afterwards the kindly old English lord sent nine barrels of gold to the young couple.

All kinds of implements were used in faction fighting and usually large numbers were engaged on both sides. Women aided. Wherever the people were wont to congregate, advantage of the gathering was taken for the faction fight. Even the Mass on Sunday helped to gather the faction fighters, whilst the women brought with them the weapons hidden under their cloaks. In the neighbourhood of Leap there were two opposing clans – the O'Callaghans and the Scairtes. The faction fight of Cooladreen, a townland near Leap, which is since known as the 'Battle of Cooladreen' was fought by two clans already mentioned.

On Stephen's Day 1802, the Wren men of both clans set out early. Each consisted of over twenty men. They both went in all haste towards O'Donovan of Bawnlahan. He was a retired officer and he always gave a guinea to the first Wren men arriving. O'Callaghans were the first to arrive and received the guinea. On their way from the house they met the Scairtes and tit for tat started a faction fight for that day. They fought with stick, stones and anything else they could lay their hands on. A Callaghan struck a Scairte with a stone. A Riabhach, who always supported the Scairtes, took the same stone and with a deadly aim struck the Callaghan who fired it and severely cut him. The fight now continued south through Myross until they came to the sea at 'Traig na mBó'. Here they fought around the shore. Many became terrified and they sent for the priest. He arrived on horseback and he had the greatest difficulty in separating them. He only succeeded by calling to his aid the Myross folk who carried one side in their boats to the opposite side of the harbour – Prison Cove.

The Mass rock is still to be seen there where the congregation gathered on Sunday to hear Mass. When the church was built in Ballyhiloe, near Leap, Mass was no longer celebrated in Cooladreen but great crowds

frequented the place on Sunday and held a pattern there and as a popular place it was chosen for the Battle of Cooladreen.

Great crowds from both sides prepared for battle. They went from wood to wood to cut some heavy sticks. Others among them dressed the sticks and, on the appointed day, both sides repaired early towards Cooladreen. The Callaghans assembled at Connonagh Bridge.

A number of them on their way to the bridge passed by the Church at Ballyhiloe. The famous priest, Father John Power, was at the gate. He advised them to return home. They refused to do so and Father John Power, getting angry, passed some sarcastic remark about the white stockings they were wearing and someone in the Callaghan bunch stated that they had as much right to wear white stockings as his brothers who were also faction fighters. He then and there told them that they would regret not taking his advice on that day.

The women accompanied both clans to the battlefield. The battle started and continued during the day. Women shouted themselves hoarse in urging their side on to battle. The Scairtes were in retreat and the battle swayed northwards to the bog at the eastern end of Corran Lake. Here a Callaghan was knocked with a stone and a Scairte close by ran towards her husband and drank the blood as it flowed from the wound. This woman soon afterwards gave birth to a child whose face bore a remarkable bloodmark.

The Callaghans now began to retreat towards the Mall school closely pursued by the Scairtes. The Callaghans tried to get over the fence directly to the north of the school where they would have suffered severely. Probably the loss of many lives would have occurred were it not for the late John Williamson of Knockskeagh who lived at the Mall. He stood on the fence with a gun and threatened to shoot the first Scairte who tried to get over the fence. This gave the Callaghans an opportunity of retreating towards Tullig, round to Cashel and down to Connonagh pillaging the latter place on their arrival.

## Wildflowers of West Cork talk

Coppeen Archaeological, Historical & Cultural Society presents 'Wildflowers of West Cork', a wonderful slideshow and talk by Finola Finlay, on Wednesday, March 6 at 8:30pm in An Caipín, Coppeen.

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# ‘Walking with Stones’ across West Cork’s fascinating heritage

‘Walking with Stones’ by David Myler is a new book which takes a fresh look at many of the ancient megalithic sites in the West Cork region. Started as a family lockdown activity within their 5km, the Myler’s adventures expanded with the lifting of the pandemic travel restrictions and the book covers a geographic area from Bandon in the East to Beara and Mizen in the west, looking at the rich tapestry of prehistoric landscape on our south coast and some fascinating bronze age burial sites north of Macroom. The final chapter in the book ventures over the county boundary and into Co. Kerry to look at some unique ancient features, both archaeological and natural, in the area near Kenmare.

Dublin native David moved to West Cork in 1989 and settled in the Mealagh Valley area, near Bantry. A local community development association project published ‘An Archaeological Survey of The Mealagh Valley – David Myler’ (1998) and David went on to study archaeology to certificate level at University College Cork. He made some contacts and friends with similar interests as a result of the project and his studies, and the book was published at that time with support of the Heritage Council of Ireland.

In addition to the full colour images of the sites, ‘Walking with Stones’ features many old sketches, photographs and map images to support the site descriptions. Local folklore and handed down local information played a part in the research for this book, as well as David’s own knowledge which he has developed over many years of exploring.

Following David’s own journey, the book includes 150 ancient sites covering the West Cork region. The author divides the sites by chapter starting with the earliest Neolithic tombs, which date from approximately 5000 years ago. He goes on to visit and feature Bronze

Age burial sites such as wedge tombs and boulder burials, stone circles and associated sites, prehistoric rock art, stone rows and ‘gallauns’. Ogham stones, forts and enclosures, tower houses and many other sites of interest are also included in the new book.

In the course of his adventures and site visits David has made a few discoveries, or ‘re-discoveries’ as he prefers to call them, which are now reported and recorded on the national records of sites and monuments. These include some rock art known as ‘incised rings’ north of Bantry. In conversation with a local landowner, he was also told of a previously undocumented ‘cillíneach’. “These burial sites were traditionally used throughout the country to bury unbaptised children and other burials such as famine graves; the sites are often found in old field corners and enclosures, which sometimes were themselves associated with ancient chapel sites,” shares David.

“The West Cork landscape is unique and due to the terrain it holds a very rich diversity of prehistory within the hills, valleys and farms,” he continues. “Sites remain today which were first built by early neolithic settlers, Bronze Age tribes, miners and farmers, Vikings, Anglo-Normans, Irish clans and English settlements. Often sites had multiple phases of use through history.

“The region was also influenced by seafarers travelling along Europe’s western coast. The sites were traditionally protected and respected by local residents and landowners, whose own ancestors themselves often built and lived in the enclosures, ringforts and burial grounds. There was a ‘bad luck’ tradition associated with any interference into the sites themselves, many still



Carrigacappeen, Kenmare

believing in such traditions.”

Only a few of the many sites are in state care. “Most are on privately owned land and the care of these sites varies hugely,” shares David. “Some are sadly neglected and overgrown, which can limit access and make it difficult to get a clear overall view of the remaining features. Of course many landowners do take good care of the sites too and for the most part are happy to share their own stories and permit access provided due care is taken.”

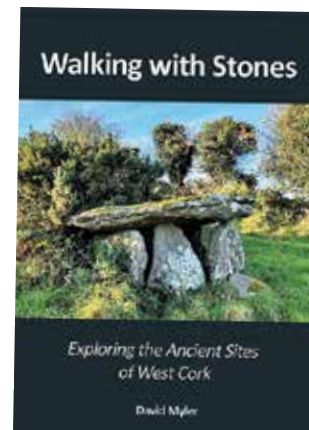
Drombeg Stone Circle, Glandore or the Alter Wedge Tomb, Toormore and many of our castle sites are easily accessible. Many megalithic sites of course are far more difficult to access, and some are quite far from the beaten track. David is keen to stress that permission should be obtained to access any sites and all due care be taken with livestock, gates and fences. Please leave only your footprints behind. The book is not intended as a guidebook, maps which highlight all the sites are available online on the Historic Environment Viewer at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie).

David works as a social care worker in residential adult disability services.

For anyone with an interest in Ireland’s ancient past, “Walking with Stones” is pure gold. 240 pages of accurate information and beautifully illustrated with colour photographs throughout.

“Walking with Stones” is available in selected West Cork bookshops at a cost of €20. It is also available online at [buythebook.ie](http://buythebook.ie) and [thebookshop.ie](http://thebookshop.ie).

David was a guest speaker at the Ballydehob ‘Talks from the Vaults 2024’ series in February and has been invited to give further talks in the coming months to local history and heritage groups details of which will be advertised locally.



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**CROSSBARRY COMMEMORATION**

103rd Anniversary of the Battle  
**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1.30pm**

Guest speaker: **Christopher Ó Sullivan TD**

*Ta fáilte roimh gach éinne*

Eagraithe ag an gCoiste Chomóraidh Chill Mhichíl  
 & Crois a' Bharraigh

**Battle of Crossbarry commemoration**

**F**ianna Fáil TD Christopher Ó Sullivan will be the guest speaker at the 103rd anniversary commemoration of the battle of Crossbarry on Sunday, March 24 next at 1.30pm. Christopher is grandnephew of John D O'Sullivan who fought at the Kilmichael engagement in 1920.

On March 19, 1921, the flying column of 104 IRA volunteers under the command of Tom Barry struck a decisive blow for Irish freedom against British forces at Crossbarry. It was the largest land battle during the war for Independence and arguably the West Cork IRA flying column's finest hour. Over 1000 British soldiers were involved in an encirclement to destroy the column, coming from Bandon, Ball-

incollig, Macroom, Cork, and Kinsale. Such was the strength of the British in men and armaments that the last thing on their mind was an attack from flying column. The column did however attack and smash through the encirclement at several points leaving the British in disarray. The British never disclosed their true casualties but it is believed that close to 40 of them were killed.

Four IRA volunteers were killed in action that morning, Con Daly Ballinascarthy, Jeremiah O Leary, Corrin Leap, Peter Monahan, Kilbrittan and Charlie Hurley, Baurleigh, Kilbrittan.

Tá fáilte roimh gach éinne go dtí Crois a' Bharraigh ar an 24ú lá de Mhí na Márta seo chugainn ag 1.30pm.



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**A modest proposal for change in rural schools**

best, considered 'first amongst equals'. Consequently, the practical issues that arise when governance and day to day management issues arise are often complex and solutions are hard to find. And while the Education Act (1998) gave principals 'all such powers as are necessary and expedient' subject to the policies of the BOM and the directives of the DES, in my experience, such powers are wholly dependent on the co-operation and trust of colleagues. Those who 'lose the dressing room' to use that well-known sporting analogy can never reclaim it, and, almost inevitably, fail. Resignation is, naturally, a difficult pill to swallow, which leaves the principal in trouble with little choice but to carry on. In that doomsday scenario nobody really wins and schools get into a tail-spin of decline from which it can be extremely hard to recover. The only escape route currently available is when a new post is sanctioned in a school. In that instance, and, if a principal applies to a board for permission to step down from his/her role and agreement is reached, then a board may advertise for a new principal. This is an opportunity not to be missed if it occurs and the only exit route for a principal who is seeking to revert back to being an ordinary staff member. Alternatively, some may seek leadership advice from theoretical models and from the many 'gurus' out there. However, these 'experts', generally, apply 'one size fits all' solutions to widely differing contexts. So, with respect to the literature which fills the bookshelves with well-packaged strategies for leaders, it is worth remembering the, tongue in cheek, West Cork definition of an expert, i.e., '...anyone who comes from more than fifty miles away!'

Fortunately, most schools are effective or, at the very least, do some things very well but some are more difficult to manage than others. Some principals struggle at times. In really good schools, and some are small schools, principals empower staff to use their specialised knowledge or expertise without much regard

to status. In that type of scenario, the whole is often greater than the sum of all the individual parts. These effective principals are people-centred and outcomes focused and can think and learn on their feet. Most importantly, they all seem to set about building a positive environment for learning as a deliberate act and manage to win the trust of their colleagues and the support of their communities by working hard and leading by example. Less effective principals pray to lesser gods, seek popularity mainly and advance *à la carte* leadership styles which serve no one except their own faltering egos. They like big gestures and stage managed events and children may not always be the first priority in the internal decision making process.

The Department (DES) cannot solve these matters but does work to promote and support school leadership. As far back as 1994 the DES Report of the National Education Convention made some very valid points on school leadership which need to be recalled. Citing the relevant literature, the report said that a strong relationship existed between positive school leadership and school effectiveness. The report went on to describe the successful principal as providing skilled instructional leadership, creating a supportive working environment and a positive school climate, placing a particular emphasis on teaching and learning and maximising achievement, setting and articulating clear goals and expectations for colleagues and for students, establishing good performance monitoring systems, promoting continuous professional development for all and encouraging strong parental involvement and identification with school goals.

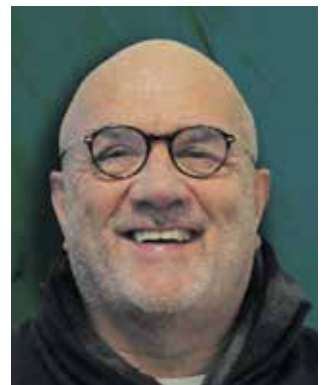
That is all very well but we can't ignore the elephants in the room and continue to accept that one size fits all solutions are possible. Schools are not homogeneous in any way. Though bound by a common curriculum, they operate in many different contexts relating to size, status,

ethos and tradition. Many of our schools, especially in rural areas, remain small in size. This structural issue is not easy to change overnight but, as a means to promote an initial, modest proposal for change, let us look at what could be done without major investment.

• Firstly, small schools can be, arguably, reconfigured to facilitate new more innovative models of leadership along lines often advocated by the IPPN and others in the past. However, this needs to be done strategically and, initially perhaps, on a pilot basis with boards of management structures as a possible starting point. In rural Ireland, parish structures remain a cornerstone of society and this existing structure could, in my view, be used to facilitate more centralised school management as a starting point to increased efficiencies. It is hardly necessary or even easy to have a multiplicity of school boards in parishes where two three or more small schools exist. Surely a parish board of management representative of all local schools is possible?

• Secondly, in the parishes with two small schools they could easily be re-imagined as Junior and Senior schools with one principal, one board and one parents' association, i.e. a split-campus parish school perhaps? This type of solution means more streamlined services, a clearer parish identity, more choice with respect to the allocation of teachers, shared resources and an administrative principal if the magic enrolment number (177 normally but 114 when schools include a Special or ASD unit) can be reached. This would be a better way to maintain parish identity, in my view, than the current alternative, i.e., having two or more local schools trying to outdo each other in the cause of annual enrolments. There's no sense to competing, and, co-operation, as suggested above, is possible without going down the emotive road of amalgamations and closures.

A reconfiguration of this nature also allows for the

**EDUCATION****Dr Michael Crowley**

Michael Crowley, Ed.D is a retired educationalist. In his career he has worked in primary education as a teacher/principal, in teacher training, in teacher professional development, in school evaluation and in adult education. His particular areas of interest are the history of education, school leadership and change management. He still works, from time to time, in an advisory/consultancy capacity with schools.

possibility of an overworked or overwhelmed principal to step down from his/her role and revert back to regular teaching duties without losing any previous allowances. Reconfiguration makes sense because the educational landscape of rural Ireland will look different in 20 years from now and many small schools will no longer exist. They are, from a DES perspective, not cost effective, require experienced teachers because multi-grade class groupings make curriculum delivery challenging, and, from a managerial perspective, problems, when they arise, can have a disproportionate effect on the social cohesion of the whole school community. Consequently, this is the time to think about possibilities that will allow for parish communities to survive with a distinct and strong local identity in larger units – it will be too late when the wolf is at the door! Maybe your parish schools would benefit from the above suggestions or, at the very least, from an open and honest conversation about them?



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**Local Election Candidate for Skibbereen - West Cork**

**E**ducation is a complex and sometimes chaotic field of enterprise because all schools, today, are at the centre of a vast network of partners and stakeholders. With respect to the chain of command in schools, for example, there are many actors on the stage and even more on the wings. The State, in line with the Constitution, 'provides for' education using many proxy agencies. These include patronage bodies, of which the Catholic Church is the dominant one; the NCCA, which develops and delivers the prescribed curriculum content; the CPSMA which supports school Boards and Principals; the NCSE which is responsible for Special Educational supports; the Inspectorate which is responsible for quality control along with a whole range of Civil Service divisions which deal with administration, infra-structural or governance matters. Throw in unions, support services, teachers, parents and pupils and the possibility of misunderstandings, an understandable aspect of human interaction, seems almost inevitable. In all schools, day to day management

is in the hands of a Principal and they are the first port of call in most situations. Many principals are also full-time teachers and only ordinary schools with an enrolment of 177 pupils or schools with a special education or autism unit with an enrolment of 114 pupils can appoint a full-time administrative principal. In small schools with multi-grade classes, all principals still teach except for one day a week when they can have substitute cover to allow them attend to their administrative duties. Departmental statistical data on schools (2023) confirms that, in parts of rural Ireland (Kerry, the West of Ireland, Donegal) up to 80 per cent of schools remain in the four teacher or less category. Principals in these schools are busy people, keeping many balls in the air, and must look on their full-time administrative colleagues with envy.

Internally as well, schools have become communities of equals where everything has to be negotiated. The old tradition of the 'master' whose word was final is, well and truly, over. In schools today, principals are, at

# Measures needed to guarantee voting accessibility for people with disabilities

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is calling for appropriate measures to be taken to remove all barriers to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in the electoral process in what is a very big year ahead for elections and referenda in Ireland.

In the February 2020 General Election, 29 buildings servicing 43 polling stations were not accessible to wheelchair users, according to the National Disability Authority's Overview Paper of UNCRPD article 29 in Ireland.

Furthermore, a survey carried out by IWA member Dr Vivian Rath, Trinity College, and Maria Ní Fhlatharta of Disabled Women Ireland, in the aftermath of that election, showed that one in every two disabled people who responded faced barriers to voting.

Dr Rath, an expert on the political participation of people with disabilities, and who uses a mobility scooter, found himself without access to an

accessible polling booth despite a prior request to the returning officer during the 2020 General Election.

Their survey found that the obstacles people with disabilities encountered included lack of easy-to-read candidates' information leading up to the election, inaccessible polling booths, not being able to get into the polling station and difficulties with the tactile voting template for the visually impaired.

Joan Carthy, National Advocacy Manager with Irish Wheelchair Association said that if the government truly wants to include people with disabilities in the electoral process these issues must be addressed.

She added: "It's hard to believe that people with disabilities are still encountering multiple challenges relating to accessibility of polling stations and information material. We are being treated as second class citizens and it is just not acceptable."

She pointed out that government is failing in its commitment under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which Ireland ratified in 2018.

Article 29 of the UNCRPD,

stipulates that state parties should; ensure that voting procedures, facilities, and materials are appropriate and easy to use for persons with disabilities; and protect the rights of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot.

Dr Vivian Rath emphasised: "The right to political participation, including the right to vote and to stand for election is enshrined in several international human rights treaties. Being prevented from voting the same as your friends and neighbours acts to isolate you from your community."

"In other countries they have introduced universally designed polling booths which are suitable for all. Why can't this be done in Ireland?"

He added: "I am very eager to see that people with disabilities firstly have the opportunity to vote and secondly that they use that opportunity to bring about the change they want to see. This can only happen if we have a fully accessible voting system. People with disabilities should have the same voting opportunities as every other voter as is our right under the UNCRPD."

Dr Rath believes that the gov-

ernment and the country need to take a wider view around voting and voting rights, and not just regarding access to voting but also around people with disabilities being able to run as candidates, engage in campaigning and being involved in political parties.

"People with disabilities make up 22 per cent of the population yet they have identified as having extremely low participation in public and political life. We need to consider what are the consequences of not having people with disabilities involved. They do not have the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process around issues that concern them."

While the option of a postal vote is there for people with disabilities Joan Carthy says it should only be used if a person's personal circumstances prevent them from being able to go to a polling station, rather than a polling station or materials not being accessible.

"There is no excuse for these barriers. There are more than enough options within communities to secure venues which are fully accessible," she stressed.



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# Ireland's early spiritual landscape illuminated in new radio series

**Social Democrats**

**Ann Bambury**

Local Election Candidate  
**Bandon-Kinsale**

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In a time when much of Europe grappled with the aftermath of the fall of Rome, Ireland emerged as a beacon of light, earning the moniker 'Insula Sanctorum' or the Island of Saints. Amidst this historical backdrop, LifeFM proudly presents 'Early Christian Saints', an eight-part radio series that delves into the lives of the extraordinary individuals who shaped the spiritual landscape of Ireland between the third and

fifth centuries.

Ireland is unique in religious history for introducing Christianity without bloodshed. Produced by Anna Daly, 'Early Christian Saints' promises an immersive journey exploring the rich tapestry of evidence that suggests Ireland was home to hundreds of saints during this transformative period. The series sheds light on the profound impact these saints had on the people, lands, and locations

they encountered. Each episode will provide an in-depth look at the lives of these remarkable individuals, unravelling the threads of their connections with various geographical locations throughout Ireland.

"While a lot of the saints had connections with multiple locations, many often had a special bond with a particular place, a connection that resonates even today," says Anna Daly, the producer of the series. 'Early

Christian Saints' is set to air weekly on Thursdays, beginning April 7, at 15:05 pm on 93.1FM. Listeners can expect a captivating exploration of Ireland's early Christian history. In contemplating the lessons for the 21st century, the series poses a thought-provoking question: How can we learn from the Irish who saved civilization centuries ago? The answer, it suggests, lies in faith.

## Adrian Carton de Wiart: The story of the unkillable soldier



### 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.

British soldier Adrian Carton de Wiart lived through some of the most remarkable war stories and events ever recorded shares Shane Daly earning himself the moniker 'The Unkillable Soldier', a title he carried with him into his retirement in Macroom.

Born in Brussels in 1890, De Wiart was the son of Léon Constant Ghislain Carton de Wiart, a well-known and connected lawyer and Ernestine Wenzig, whose mother was Irish.

A combatant in WW1, The Boers War and WW2, de Wiart served four decades in the army, during which time he was shot 11 times: in the face, skull, stomach, ankle, leg, hip, ear, groin, the eye, the hand and the elbow.

He was blinded by the gunshot wound to his eye, leaving him with a trademark eyepatch for the rest of his life.

The bullet to his left hand, sustained in Ypres, on the Western Front, during WW1,

completely destroyed three of his fingers and left two hanging on by a shred of skin. When the doctor refused to remove the fingers, which he felt could be salvaged, De Wiart is recorded as ripping them off himself with his right hand. This action meant he eventually lost his arm, leaving him with his other trademark, an empty uniform sleeve.

De Wiart survived his army base being bombed, enemy fire on a plane he was a passenger in, and a plane crash. After crash landing in Italy during WW2, he was taken as a prisoner of war. As a senior member of the British army at the time, he became the highest ranking POW in history. He and his fellow POWs made five escape attempts. During one attempt they spent seven months digging a tunnel, succeeded in breaking free, but were recaptured after a week. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest decoration for valour in the British armed forces, acknowledging his bravery.

Unencumbered by any ideological inclination, and narcotised by the smell of blood, de Wiart was doggedly loyal to any arbitrary cause that would pitch him against armed adversaries. In other words, he was the field-marshal's dream and the pacifist's nightmare. He was also utterly, resolutely, 'unkillable'.

De Wiart was brought up in Surrey, England, and then Cairo, where his father was a lawyer, magistrate, and a director of the Cairo Electric Railways and Heliopolis Oases Company and well-connected in Egyptian governmental circles. Adrian Carton de Wiart learned to speak Arabic during his time here.

After attending boarding school in England, he went to Balliol College, Oxford, leaving around 1899, just before or during the Second Boer War, to join the British Army. Failing his law preliminary, de Wiart was drawn to the Foreign Legion "that romantic refuge of the misfits" but the outbreak of

the Boer War sparked an epiphany in him: "At that moment I knew, once and for all, that I was determined to fight, and I didn't mind who or what. If the British didn't fancy me I would offer myself to the Boers."

In South Africa, de Wiart joined up with a bunch of local corps, during which time he copped the first of several bullets, this one in the groin.

"I do not think it possible for anyone to have had a duller dose of war," he later wrote, having been invalidated back to the nursing home on Park Lane, London, that would become his second home over the course of the next few years. "I returned to England bereft of glory, my spirits deflating with every mile."

Once recuperated, he journeyed to Egypt to ask his father's permission to commit his life to martial endeavour. After some persuasion, de Wiart senior gave his blessing, and shortly afterwards the young, thrill-seeking militiaman arrived back in Cape Town to join the Imperial Light Horse Colonial Corps, who promoted him to corporal within days, then demoted him within 24 hours for threatening to punch his sergeant. "My vivid imaginings of charging Boers single-handed and dying gloriously with a couple of V.C.s were becoming a little hazy." Before long, he was shipped to the 4th Dragoon Guards and stationed in India.

De Wiart's time in India generated some happy memories, but not for the first time in his life, the lack of life-threatening combat left him knee-deep in nihilism. "India for me was a glittering sham coated with dust, and I hoped I should never see her again," he wrote.

Eventually returning to what had become his motherland and joining his regiment in Brighton, de Wiart distracted himself from the vacuous banality of peacetime by taking part in polo matches and making occasional jaunts to Austria, Hungary, and what was then Bavaria, to spend the interwar years shooting deer, chamois and pheasants.



Adrian Carton de Wiart as painted by Sir William Orpen, 1919 (National Portrait Gallery, London)

Accepting an adjutancy with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, his plans changed in 1914 when his father broke the news that he had been ruined financially due to the crash in Egypt. Without an allowance and soldiering in England not being well paid enough to sustain him, de Wiart again sought active service abroad. His intended destination this time, in 1914, was Somaliland, where a low-key war effort was being waged against Mohammad 'Mad Mullah' bin Abdullah. By his own admission, de Wiart's "cup of misery overflowed" when he discovered, during a stop-off in Malta, that England had declared war on Germany. In light of this development, his forthcoming station of duty "felt like playing in a village cricket match instead of a test". De Wiart's hunger to have his mortality tested in new and interesting ways was soon sated though, during a testy battle with bin Abdullah's Dervish forces. One bullet whistled through his rolled-up uniform sleeve; the next went through

his eye, the next gunshot required the plucking of a bullet splinter from his elbow, the one after that required the services of a nearby surgeon to stitch up his ear.

His last Polish aide de camp was Prince Karol Mikołaj Radziwiłł, member of the Radziwiłł family who inherited a large 500,000 acre estate in eastern Poland. They became friends and Carton de Wiart was given the use of a large estate called Prostyń, in the Pripet Marshes, a wetland area larger than Ireland and surrounded by water and forests. In this location Carton de Wiart spent the rest of the interwar years. In his memoirs he said "In my fifteen years in the marshes, I did not waste one day without hunting".

After 15 years, Carton de Wiart's peaceful Polish life was interrupted by the looming war when he was recalled in July 1939 and appointed to his old job, as head of the British Military Mission to Poland. Poland was attacked by Nazi Germany on September 1 and,

on September 17, the Soviets allied with Germany, attacked Poland from the east. Soon Soviet forces overran Prostyń and Carton de Wiart lost all his guns, fishing rods, clothing, and furniture. They were packed up by the Soviets and stored in the Minsk Museum, but destroyed by the Germans in later fighting. De Wiart never saw the area again, but as he said "they did not manage to take my memories". De Wiart was posted back to the command of the 61st Division, which was soon transferred to Northern Ireland as a defence against invasion. However, following the arrival of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall as Commander-in-Chief in Northern Ireland, Carton de Wiart was told that he was too old to command a division on active duty. This was followed by command of the Central Norwegian Expeditionary Forces, in its hopeless attempt to hold Trondheim. A year later, he was sent to head the Military Mission in Yugoslavia but, on the way, his plane crashed into the sea and after swimming ashore he was made a prisoner of the Italians. In August 1943, the Italians released him and sent him to Lisbon to negotiate their surrender terms.

From October 1943 until retirement in 1946, De Wiart was the Government's Military Representative with General Chiang Kai-Shek in China. On his retirement, he bought Aghinish House in Macroom and moved there with his wife. His awards include the Victoria Cross, Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, Companion of the Order of the Bath, Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, Distinguished Service Order (Mentioned in Despatches), Virtuti Militari (Poland) Croix de Guerre (Belgium) Legion of Honour (France) and Croix de Guerre (France).

After a lifetime of brave battles, Adrian Carton de Wiart passed away on June 5, 1963 and now rests in Killinardish Churchyard, Carrigrohid, County Cork.

# West Cork Distillers crowned Large Cork Company of the Year 2024



Conor Healy, Cork Chamber CEO; John O'Connell, General Manager and Director West Cork Distillers and Sinead Scully, Head of Large Business, Vodafone Ireland.  
Pic: Michael O'Sullivan /OSM PHOTO

In a resounding testament to excellence and innovation, West Cork Distillers has been crowned the Large Cork Company of the Year 2024 at the prestigious Cork Chamber awards. This accolade marks a significant milestone in the company's journey, recognising West Cork Irish Whiskey's outstanding contribution to the local economy, commitment to quality, and remarkable growth in the spirits industry.

All qualifying entrants to the Cork Company of the Year Awards progress through a thorough judging process which is managed by an experienced panel of business leaders.

Founded in 2003 by childhood friends from Union Hall, John O'Connell, Denis McCarthy, and Ger McCarthy, West Cork Distillers embarked on a

mission to craft premium Irish whiskey that honoured tradition while embracing innovation. Over the years, their dedication to producing exceptional spirits has propelled the company to the forefront of the global whiskey market. The distillery is now in the completion stages of a significant expansion which will enable production capacity to increase by 400 per cent during 2024 and brings additional employment to the area.

West Cork Distillers currently employs a team of around 150 employees, a jump from 80 employees working at the company during the pandemic.

The business also has built a significant international business and in 2024 has grown its commercial team across key markets such as North America, Europe, Middle East, and Africa

and the Asia Pacific region.

Beyond its commitment to quality, innovation and growth, West Cork Distillers has remained deeply rooted in its local community, embodying the spirit of Cork through its support of local initiatives and sustainability efforts.

Receiving the Large Cork Company of the Year award is a testament to West Cork Distillers' unwavering dedication to excellence, innovation, and community.

In accepting this prestigious accolade, John O'Connell, Co-Founder of West Cork Distillers, expressed gratitude for the support of the Cork Chamber and the local community, emphasising the company's commitment to continued growth and excellence.

## Kerry College a hidden gem for students and career changers

Kerry College Open Week 2024 in February welcomed over 2,000 students, career changers and jobseekers across its five campus locations in Listowel, Clash Road, Killorglin and Monavalley.

At Monavalley Campus, visitors were offered hands-on experiences, with practical skills-based demonstrations throughout the day. Activities

ranged from stone carving to virtual reality experiences overlooking Tralee from the Wind Turbine training tower. Kerry College's state-of-the-art Digital Skills Centre allowed visitors to record radio sound bites or vox pops.

The highlight of the week was the Amazon Web Services Fibre Splicing Workshop. This fantastic program enabled learners to develop their skills

and knowledge further. It also catered to potential career changers who were interested in learning more about this exciting and growing industry.

"I never realised that these courses and facilities existed on my doorstep! Kerry College is a hidden gem." said one attendee.

Monavalley Campus Manager Con O'Sullivan reflected on the record-breaking attendance during the Open Week and was



happy to see huge demand for direct routes to work and career progression.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for Monavalley Campus to showcase the extensive catalogue of courses on offer including, IT, Healthcare,

Construction, Digital Media, Broadcast Production, Business, Tourism and of course Apprenticeships. It was great to have so many Kerry, Cork and Limerick based schools visit."

There are so many more courses available at Kerry

College from outdoor education to beauty. For those interested in Part-Time and Full-Time Courses and Apprenticeships, more information is available at [www.kerrycollege.ie](http://www.kerrycollege.ie) or by contacting the Admissions Team at 066 714 96 96 or 064 6622593.

## #makingithappen

# County Cork gears up for Local Enterprise Week as 2,000 attendees anticipate insightful events

Local entrepreneurs rally for growth – over 160 jobs created in 2023

In the lead-up to this month's Local Enterprise Week 2024, there's a palpable buzz in County Cork as 2,000 local business enthusiasts are tipped to secure their spots for a week filled with informative and transformative events.

At the launch of Local Enterprise Week, which runs from March 4-8, Cork County Council's Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) shared positive outcomes from 2023, revealing that businesses in the region were approved over €2million in grant aid and financial supports. More than half of this was for business expansion, with micro enterprise clients in manufacturing and internationally trading services creating 167 new jobs in the past twelve months.

The announcement took centre stage at the launch of Local Enterprise Week which will offer a variety of events including conferences, workshops, seminars, and business advice clinics, catering to both established business owners and those considering entrepreneurship.

Over the past year, Cork County LEOs organised more

than 200 business training courses, reaching 2,700 business owners. Furthermore, 226 entrepreneurs participated in eighteen specialist 'Start Your Own Business' Programmes, with many already planning to create jobs in the region this year. More than 1,000 business owners also benefitted from free business advice clinics and mentoring sessions on various topics, including costing, marketing, exports, and more.

Local Enterprise Week will feature events covering topics such as 'Steps to Self-Employment', and 'Unlocking Competitiveness for North Cork Businesses at Mallow GAA Complex', 'Peak Performance for Business with Derval O'Rourke and Rob Heffernan' at Castlemartyr Resort and 'Benefits of Business Mentoring' at The Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen among others.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn welcomed the return of Enterprise Week for 2024, "County Cork is on the up, and we're rallying behind our visionary business leaders and entrepreneurs who are igniting job creation and propelling their business forward. Local Enterprise Week is our grand showcase, inviting over 2,000 attendees to explore the myriad of supports that our Local Enterprise Offices provide."

Echoing the Mayor's



Jamie Cuthbert, LEO Cork North and West, Kevin Curran, Head of Enterprise LEO Cork North and West, Sharon Corcoran, Director Economic Development and Tourism Cork County Council Council, Paula McGovern, Wizard & Grace Candles and Seán O'Sullivan, Head of Enterprise South Cork. Photo Darragh Kane.

sentiment, Chief Executive of Cork County Council Valerie O'Sullivan said, "Our bond with the business community is unbreakable, and we are honoured to tailor the week's events to their needs and aspirations. As we gear up for Local Enter-

prise Week, we look forward to showcasing the best in business that County Cork has to offer."

Local Enterprise Week is a national event across 31 LEOs, targeting aspiring entrepreneurs, start-ups, and growing SMEs. The week showcases various

events, fostering business growth, innovation, and networking.

Most events are not just enriching but also free of charge, making this week an unmissable opportunity for businesses. Register now through Cork's

Local Enterprise Office websites [www.localenterprise.ie/CorkNorthandWest/](http://www.localenterprise.ie/CorkNorthandWest/) and [www.localenterprise.ie/South-Cork/](http://www.localenterprise.ie/South-Cork/) Follow LEO on social media or search #localenterprise for the latest updates.

## Tweeting Goddess Samantha Kelly to speak in Clonakilty

Global keynote speaker and Tweeting Goddess, Samantha Kelly, will be the guest speaker at an upcoming Network Ireland West Cork event hosted in Clonakilty on March 19.

A renowned expert in X, formally Twitter and LinkedIn,

with a wealth of knowledge in all things social media strategy, Samantha joins Network Ireland West Cork, a dedicated non-profit organisation committed to supporting and empowering women in business, to host an event that promises to be a transformative experience

for women professionals in the region.

With an impressive following of over 70k on X, Samantha has helped countless businesses elevate their online presence and foster thriving communities around their brands. Samantha is also the author of 'The Little Book of Twitter Magic'. A multi-award-winning entrepreneur, Samantha will share invaluable insights on how to stand out, influence, and cultivate valuable relationships on X and LinkedIn.

Speaking ahead of the event, she said: "I'm really looking forward to heading to West Cork to meet with the wonderful Network Ireland West Cork community. West Cork is beautiful and I love spending time there. I will share tips to



help people to make relevant connections online – tips that have helped me to build my brand and widen my network to an International audience."

Sandra Maybury, President of Network Ireland West Cork


Branch said: "We are thrilled to have a speaker of Samantha's calibre – she has a wealth of experience and knowledge to share. This is an excellent opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and

gain valuable insights. As someone that has presented on global stages, Samantha's event in Clonakilty is likely to be hugely popular. I encourage all our members and those interested to hear from her, to register as soon as possible. This is a not-to-be-missed event."

The event is scheduled for 6pm-8pm on Tuesday, March 19 at the Regus West Cork, which is located in Unit A of the West Cork Business & Technology Park in Clonakilty.


This event is free to Network Ireland members and a nominal fee of €25 applies to non-members. All are welcome.

For more information and to reserve your ticket, please visit [www.networkireland.ie/events](http://www.networkireland.ie/events)



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# Local Enterprise Week 2024

Local Enterprise Office  
Cork North & West

North: [022] 43235

West: [023] 8834700

[www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest/](http://www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandwest/)

## Monday 4th March

### A guide to LEO Financial Supports and Winning Grant Applications

Time 6.30pm-9.30pm; Location: Online

Join the LEO Cork North and West Executive Team for an informative presentation on the Financial Supports available through your Local Enterprise Office.

### Business Advice Clinic Appointments

Time All Day; Location: Online

Get general business advice whether you are an entrepreneur with a business idea, a start-up or a growing and established small business.

### How to Leverage Traditional Social Media to Grow your Audience and Generate Leads and Sales

Time 3.00pm-6.00pm; Location: Celtic Ross Hotel

How do you stop the social media scroll and connect with customers online? In this practical workshop, you will create a social media action plan to help increase your online customer engagement.

## Tuesday 5th March

### West Cork Women In Business Management Development Programme

Time March 5th, 12th, 20th, 26th, April 9th, 16th and 23rd

The programme is designed for those who have an existing business which has been trading for over 18 months.

### Business Advice Clinic Appointments

Time All Day; Location: Online

Get general business advice whether you are an entrepreneur with a business idea, a start-up or a growing and established small business.

### Trading Online Voucher Information Webinar

Time 9.30am-11.30am; Location: Online

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is a financial incentive/grant for small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online.

### 10 Steps to Self Employment - 2 Day Programme

Time 10.00am-1.00pm; 5th&7th March; Location: Online

Have a business idea or a few business ideas? Have you always wanted to be an entrepreneur and to start your own business? If so, this short 2 morning programme is ideal for you.

### Start Your Own Business Programme

Time 6.30pm-9.30pm; Tuesday 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th March, 2nd 9th & 16th April 2024 Location: Online

This intense 7 evening online programme is for someone with a business idea who wants to research their idea in detail. It would also suit someone who has recently started their own business within the last 6-12 months.

### How to Plan for Export Success

Time 2.00pm - 4.30pm; Location: The Kingsley Hotel, Cork

Join LEO Cork City, LEO South Cork, & LEO Cork North & West for this dynamic seminar that focuses attention on how to begin your export journey to ensure ultimate success in your chosen overseas market.

## Wednesday 6th March

### Unlocking Competitiveness for North Cork Businesses

Time 10.30am-1.30pm; Location: Mallow GAA Complex

This event will include keynote Speaker Jim Power, Economist, Author & Lecturer at UCD's Smurfit Business School. The event will help businesses understand the business landscape and cost saving competitiveness supports

### Business Advice Clinic Appointments

Time All Day; Location: LEO Office, Spa House Mallow

Get general business advice whether you are an entrepreneur with a business idea, a start-up or a growing and established small business.

### NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT EVENT - Understand and Leverage Future Trends for your Business

Time 2.00pm-4.00pm; Location: Online

Two international experts on Future Trends will present to a national audience as part of Enterprise Week 2024.

## Thursday 7th March

### NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT EVENT - The Sustainability Imperative for your Business Success

Time: 12.00pm-1.30pm; Location: In Person & Live Stream

What is Business Sustainability and why does it matter to your business? A live audience with Liz Bonnin, world renowned Natural History and Environmental Broadcaster

### Grow Your Creative Business

Time: 10.00am-1.30pm. Location: Oriel House, Ballincollig  
Thursday 7th, 14th March, 11th & 18th April

Grow your Creative Business' training is a MUST for those working in gift, craft, design, textiles, skincare, homewares and creatives who need a business focus for their artistic enterprise

### Business Advice Clinic Appointments

Time All Day; Location: Online

Get general business advice whether you are an entrepreneur with a business idea, a start-up or a growing and established small business.

### All in a Day's Work

Time 12.30pm-4.30pm; Location: Vertigo, Cork Co Co, County Hall Campus

A transformative session designed to empower your business across Better Business, Lean & Digital Productivity, Leadership, Innovation, and Sustainability.

## Friday 8th March

### Benefits of Business Mentoring & LEO supports to accelerate your business

Time: 12.00pm-2.00pm; Location: Ludgate, Skibbereen

Join us for a business Lunch and Learn meeting to explore the Benefits of Business Mentoring, with seasoned LEO Mentor, Grainne Carmody of Carmody Consultancy.



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## ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference



This month Birdwatch West Cork Committee Chair **Jez Simms** shares one of her favourite birds, the Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*).

When I was very young and first started looking through bird books and field guides, I noticed one fantastic looking exotic creature which the books described as a very rare spring visitor. It became my dream to see one, especially to look out in the garden and find one hopping about on my lawn. This bird is the Hoopoe. It visits our shores in small numbers every year, especially on coastal headlands like the Mizen and Galley Head, and Islands like Cape Clear. They will also venture further inland and have been seen in gardens in Ballydehob, Clonakilty, Schull and quite a few other West Cork towns. Sadly, this does not include my garden here in West Cork yet. However, my ambition was achieved when I lived in Kenya and the locally

## A remarkable bird: The Hoopoe

breeding African Hoopoe (*Upupa africana*) used to feed right outside my window; a huge thrill for me. The African Hoopoe is very similar to its European cousin but is much richer in hue, almost orange with a solid black crest and slightly different wing pattern, as the photos illustrate.

In our area Hoopoes can be found from as early as February but most arrive in March and April with the odd bird occurring in the autumn. They are best found when the winds are southerly and there has been a good blow with a bit of rain or mist overnight. When that happens keep an eye out the next morning.

In recent years the number of Hoopoes visiting has increased along with increases in several other southern species, possibly due to climate change. A pair of Hoopoes even bred in the midlands of the UK last year so one day like the Collared Dove and Little Egret before them, they might become resident here in Ireland. They are currently to be found breeding across southern Europe and would be commonly seen if you holiday in France or Spain. Once, when I was in Mallorca, they were nesting in front of the hotel reception; it made my holiday! In the winter they head to Africa and occasionally meet their cousins down there.

The Collins Field guide describes them as 'one of the most striking and distinctive birds of the whole region, buffy pink with black and white striped broadly rounded wings and crown with an erectile crest like an Indian chief. Need I say more. Like the cuckoo its name is onomatopoeic and its 'oop oop' call is a very evocative sound, especially in the dry African or southern European bush, it is even reflected in its scientific genus 'Upupa'.

I hope you may one day get to see, or have already seen, this remarkable bird and that you too will become enthralled by it. In my home I have Hoopoe prints and paintings, stained glass, carved wooden ones and even a plush toy that goes 'oop oop' when squeezed. Come to think of it, I have not seen it for a while, I think my wife might have hidden it.

### BirdWatch Ireland West Cork Branch News

Upcoming events being held by the Branch are:

**Sunday March 3:** Timoleague and Courtmacsherry  
**Thursday, March 14:** AGM and talk on Barn Owl by Alan McCarthy  
Visit our website [www.bird-watchirelandwestcork.ie](http://www.bird-watchirelandwestcork.ie) for



Above is African Hoopoe (*Upupa africana*) and below is Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*). Both pics: Jez Simms



more information about these events. To receive news and reminders about our events join our mailing list by sending an email to [mailinglist@bird-watchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:mailinglist@bird-watchirelandwestcork.ie). For more information about the

Branch, contact Fiona O'Neill at [secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie](mailto:secretary@birdwatchirelandwestcork.ie). Facebook @BirdWatchIrelandWestCork Twitter @BWIWestCork

## €1.25m boost for West Cork Greenways

West Cork greenways have been given a €1.25 million funding boost to further connections from Cork to Kinsale and Cork to Schull, marking a pivotal moment for the communities and the local environment, Cork South West Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan says.

Greenways have transformed communities across Ireland, offering both locals and visitors alike the opportunity to engage with the natural landscape in a sustainable manner.

"It's brilliant to finally see progress happening in Cork southwest," Deputy O'Sullivan said.

"This is a significant sum of money, which shows that government are really serious about delivering these green road projects."

Places like Dungarvan, Kerry, and the Western Greenway in Mayo have already reaped the benefits of such projects.

The Gullane/Joe Walsh walkway has received an additional €800,000 funding boost, while the Glasslyn road development in Bandon is set to connect with the Claire O'Leary walk, offering a safe pedestrian route from Bandon to the end of the Claire O'Leary walk.

"This is a very important development," O'Sullivan said.

"I've been advocating for these projects so I'm overjoyed they are being driven forward. This investment not only signifies a step forward in promoting outdoor activities, but it also fosters community well-being and environmental sustainability in West Cork."

## Clochan Uisce: River rewilding

River rewilding is a term that has become synonymous with the return of healthy rivers, and healthy rivers are critical for life on our planet. Our rivers are powerful aquatic architects and ecosystem engineers but over time we have broken the natural flow of water from source to sea. Our rivers have been ditched, drained, dammed and diverted, all of which have left a large majority of them in a poor state. Remarkably these landscapes have the potential to be some of our most abundant and easily restorable eco systems. By allowing natural

rewilding or implementing uninterrupted ecological corridors from source to sea using a riparian buffer zone our rivers would quickly return to a healthy more balanced eco system.

This very topic was discussed recently at a local event at Darrara Agricultural College in Clonakilty. The event was hosted by SECAD, a community development organisation. They set about exploring the prospect of creating a river rewilding project along two river systems in West Cork.

The ecologists that were commissioned for the scoping project

engaged with various stakeholders such as land owners, community groups and government agencies. The response to their research was very positive and a better understanding of what would work to implement such a project was gained.

The benefits of the ecological corridors would help restore natural flow and sediment regimes, mitigate climate warming, reduce habitat fragmentation, which in turn increases biodiversity and very importantly improves water quality. It was discussed by local farmers that land owners would

have to be fairly compensated or benefit from fair and continuous payments equitable or in excess of current p/ha earnings over a suitable time span. Community groups discussed the possibility of walk ways and cycle routes being created, which would be of a great benefit to the community but also tourism.

That such a meeting with such a broad mix of stakeholders and groups coming together to discuss the possibilities and understand the concerns around such thinking shows how debating these issues is paramount to implement such projects.

Rewilding our rivers is not only a possibility but a necessity: How we do it is by making it work for both the river system and human system that is shared along its route from source to sea. Such a concept would change our relationship with rivers for the better.

Who knows, maybe one of our local West Cork rivers could become the template for the future rewilding of all our rivers.

## Help protect Kilcolman Bog

A small group of locals have started a petition to get an interesting salt marsh near Garrylucas Beach known locally as Kilcolman Bog on the list of protected sites.

As the term 'biodiversity collapse' becomes commonplace, Ballinspittle village is in the lucky position to have a variety of beautiful and important habitats in its surrounds; coastal

cliffs, woodlands, a river with a protected wetland running towards Garretstown beach, and Kilcolman Bog.

The Kilcolman salt marsh is a carbon store, recycles nutrients and filters water. It provides coastal protection and flood mitigation, and is an important habitat for biodiversity and is home to some endangered species. It also has potential for

a recreation and education site.

Currently, this salt marsh is lingering on a proposed list of protected sites and as such does not have the full protection of the law. Locals want to change that and have been working towards that goal by reaching out to politicians and working with the National Parks and Wildlife service. As many signatures as possible are needed on the

petition to help them reach their goal. You can sign the petition by going to [www.change.org/Preserve\\_Garrylucas\\_Marsh](http://www.change.org/Preserve_Garrylucas_Marsh) or scanning the QR code below.



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## ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference



## THE ANIMAL WORLD

Dr. Jeremy A. Dorman

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

The study of reptiles and amphibians is called herpetology. In Ireland, unfortunately, it is a limited field – apart from the occasional sea turtle, we have only one species of native reptile, and just three amphibians. Some might blame, or thank, St. Patrick for banishing snakes and other poisonous creatures from these shores. But of course, it was the last Ice Age, not Patrick, that was responsible.

From about 115,000 to 24,000 years ago, Ireland was covered by ice. Then the Earth started to warm up and the ice to melt – by 20,000 years ago, West Cork would have been part of an area of tundra, like Lapland or northern Siberia today, running from Donegal, along the west coast, south to Brittany, and from Cornwall to Denmark. Everything to the north and east was still frozen.

As the ice retreated, the sea level rose. At the same time, animals that could tolerate cool temperate climates migrated northwards. The last creatures to reach Ireland from Britain possibly came via land bridges, but once those were submerged, 12,000 years ago, only birds or bats were going to get here under their own power. Britain, however, was still attached to mainland Europe for another 4,000 years, giving more species time to move in.

Snakes are poikilothermic (cold-blooded) and need heat to be active, so they were slow to colonise newly defrosted landscapes. Only three – the grass snake, the smooth snake and the adder – managed to get to Britain; none made it to Ireland.

Fear of snakes – ophidiophobia – is one of the commonest aversions people have to animals, understandably so. There are approximately 3,900 species of snakes; 600 are venomous, and about 50 are dangerous to humans. The adder is the only venomous snake in Britain, though its bite is rarely fatal. But in Asia and sub-Saharan Af-

## St. Patrick, the Ice Age and herpetology

rica, thousands die from snake bite every year – 1.2 million in India alone in the last twenty years.

The first wild snakes I ever saw were in Zambia on school field trips – a large cobra, dead on the road, and a black mamba, the most feared of all African snakes, alive and hissing in the washroom. The manager of the lodge where we stayed shot that snake, and I took it back to school in a large jar filled with gin. On another occasion, beside Lake Malawi, I watched as a crowd chased a black mamba and beat it to death. It was sad to see, but black mambas are large, aggressive if threatened, and their neurotoxin highly potent; a bite, far from hospitals with anti-venom, is nearly always fatal.

Also in Malawi, while carrying out a survey of frogs in a nature reserve, I came upon an enormous python moving slowly along a sandy path. Pythons are not venomous; they rely on strength to constrict their prey, and extremely elastic jaws to swallow it – one of our geese had already been a victim. This python was like a bronze and silver telegraph pole – I just had to take a photograph of it. But by the time I had fitted the correct lens, the snake was already heading off into the grass. So I did a crazy thing – I grabbed its tail and tried to pull. The power of that snake was incredible, and I couldn't stop it gliding off into the undergrowth. I might not have been able to do much had it wrapped itself around my legs and swallowed me whole.

Snakes evolved from lizards in the late Cretaceous Period – four fossil snake species from that time had small back legs. Pythons still have little claws, the remnants of these limbs; they are used now to grasp their partner during mating. Some lizards, such as skinks, have lost limbs more recently in response to a burrowing lifestyle, so while there are skinks with four normal legs, other species have four reduced legs, two legs, or no legs at all.

Unlike snakes, lizards have eye lids and ear openings, and only two of the 7,000-odd lizard species are venomous. Large lizards, such as the Komodo dragon, might be rather scary, but most are handsome, inoffensive creatures. Around fifty species live in Europe, mostly in the south; three are found in Britain, and one in Ireland – the viviparous lizard. This is small, brown and speckled, and unusual among lizards in that it gives birth to baby lizards, not eggs. Lizards will be emerging from



Natterjack toad



Common frog



Viviparous lizard



Smooth salamander, non-breeding



Smooth salamander, breeding male

their winter hideaways soon, so you might see one basking on a sunny morning.

There is another reptile, living in the Burren, which looks like a snake – the slow worm; but it is a legless lizard, and was introduced sometime in the last century.

Amphibians are divided into three groups – salamanders and newts, frogs and toads, and caecilians (worm-like creatures found in the tropics). While

the same toxin found in puffer fish (fugu in Japan, which, if improperly prepared, can prove lethal).

Other notably toxic amphibians are the poison dart frogs from South America, used by indigenous hunters to poison the tips of their arrows; the cane toad, introduced into Australia to eat insect pests, which instead is poisoning the native marsupials; and the Colorado river toad, whose skin secretions can produce psychedelic effects, like magic mushrooms.

Most salamanders and newts are small, though the gravely endangered Chinese giant salamander can grow to over one and a half metres. Our only species, the smooth newt, spends much of the year on land, hiding under logs or stones. It might be mistaken for a lizard, but its skin is smooth, not scaly, and like all amphibians, it lays its eggs in water. In the breeding season, the males of our lizard and newt species both have bright orange undersides, but the newt also has large black spots and a crest along his back and tail.

There are about 7,600 species of frogs, some of which are called toads; true toads are just members of one frog family. In Europe, frogs have smooth skin and hop, toads have knobbly skin and walk, but in the tropics they come in a huge variety of shapes, sizes and lifestyles.

The common frog is found throughout Ireland, and should be familiar to everyone. The natterjack toad, further distinguished from the frog by the green stripe on its back and the parotid glands (which contain defensive toxins), is plentiful in Europe, but here is found only in parts of Kerry and some other sites where it has been introduced.

There is much debate about how our amphibians got here. Some might have survived the Ice Age, living in almost ice-free refugia to the south (frogs can be very tolerant of the cold – the North American wood frog for example, freezes totally every winter – blood, organs and all). They might have travelled here by land bridges. Perhaps they are not native at all. Aodh MacAingill (admittedly not a zoologist – he was briefly Archbishop of Armagh) wrote in 1618 of these “very ugly creatures that are not found in our land through the graces of Patrick, our patron.” It has been suggested that the natterjack, anyway, was introduced.

Whatever about the past, their future does not look good. A third of frog species are endangered; 120 have become

extinct in the last forty years. Because they breathe through their skin as well as their lungs, and need both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, frogs are very sensitive to pollution, climate change and habitat loss. A type of fungus has badly affected hundreds of species; thousands get squashed on roads; and in many countries, frogs are part of the human diet.

One way to help frogs is to build a pond. It need not be anything fancy. When I lived in Zambia, a guttural toad waddled across my veranda most evenings, so I dug a small hole in the garden, big enough for a washing basin containing a few rocks and weeds. Soon, a fat female toad had moved in. Sadly, one morning, I found just her head and back remaining, sure signs of a mongoose – they know the position of a toad's toxic glands. But we don't have mongooses in Ireland, so stop all that mowing, strimming and poisoning, let part of your green desert go wild, and make a pond. A frog will find it; you might be lucky and get some newts too.

## UL study reveals new eco way to generate power from waste wood

A new study by researchers at University of Limerick has revealed a sustainable method of efficiently converting waste heat into electricity using Irish wood products, while minimising costs and environmental impact.

The groundbreaking study, led by researchers at UL in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Valencia, has demonstrated a method of generating electricity using low-grade heat recovered from lignin-derived membranes.

Lignin, typically overlooked, is a sustainable by-product derived from wood in paper and pulp production.

The study shows that these membranes can convert waste heat into electricity by utilising the movement of charged atoms (ions) within the material.

This is a significant advancement as previous studies had only demonstrated this technology using cellulose from natural wood, and the new UL research has successfully applied it to lignin from waste wood – contributing to a more circular and sustainable economy as a result.

**ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference**



**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.

It's great to be writing this with the sun shining and a bit of warmth in the air. Pat from Sherkin Island kindly shared his story with us last month and it sparked a lot of interest in the topic of using different materials for retrofitting especially in his case when you are dealing with older stone buildings. So I wanted to take a look into a few options around natural insulation.

It is of particular interest to me as my own house is a stone building (typical Irish farmhouse) – in fact the walls are approximately two feet thick made from stone and rubble, which is typical of any home built before the 1950s in rural Ireland. It was renovated in the 1990s and an extension was added and the external walls were all clad with a cement based render. I have spoken before about the different steps we have taken to bring our home from a low BER up to an A3. A key part of it was to insulate and improve the airtightness of fabric of the dwelling as much as we could, in order to reduce heat losses.

The low hanging fruit was to raise the insulation of the attics from a patchy 100mm layer of standard insulation between the rafters to approximately 400mm layer. We used an amazing natural material manufactured in Cork by Ecoce called cellulose insulation. Cellulose insulation is made from recycled newspapers and was sprayed using pressure into attic spaces and to fill up stud-

# Where to use natural insulation



The low hanging fruit was to raise the insulation of the attics from a patchy 100mm layer of standard insulation between the rafters to approximately 400mm layer. We used an amazing natural material manufactured in Cork by Ecoce called cellulose insulation (pictured above)

ded walls. It's a great 'circular' sustainable solution with a very low embodied carbon with equivalent insulation properties and the added benefits of reducing air leakage from the attic into the house and being an excellent sound barrier. We also pumped the cavity walls of the back extension with silver polystyrene beads, a standard solution nowadays, also available from a number of companies in and around Cork. The next big job will be to insulate the exterior stone walls in the old part of the house. These have been plastered with a cement based plaster so when we do go to insulate the house, like Pat on Sherkin, we'll be removing that layer and replacing it with some type of external insulation. There are an increasing number of natural options for this as well. One is adding a layer of lime-based insulated plaster including cork for example. Another one is to use external insulation that comes in rigid, dense sheets, often

made from wood fibre or hemp, which are then rendered on the outside with a lime-based render. The key requirement is that the system and materials system lets vapour pass through and actively transports moisture from the structure of the building helping the wall and building dry out. This regulates humidity and prevents condensation and mould growth.

One of the bigger jobs we did at home was to remove the Stanley oil burning range and the very chimney and open the wall behind it to install large glass doors which look into the garden. It was mainly because it was the south facing wall and we wanted to bring warmth and light from the sun into our home. It is also an added bonus that we can now look out onto our garden.

It is amazing how even a few hours of sunlight a day through those windows heats up the space. Traditionally, Irish Homes were built to shelter us from the wind and the rain and with single glazed windows, usually small ones. I sometimes wonder how life was different in those days... what it was like living in darkness when artificial light was not common. I guess a key thing was that they were outdoors a lot more at the time. So it got me thinking about how we can tap into natural energy – in this case the sun and the role of modern glazing to bring daylight and solar heat while minimising heat losses significantly compared to old, single glazed windows. The final piece of the jigsaw will be to replace our old windows (currently PVC double glazed windows - installed around 1995) with quality triple glazed

windows and then to wrap the house with insulation from the outside.

If you'd like to explore further solutions for older buildings, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has published an excellent guide called 'Improving Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings. Guidance for Specifiers and Installers' available online.

**Cheris Project**

The CHERIS project is drawing to an end as its final date is March 31.

We are currently evaluating the project from the mentor and clinic attendees point of view. The feedback has been very positive with 100 per cent attendees recommending the clinic. We will be reflecting about what we have learned from this project and how we can build on it to continue the mission to help accelerate the decarbonisation of houses in West Cork.

More on the key takeaways next month!

This was a pilot project funded through the Community Climate Action Fund. We are now preparing lots of materials so that other groups around the country can learn from our experience and replicate it in their own community.

Keep an eye on the CHERIS website for more updates.

**Tidy Towns Rosscarbery organising a home energy upgrade event**

Rosscarbery Tidy Towns are organising an event for the public around home energy upgrades on April 12, 7-9pm, at the Celtic Ross Hotel in Rosscarbery. The event is for people who want to take action and will provide information about upgrades, the CHERIS project, SEAI grants and a chance to meet with some of the contractors, BER assessors and suppliers working in West Cork.

There are limited spaces. If you are interested in taking part in a 121 clinic with our CHERIS mentors. Please email cheris@ludgate.ie to register your interest.

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## ENVIRONMENT : Making a difference

# Waste Not, Want Not: Community sessions in full swing and tips for food storage

This month the ‘Waste Not, Want Not’ team, including Voice Ireland, Clonakilty Tidy Towns and the Community Resource Centre, have been busy reaching out to individuals, groups and businesses across the food chain to invite them to brainstorming sessions; the first of which took place at O’Donovans Hotel in Clonakilty last Thursday, February 22, and was a tremendous success.

Over 50 representatives from our community took part in brainstorming exercises to discuss food waste, which we began by listing reasons we felt it was an issue worth our attention. Resource waste (financial and material), climate change and global inequality were some common concerns discussed, as well as the general agreement that it just didn’t sit well with people to waste! The discussion then moved to our own experiences of food waste, from how much we waste, what foods we wasted most (bread, fruit and leftovers came out on top) as well as what we thought caused

us to waste – busier lives, not being aware of what was in the fridge, lack of planning and loss of ancestral skills were common themes.

It was so interesting to be in a room with such a lively and personal discussion about food waste! The evening progressed to considering strategies we could work on in our own homes to reduce waste. These strategies were grouped into categories for discussion (such as proper storage, meal planning, community building and responsible eating out) and participants were invited to share which techniques they would try to start integrating into our own lives. The simple act of observing and taking note of which foods are wasted most in your home is a great first step in reducing your food waste!

The evening ended with a lot of positive feedback, ideas and general enthusiasm for ‘Waste Not, Want Not’. Abi O’Callaghan-Platt from Voice Ireland summed it up saying: “the turnout for the household and community conversation was

wonderful, such an engaged crowd, we can’t wait for the next two conversations with the businesses and the farming community!” Those two sessions will take place on February 29 and

March 7, followed by creating pilot projects and workshops to run for the duration of 2024 and into 2025!

### The Use By/Best By conundrum

Each month in this column we will delve into one specific area of food waste, with facts and tips inspired by our conversations with the Clonakilty community; this month we will focus in on Use By/Best By dates. ‘Best before’ and ‘Use by’ date labels are the most widely used types of date labelling on food in Europe. Although, let’s be honest, they can be confusing. A study evaluated that about 50 per cent of Europeans did not know how to interpret them correctly and shockingly, up to 15 per cent of household waste of edible food could be attributed to this confusion alone.

In short, the ‘Use by’ date is about safety, while the ‘Best before’ date is about the quality of the food.

‘Use by’ is clear: do not eat after the date. This label is typically found on perishable items like meat, fish, dairy, and fresh juices. ‘Best Before’ signifies the peak quality of the product. While passing this date might result in a decline in taste or nutritional value, it does not necessarily indicate spoilage or safety concerns. As a general rule, you can use your own senses, to smell it and eat it — to see if it’s still good to eat.

Now that we know what they mean, we should also talk about how to use them to your advantage: both economically and environmentally.

Most perishable products marketed with the Use By label not only carry a high environmental footprint (1L of milk can account for up to 4.5kg of CO<sub>2</sub>), but also cost us: the average Irish household squanders 700 euros annually on waste from edible food.

Rather than treating date



labels as an afterthought, we can use them as a tool for proactive meal planning, storage in order to reduce food waste. The first step is to plan meals and check dates when you are buying foodstuffs, especially perishables. For example, if you plan on making chicken the same day, consider taking a pack close to its expiry date, potentially saving it from waste for not being sold on time (and maybe get it at discount prices)!

When storing food, create a habit of checking date labels to help you have a better idea of what needs eating and plan your meals around that. If you are

popping leftovers into the fridge make sure they sit in an obvious place and don’t get pushed to the back and forgotten about until it’s too late! Another easy thing to do is to freeze items that you realise you won’t be able to eat on time – and keep things in your freezer labelled and dated to save guess work later.

Did you know that March 1 is national ‘Stop Food Waste’ Day? If you want to get involved or keep up to date with this project visit [www.voiceireland.org/wastenotwantnot](http://www.voiceireland.org/wastenotwantnot) and register your interest.

## FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Protests demand urgent reforms in Eating Disorder Services

Ireland’s first multi-city protest to demand urgent attention and action to reform eating disorder services across Ireland will take place this March 2, to coincide with Eating Disorder Awareness Week.

Driven by mother Amy Hanley, whose teenage daughter was diagnosed with anorexia in 2022, the protests will highlight the critical need for reform of eating disorder services and call on the government to urgently address the multiple obstacles to receiving treatment in Ireland.

Fuelled by her harrowing experience navigating the healthcare system for her daughter, Amy Hanley launched the ‘MindEverybody’ campaign late last year, organising a protest in Dublin in November.

This March 2 will see protests organised in Cork and Limerick, and again in Dublin, as parents and sufferers seek widespread support for much-needed changes and demand that access to care be equitable and timely.

A Change.org petition has also been set up to be delivered to Minister for Health, Stephen

Donnelly and Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler.

“No family or individual should endure the obstacles we faced in securing treatment for my daughter. It’s time to dismantle the multiple barriers that impede access to care for eating disorders in this country,” said Amy Hanley.

“An often overlooked reality is that eating disorders have the highest mortality rate among all mental health conditions. While recovery is attainable, the flaws in our healthcare system can prove detrimental, often worsening or prolonging an illness.

“Countless young individuals and their families across Ireland are needlessly suffering as they grapple with the lack of resources in the face of deteriorating physical and mental health. This is unacceptable. We need our voices heard once and for all.”

In January 2018, the HSE published a five-year Model of Care for community eating disorder care, with a plan to have sixteen specialist teams in place in by 2023: eight for adults and

eight for under-18s. There are currently eleven in place though “not all teams are funded to the recommended levels in the model of care” according to the HSE.

A recent report by the Health Research Board found the number of child and adolescent admissions for eating disorders more than doubled in 2022 and the number of adults admitted to hospital for eating disorders was the highest in a decade.

However, the eating disorder support organisation ‘Bodywhys’ said people admitted to hospital are only a “fraction” of the individuals experiencing one of these conditions in Ireland. With an estimated 188,895 people in Ireland experiencing an eating disorder at some point in their lives, and approximately 1,757 new cases annually in the 10-49 age group, the urgency of reforming services cannot be overemphasised.

“If authorities treated this mental health condition with the gravity it deserves, not only could it alleviate the profound

suffering experienced by patients, but it could also significantly reduce the economic burdens,” added Amy Hanley.

“This includes the costs associated with multiple hospitalisations, treatment in private facilities here or abroad when the HSE is unable to provide adequate care, and the financial strain on caregivers who may need carer allowances or sick leave due to the challenges of simultaneously working and caring for someone severely ill without sufficient support.”

### Protest information

The Eating Disorder protests will be held at 11am on March 2, 2024 and those interested in getting involved or in organising a protest in their own county are being encouraged to contact Amy on [mindeverybody@gmail.com](mailto:mindeverybody@gmail.com)

**Cork:** the plaza at City Hall from 11am-1pm. More information can be found on Eventbrite.

To sign the petition go to [change.org](http://change.org).




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**FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE**

**Whiskey talk in Clonakilty**

The 'History of Irish Whiskey from the Middleton Archive' public illustrated talk hosted by Dúchas Clonakilty Heritage takes place this Thursday, February 29 at 8pm at the Clonakilty GAA Pavilion. A €5 (cash) entry fee applies for attendees.

Carol Quinn and Katherine Condon, both of whom work at Irish Distillers, Midleton, will deliver the talk.

Carol is the Head of Archives at Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard, where she cares for the historical archive of Irish Distillers.

Katherine Condon hails from Ballinascarthy, and is distiller at Midleton Distillery, working under the guidance of Master Distiller Kevin O'Gorman. She is responsible for tasting all distillates daily, overseeing the quality of the pot and grain distillates produced at Midleton to ensure the correct balance of flavours are present, before being matured and bottled.



**OUT & ABOUT**

Mary Hallissey from Clonakilty celebrating her 100th birthday in the company of Christopher O'Sullivan, TD and Mary Nolan, Director of Nursing at Clonakilty Hospital.

**Clonakilty and Waldaschaff celebrate 35 years of twinning with April visit and art exhibition**

Clonakilty has enjoyed a history of successful exchange visits to its German sister town, Waldaschaff in Bavaria. To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the official twinning of the two towns, a trip from Ireland is planned for April 1 (Easter Monday) until April 8 next; a shorter trip of a few days within the week is also an option.

"As always, the trip will be a mix of official celebrations, meeting old acquaintances and making new friends, with ample leisure time to enjoy the local sights and cuisine," promises Anne Marie Harte of the Clonakilty committee. "Our twinning partners in Waldaschaff have asked that we advise them on numbers going from Clonakilty by early March, to ensure sufficient time to plan the perfect programme

of events."

A preliminary programme already includes food and drinks tastings, live music, talks, walks, day excursions and river trips.

An exhibition of work by West Cork artists will also be shown at the Turnhalle in Waldaschaff from April 3-14. The participating artists are Kate FitzGerald, Aidan O'Regan, Deirdre Pattwell, Eadaoin Harding Kemp, John Beasley, Moss Gaynor, Jim Turner, Stephen Hayes, Geraldine O'Sullivan, Pauline Walsh and Shane O'Driscoll. All groups, arts schools and gallery owners from Frankfurt to Würzburg will be invited to the exhibition, a demonstration of the cultural exchange born from this town twinning.

Please email [info@clonakiltytwinning.ie](mailto:info@clonakiltytwinning.ie) or telephone 087



3325005 or any member or the committee if you would like information on joining the visiting group to Waldaschaff.



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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE



## 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.

In my last article I looked at why movement matters in our battle against chronic inflammation and age-related disease. This month I'm looking at how visceral fat can impact our health and why it is so important to reduce it.

The key to reducing inflammation is the production of chemical messengers

or myokines in the skeletal muscle, which are secreted every time we move our bodies. So it stands to reason that the more muscle we have and the more effectively we move it, the better our chances of offsetting inflammation. I've heard it said that sitting is the new smoking and initially I felt this was a pretty extreme statement. How can sitting be so bad? But as I looked deeper into the research and in particular at the hallmarks of our modern lifestyle – insufficient physical activity, over-consumption of processed foods and excessive stress, it became clear that there's more to the picture than just getting out of your chair and moving more.

From our 30s on, we begin to lose muscle mass at a rate of three to eight per cent per decade, a phenomenon known as sarcopenia. It is a normal consequence of aging, probably not much noticed by us in our 30s, but by the time we reach our 60s this loss speeds up considerably. And if we've been lucky enough to make it this far, we can really be plagued by age-related disease and health concerns.

The good news is that we can build muscle well into our 80s. And we should do for all manner of reasons, such as preventing falls, remaining independent and feeling well in ourselves. Movement really matters. But perhaps even more importantly today, we need to

# How to move it to lose it...



tackle the issue of belly fat, because it is quite literally making us sick. Let's delve a little deeper to understand just how it is making us sick and why it is necessary to shift it.

Most of us have subcutaneous fat on our belly, this is both visible and pinchable. It is possible to be metabolically healthy and have this fat, it is relatively harmless. However, the fat we cannot see, which lies beneath our muscle, visceral fat, tells a different story.

This visceral fat is in fact metabolically active and it secretes inflammatory molecules that affect insulin function, as well as metabolism of lipids and glucose. It is a silent killer, causing many metabolic diseases such as fatty liver, type two diabetes, heart disease and atherosclerosis to name but a few. Even before we develop these full-blown conditions, this fat can produce more 'minor' effects such as low mood, anxiety, stress, joint pain or brain fog. The tricky thing about this fat is that you could be thin on the outside yet still have high levels of visceral fat. However, if you

are dealing with any chronic inflammatory conditions, it's likely you have above optimal levels of this fat.

Visceral fat not only creates inflammation and chronic health problems, it also impedes the efficiency and growth of our abdominal muscle. Current research shows that the more visceral fat we have, the more likely we will be to have reduced abdominal muscle. Simply put, the fat is taking up too much room internally. Visceral fat is literally causing the shrinkage of our abdominal muscles, not good news for our backs! While muscle loss is part of the normal ageing process, the fact that our diet today is so high in highly processed foods means we are storing more fat than ever before from an earlier age and reducing the potential for our muscle to grow bigger and stronger.

Today it is estimated that we are consuming between 50 to 100 times more sugar than our body has evolved to handle. The pancreas therefore has to produce a lot more insulin to get glucose into our cells to

make energy; but the cells are overwhelmed by this load and block the glucose. They become less efficient at making energy and we feel tired all the time. Because the cells cannot utilise the glucose, they store it as toxic fat, which builds up around our internal organs. As another consequence, we then have all this free floating surplus insulin circulating in our bloodstream, causing metabolic disorders.

If the body undertakes sufficient physical activity, we can reduce circulating levels of insulin, but when our cells are so hampered by toxic fat that they cannot make energy, we might often feel habitual fatigue, leaving us too tired to move and burn the fat. And so we sit more.

There is another hormone, cortisol, which is a major feature of this inflammatory landscape. We can have healthy diets and take time to be active, perhaps even getting in our 10,000 daily steps, but if our cortisol levels are too high we are really stressing our bodies. Normal levels of cortisol help in managing our fat stores, controlling our inflammatory response and our digestive processes and it is a very important hormone for the body. It also helps with short term memory, supports the detoxing of the liver and collaborates with the immune system to control the body's glucose levels. However, when cortisol is excessive, for instance if we've had any long term stress or suffered trauma at any point in our lives; if we over-exercise or starve our bodies, we elevate our cortisol levels excessively and this causes insulin resistance, sleeplessness and fat storage. Excessive insulin and cortisol are responsible for holding on to this toxic fat that makes us so unwell.

We need a two-pronged approach when it comes to exercise, as we need to ensure we can both build muscle effectively and reduce visceral fat. One cannot be separated from the other. So how do we tackle these belly blues?

## 1. Eliminate ultra-processed foods

Firstly, and most importantly, eradicate or severely restrict all ultra-processed foods. They are poisoning our bodies. Read your food labels. If a food has more than four or five ingredients or if there are ingredients you struggle to pronounce, don't eat it. Eliminating these foods has the greatest single impact on visceral fat loss. If you are managing pain, try reducing your processed carbohydrates

such as: rice, pasta and grains and so on and see how this affects you. This is a sure way of reducing pain and inflammation. What you put in your mouth matters.

## 2. Resistance training is your friend

Undertaking resistance training can result in significant reduction of abdominal fat in a short time. It can create a significant increase in insulin sensitivity and it does not spike cortisol, once performed in short bursts. It promotes muscle growth, which increases your myokine production. If gyms aren't for you then try a good core conditioning class which targets the abdominal core to help you become a more efficient fat burner.

## 3. Don't over-exercise

Increasing your cardio will not help you shift visceral fat. If your cortisol levels are elevated and if you decide to restrict calories as well, you are ensuring that your body will hold onto its fat reserves. By all means train for marathons or long-distance events or run your 10km if this is something you enjoy, but it will not shift visceral fat. If you need to shift this fat, you need resistance training or short bursts of maximum effort exercise. The best prescription would be taking a walk in nature but maybe adding some short bursts of brisk walking, jogging or sprinting, even jumping jacks. A minute of maximum effort is sufficient but repeat it and do so daily. And for maximum effect do it with a friend or in a group.... it does wonders for reducing your cortisol levels.

## 4. Eat enough protein and fats

Protein is a muscle-building food and both protein and fats are necessary to help us feel satisfied, so we're neither too hungry and therefore triggering cortisol, nor overly full and triggering insulin. Good proteins and fats are essential nourishment for our body. Keep your carbohydrates on the lower side, unless you have a very physically active life; remember what is not burned off is stored and anyone struggling with belly fat has more than enough in reserve already.

Our health outcome is 80 per cent influenced by our lifestyle choices. Make the right ones. It's not so much about adding years to our life, but rather life to our years.



## Mat class timetable

### Spillers Lane Studio, Clonakilty

#### TUESDAYS

- 9:45am** Strengthen & stretch
- 11:00am** Pilates for seniors, mobility and strength
- 6:00pm** Beginners Pilates

#### THURSDAYS

- 6:15pm** Core deepen, intermediate
- 7:15pm** Core, strengthen and stretch

FRIDAYS **9:45am** Strengthen & stretch

### Rossmore Hall

MONDAYS **7:30pm** Deep Core, strengthen and stretch

**Individual Pilates** for rehabilitation and strengthening at The Pilates Room, Rossmore. 1hr session €65. Tailored individual programmes.

Booking essential, contact Lorraine Dufficey  
**086 3670478** or [lorrainedufficey@gmail.com](mailto:lorrainedufficey@gmail.com)

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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

# Shaping a successful business from clay

#makingithappen



*l-r: Suzanne O'Connor and Sophie Miall*

The paint-your-own-pottery studio in Skibbereen has hundreds of pieces of blank pottery in all shapes and sizes to choose from and lots and lots of stencils, sponge shapes, glaze colours and brushes to help with inspiration. “When we first started, it took a while to encourage people to paint but now we have people coming back again and again and there is someone painting here every day,” shares Suzanne. “The children from seven years ago are now coming in to the studio as teenagers, which is really lovely.”

With prices starting at just €10, you can paint your own piece of art, the studio will glaze and fire it for you, and it will be ready for collection in just a few days.

It's also possible to make prints and impressions of your baby's little hands and feet or even dogs and cats! Cré will personalise your piece and glaze and fire it for you in studio. “One lady brought in her three labradors,” shares Sophie laughing.

Sophie and Suzanne now have Maya and Nancy working

with them and offer a variety of classes, ranging from children's and adult's pottery classes, which run in four-week blocks, to private sessions learning more advanced techniques such as wheel throwing, available for individuals or couples. Participants have the opportunity to work with different types of clay, experiment with various tools and techniques, and unleash their creativity under the guidance of experienced instructors.

“I've seen non-verbal children with autism get on the pottery wheel or stick their hands into clay and start chattering from excitement,” shares Sophie, “it's really wonderful to see.”

“Others, who might be very chatty like me, just stop talking,” she laughs. “It's amazing how silent and mindful a pottery class can be, even when it's a kid's birthday party,” adds Suzanne.

Cré Pottery offers a wonderful venue in which to celebrate a birthday, hen party or special occasion with lots of party packages to suit individual needs. It's the perfect place to

get a group of friends together and adult parties are welcome to bring their own wine and food. There are a number of party packages available.

Customers travel especially for the experience that Cré offers: “I absolutely loved this. I came down specifically to Skibbereen just for this experience. When you go in everything is laid out in very clear order and you can set your own price range. You can paint as many items as you want. You can have tea or coffee as you paint. The girls who worked there were very helpful showed me how to use the glazes and then left me alone to paint. I totally got lost in this experience and loved watching my pieces coming together. Then I was told they would be able to post the items up to me too.”

On the first Friday of every month, the studio is open between 6 and 9pm and adults can bring their own bottle of wine and nibbles and enjoy a sociable, fun and creative evening. Suzanne and Sophie are now introducing ‘clay’ nights on the second Friday of the month, where you can make

Tucked away on Skibbereen's Market Street, Cré Pottery Studio offers an immersive experience into ceramics for people of all ages and abilities. Established by Sophie Miall and Suzanne O'Connor in 2017, this friendly and inviting pottery painting studio and coffee house has over the past seven years become the go-to space in the town for families, couples and friends to get together and explore their creative side, while of course enjoying coffee and cake. Today with shows like The Great Pottery Throw Down and celebrities from Brad Pitt to Seth Rogan getting their hands into clay, the mindful craft of pottery is becoming an increasingly popular pastime.

and paint your piece of pottery on the night.

Sophie Miall has a degree in Ceramics while Suzanne has a FETAC level VI qualification in Professional Arts Practice from Rossa College (now West Cork Campus). Both artists sell their own work through the studio. Prior to opening the business the friends worked on many projects together, from providing party entertainment to pottery classes. Cré Pottery is a family affair with children and partners all helping out when

needed. “We feel very privileged to be able to have our kids at work with us,” says Sophie. They all help out, from making a cappuccino to working on the pottery wheel.”

Pottery camps for both Easter and Summer are now available to book online and Cré Pottery will host a special ‘Paint a Mug’ fundraising event on Saturday, March 16 for Marymount. Suzanne lost her foster mum to cancer in 2017 and Marymount provided incredible care and support for the entire family

during their time of need. €10 from every mug painted will go directly to Marymount. Paint-at-home kits will also be available and, for anyone who can't attend but would like to support, donations can be made at Cré Pottery Studio or donate directly on the website, marymount.ie.

Cré Pottery is open Tuesday - Saturday, 10am - 5pm. Booking advisable.

For more information or to book a class go to [www.crepotterystudio.com](http://www.crepotterystudio.com).

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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE



## A FLAVOUR OF WEST CORK RECIPE

Karen Austin

everyone lives side by side and there are churches, temples and mosques.

It's lush and green, which is quite a surprise, as it's very hot. It's 36 degrees Celsius down on the coast and the Arabian sea is as warm as soup. It's not a beach destination despite the long sandy beaches, and ladies wearing swimwear cause curiosity and consternation outside of resorts.

We have now moved up to the hills in search of a little heat relief – it's a moderate 30 degrees here, which is much more comfortable.

As in most of Asia, the traffic is mad: Buses, trucks, cars, tuk tuks, bicycles and scooters, all beeping and weaving seem to aim for the gap. Zebra



crossings are a mere suggestion, one might wonder if they are ornamental. Crossing the road is scary and takes a great leap of faith but we're getting used to it. The one rule of the road seems to be to not to hit anything.

We are staying in a small village, up amongst the tea and spice plantations. There are acres and acres of tea bushes rolling down the hillsides. A river runs through our village and we can wander down the path out of the urban area where we can clamber across rocks and jump in. It's refreshingly cool which is so welcome.

Our accommodation is in a 'homestay' – we have small room with a fan and a traditional shower, which is a bucket and jug, a forerunner of our modern wet rooms.

Our hosts, an elderly Keralan couple, have a spice garden behind the house, which is like a curated piece of jungle, where cardamoms, nutmegs, peppercorns, cacao and coffee are growing. It's harvest time for nutmegs and peppercorns and they are laid out on the roof to dry.

I spent yesterday evening in the kitchen with the lady of the house who is a great cook and shared some recipes with me. I learnt some advanced chapati tricks and this recipe for Gobi Manchuri, which is a cauliflower dish. The ingredient list is quite long but I reckon you could leave out the mace if you don't have any – there's plenty here at the moment, as it's the lacy outer covering of fresh nutmeg. All the other ingredi-

As in most of Asia, the traffic is mad: Buses, trucks, cars, tuk tuks, bicycles and scooters, all beeping and weaving seem to aim for the gap. Zebra crossings are a mere suggestion, one might wonder if they are ornamental. Crossing the road is scary and takes a great leap of faith but we're getting used to it.

ents should be available in the Asian store in Spiller's Lane, Clonakilty, including fresh curry leaves, which are stashed in the freezer.

## Gobi Manchuri

## Ingredients:

- 1 small cauliflower
- 1 heaped tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp salt
- 3tbs coconut or vegetable oil
- 3 cloves
- 2-3 green cardamoms
- a pinch of mace
- 1/2tsp fennel seeds
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 sprigs curry leaves
- 1 small green pepper, reseeded and diced
- 2tbs garlic/ginger paste – garlic and ginger buzzed/ground in mortar and pestle or very finely chopped
- 2tsp Kashmiri chilli powder



- 1 green chilli, split in half
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1tsp ground coriander
- 1 large ripe tomato, chopped
- 1 tsp cornflour mixed with a little water
- 1 tsp salt

## Method:

Chop the cauliflower florets into small pieces. Put into a saucepan and almost cover with water

Add one heaped tsp turmeric and one tsp salt. Bring to the boil then cook for two to three minutes.

Drain, discard the water and put the cauliflower aside.

Put a shallow pan on the heat and add enough coconut/veg oil to cover the bottom. Add the cloves, cardamoms, mace, fennel and cumin seeds. Gently cook on low heat for two minutes.

Add the chopped onion then continue to cook until the onion softens.

Strip the curry leaves from the stems and stir in then add

the green pepper. Cook for two to three minutes longer, then stir in the garlic/ginger paste. 1tsp Kashmiri chilli powder, garam masala and ground coriander.

Add a little more oil if it's too dry then cook for a further two to three minutes.

Stir in the chopped tomato, then cook until the tomato melts down. Season with salt.

At the same time heat another shallow pan and tip in the cauliflower and 2-3tbs water plus 1tsp Kashmiri chilli powder. Fry gently until the water has disappeared.

Tip the cooked spice mix into the cauliflower and mix well. Cook gently for four to five minutes more. Stir in the cornflour, mix and check the seasoning. It may need a little more salt.

I'll be back in March with more new recipes to share. Sunny greetings  
Karen

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## LETTERCOLLUM

## COOKING CLASSES APRIL 2024

SATURDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> APRIL INDIAN VEGETARIAN

We are taking a wander around southern India this spring and I will be collecting up lots of easy recipes for every day dinners or to make a feast. One of my favourite vegetarian cuisines - so many possibilities!

SATURDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL GREEK

The food in Greece is simple and seasonal. This class will be about creative ways with aubergine, peppers and tomatoes, delicious vegetable mezze and the secret to making filo pie.

SATURDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> APRIL MEXICAN

Plenty of fresh and vibrant recipes; tacos, elotes, tostadas, re-fried beans, quesadillas, pico de gallo, guacamole.....

SATURDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL NEW SEASON VEGETARIAN

Lots of fresh ideas and recipes, using seasonal ingredients to make delicious and nutritious salads, salad dressings and spring meals.

023 8846251 karen@lettercollum.ie

The classes are held at Lettercollum in Timoleague. They begin at 10.30am and finish around 3pm. The cost is €120 and includes all recipes, tastings and a large lunch.



**FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE**

# A new season and new beginnings at The Lake Hotel



The Lake Hotel Killarney reopened for the season on Thursday, February 1 and in keeping with tradition, the new season marked the unveiling of new developments at the luxurious four star property. Each year, the Huggard family invest in the enhancement of the hotel and are highly committed to maintaining a high standard for their guests.

Over the past number of weeks, the hotel's winter projects have included the refurbishment of their multi-award winning Castletough Restaurant, the revamp of 20 bedrooms including the addition of a luxurious family suite and, the commencement of an exciting 2024 project in the hotel's wellness centre.

The Castletough Restaurant has been transformed with lavish interiors that resonate with the breathtaking surroundings. Deer printed carpet, plush blinds and curtains, eye-catching cream wooden pillars and, the installation of a new breakfast buffet area are just some of the

enhancements. Warm and serene tones used throughout ensure an inviting and relaxing ambience for guests.

Facing into the season ahead, The Lake Hotel also received some exciting awards news as they were among the winners in the Virgin Media Business Gold Medal awards. The Lake Hotel received the silver medal in Ireland's Four Star Resort category and, the bronze medal for Chef of the Year was awarded to the hotel's Executive Chef, Noel Enright. Featuring in Ireland's top three in both categories at these prestigious awards is a great boost for the year ahead. The top three Four Star resort hotels were named as follows: Inchydoney Island Lodge and Spa, The Lake Hotel and, Parknasilla Resort and Spa.

Now in their 34th year, the Virgin Media Business Gold Medal Awards recognise and reward excellence in hospitality and catering operations across the island of Ireland. The winners were announced on Tuesday, January 30 at a gala awards ceremony hosted by Anton Savage at The Galmont Hotel & Spa in Galway.

Sales and Marketing Manager Sheila O'Callaghan commented, "Featuring among the winners in two categories at the

renowned Gold Medal awards is a wonderful start to our season. We couldn't be prouder of our amazing team. Without their hard work and commitment, accolades like these would not be possible."

She also noted, "We are thrilled with the enhancements made throughout our seasonal closure. The Huggard family are highly committed to maintaining exemplary standards for our guests and invest extensively in the hotel each year. The recent investment will really enhance what was already a wonderful product offering."

The Lake Hotel is a four star family owned property and has been in the Huggard family name for over 100 years. A long tradition of warm Irish hospitality awaits. Nestled on the lakeshore, overlooking the renowned Lakes of Killarney, and just 2kms from Killarney town centre, The Lake Hotel offers a truly exceptional location and something unique for all its visitors. Serving delectable dishes daily, The Lake Hotel is a stunning location for lunch, afternoon tea or an evening meal.

The Lake Hotel have some superb offers available on [www.lakehotel.com](http://www.lakehotel.com). Telephone 064 6631035.

## Daffodil Day in Clonakilty

Daffodil Day 2024 takes place on Friday March 22 and is back this year to full fundraising activities!

The beloved 'Coffee Day' returns, thanks to the Blackwell family and all at De Barra's on Pearse Street, who have yet again very generously offered their premises for the day. Therefore, the organisers are calling on readers to don the

aprons, switch on the ovens and overwhelm them once again with a wonderful array of cakes.

Various other fundraising activities will be happening so look out for local notices.

Over the years Clonakilty and the surrounding areas has an incredible tradition of supporting Daffodil Day, recognised by the Irish Cancer Society as being one of the best

in the country. By joining the Irish Cancer Society in its fundraising efforts, together we can help ensure that no-one has to go through their cancer journey on their own.

If you would like to help or contribute in any way, please contact Therese at 086 823 0106 or Liz at 086 2519409.



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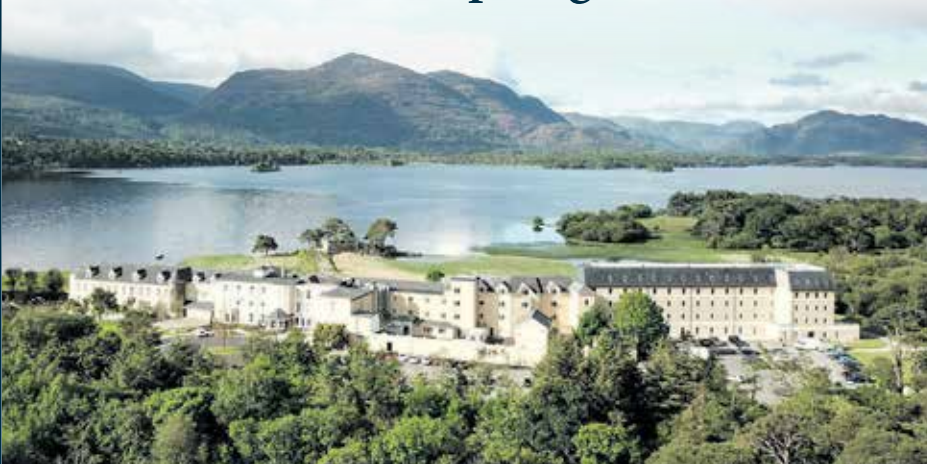
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**LIFESTYLE** : Spotlight on spring/summer weddings

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It is now two year's since Catherine Deasy took up the reins at Deasy Dress Hire, following the sudden passing of her father Denis in February 2022. With an initial plan to simply honour the weddings and events already on the books, Catherine found she relished the challenge and has now brought a new dynamic to this West Cork institution, something that is attracting a younger generation of stylish men. Catherine speaks to **West Cork People** about the learning curve and joy she has found in her unexpected new career.

Catherine had spent over 10 years working in hospitality when, as his only child, the decision fell to her as to whether to continue Deasy Dress Hire after Denis passed away. "At first I just didn't want to let down Dad's customers," Catherine remembers. "Luckily the bride of my first wedding was a girl I went to school with. Although there were seven or eight groomsmen to kit out, she was very kind and encouraging."

Others quickly came forward with help and advice, such as Denis's former contacts in the industry, so with the support of mum Mary, Catherine decided to give her all to the business for at least six months. Two years later and she has more than found her feet; in fact she has grown the business to cater for West Cork men who are perhaps more fashion conscious than in previous times!

"Many men are no longer happy to, for years, wheel out the old suit from the back of the wardrobe; they appreciate variety as much as women do," Catherine has observed. "Renting a suit gives them quality

and variety without cost and hassle. Our Wedding Package for example is extremely good value at just €130 per person for a three-piece-suit, with a new shirt to keep.

"It is so much more environmentally sustainable to rent than to buy a suit. Our Torro Uomo suits are designed in Britain and ethically produced in Portugal by expert tailors. These well-cut suits look great on all body shapes and the quality fabrics hang right and flatter in all sizes," says Catherine.

Customer service and reliability are the bedrock of the business for Catherine who works by appointment at her showroom in Rossmore and offers an out-of-hours service by request: "A big occasion like a wedding can be stressful for the bride and groom so I make sure worrying about the arrival of suits is not a factor!"

To ensure she can meet demand Catherine stocks a core of classically cut suits in a variety of colours, in sizes 34-60, which can be styled with a wide choice of waistcoats. She also stocks some statement blazers and a great selection



of accessories such as belts, tie bars and cufflinks that are available to purchase.

For the future Catherine is hoping Deasy's Dress Hire will continue to see West Cork men through most of life's occasions – both happy and sad – from the TY Balls, to the Grads, college balls, interviews, GAA dinners, weddings, communions and funerals.

"Whilst notice is important for most events I do of course drop everything to cater for a funeral," Catherine says. "It's

an emotional time for people and getting suits organised is part of the process."

All in all Catherine is happy to be doing the thing she loves most, meeting people, whilst working for herself in beautiful West Cork. "I'll never tire of chatting to customers and when people send me photos from the event – usually proud mothers – it makes my day."

To arrange an appointment contact Deasy Dress Hire on 086 157 0237.

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## LIFESTYLE : Spotlight on spring/summer weddings

## It's the simple things that make a wedding day special



Beauty therapist Claudia, 26, and fisherman Audrius Slezas, 27, first laid eyes on each other in Twomey's Bar in Castletownbere. After getting talking and finding out they shared many interests in common, they quickly became a couple and, after an unexpected proposal at home from Audrius when Claudia was pregnant with their second son, the pair tied the knot at The Maritime Hotel in Bantry in February.

For the most part their experience of planning the wedding was "plain sailing" with Claudia looking after the majority of the organising and Audrius giving his input into the finer details such as colours, food tastings and decorations. "The only thing that was a little stressful in the final week was the table plan but luckily Grainne Begley, our



wedding coordinator, took care of it! We just passed on our list of guests and she took care of the rest," shares Claudia.

For the couple, the Maritime in Bantry was an easy choice when booking their wedding venue, as it's a place where they spend a lot of time with their family and feel very much at home in. "We love this hotel and the location especially the views over the bay. The hotel staff are also exceptionally friendly and were very obliging to us when planning our wedding. Everyone was very easy to deal with and went above and

beyond to cater for every aspect of our special day," shares Claudia.

Highlights of the day included the ceremony and the food. "The function room roomed looked amazing and we were really impressed by the service and quality of the food," says Claudia.

The atmosphere on the day was so relaxed, with young children running around, that the couple leaned in for the kiss before the celebrant had said the words 'you may now kiss your bride'.

Claudia and Audrius look

forward to a healthy and happy life together with their sons and hope to expand their family in a couple of years.

Their advice for couples just about to start their wedding journey is "not to fret over small things". "The day goes extremely fast so try to relax and take it all in," says Claudia. "Look around the room during the ceremony or on the dance floor that night and soak up your amazing day and all the people who were there to support you both."

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All band members have years of experience in the music industry and pride themselves on their ability to entertain audiences young and old.

The band performs a large mix of music, everything from country, Irish, waltzes, quick-steps, pop, rock, 60s to 00's, new and old chart hits. They'll even perform a Siege of Ennis

and a Polka set on request.

Arklight also provides a DJ Service to keep you and your guests dancing until the early hours of the morning.

If you're still unsure just visit the website ([arklight.ie](http://arklight.ie)) to read some google reviews from previous wedding couples and while you're there check out availability for your wedding date.

Arklight proudly performs nationwide, bringing musical magic to weddings in every corner of Ireland. Contact them today to secure the best in wedding entertainment for your special day.

If you'd like to discuss anything regarding planning your dream wedding, don't hesitate to contact the band by email at [info@arklight.ie](mailto:info@arklight.ie) or Call/Text or WhatsApp them on 085 850 9030.





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## LIFESTYLE : Spotlight on spring/summer weddings



## IMAGE

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

There is no longer a wedding season with loved-up couples now taking the plunge year round. While there will always be an endless supply of strappy dresses for summer weddings, what do you wear to a Spring celebration of love? You have to contend with chilly outside temperatures, a cold church or marquee perhaps and transition glamorously to warmer indoor temperatures. The bottom line girls is that we want to look and feel amazing.

# Dressing up for the big day

It's so important to embrace any occasion where we can dress up, pull out all the stops and party until our eyes and our bodies scream 'I'm done'!

Midi and maxi dresses will always be a popular choice with a sweet little jacket added to keep the shivering at bay, but this year, wide leg trousers are taking over. While jumpsuits are still very much on trend, wide leg trouser suits look sensational. Picture an emerald green or a sky blue suit or whatever your 'go to' favourite colour is and with a little bit of hunting and seeking this season, you should be able to find it. The key is to keep the top underneath quite fitted and sleek. Style is always about balance and a wide leg trouser needs to be reeled in on top. Choosing a top in a shade very similar to the suit is also a must. If you can wear strapless, all the better, or perhaps go for a one shoulder top. I'm a huge fan of fitted chiffon or silk blouses and they seamlessly match wide leg trousers, especially if you are not a 'suit' person. On cooler days, a long-sleeved blouse will pack a style punch any day or night. Once you keep every-

thing from top to bottom in a single solid colour, the world is your oyster when it comes to choosing a glorious multi-coloured silk scarf to drape across one shoulder...and let it hang down, elegance to the core!

Heels are an absolute must under a trouser: That doesn't necessarily mean a very high heel, as a cute sling-back kitten heel will also give you enough of a lift to ensure that you feel 'dressed up'. Studies on photographs of women wearing flats and then heels show a remarkable difference in how they hold themselves, I suppose it's not a huge surprise to hear that we stand much straighter when wearing a heel, that slouchy rounding of the shoulders just disappears; I guess it's all to do with balance! And the shoe colour? Choose whatever you like, be bold, ditch black, go bright and vibrant always.

There is absolutely nothing wrong and only everything right about re-inventing an already worn outfit. Change the accessories, get some amazing new underwear and wear your hair a little different. Equally if your heart desires something new,

then go get it. A lot of dresses for this season have 'no waist'. While I do like the look, I also think that volume can sometimes take from an overall look, and if you have a great waist, don't hide it.



Dress by  
Carolina  
Herrera

The 'Meg Ryan' tiny polka dot dress appeared on a few runways for this season, cinched at the waist and ending below the knee, this is a flirty stylish look and gorgeous for any wedding, smart or casual. On that note, even if a wedding invite says smart/casual, always veer towards smart and away from casual – it's always more fitting to be a little bit more dressed up than you should be, rather than underdressed!

As the temperatures climb heading into the summer, we

will obviously show off more arm, more leg and even some shoulder. Choose a dress adorned in bold prints or big polka dots. Pick whichever encapsulates your personality and remember – big on the pattern means minimal accessories! A black tie wedding invite means that you need to push glamour to the limit, consider a sleek maxi dress with a hefty slit. Flutter sleeves on a cocktail dress are the ultimate in femininity – flirty and playful, ensuring lots of repeat wear also. A beach wedding calls for effortless elegance so choose a lightweight dress – an airy fabric will keep you cool no matter how high the temperatures climb.

I have a wedding at the end of May and have already snapped up wide-leg cream trousers and was lucky enough to find a cream halter neck waistcoat in the same shop. Versatile separates can offer a very contemporary fashion-forward look. I know that I will get loads of wear out of both of these pieces. Now I'm on the hunt for hunter green heels: I always think that it's a good 'safe' idea (when it comes to a summer wedding and our climate) to add a darker colour when you are wearing a very light shade, especially if it's a dreary wet day. I already knew that the bride would not be wearing white or cream, hence why I chose that shade...oops, I forgot to mention that before.

Wedding umbrellas are an absolute must in this country, as you never know what you are going to get! Whenever you have decided on your attire, start looking for an umbrella in a similar shade. Photographs taken outside when it is raining can look just as breathtaking as those taken on a sunny day,

especially when you picture the matching umbrellas in tow – it's quite striking actually.

Underwear, underwear, underwear...need I say any more? Getting dressed up for a wedding means that you pull out all of the stops. Shapely new underwear can make such a difference, especially as our bodies continually change, so be mindful of your 'special knickers and bra' that you put away for special occasions – changes in your shape might necessitate some new purchases. It's amazing how the scales doesn't change at all but parts of our body almost seem to move around – I know that you totally get what I'm saying. So don't assume that your underwear will work just as well as it did under a dress last year.

Common sense dictates that we wear shoes we can walk in comfortably but more often than not it seems so obvious that a lot of women did not get this memo! How many of us have sat next to someone who has moaned about their poor feet all day at a wedding – all because of idiotic shoes or ones they haven't taken the time to break in. Kitten heels give enough of a lift without putting undue pressure on the balls of our feet, something that we can struggle



Gabor heels from Batemans  
Clonakilty & Bandon

with as we get older. Comfort can look fetching and stylish so always choose comfort, especially if you are going to be sitting next to me, as I have zero sympathy for self-inflicted foot pain!

I've always felt that it is such an honour to be invited to a wedding, to share in the public acknowledgement of a couple's commitment to each other. So if you are invited to lots of weddings, enjoy each and every one of them. Life is all about celebrating what you can when you can.

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LIFESTYLE : Spotlight on spring/summer weddings

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# Feeling the day

Cork native Laura Wiseman (30) married Scott Bell (37) from Michigan at The Eccles Hotel in Glengarriff last September. The couple, who first met eleven years ago at a dive bar in Lansing, Michigan where Scott was working, exchanged numbers, and the rest is history.

“Scott went on a full US Tour with the band he manages, but we stayed in touch and talked every day of the tour,” shares Laura, who’s an artist.

While the original plan for Scott’s proposal involved a trip home to Ireland, the pandemic unfortunately threw a spanner in the works. Instead he took the ‘apple of his eye’ to an apple orchard, where on a warm Autumn day he popped the question and Laura said yes.

After a visit to the Eccles Hotel in Glengarriff, there was no question that this was the perfect venue for their special day.

“We were truly blown away by how warm all of the staff were,” they share. “The Eccles could accommodate our guests and provide them with the most picturesque West Cork scenery. The location and history of the hotel, Marie Dooley’s attention to detail and warmth, and Chef Eddie’s incredible menu made

Eccles the perfect choice for us.”

While possibly the greatest challenge was getting Scott’s entire family over from Michigan (many of whom had never been to Ireland before), everyone arrived on time and, aside from Scott losing his birth certificate just before the flight to Ireland, the wedding went without a hitch. “Thankfully Scott pulled out all the stops and managed to get it sorted!” shares Laura laughing.

The couple really enjoyed planning their wedding and found it brought them closer together. “Many people expect the groom to be quite hands-off but we were equal partners through it all, including the deliberation of which shade of green the invitations should be,”

shares Laura.

Even the arrival of storm Agnes couldn’t put a cloud on the big day. The personal Humanist ceremony took place at the hotel with family members included in the readings, ring warming, drinking from the Quaich (a two-handled cup that in the Scottish tradition seals the bond of two people and marks the blending of two families) and the handfasting. The haunting sound of the Uilleann Pipes from traditional Irish band Arundó created an atmospheric backdrop to the ceremony.

Having their friends and family join them from all over the world meant so much to Laura and Scott. “When we talk about the day and what we took from it, the one feeling that seems to always rise to the top is the feeling of immense love and joy we felt having so many of our family and friends together... putting the effort in to come out

and dance with us until the wee hours of the morning – we will never forget that.”

The food also rates high on the couple’s list, in particular the midnight crisp sandwiches!

After a magical stay in Glengarriff, a brief stopover in Iceland on the way back to the US marked the mini-moon but plans are afoot for a proper honeymoon in Japan in 2025.

For now Laura and Scott are enjoying their first year as a married couple and supporting each other’s goals. Together the future feels bright: Scott has just opened his own music venue in Lansing, Michigan, and Laura is expanding her work as an artist.

They want to pass on a piece of advice given to them in the early stages of planning their wedding that proved so true: “You will most remember how your wedding felt, not how it looked.”

“It’s so easy to become overwhelmed by options, especially with all these seemingly perfect weddings on social media. Let all of the details fall to the side and work ‘together’ to concentrate on what you both want to ‘feel’ during the day. For us, we wanted to prioritise family, food, and music. Ól, ceol, bia agus craic—what more do you need?”



## LIFESTYLE : Spotlight on spring/summer weddings

# Crafting your perfect ceremony

While traditional religious wedding ceremonies are still popular, many couples today are seeking alternative ways to tie the knot, often opting for personalised and non-traditional ceremonies. This has led to the rise in popularity of wedding celebrants and legal solemnisers, professionals who

play pivotal roles in crafting and officiating ceremonies that reflect the couple's values, beliefs, and personalities while ensuring legal recognition.

Trained and authorised to officiate weddings without any religious affiliation, wedding celebrant and legal solemniser Caroline Murphy offers couples the flexibility to customise

every aspect of their ceremony, from vows and readings to rituals and symbolic gestures.

Celebrants often meet with couples multiple times prior to the wedding to get to know them, understand their vision for the ceremony, and offer guidance and support in crafting meaningful rituals and vows.

"Unlimited chats and communication are included leading up to your wedding day, so everything is clear and there is no stress on the day," stresses Caroline.

Whether the couple envisions a traditional wedding ceremony,

or a unique celebration, which may include handfasting, sand ceremonies, tree planting or even a ceremony 'as Gaeilge', her focus is on making the day a reflection of each couple's unique story.

"I love to find a role for family, children and even (well trained!) pets!" she says.

Based in Cork, Caroline is happy to travel to hold wedding ceremonies on any day of the week in your venue.

As well as vow renewals celebrating a partnership or life lived together, baby naming ceremonies are also on the rise

with more and more parents officially introducing a new family member to family and friends. "A memory box or tree planting can be used in the ceremony to mark this special occasion," shares Caroline who officiated at home for her own grandchild's ceremony.

A retired teacher, Caroline's love of meeting people and outgoing personality are what prompted her to become a wedding celebrant. She trained with Enthos Ireland, which was founded to serve people on the basis of diversity and inclusivity.

An enthusiastic set dancer, she also enjoys singing and is a member of the Whitehorse Gospel Choir in Ballincollig, so when she's not officiating at a wedding, she can often be found performing at one.

"We collaborated recently with Áine Whelan and the Whitehorse Guitar Club to record the classic single 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' in aid of Pieta," she shares, adding "be sure to listen to it, and better again buy it on iTunes to support the amazing Pieta charity."

[carolinemurphycelebrant.ie](http://carolinemurphycelebrant.ie)

Engaged?

Planning a wedding ceremony?

Would like a vow renewal ceremony to celebrate a special anniversary?

Wish to celebrate the arrival of a new baby with a baby welcoming/naming ceremony?



My name is **Caroline Murphy** and I am a Celebrant and Legal Solemniser. I would be delighted to be your Celebrant on your special day.

I am professional, calm and enjoy lighthearted fun. I love meeting couples and their families, and this helps to make ceremonies more relaxed and stress-free. I'm also delighted to include family members, children and even (well-trained) pets!

You can have a low key, intimate ceremony or add all the bells and whistles.... Your ceremony, you choose.

*Tá Gaeilge agam.*

*Is feidir liom cúpla focal a úsáid sa searmnas más mian leat.*

Follow me on Instagram: [@Caroline Murphy Celebrant](https://www.instagram.com/CarolineMurphyCelebrant)

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## FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Learning to be at home in your body

Can you sense Spring in the air? The promise of it, the feeling of hope it can elicit. Are you aware of a changing energy in your body? A felt sense in the body of playfulness, mischief or maybe even foolishness? We are moving forward with the longer days, brighter mornings, birdsong. As our energy levels change

with the seasons, we may feel a response to Spring in our bodies. It is time to push up out of the energy of Winter and emerge just as nature is budding and blossoming all around us. We can notice our shifting energy more intentionally with some gentle, embodying practices, being present in our bodies as we move through our days.



### 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.

Mindful movement is an embodying practice that I have grown to love, even though it can be challenging at times. It's different to the more traditional forms of exercise that we are accustomed to. It isn't about how far we move or how many repetitions we can get in, it is a slow form of focused movement. We place our full attention on our body as it moves. We feel our body in motion, and the energy shifting as we tune in with the wisdom of our own body. It is a wonderful

practice that helps us to 'drop' our attention from the busy mind right down into the breathing body. It's almost like a moving version of the body scan meditation; in that it fosters a deep sense of awareness of the body and helps us in how we relate to our bodies, developing a deeper appreciation, from the inside out.

Having a sense of the mind and body connected and being in one place can be a rare occurrence, and is captured by James Joyce in the sentence, "Mr Duffy lived a short distance from his body". I can really identify with the feeling of being disembodied. When I began my compassion-based mindfulness training, I remember having to have to look at, or physically touch, for example, my feet, to locate them during a body scan practice because I was not able to sense my body. Mindful movement is a great practice to inhabit our bodies and, as well as helping to clear the mind, can help to clear stagnant energy that may have gotten stuck in the body. Sometimes it can feel difficult to stay with the slow motion of the body because it can touch the edge of discomfort, and our mind may urge us to move at a greater speed, we may feel impatient. But that is the beauty of the practice, learning to stay with the slow movement, feeling every tiny, intricate sensation of our body in the moment, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

Because I am familiar with feelings of disembodied and disconnection, I am in the habit now of regularly taking a pause and checking in with my body as I go about my daily business, feeling the contact of my feet on the ground as I stand or walk, noticing my fingers, hands and wrists as I type or drive, feeling the parts of my body that are connecting with the ground or seat, as well as the parts that are not touching anything, except maybe the air. I do this deliberate tuning in, now and then, on purpose, while I'm eating, driving, writing in my journal, and when practising mindful movement or dance. We can notice parts of our body that might feel tight or tense and with some gentle attention and movement we can help release and unstick physical or emotional tightness.

My interest in embodied, somatic practices is growing, encouraged by moments of being truly present in my body, that often-fleeting feeling of wholeness and presence. For example, in this moment I can sense my fingertips as they tap the keyboard, feel my elbows resting by my sides, my back leaning on the arm of the couch, my breath moving, the parts of my feet on the ground, aware of the space around me. By pausing and consciously nurturing a feeling of being at home in our own skin, even if for just a moment or two throughout the day, we learn to notice how

different life feels when we're at home in our bodies. These words from 'The most important thing' by Julia Fehrenbacher seem to fit here.

"I am making a home inside myself. / A shelter of kindness where everything / is forgiven, everything allowed—a quiet patch / of sunlight to stretch out without hurry, / where all that has been banished / and buried is welcomed, spoken, listened to—released. / A fiercely friendly place I can claim as my very own".

Monthly mindful journaling workshops are running at CECAS on March 30, April 27, May 18 and June 22. Journaling is another way of being present and embodied. 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 throughout the year (March 5, 12, and 19) 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](mailto:susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com) FB: [susanoreganmindfulness](https://www.facebook.com/susanoreganmindfulness) [www.mindhaven.ie](http://www.mindhaven.ie)



### MINDFULNESS MEDITATION DROP-IN SESSIONS in the old chapel

Tues March 5, 12 & 19, 10-11am, €12  
CECAS, Myross Wood House, Leap

Contact Susan 087 2700572  
[susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com](mailto:susanoreganmindfulness@gmail.com)  
[mindhaven.ie](http://mindhaven.ie)



FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Awards and family celebrations season at The Maritime Hotel

Staff members from The Maritime Hotel made a road trip to Killarney last month for The Gleneagle Group Employee Awards. The awards took place in the Muckross Park Hotel, where the team enjoyed a gala banquet followed by live entertainment.

The Gleneagle Group employs over 450 people including 90 staff members in The Maritime Hotel. The annual employee awards aim to appreciate and celebrate the hard work and dedication of the whole team

with nominees chosen from across 2023.

Speaking about the awards Gleneagle Group CEO Patrick O'Donoghue said: "These awards are not just about singling out any one person, they are a celebration of the team effort that is needed to deliver exceptional customer experiences. We are very proud of all we achieved throughout 2023. We welcomed visitors from all over the world and their feedback consistently mentioned the professionalism and friendliness

of our team. Thank you to everyone for your part in making 2023 a success."

The top accolade of The Maritime Hotel's 'Employee of the Year' was awarded to Anna Puskzo, while 'Manager of the Year' went to Adrian Biffen. Also representing The Maritime, Megan Horgan won 'Best New Starter', Ben Horgan won the 'Leadership Award', Anna Gajownicek won 'World's Best Colleague' and Pauline Murray won the 'Excellence in Customer Service Award'.

Staff at The Maritime are now looking ahead to welcoming both locals and visitors for all the family occasions that arise in Spring.

On March 10, the Ocean Restaurant is offering Mother's Day Lunch from €37 per person. There is also €10 off treatments for mums in the hotel's You Time Treatment Rooms, which stocks hampers to suit any budget if you are hunting for the perfect gift!

The Ocean Restaurant is also looking forward to welcoming families for confirmations and communions and will have a three course meal on those days for €37.50 per adult and €15 per child.

No matter the occasion, a home buffet is also available – choose your date and time and your meal will be ready to serve upon collection! From just €15pp.

For bookings and information call 027 54700 or email info@themaritime.ie



Anna Puskzo receiving her award for Employee of the Year from Patrick O'Donoghue, CEO Gleneagle Group and Noel O'Donovan, General Manager of The Maritime.  
Photo: Don MacMonagle

## Jury service... cont'd from previous page

juror so they don't have to do jury service

### How is a jury selected?

Jurors are contacted by summons of the County Registrar. You must reply to the jury summons. You can do this online by visiting jury.courts.ie or by using the QR code on the summons. You can also reply by post using the form and pre-paid envelope provided. If you have a right to be excused from jury service, you must state this when you respond to the summons.

If you want to be excused for another reason (such as illness), you must state that reason when you reply to the summons and enclose any certificates or documents in support of your application. The County Registrar will decide if you can be excused, or not.

**Is there a payment for jury service?** You are not paid for jury service and travelling expenses are not allowed. If you are actually serving as a juror, lunch will be provided on the day or days of the trial.

If you are self-employed and work alone and your attendance at jury service means you cannot earn a living, you may qualify to be excused from jury service. You should contact the jury office of the court for more information.

If you are signing on for a Jobseeker's payment you will continue to be paid, but you should advise your local social welfare office that you have been called for jury service.

**What happens if I am employed?** If you are in employment, your employer must let you attend jury service. Time spent on jury service should be treated as if the employee were

actually employed. In other words, if you are in employment and are attending for jury service, you are entitled to be paid while you are away from work. If you have a contract of employment, for example, (temporary workers or contract workers) you are entitled to be paid by your employer while you are on jury service. There should also be no loss of any other employment rights while you serve on a jury. You can request a certificate from the jury office to confirm your attendance at jury service.

If you feel your employment rights have been infringed or you have lost employment rights while serving on a jury, you can make a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission using the online complaint form available on workplacere-lations.ie. You can contact your local CIC for information.

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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

## Easter fundraiser for Brú Columbanus and Bantry Palliative Care Unit

The Lawton family in Barryroe are asking people to put on their trainers, walking shoes, hiking boots or swimming togs this easter to support Brú Columbanus and the Bantry Palliative Care Unit (Marymount Hospice). The Bantry Palliative Care Unit provides specialist care of the highest quality for those with a life-limiting illness and Brú Columbanus provides home from home accommodation for the relatives of seriously ill patients in Cork Hospitals.

Nora and Eimear Lawton lost their younger brother Killian, 24, to cancer on July, 28 2021. “When we think of Killian before his cancer diagnosis (in April 2020), we think of his vi-

brancy and energy. Luckily for us, and despite all the challenges, of which there were many, he held onto this until the very end.” share the sisters.

Both Brú Columbanus and the Bantry Palliative Care Unit (Marymount Hospice) offered incredible support to the Lawton family during this difficult time.

“Whenever Killian was unwell (during his treatment) he was often cared for at home by members of the Bantry Palliative Care team. In the end, he spent over three weeks in Marymount Hospice. No words will ever capture the care administered in this unique hospice.

“Whilst he was in Mary-

mount, we were lucky to have accommodation nearby in Brú Columbanus. It proved to be a home away from home during his final days and meant we could spend as much time as possible with him in the hospice.”

So from Friday March 29 to Monday, April 1 (Good Friday through to Easter Monday), the Lawton family invites everyone to run, jog, walk, hike, cycle or swim for Brú Columbanus and Marymount. Choose your distance goal of either 5km or 10km. For those swimming, a quick dip will suffice!

All that is asked is that you take part, get active and embrace the moment.

A nominal €20 ‘entry fee’ is

suggested, with all funds raised equally going to Brú Columbanus and the Bantry Palliative Care unit in Marymount (the monies raised will be split and transferred to both organisations by iDonate).

Even if you cannot take part, yet you would still like to donate, all amounts are welcome. No matter where you are in the world, you are encouraged to get involved.

The last event saw people taking part all over the world with an incredible €26,076 raised for Marymount Hospice.

To donate go to [idonate.ie](http://idonate.ie) and search Easter fundraiser for Brú Columbanus and Marymount Hospice.



The late Killian Lawton at the Broadstand Swim in 2017.



### 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).

It feels like our world has stopped turning. Numbness takes over and bright blue skies lose their colour. In a room full of people, we can feel isolated and alone. The pain can be so painful that we don't even feel it...until we do. Then when it comes knocking we feel it wholly and deeply. We might feel angry and ask why me? Sometimes we don't believe this is really happening and deny it down to the ground. Maybe we fall deeply into depression and see no way out, possibly not even wanting a way out. We might wonder why nobody understands and why the world at large has continued to turn. Our very meaning for existing might be called into question. What is this common experience that is beyond race, geography or languages? Grief.

## Grief is the price we pay for love

Experienced by all at some time in life and very much in common in our humanity.

In general, loss is experienced by all people at one time or another, as there is suffering and grief in all human life. However, it is important to distinguish between loss, bereavement and grief. Loss can be defined as an event, over which a person has no control, that changes the person's thinking and belief system, as something is removed from their life; whereas, bereavement is when a loved one, in which we have a connection and relationship with, passes away. Lastly, grief can be defined as the response to a loss or bereavement, which includes physical, emotional, behavioural and spiritual effects. In his 2014 research into these experiences, Michael Hall writes "...put simply, grief is the price we pay for love".

I teared up when reading that quote. It captures the depth of connection and emotion we experience when we have any type of relationship be it with another person or an animal and sometimes even with a place or job. The closer we become to someone or something, the more we attach and invest and the more intensely we feel when it is gone. When we love we can do it so fiercely, and from an inherently vulnerable place, that a loss of that connection can be devastating. It goes beyond hurt and pain to something that can be all encompassing.

Grief is a natural human reaction to bereavement that has noticeable symptoms along with

behavioural and emotional responses. It is a common process following bereavement and loss but sometimes it can develop into complicated grief, this is a condition where grief is extended due to complications in the natural healing process. Alternatively, a person can experience anticipatory grief, which is complicated and layered if they are grieving in advance of a loss or bereavement that is certain to happen. This is also common if someone receives a health diagnosis in which they face their own mortality. There can be different kinds of loss and bereavement, not only the death of a loved one. Loss of a sense of self, a job, a pet, possessions, a relationship, a place through emigration and even a life not lived are just some examples of that, which can be experienced, and cause disruption in our lives.

“...There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me.”

C.S Lewis

In 1961, C.S Lewis wrote ‘A Grief Observed’ after he lost his wife to cancer. He said that “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing. At other times it

feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me.” I think this is very relatable all these years later, the experience of grief is one that alters who and how we are in relation to ourselves, others and the world around us. The loss of a loved one is one of the most intensely painful experiences any human being can suffer, and not only is it a painful experience, but also painful to witness, if only because others are so impotent to help.

When I sit with clients who are experiencing grief or complicated grief, I often invite tears in moments when the client feels most in touch with their grief. This can be painful and challenging but nearly always leads to relief. It has been helpful to frame the tears as a testament to, and in honour of, the love that was felt in relation to the person, animal, place or thing. I have experienced it as helpful for clients when we explore the idea of the grief in relation to how much space it takes up in the person's life. It can feel so overwhelming at the beginning and, although cliché, people might say things to be helpful such as “time heals all wounds”. This can seem unhelpful for the person experiencing the grief but it has an element of truth, time can support a feeling of distance from the initial bereavement or loss.

I like to frame it that the grief does not shrink over time. More so, a person's life grows

around it. The grief stays the same but new experiences, finding ways to cope, finding ways to remember a loved one and ‘moving on’ with life all add space around the grief. We can see this as true when we look at a picture or visit a grave, the pain hurts just as much as it did originally but we might also smile fondly or laugh about good memories and the joy and love experienced. Then we can muster the strength and courage to go about life without feeling like we are holding back tears indefinitely.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross wrote about the ‘Five Stages of Loss’ in 1969 as a way of understanding grief, bereavement and loss. Her theory became quite well known over time and most people now recognise the stages she proposed, which are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. What may not be so well known as the stages is the fact that they are not linear stages. They can come in any order and any time in life, during the initial grieving or even years down the road when it has passed. Also, not everyone will experience all or many of the stages, grief is just as unique as we are as people.

Finding support in friends, family and your community can be helpful when grieving. However, if grief becomes a challenge, struggle or disruption in life, then psychotherapy and counselling can help. This is because it can provide a space and time dedicated to the person struggling in which they are accompanied in their experience

by an objective mental health professional. To be witnessed, heard and seen can help to create a relationship between the client and the therapist that is safe for the client. It is in this relationship that the client can express what might feel un-expressible and be accompanied through their challenges towards healing. Christy Kennelly, a Cork man, writes succinctly in his book ‘Life After Loss: Helping the Bereaved’ on the goal of therapy for grieving clients, which could be said of all therapy, that “The more we operate from the centre of our natural feelings, the more real is our grieving and the healthier we will become as human beings.”

To live life and grow around grief is an act that can honour bereavement or loss not only in the present but always. To find the strength within to live in a world that might seem like it does not care about loss and pain is brave and takes determination so as not to feel like everyone around does not care; this can be supported through Psychotherapy and Counselling. As Irvin Yalom put's it “...if one is to learn to live with the dead, one must first learn to live with the living”.

For more information on Leo's services,  
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FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE



A WEST CORK LIFE

Tina Pisco

# Salutations

what used to be a muddy field full of cows. The new houses are all big, beautiful, white, and modern. Solar panels and separate two car garages are the norm. Houses rarely sell for less than half a million euros around here, which is well above the national average house price of 300,000 euros according to the Residential Property Price Index for 2022. Who knew that what used to be described by the ESB as “an isolated rural pocket” would become an affluent neighbourhood?

Overall, the increase has been a good thing. The developments have mostly been done by local builders and the homes all quickly filled with families. The school and pub are flying it, and the GAA is thriving. Overall, the community is buzzing. In fact, the only real downside is that the new owners of these big houses also tend to have big cars, which makes walking down the road dodgy, which in turn means that less children walk or bike to school. But I digress.

As I pondered the strange behaviour of the two women on the road, it occurred to me that they must be new arrivals. Perhaps they came from a large city? I recently went to London and though I passed more

people in five minutes as I stood trying to hail a taxi in Shepard’s Bush than I do on my road in a year; I only actually interacted with one other human – the cabbie who picked me up. (He was lovely mind you. Born in London to Irish parents from Kerry.) I’m a city girl born and raised. I know how not to make eye contact on a crowded urban street. I am comfortable with putting every human I pass into a little ‘Do not acknowledge unless necessary box’ as I go through my day. But one of the joys of living in a rural setting is that we do not ignore other people. I really enjoy the brief acknowledgment of shared humanity that a quick salute brings. There is also something graciously old-fashioned about a good salute. It’s from a different, more relaxed time. To lose it would be a shame. (Besides – How else will you know if you’re being shunned?)

Saluting is important. It recognises that you have passed another member of the human race. It is only common decency to mark the fact that you have made a connection no matter how tiny. It is why I love the countryside more than big cities. In cities there are too many other humans to salute them all. In the countryside you have the

time and space to give a little gesture of recognition.

For those new to rural customs, including visitors who may be reading this around Paddy’s day or the West Cork Rally, here is a handy guide to West Cork salutations:

- When passing someone you don’t know, one finger is sufficient, except if passing requires extra manoeuvres like slowing way down to avoid the ditch. In that case four fingers are lifted in a nearly full hand salute.

- The full hand salute is used when passing someone that you know, but not necessarily well. The full hand is lifted in a quick movement. Like a military salute but not as high up.

- The full arm extension is used when saluting a good friend or family member. The full salute is accompanied by a full nod of recognition. Handy for when you see a friend across the street but don’t have the time to stop and chat.

A salutation is like a little message to each other: “I see you.” It’s like a West Cork version of Namaste. Happy St Patrick’s Day!

**Ilen River Playschool**

**ENROLLING FOR SEPTEMBER 2024**

Contact Cora O’Donoghue | 087 4162680  
Email: coraodonoghue2013@gmail.com

## OUT & ABOUT IN WEST CORK



The 2024 Cork County Mayor’s (Cllr. Frank O’Flynn) Community Awards took place at Cork County Hall in February. Winner of the Overall Individual Mayor’s Community Award, Theresa Hickey, is a passionate voluntary community activist and a member of Co-Action West Cork Co Ltd, The Legion of Mary, The Carbery Show Society, The Red Cross Society, The Parish Council, and the I.F.A. Theresa was also a volunteer with Skibbereen Credit Union for many years. Pic: Brian Loughheed

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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE



## 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.

I'm not long back from a sun holiday; a real blessing when it feels like rain has been the primary forecast since last Summer. Even so, routine breaks are wise, necessary even, however you spend your days. I was grateful to take a genuine pause from work: The only death-speak being 'Life After Death' by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a comforting, candidly written book that came along on the journey, but to be fair, only 85 pages long. I finished it in two sittings, unashamedly diving into it poolside. I suppose rarely do I pause 100 per cent from the subject, but so far I feel I'm genuinely ok!

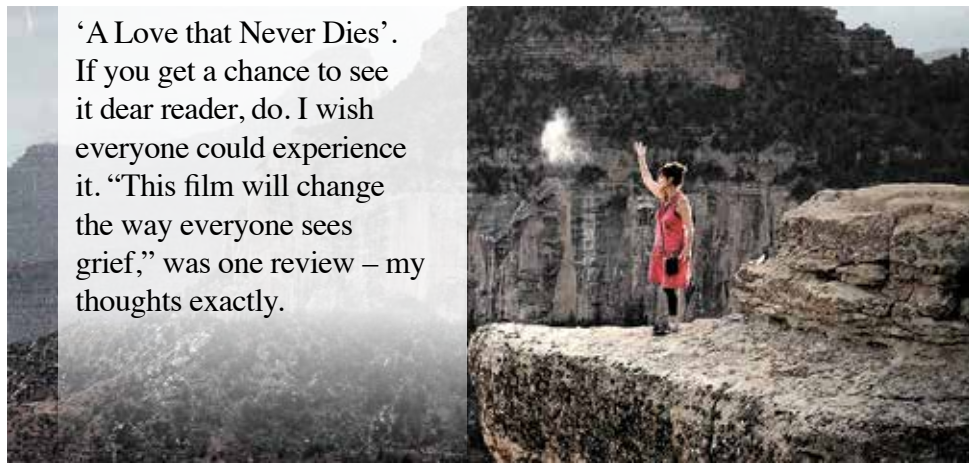
I'm now settling into routines back home while Spring is making her presence known. Daffodils of all sizes are popping up from the earth and I've spotted a few baby lambs cautiously peeping out from behind their mothers. While

## End of life doula-ing: Ordinary days

inspiration abounds, it happens sometimes that a column topic doesn't arrive with the predictability of a new month. This surprises me, as on one hand, I think there's no shortage of topics on death, end of life and grief. But I also want to be thoughtful, hoping to be of some benefit to others whether educationally, or to simply offer validation or resonance. In any case, some reflections on this rather ordinary day.

I glance at my phone. A missed call first thing Monday morning. An unrecognisable Irish number but thankfully a message has been left. It's someone from a national organisation based in Cork. One of their beloved staff, a relatively young person, died over the weekend. They wonder if I could potentially support them around the event of an unexplained, sudden death. My heart dips. I haven't done this, but it's not to say that I wouldn't have the capacity and space to do so. I ring back, listen and enquire. Actually I feel I may have talked a bit too much. They ask me several questions about my work, but still. The person I'm connected with plans to offer a supportive space for employees to gather, share stories and reactions to the loss – all expressions welcome, she says, telling me that she would like to do this today; feeling she is well able for it. It sounds like she is and I applaud her. I wouldn't change a thing I tell her, only offering a gentle reminder that being early days, the news of their colleagues' death is still being digested, so support like this will also be beneficial in the weeks and months to come.

'A Love that Never Dies'. If you get a chance to see it dear reader, do. I wish everyone could experience it. "This film will change the way everyone sees grief," was one review – my thoughts exactly.



They ask if they can keep my number and possibly get back in touch. Of course, I reply, and make a note to follow up in due time to see how they are getting on. I'm touched to receive this call – all from a google search apparently. I pause for a few moments more. A sudden traumatic death elicits so many questions. I imagine their beloved colleague; someone who went to sleep and didn't wake up. I imagine this person, their family and community throughout the day.

I check my email inbox. A fellow end of life doula is considering spending some time in Ireland; wanting to know if the role here has different requirements to America. I cordially reply, referencing an article I've written about this. I'm a bit humbled and astonished that someone in Las Vegas can find me in rural Ireland these days!

Another email and now my heart swells. I exhale deeply. A carer I have supported by phone and sporadically via email for about nine months has written to tell me their son has died. They write of this as terrible news but also share expressions

of beauty in the final moments and the personalised honouring that was created to celebrate his life. I reply, wishfully thinking I might find some impossibly perfect wording but can only express what comes. The bereaved had also requested ideas for a quiet retreat in the area this summer and I shared a few thoughts; offering to discreetly ask around for other suggestions. I also remind them that I'm still here to support if / as they wish down the road – however long.

There is a third email that catches my eye; an invitation to preview a film. At this stage, it's quite time-limited to do so. It's just over an hour, so I can indulge I think. It's called 'A Love that Never Dies'. If you get a chance to see it dear reader, do. I wish everyone could experience it. "This film will change the way everyone sees grief," was one review – my thoughts exactly. A couple take their grief story on a road trip around the US, meeting and sharing with other parents who have experienced the sudden death of a child. The stories are profound and deeply insightful.

I believe that grief is an education that never ends, so unique and individual. The more grief aware we are, the more benevolent our society. The film is available to rent on Vimeo for a few euros or you can access it through the [goodgriefproject.co.uk](http://goodgriefproject.co.uk). I can't recommend it or their work in the world enough.

Catching up on my social media pages, I became aware that there are four death cafes around the country coming up in the last two weeks of February. I've been asked to share the event details on the 'Irish Death Cafes' page I admin. These are the most I've seen since before Covid lockdown. People are wanting to have these meaningful conversations and there was a decent buzz of discussion in the comments section; others wanting to start one in their own community. If you are not yet familiar, 'Death Cafe' is just what it sounds like. I've written a past column about my experience with them and you can also learn more via [deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com)

Remembering that the sun is shining and may not be tomorrow, I make my way out

for a walk. My husband joins me, as we remember to call over to our neighbour who was kind enough to receive our mail while we were away. This 87-year-old soul is the salt of the earth type. His wife died about six years ago so we call in to him from time to time but also try to treasure our neighbours, especially the elders, some who have since died during our time here. Each has been so caring since our move here seven years ago. This gentleman is particularly refreshing, as you'll never wonder what he's thinking. I can easily forget his age, as he's up to speed on current events and local craic alike. When we arrive he tells us of another full day looking after his homestead; particularly all the four-legged creatures he shares it with. Then, without hesitation or inquiry, he pours three taster glasses of Jagermeister. I look at the clock – it's just after three in the afternoon – why the hell not, I think. We toast 'slainte' and chat until sunset. I love that I'll get to remember him this way on an ordinary, moving kind of day.

"In this small span of life, if I can rejoice in the beauties of existence, the beauties of human beings; if I can share my love, if I can share my songs, perhaps death will not be hard on me. A conscious life is rewarded by existence with a conscious death." - Osho

To learn more or to connect with Melissa, email her at [starsbeyondourskin@gmail.com](mailto:starsbeyondourskin@gmail.com) or visit [www.starsbeyondourskin.com](http://www.starsbeyondourskin.com). She also welcomes your questions or ideas for future columns.

## OUT &amp; ABOUT IN WEST CORK



Maria Immaculata Community College Dunmanway is among the first Cork schools to be awarded the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark for their commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion. The post-primary school recently finished an 18-month journey embedding LGBTQ+ inclusion across their people, policies and practices. L-R Elaine O'Sullivan, Niall Murphy, Tara McCarthy, Rowan Mohan-Sexton, Christine Hogan, Kenneth Hickey



Supporting the Kilnadur Tractor Run recently were Con McCarthy from Dunmanway and his niece Hazel. Proceeds went to St Enda's National School, West Cork Rapid Response and Farm Embrace.

## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

## Living with MND



## HEALTH

Hannah Dare  
Organico Bantry

In celebration of International Women's day on March 8, I'd like to remember my mother Caroline Dare (1954-2004).

Caroline grew up in the UK and migrated to West Cork with her husband Alan in the early 80s to find a new life and raise her young family.

Caroline loved working with women, focusing on empowerment and personal development. When she first arrived she held birth-preparation classes and later helped to set up the West Cork and Beara Women's Network and she worked extensively with Traveller women in Clonakilty.

In 1995 she went to Beijing for International Women's Day, as part of the Irish NGO delegation for the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women. While she was there she met and was befriended by a group of Tibetan women from the highlands in China. They made a strong connection, and so in 1999, she went back to China to visit them in their homes for an incredible 50th birthday adventure.

Caroline was so full of life, she never seemed to stop – so it was a huge shock when she was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of Motor Neuron Disease (MND) in 2002 when she was 54.

We discovered this piece of writing after she died. At the end of her life, her ability to speak was reduced to typing on a mini writer that had an electronic voice, and she had lost the power to smile, but discovering this writing gave us a connection to how she was feeling that transcended the wheelchair, the electronic voice and the trappings of a very challenging disease.



## Living with MND

by Caroline Dare

Movement is the first freedom. It is our first identity. 'I am here, I am alive', we say, exploring the lush walls of the womb with our new fingers. Blinded by darkness we swim into being. Even before we breathe we move. Then the instinct energy overtakes us, births us, breathes us, crawls us, walks us, runs and the whole helter-skelter of movement that teaches us what bodies can do.

Soon we become dancers. Everywhere, in all times, people

dance. We dance in every language. Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, attraction, we dance all this and we dance for the dance itself. For what happens to our spirit when we move our bodies.

These days I watch my friends dancing with amazement. One is a cat on hind legs, face up to the moon, playing with the air; another uses her body to dig space, making deep shapes with her limbs; another floats and sways in contentment, contained in the music like water in a pool; others are fiery and flash with electric energy or burn slow holes in the

floor as they move. I watch all this in wonder, seeing dancing for the first time. A movement from inside willing our bodies to express itself.

There was always a part of me that copied the dance. I can see myself furtively borrowing gesture and grace, wanting to make them my own. I remember asking myself, will I be 50 and still copying the dance or will I find my own authentic self and move as me? Now that question has even more resonance. I have to learn to move again in a new, softer way. The movement I have left is certainly mine alone, no one around moves quite like me. Clumsy, shaking and unbalanced, my dance is changing. I have heard of people with Motor Neurone Disease whose dance is reduced to the blink of an eye. That could be me. That could be where I am going. If I think of it as a progression towards stillness rather than paralysis it's an easier image to hold in my mind. Paralysis brings fear beaming out of my eyes like headlamps while stillness allows me to rest in spaciousness.

I have only recently thought of speech as a kind of movement. Language is the second great freedom. Now that my voice is leaving me, talking seems a magic art, but I will still have language even if I cannot talk. I have always loved words, and they will never leave me, I will never be wordless even if speechless. Breath and sound are movements. The throat is a vagina giving birth to voice. Speech is muscular. Our tongue shapes sounds into words, like

pastry-cutters making forms out of formless. My tongue is shrinking, tires easily and can no longer cut, chop and arrange sound so easily or so recognisably.

I watch people talking, conversations are hypnotic. Words flow and fly out of mouths as carelessly and unconsciously as breath. Speech happens. Rivers, waterfalls, tidal waves of words flood the space between people wherever they gather together. I marvel at the effortlessness of this exchange. For me talking is slow and full of effort, words are like rosary beads, felt singly and noticed as they come one at a time. Making sounds that sound like words is real work. So the other space I am heading for is silence. These days I am quieter. But the words are always there, caged like birds, flapping my throat, struggling and hoping more than anything

to regain the freedom of speech.

In the early days of this disease I used to play a game with myself. If I could choose only one would I prefer movement or speech, walking or talking. My mind would change daily as I played one off against the other. The freedom of walking in the mountains versus conversations with my children. Now the game is up. I am facing the loss of both. As things stand stillness and silence is where I'm going. A place of contemplation and inwardness, and I am a beginner there. Up to now my skills have belonged to the outer world where I have travelled and adventured beyond my wildest imaginings. If I have one hope now it is that this journey I am on is taking me somewhere more vast, more mysterious and more awesome than anywhere I have yet known.

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SCAN ME

## Dunmanway Christmas Swim recognised with a County Mayor award

Congratulations to Dunmanway Christmas Swim group who were recognised for their tremendous fundraising at the recent County Mayor's Award ceremony held at County Hall. For their endeavours the committee received a nomination from Cllr. Deirdre Kelly for the Lord Mayors Community awards and were named the overall winner for the Cork West award category.

Dunmanway Christmas Swim has been going since 1999 and has raised over €350,000 for the Dunmanway

Day Unit at Cork University Hospital, a very worthy charity indeed. The annual swim on Christmas morning has built momentum over the years with 2023 marking the highest turn out of swimmers, with 150 people braving the icy cold sea. This fundraiser was complimented by side events such as the annual table quiz, shop collections and especially the online go fund me page. Sincere appreciation must go to the many families, businesses and volunteers who have contributed to the success of this marvellous fundraiser.



Celebrating receiving the County Mayor's Award on behalf of the Dunmanway Christmas Day Swim were front row (l-r) Karen O'Donovan, Kathleen O'Farrell and Eileen Lyons. Back row (l-r) Maighread Mc Carthy, Laurie Hayes, Tim Buckley and Niamh Hayes. Pictured at The Southern Bar, Dunmanway. Pic: Noel M Photography.

## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

## Looking at the doughnut or the hole?

“As you ramble on through life, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the doughnut and not upon the hole.” Margaret Atwood



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**Noreen Coomey** of Transition Coaching and Psychotherapy looks at how solution-focused coaching helps with workplace and life transitions.

**S**olution-focused coaching is a powerful approach that can help you not only navigate but also survive and thrive amidst rapid changes that happen in how you live, work and communicate. Here's how:

*Clarifying Goals and Vision:* Solution-focused coaching

begins by helping you clarify what you want to achieve despite the change you are experiencing. It encourages you to envision a positive future and articulate clear, actionable goals. By focusing on what you want to accomplish, rather than dwelling on the uncertainties of change, you can maintain a sense of direction and purpose and control.

*Identifying Strengths and Resources:* During times of change, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and uncertain about your abilities. Solution-focused coaching helps you recognise your strengths, skills, and resources that will support you through the transition. By emphasising your capabilities, the coaching process boosts your confidence and resilience, enabling you to face challenges with a degree of control and a proactive mindset.

*Embracing Flexibility and Adaptability:* Change often requires flexibility and adaptability. Solution-focused coaching helps you discover how to embrace uncertainty and view change as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat. When you see change as a natu-

ral part of life that leads to new possibilities, you become more open to exploring different paths and better at adapting to unexpected circumstances.

*Breaking Down Barriers and Overcoming Challenges:* Change can bring about various obstacles and barriers that hinder progress. Solution-focused coaching helps you identify these challenges and develop practical strategies to overcome them. By breaking down complex problems into smaller, manageable steps, you will make progress towards your goals despite the obstacles.

*Building Resilience and Coping Skills:* Change often tests our resilience and coping abilities. Solution-focused coaching equips you with resilience-building techniques and coping strategies to navigate the inevitable ups and downs of change. By developing resilience, you become better equipped to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to new circumstances and thrive in the face of adversity.

*Celebrating Progress and Success:* In the midst of change, it's essential to acknowledge and celebrate your progress and

successes. Solution-focused coaching encourages you to recognise and appreciate your achievements along the way. By celebrating milestones and accomplishments, you reinforce positive behaviours and build momentum towards your desired outcomes.

*Maintaining a Positive Outlook:* Finally, solution-focused coaching helps you maintain a positive outlook and mindset throughout the change process. By focusing on solutions, possibilities and progress, rather than dwelling on problems and setbacks, you cultivate a sense of optimism and hope. This positive mindset not only helps you navigate change more effectively but also enhances your overall well-being and satisfaction with life.

In conclusion, you can use solution-focused coaching to clarify goals, leverage strengths, embrace flexibility, overcome challenges, build resilience, celebrate successes, and maintain a positive outlook. You can therefore navigate change with confidence and emerge stronger on the other side. Keeping your eye on the doughnut not on the hole!

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## Jury service

**J**ury service is when you are instructed to attend court with other members



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of the public, so the court can select people to sit on juries for upcoming court cases. Even though you are called for jury service, you may not actually serve on a jury. If you are selected to serve on a jury, you and the other jurors will hear the evidence in the case, and then decide if the accused person is guilty of an offence. You have an obligation to attend for jury service if you are called to do so. You will be contacted by summons of the County Registrar, and the summons will state that you are obliged to attend for jury service on a particular date.

**Who is eligible for jury service?** If you are an Irish citizen aged 18 and over, and are on the Register of Electors you are eligible for jury service, unless you:

- Are involved in any way with the administration of justice. This includes judges, former judges, the President, the Attorney General, the Director of Public Prosecutions, members of the Gardaí and defence forces, prison officers, practising barristers, solicitors, court officers such as registrars, and personnel in government departments involved in matters

of justice or the courts.

- Have, or had, a mental illness or mental disability and because of this are staying in a hospital or similar institution, or regularly attend treatment with a medical practitioner

- Are unable to read or have a long-term impairment that means it is not practical for you to serve on a jury

The rules about eligibility for jury service in Ireland are set down in the Juries Act 1976 as amended by the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008.

**You are disqualified from jury service if you:**

- Have been convicted of a serious offence in Ireland
- Have ever been sentenced to five years or more in prison
- Have been sentenced to three months or more in prison in the last ten years
- Are living in Ireland but are not an Irish citizen.

**You have the right to be excused from jury service if you:**

- Are aged 65 or over
- Are a member of either House of the Oireachtas, a member of the Council of State, the Comptroller and Auditor General, a Clerk of Dáil Éireann

or Seanad Éireann, in Holy Orders, a minister of any religious denomination or community, a member of a monastery or convent, an aircraft pilot, a full-time student or a ship's master

- Provide an important community service, such as a practising doctor, nurse, midwife, dentist, vet or chemist

- Have served on a jury in the last three years, or have been excused by a judge for a certain amount of time after a previous period of jury service

In some cases, people with the following jobs can be excused, however in these cases you must provide certification that your role cannot be postponed or reasonably performed by another person:

- Member of staff of either House of the Oireachtas
- Head of a government department
- Civil servant
- Chief executive officer or employee of a local authority
- Health Service Executive (HSE) employee
- Harbour authority employee
- School teacher
- University lecturer
- Other situations when you can be excused from jury service

You can also be excused from jury service in other situations, for example:

- The County Registrar or the trial judge can excuse you if they are satisfied that there is 'good reason' to do so

- At the end of a case of 'an exceptionally exacting nature', the trial judge can excuse the jury from jury service for as long as they consider suitable

**What happens if I don't attend for jury service?** Under the Juries Act 1976, you can be fined for:

- Failing to attend for jury service without a reasonable excuse
- Being unavailable when called to serve as a juror
- Being unfit for service by reason of drink or drugs

You can also be fined for other offences in relation to jury service, including:

- Making (or causing to be made) any false representations
- Serving on a jury knowing you are ineligible or disqualified
- Giving false or misleading answers to the judge about your qualification for jury service
- Making (or causing to be made) any false representations about a person summoned as a

Continued on next page...



## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE



Amanda Roe

Acupuncture and  
Clinical Hypnotherapist

Most people have heard of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and associate it with the effects of a traffic accident or war-related experience. What many do not realise is that in Ireland postpartum or perinatal PTSD (PPTSD) is a birth trauma affecting three per cent of all new mothers and approximately six per cent of women following an emergency caesarean section.

The cause of postpartum trauma is unique to each woman, however it can be caused by feeling a loss of control, vulnerability or danger to themselves or their baby i.e. premature labour, unplanned C-Section, prolapsed cord, postpartum haemorrhage, use of a vacuum extractor/forceps to

deliver the baby, or any need for the baby to go into a neonatal intensive care unit. However uncomplicated vaginal delivery, breastfeeding problems and sleep deprivation can also be traumatic for a new mother.

I experienced PPTSD when after being diagnosed with severe preeclampsia I was rushed to hospital for an emergency caesarean-section. Although the surgeon and nursing staff were wonderful, it was a traumatic experience for both my husband and I. I was disappointed not to have had the natural birth I had planned and, although I was positive and seemed to recover quickly shortly afterwards, I slipped into postnatal depression and a fog that left me exhausted and made everything seem overwhelming.

Some women who elect to have a home birth and have to transition to a hospital birth find the experience traumatic, as staff are on high alert, the lights are bright and the hospital busy. One of my clients who got airlifted in from an island said "My midwife called for the air ambulance as she felt I was getting tired, and she did not want to risk that I would become exhausted. The transition

into the helicopter was calm and relaxed, the journey was comfortable and I retained my birthing mindset, however when we landed, the hospital staff were on red alert, shouting excitedly and in a hurry. My midwife tried to explain that everything was normal and we were only transferring to the hospital as a precaution but no one seemed to be listening, I felt powerless, as they induced me; it was almost like I didn't matter..." Feeling powerless during your birthing experience and poor communication and/or lack of support and reassurance during delivery can make delivery a traumatic experience.

When a past trauma still feels real and present, it can lead to feelings of detachment, depression, general anxiety or panic attacks. Some women may even relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks which leave them feeling overly emotional or hyper vigilant.

Women who have experienced a previous trauma, such as rape or sexual abuse, are at a higher risk of experiencing PPTSD so it is important to process and recover from these experiences as much as possible if you are planning to get

pregnant.

PPTSD and trauma are treatable, with support you can rebuild your confidence and dissolve the strong negative emotions attached to these past experiences.

*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](http://www.roehealth.ie) or call/text Amanda on: 087 6331898*

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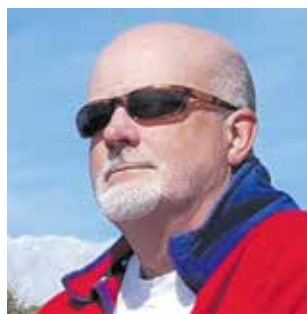
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## If the DNA 'Fitz'

THE DNA OF WEST  
CORK PEOPLE

Mark Grace

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

If you have DNA tested on any platform, this is the time of year when you should log in and check your most recent genetic matches. Prior to the Christmas/New Year testing boom I might get half a dozen new matches on a daily basis, but this increases four or five-fold as the new results come in two to three months down the line. As always, I have found some very useful new matches

to keep me happy!

A recent helpful test result was with my wife's third cousin. We already knew on paper that they connected at 2x great grandparents Dan FITZPATRICK equals Cat O'BRIEN, a marriage that took place in Rathbarry in 1842. That the match indicated that this relationship was genetically proven was no great surprise. The FITZPATRICK's were covered in my piece written for the October 2022 edition and the BRIEN's mentioned in my June 2022 piece.

What was particularly helpful was the match contained some new pieces of DNA not shared with others who had previously been shown to share the same FITZPATRICK connection. Shared segments are the detail you need in genetic genealogy to tie people to common ancestors. It can be the case that a group of relatives all seem to share the same pieces of DNA, so it can be very hard to get insights from this narrow perspective and establish wider connections. Having this cousin now appear in shared match lists started pulling in

other matches who were only suggested to be connected somehow to the wider FITZPATRICK side but could not be specifically assigned from their family trees. Two new lines of investigation emerged.

The first provided suggested DNA connections back to an Ann BRIEN of Rathbarry who married Jerry O'BRIEN mangan or mongane of Tullineasky (Rosscarbery) in 1828. This connection suggested that Ann was another sister to Cat. We had already established that her sister, Johanna BRIEN, had married Jerry FITZPATRICK in 1833, thereby indicating a wider family connection between the family of Daniel BRIEN, a flax grower in Rathbarry, and the FITZPATRICK's who farmed in and around Cahermore and Derryduff (Rosscarbery).

Further research indicated a second line of enquiry as Jerry O'BRIEN mangan was reported to be a blood relative of Mary Anne O'BRIEN mangan, the mother of General Michael COLLINS. What is not clear is whether the marriage that differentiated between BRIEN and O'BRIEN mangan was between

cousins of the same family or were entirely different.

In the June 2022 piece, I related the story of my wife's great grandfather (O'NEILL or Reenroe) and Michael COLLINS to be "second cousins", as reported by the COLLINS family, however it was not possible to prove this from the paper record or with DNA (no close relatives of Michael COLLINS known to have DNA tested). Thanks to my research on behalf of John STASKY (reported in my December 2023 piece), I could effectively rule out my wife's COLLINS 2x great grandmother (who married into the O'NEILL family) as the potential connection for this story as they were another family entirely (originally from Limerick). This left the Collins story as family myth. It now seems more likely that the connection to Michael COLLINS is through his mother's family of O'BRIEN mangan.

I am continuing to piece together the O'BRIEN side of the story through church

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records and DNA matches. I am sure there are families in the area who have more definitive stories and trees that show a connection to Michael COLLINS and the wider O'BRIEN's mangan. If you are willing to share, I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has any further evidence that can make

the tree connecting these two families more robust.

Questions for future articles or private client services can be emailed to [DNAmatching-projects@gmail.com](mailto:DNAmatching-projects@gmail.com). Follow the West Cork DNA projects on Facebook 'My Irish Genealogy and DNA'.

## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

## Super serums

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.

If you've ever wondered about the magic behind these powerful elixirs, you're in the right place. Serums are lightweight, fast-absorbing liquids packed with powerful active ingredients designed to target specific skin concerns. Unlike creams or lotions, which contain more emollients and moisturising



agents, serums are formulated to deliver a high concentration of active ingredients directly to the skin making them highly effective in addressing issues such as dehydration, wrinkles, fine lines, redness, hyperpigmentation, acne, and more. With a wide array of serums available on the market, finding the one that suits your needs can be a bit overwhelming. Top Tip! It's best to focus on your skin and your specific concerns and treat accordingly, rather than throwing the kitchen sink at your complexion. Try and look for a multi-tasking serum, with a

synergistic blend of ingredients so you're getting lots of benefits with just one product. To reap the benefits of serums, it's essential to use them correctly. Start with a gentle cleanse, followed by toner (if using), and then apply your chosen serum. Allow it to absorb and follow with moisturiser and sun protection factor (in the morning). Undoubtedly a game-changer in your skincare routine, for optimal results be sure to use consistently and you'll be one step closer to achieving your skin goals.

## What's new?

**Doctrine Divinity  
Cleansing Balm**

New Irish skincare brand Doctrine are dedicated to transforming the skin we're in. Their products are thoughtfully crafted to benefit all skin types, ages, and genders, contributing to the improved well-being, radiance, and texture of your skin. Expertly formulated in-house by Cosmetic Chemist Tracey Ryan, each product is meticulously crafted with functionality and potency at its core, using

ingredients that genuinely make a difference. Erase the day and soothe skin with their Divinity Cleansing Balm, an indulgent and sensory formula that transforms from a cushiony balm to a light oil to milk without leaving any residue. Containing calming Spirulina and Yarrow extracts, this plant-based butter dissolves makeup, SPF and impurities leaving skin soft, supple and hydrated, ready for your next steps, €42 available online from [www.doctrineskincare.com](http://www.doctrineskincare.com)

**Clarins Hydra-Essentiel  
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Clarins reformulated bi-phase serum intensely hydrates, re-balances, replumps and repairs the skin barrier. At the heart of its formula is their Hyaluronic Power Complex, a duo of hyaluronic acids (regular and acetylated) combined with organic leaf of life extract, which provides continuous, multi-level and long-lasting hydration. The formula is also enriched with saffron flower polyphenols to help balance the microbiota

while organic strawberry tree extract has a seboregulating action, helping to refine skin texture and tighten pores. It also reinforces the skin's natural defences and improves skin quality for radiantly beautiful skin with each application. A silky, non-greasy formula that absorbs easily and nourishes the skin. For all skin types, €55 available online from [www.clarins.ie](http://www.clarins.ie) and Clarins stockists nationwide.

**Yonka Serum C20**

Yon-Ka's latest innovation, Serum C20 is a healthy ageing, radiance enhancing and unifying elixir suitable for all skin types, even sensitive skin. Using 99.9 per cent natural ingredients, it is formulated with a highly stable and potent new generation 20 per cent Vitamin C infused with native turmeric and pomegranate cells. These native plant cells not only enhance the power of the Vitamin C, but also deliver antioxidant benefits of their own and ensure visible and proven effectiveness from five days. Enriched

with organic apricot oil, sweet orange essential oil and Yon-Ka Quintessence, skin is more luminous, the complexion more even and the appearance of dark spots and pigmentation minimised. With continued daily use, wrinkles become less visible, and skin is noticeably more toned, €138.50, available online from [www.yonka.ie](http://www.yonka.ie) and YonKa stockists nationwide.

**Skin Formulas Oatfoliant**

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## Adult learners from Clonakilty to visit Spain on Erasmus+ exchange

The Cork College of FET, Clonakilty Centre (Cork ETB) provides part-time classes for adults at their centre in The Old Technical School on the Western Road, with classes including English, art, woodwork, office administration, computers, horticulture, cookery and crafts. Recently, under the stewardship of area coordinator, Bríd Murphy, the service was awarded funding under the Erasmus+ programme, which is funded by the European Commission. Erasmus+ programming facilitates adult learners to undertake a learning experience in another country.

"This is something new for us in the area of adult education

and we are really excited about the opportunity it holds for us all," says Bríd. "Through Erasmus+ we will take seven of our students on a learning and cultural experience, meeting peers in Vigo, Spain and exchanging ideas and skills."

The learners travelling took part in course in 2023 entitled 'Community Participation'. The group crafted a tapestry depicting different groups, clubs, stories and landmarks of life in Clonakilty. Jean Williams, one of the participants explains "At present we are busy preparing workshops to share with our counterparts in Vigo. While on the exchange, we will take part in craft classes at the local com-

munity centre and also engage in classes with students at the Escuela Da Idiomas, Vigo. For our art, we will present classes on the ancient Gaelic script of Ogham Writing, St. Brigid's Crosses and crochet. We will also teach the cúpla focail and maybe a song or two!"

Ireland and Galicia have always been connected historically through migration, fishing and a shared cultural heritage. Learners from Clonakilty look forward to exploring both the similarities and differences in past experiences when they travel to Vigo on March 3. They are also hoping to host a return visit from students from Vigo to Clonakilty in April.



FOOD, HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Ballydehob welcomes 'Return of The Snakes'

'Return of The Snakes' is a cultural event taking place at An Sanctóir in Ballydehob on March 17 and 18 with the intention of bringing people together to reclaim and reimagine our sense of national identity and Irish pride this St. Patrick's weekend.

Organised by Luc O'Rourke of 'Wild Notions' (original music and events), the 're-wilding retreat' aims – through a selection of workshops and live performances – to connect participants to the natural world, in a celebration of Ireland's ancient spirituality and magical culture that have shaped our national identity.

"The snakes were the symbol of the druids, pagans and magical, mystical folk of Ireland pre-christianity. The idea of the event is to offer people a more wholesome way to celebrate Irishness than through alcohol abuse and colonialism," says Luc.

This event is alcohol and drug-free and will also be used to raise funds towards planting native forestry in Kinsale through the Cairde Crainne group.

Workshops include 'Sen-



suality and Shame' by Claire Killilae, 'Foraging Wildness' by Luc O'Rourke, 'Reclaiming Ritual' by Robyn O'Leary, 'Herbal Yoga' by Jen Doran and Sound Healing' by Robyn and Luc. Live music on the weekend is by Bog Bodies, a band that has been described as "breaking

fresh ground between traditional Irish and alternative folk; as well as from Domhan and Wild Notions.

Tickets cost €120 and spaces are limited. To book a place go to eventbrite or text Luc on 089 499 6629.

# Jack Crowley appeals for puppy raisers for Irish Guide Dogs

Ireland and Munster fly-half Jack Crowley has appealed for volunteers to sign up as puppy raisers for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.

As an ambassador for the charity, Crowley is better placed than most to extol the virtues of puppy raising with his own family having raised many pups who went on to become guide and assistance dogs.

"Puppy raising was part of family life growing up. We all got involved, helping each pup to socialise, learn the basics of obedience, and experience everyday activities such as traveling on buses, trains, and even going to some of my games. It's a huge commitment, but we knew that every time a pup left to start formal training, we had given it a significant start in its journey to changing someone's life. Every time I visit the centre now, I'm tempted to sign up again!"

Puppy raising supervisor Shereen Pearson says puppy raising can fit in with most people's everyday lives: "Anyone can apply. Retired people and families with children generally make good puppy raisers, but many Puppy Raisers combine their role by bringing their pup to the office a couple of days a week, attending appointments, and visiting family and friends. The important thing is



that the person is able to spend time caring for and teaching the puppy."

The charity provides training and ongoing support to each puppy raiser, and all veterinary fees and feeding costs are covered by Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. Equipment such as crates, leads, etc., are also provided and cover for when a puppy raiser goes on holiday.

What are the requirements?

- There should be no more than two dogs in the home. All dogs should be over 12 months old, neutered/spayed, up to date on all vaccinations, and well-behaved around other dogs.

- The puppy must not be left alone for more than four hours.
- You have a fully enclosed garden with walls or fences minimum 5ft high.
- Puppy will live inside, day and night.
- Children in the home must be over five years of age.
- You must be 18 years or older, but the whole family can get involved.

To find out more visit the website at [www.GuideDogs.ie](http://www.GuideDogs.ie) or email [Pups@GuideDogs.ie](mailto:Pups@GuideDogs.ie)

The charity runs free information webinars regularly. To register email [Pups@GuideDogs.ie](mailto:Pups@GuideDogs.ie)



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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.com  
www.katearbon.com

# March Sun Signs

March brings big shifts and new phases as the astrological new year begins along with the first eclipse season of 2024.

The focus is on Pisces energy at the start of the month with the Sun sharing this sign with Saturn, Neptune and Mercury. We can expect to feel the dreamy, otherworldly and sometimes chaotic essence of Pisces most strongly during the first two weeks. There is also a sense of looking for more connection on a spiritual level as well as feelings of compassion and a desire to relieve the suffering of others during this time. When the social planet Venus makes a challenging square aspect to offbeat planet Uranus on March 3, we can see friction and discord arising all around. Our sympathies may be heightened and we want to support the underdog. This is especially strong in areas that involve the land, natural resources and arming, as new ideas and methods are proposed which interfere with livelihood, traditions

or the status quo. Mercury, which has a rational and logical nature and finds being in 'touchy-feely' Pisces very disorientating, gets to connect with Uranus on March 4. This can bring a frazzled energy as we try to keep things on track, plan and organise but our minds just cannot focus as we keep getting new thoughts or "seemed like a good idea at the time" type of inspiration.

Neptune, the planet of mystery and the metaphysical is visited by Mercury on March 8. Don't expect to have clear thinking or good comprehension and don't trust what you hear or see as reliable or accurate.

Frustrations and confusion can come to a head on March 9, as Mars the planet of action and confrontation connects with the disruptive energy of Uranus. This can be a time of making rash choices just to make things happen differently. The New Moon in Pisces on the 10th can be the chance to let things go and make some space,

allowing situations, relationships and plans to take their own shape. The first days of March may be an emotional and confusing time that is better suited to creative projects, social connections, recreation and going with the flow rather than trying to get stuff done!

Mid-month brings the next wave of planet energy when the Sun joins with Neptune on March 17, giving us a real boost of mystical magic, perfect illusion or just a further loss of orientation. It can be a great time to meditate, be creative, turn on the romance or take a retreat break.

Mercury, the quicksilver planet of thoughts and transactions, is in Aries now, from the 10th and starting to slow down in advance of the next retrograde phase. On the 19th, it crosses the point it will return to in late April. This is known as the shadow phase, which lasts until Mercury starts to cover new ground in mid-May. Being aware of any thoughts, ideas, plans or potential projects

that are relevant now may help you during the April retrograde phase when these topics are revisited for review.

The lovely lazy Pisces energy comes to an abrupt end and we get a reality check when the Sun moves into action-orientated Aries at the Equinox on the 20th and fun time Venus joins serious Saturn on the 21st. The Equinox of equal day and night, marks the start of a new Zodiac cycle and the astrological New Year and brings a rush of energy to the season. With Saturn putting a sudden halt to the easygoing party nights of Venus in Pisces we will have to face the mess of the "morning after" and the reality of responsibility once more. Things may have slipped our attention or been slipped in under the cover of distraction. We need to assess where we stand now, as we approach the Lunar Eclipse and Full Moon on March 25.

Relationship dynamics are the theme over the coming weeks

as the axis of Libra and Aries is activated. A Lunar Eclipse brings change through shifts in sentiment. This can affect group, national or cultural alliances, as well as personal connections. We may see the "mood of the masses" take a turn towards what is wanted by the larger social group and individuals may not be so ready to go along with the loudest or most forceful voice. On a personal level, we are going to strive to have good relationships, companionship and harmony with those around us and if there are obstacles to this, we will be willing to work on compromise. This is not the time to tolerate any one-sided scenarios or unequal partnerships. A relationship focus continues into April and is highlighted again by the Solar eclipse in Aries on April 8.

**March has a New Moon in 21 degrees Pisces on March 10 at 9am and a Full Moon Lunar Eclipse in 6 degrees Libra on March 25 at 7am**



**Aries:** The New Moon phase allows doubts to fade into the background as a new sense of self, a more assertive personal style and a more dynamic approach to life can emerge now. With the Sun in your sign later this month, it's no surprise that you want to take a close look at your

personal associations. The Eclipse puts the focus on your house of relationships. You're tempted to let go of anything you believe to be holding you back or simply uninspiring. You may also be torn between your individual or personal concerns in favour of a more active social life. Your relationships need to reflect this energy and those that don't may suffer.



**Taurus:** You'll have an increased ability to make your dreams a reality this month if you put the work in over the next few weeks. Any effort on your part to improve your health, diet, and physical condition will pay off.

Your practical sense is enhanced and you can now make difficult decisions affecting your material welfare. Being of service to others or taking on extra responsibilities will prove to have been an investment in your own future in the long run. The Lunar Eclipse will prompt you to focus your attention on the everyday demands of life. Dealing with the mundane aspects of your daily routine will be fully rewarded later.



**Gemini:** Any tendency to compromise and settle for less than you are capable of can be a problem. Tension results when you ignore your own desires for achievement or acknowledgement. This is a very creative phase so allow yourself time to be playful with any new ideas

and inspiration you experience. You want to fully realise your dreams and this Eclipse season starts you on a new journey. Any attempt to put into practice your hopes and ambitions will pay dividends. You'll find that despite everything you are actually on course, and making the right moves for getting to where you want to be.



**Cancer:** Events make it difficult to reach clear decisions concerning career and life direction. Circumstances may urge you to make a greater effort. But don't overdo things or try to go too far too fast. Despite appearances things are working with, rather than against you, so don't

get overwhelmed. Your feelings and need for security may find you seeking seclusion for a while as you take time to re-energise. Let things take their natural course. The Eclipse Moon shines on your home and private life, which can be very satisfying right now. With this eclipse, you'll begin to gather your resources around you so you can reach new levels in the coming weeks.



**Leo:** This month is the perfect time to act on any impulse to improve yourself and your status. Even just mixing with people who are socially different to you or exploring new ideas will prove worthwhile. A career opportunity or the chance to impress someone of importance is likely during this phase. Feeling good about yourself and what you are doing with your time enhances your sense of well-being. The Eclipse may find you making plans to take up some study or make a journey.

Giving extra attention to details and keeping up with everyday business could be time-consuming but you can make the small things add up to contribute to the larger plan.



**Virgo:** It's a good time to put the past behind you as you're likely to be less sentimental during the next weeks. Keep moving onwards, concentrating on the things that matter. Strip away and discard non-essential items, memories and old habits. The drive to improve your finances and material security is strong. This Eclipse season is a time for getting on with important business. The desire for autonomy makes you reconsider areas where dependence on others may no longer serve the original purpose. You could find some welcome inspiration for a new direction or opportunity you hadn't previously considered.



**Libra:** A strong desire to express your unique personality becomes a priority. Relationships are meant to be a two-way flow but this month will find you wanting the ball firmly back in your court. Your basic energy and drive are strong so if you can avoid being directly confrontational you will soon manage to charm even the most obstinate. How you respond now could largely shape the direction of an important relationship. The Lunar Eclipse energy may help you achieve a new intimacy or understanding, enjoy it. If you can focus on the positive you will recognise the message underneath is sincere and needs to be taken seriously.



**Scorpio:** You're sifting through the experiences of the last several months, in preparation for making a new start in some area of your life as you move forwards. Discrimination and self-examination show you that living the ordinary life is not the whole story for you now. You want to contribute something worthwhile and you're happy to take on extra responsibilities. After the Lunar Eclipse, the additional support you need will be offered by friends or your community if they see your true intention is sincere. Taking care of your needs both spiritually and physically is a balancing act that you strive to achieve now.



**Sagittarius:** You can always bring an unexpected twist or insight to anything you set your mind to. Your recent creativity and increased sense of enjoyment are enhanced by a sincere appreciation coming from others. You can reap the rewards from past efforts whilst there's strong support for your ambitions and goals. Remember though that not everyone is ready to make those moves at exactly the same time as you. This Eclipse season brings the opportunity to improve or make the best out of a current situation. Your vision is probably far reaching and others may not see the world exactly as you do.

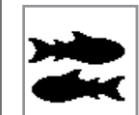


**Capricorn:** A new energy directs you towards achieving something of value and puts you back in the full flow of life events this month. Now you can see what was holding you back. You're able to secure your position, know what the limits are, and move forward. Your recent inward focus and quiet time are paying off now. You've created a firm

foundation to build on so now decide how you can make it work to your benefit. The Lunar Eclipse later this month marks the end of an anxious time. Injured pride and misunderstandings are a result of people taking themselves too seriously, so try not to be one of them.



**Aquarius:** This month's New Moon is the culmination of energies from the past two weeks so now you can push on toward whatever goals you have in mind. Whilst you have this current mood compelling you, it's a good time to reach for something different and exciting. You want to improve your position and are willing to take advice or seek extra knowledge. There may be additional details, communications or travelling to attend to but keep your focus on the bigger picture. The Eclipse brings so much strong energy you are likely to feel an incredible drive to accomplish and achieve in life.



**Pisces:** During the first weeks of March, you'll have the impulse to do something quite liberating. Having considered what's worth keeping and what's just a drain on your resources you'll want to make some space in your life. Later this month the Eclipse gets you thinking about your own needs in all your relationships. New thoughts inspire you and send you off in a different direction. Consider how much your physical needs and personal assets are tied up with others. Ensure there is a balance so no one feels overly indebted. This burst of freedom will do you good and make it easier to keep things in perspective.

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## FOOD, HEALTH &amp; LIFESTYLE

## What a difference a year makes



## WOMEN'S HEALTH

Dr Paula Stanley  
drstanley@westcorkpeople.ie

A year ago today, I moved back to my native Cork after 28 years working as an NHS GP partner with special interest in Women's Health in Hackney, London.

I live with my husband and our lurcher in Bealad East and, while the transition we went through was bumpy, a year in, we are well and truly rooted in West Cork.

In the summer of last year, I set up and ran clinics providing consultations exclusively for women's health problems located in the GP surgery in Skibbereen Medical Centre.

I had run a similar clinic within my own GP practice in Hackney. It was a service that my London patients really valued, so I wanted to provide the same here.

To be honest, I had no idea what to expect. To say I encountered a steep learning curve would be the understatement of the year. I had not worked in Ireland for 30 years and never as a GP. I ran the clinic as a six-month pilot to the end of December 2023. I wanted to use this article to honestly reflect on this endeavour: what worked and what can work better moving forward.

There were a small number

of younger patients with severe period or PMS problems and women wanting to discuss concerns about fertility.

I also saw a lot of patients with urinary symptoms such as frequency or leaking problems but the majority of my consultations were for women with menopause or perimenopause symptoms.

I was humbled and quite blown away by my patients' feedback on their appointments with me over the course of that six months. With these women's consent, I share here some of those voices.

"I was very pleased to read in the West Cork People that Dr Stanley was offering a dedicated service for women and the Menopause Clinic at Skibbereen Health centre. I think it is important that this type of service is accessible to all women who need it.

"For the first time, I met an empathic and engaged GP who was interested in ALL my symptoms and experiences as a menopausal woman. To be able to share my experience of menopause over 10 years with Dr Stanley helped me understand the bigger picture myself, and to understand just what I had been going through, without much help and support. Prior to this, I had met often male, uninterested health professionals, who had dismissed or isolated my symptoms, rather than exploring or explaining what is after all a common and natural process.

"I sincerely hope that this service grows and develops and is available to all women who need it."

"Overall, I would have to say my experience was very positive. I found Dr. Stanley very professional and competent. It is clear that she has many years of experience in dealing with women's health. I was experiencing the symptoms of perimenopause: tiredness, achy joints, moodiness, forgetfulness, very heavy periods, overactive bladder, etc. After speaking to

Dr. Stanley, she gave me some options on how my symptoms and the issue of contraception could be dealt with/improved. I started HRT treatment and am feeling much better. There is a lot of misinformation on HRT, which I feel Dr. Stanley clarified for me. Also, she has a better understanding I feel than some GPs would have when dealing with a woman as an individual. The service is a great advantage for women in West Cork."

"Age 64, it was very important for me to see someone in my female predicament, I needed a pessary fitted. We so need GPs dedicated to women's health, at all ages. Thank you Dr. Paula Stanley."

"I accessed this service about a month ago. I had been looking for someone to specifically discuss some women's health issues and found there is a serious lack of services in Cork County. I was delighted to find Dr. Stanley. The appointment was great, I was allowed far more time than usual to discuss my history and was given very clear and helpful advice throughout. She was informative and very knowledgeable. I would highly recommend her."

"After reading about Dr Stanley in our local newspaper, I decided to make an appointment to see her. I was not disappointed as Dr Stanley made time to listen to my history, asked some questions and was very helpful. I could see she had a wealth of experience and was highly qualified and really wanted to help me. It's not only for women who are menopausal. I am in my early 70s and found Dr Stanley very beneficial to my health. I am feeling much better and would highly recommend Dr Stanley. It's great to have this service available here in West Cork."

Now, I have to emphasise here – this is in no way a criticism of our amazing West Cork GPs. We have fantastic doctors here, many very knowledgeable when it comes to women's

health problems. The issue is not one of lack of expertise but one of capacity.

In my clinic in Skibbereen, I had the ridiculous luxury of 30 to 45 minute appointments with patients. I had no other day-to-day GP work pressure to deal with: no additional patient urgent phone calls, no sick children needing seeing on the day and no practice nurse popping her head in asking me to review a patient she was worried about. I did not have to interrupt surgery to see a 67-year-old male farmer that walked in with "a bit of chest pain": This far from an A&E department, if a suspected heart attack patient walks into your surgery, you see him and you see him now. I had no giant mountain of hospital letters and test results to action, no repeat prescriptions to get done in the non-existent time between morning and afternoon surgeries.

In a rural West Cork GP surgery a doctor might have 20 to 25 patient contacts in a morning, between face to face appointments and patient telephone calls plus all of the above; it does not stop.

Ninety-nine per cent of first contact with medical care happens in your GP surgery. This is a woman's first port of call with any women's health issues. The ICGP, Irish College of General Practitioners, has great online teaching and training modules for any GP in Ireland to access to further their knowledge and expertise in dealing with gynaecological issues as well as menopause. Pretty much all of the female GPs I encountered over the last year in West Cork have undertaken this further ICGP Gynaecology training.

What next? What I now see has been a problem with what I was trying to accomplish was that there was a disconnect: a disconnect between myself and West Cork General practice as a whole. Why did I encounter so many women telling me they had trouble accessing the med-

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ical care they needed for their women's health problems? What is going on here?

GPs do not have the luxury of 30-plus minute consultations. That does not make them uncaring or unqualified. So is it an access issue or capacity or both? I feel there is an important bit of mapping work here could be done to look at that access.

I realise after the six month pilot that I have a lot to learn about how healthcare here is delivered, how it works, is funded, who does what and so on before I go running off trying, essentially to sell a triangular wheel, ie: a stand-alone community-based women's health service. For that reason I have taken up the offer of a post as a GP in Bantry Bay Medical Centre.

Women's healthcare, including menopause care, is best delivered by her GP, close to her home. She does not want to take a day off to travel up to the city to have a ring pessary fitted

for her prolapse, as she has four kids and a dairy farm to manage. It may be she is unaware that her GP can fit a pessary for her.

The concept of care closer to home is something we all agree on, and it is especially important when it comes to women being able to access consultations for their women's health problems. West Cork is fortunate that CUMH runs a satellite gynaecology outpatient service once a month. GPs can choose to refer their patients directly to Bantry Hospital to see a gynaecologist rather than have to travel all the way up to CUMH.

I look forward to the next phase in my career as a GP in West Cork, as always with a special interest in Women's Health and Menopause in particular.

I am happy for readers to contact me by email with suggestions for future articles in West Cork People at drstanley@westcorkpeople.ie.

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

## The Vanbrugh &amp; Friends in concert

St. Barrahan's Church Festival of Music and The National String Quartet Foundation present The Vanbrugh & Friends, a delightful concert at St. Matthew's Church, Baltimore on Sunday March 24 at 3pm.

The Vanbrugh and their guests present two fine and highly contrasted works from the extended chamber music repertoire. Beethoven's early string quintet Op.4 is his own

re-working of his wind octet written in Vienna in 1793 where there was great demand for light-hearted wind band music. The arrangement for strings offers an attractive and elegant lightness of touch. In contrast, Brahms' extraordinary G major sextet is the work of a composer at the peak of his powers, its mood ranging from the restrained beauty of the opening bars to the boisterous party music in the scherzo and the

relaxed playfulness of the finale. The 32-year-old composer wrote it in idyllic surroundings near Baden-Baden, Germany and it was premiered in Boston, Massachusetts in 1866.

Tickets: €15. online with Eventbrite; Thornhill Electrical, Skibbereen; at the door on the night; text/call: 086 2264797; more information from: www.barrahanmusic.ie



## Comedy night in Butlerstown

On March 22 Butlerstown Community Centre will once again host Ahakeera Drama Group with their comedy play 'God Rest His Soul'. Advance booking essential from Majella on 086-3415283 or Marian on 086-3458764. This is a fundraiser for the centre.

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT



## 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.

New York-based guitarist and songwriter Steve Gunn is making a comeback to Ireland this spring. With a career spanning nearly fifteen years, the prolific musician has produced volumes of critically acclaimed solo, duo, and ensemble recordings, working with the likes of pianist and composer David Moore, Sonic Youth bassist and singer Kim Gordon, experimental guitarist Bill Nace, and more recently with Navan native Oisín Leech. His guitar-driven material is most definitely contemporary, at times drawing on improvisation, other times on folk and blues with subtle fingerpicking and slide.

Gunn grew up in Landsdowne, Pennsylvania, a suburb on the outskirts of Philadelphia. His parents were into music, collecting vinyl and often attending gigs in the city, so there were no questions asked when young Steve expressed wanting to play an instrument. Thanks to a great guitar teacher, playing the instrument became like second nature, and he fell in love with it. "It just fit my personality and into how I wanted to relate to myself and to the world," he says. "It was like this placeholder for me where I knew that I wanted to travel and be an explorer per se." His love for playing guitar continued when he moved to

# American troubadour Steve Gunn strengthens connection with Ireland

Philadelphia to study art history. He found the city to be a deeply rich environment for culture and music, and this is where he bounced off different music communities, meeting people he was able to learn from, such as American primitive guitarist Jack Rose.

After college he moved to New York with \$50 in his pocket and worked in various jobs to sustain his music career, including construction work, and handling artworks for a gallery. New York was only a two hour drive from home, but it almost felt like a different country. Now based in Brooklyn, Steve feels somewhat embedded in the city because he has a community to draw from and a studio that he uses, but he admits that things are changing economically, and he's unsure if he will stay there forever. "I'm constantly trying to think about where to go and how to cultivate this creative life and not feel like I need to give up," he explains. "There's a certain level of decision making and protectivity with being a creative person, particularly in the US and for musicians," he continues. "It's a different world now, and most of us make money by playing gigs and it's hard work, but luckily I'm able to do it, and New York was always a place where I could leave and come back if I needed a break from it."

And travelling he does, having gigged in Ireland and most of Europe for the last ten years. He is currently on a tour that will see him play festivals in Portugal, Spain, and France with composer David Moore. Together, they collaborated on the 'Let The Moon Be a Planet' album which was a project of improvisation, a sort of call and response where Gunn plays a nylon string guitar through some effects and Moore responds on the piano. The album was released in March last year,



and a 'Live in London' just came out at the end of February. "It's a different world for me because it's very open music and it's really nice to shift a little bit and try different things," he explains. "Being on the road with David is a different experience too – he plays piano, so he doesn't travel with any gear, which fascinates me because I have just been lugging my guitar around forever and I'm kind of jealous that he just has a little backpack," he laughs.

In early April, Steve will travel to Ireland from Brooklyn to perform with Navan musician Oisín Leech for three very special performances in

Dublin, Galway, and Letterkenny to mark Leech's debut Irish headline to promote the release of his album 'Cold Sea' produced by Steve. The two musicians first met after Leech contacted Gunn following the release of his rather beautiful 2019 album 'The Unseen in Between' written in the wake of his father's passing. "Oisín ended up recording at the same studio, so I went and said hello and we became friends," he recalls. "Oisín is such a generous guy that the next time I came to Dublin we hung out and I went up to Navan where he lives, and played at this folk club that he plays at. We're both

busy musicians, so we had a lot of crossover with people we knew."

Meeting Oisín Leech further strengthened the connection between Steve Gunn and Ireland. Oisín's innate Irish welcoming is the reason why Steve decided to travel to Ireland and produce his album. "We rented this house in Donegal and built a studio there and really got to sink in and absorb the landscape. And to me, that's something I've been wanting to do forever so I value meeting him and his friendship", he confesses. The video for 'October Sun', the debut track from Leech's forthcoming album (out March 8) gives us a glimpse into the recording process, where the musicians are seen playing the guitar in the garden of the studio they set-up near Malin. "We went swimming twice a day, it was really cold hence the title 'Cold Sea'", he explains. "The way that we worked, we'd wake up and go swimming and then we'd work, and then we go for another swim and then we'd work more. And it was this way to recharge ourselves. It was incredible". Of the process of producing an album for someone else, he says: "Oisín is a very talented, smart poet and musician so it wasn't a hard job per se because he did all the work, but it was really rewarding to help somebody make a record that sounds great. And I learned from it too, so it was something that I look forward to doing again."

A versatile musician and now a music producer, Steve Gunn is a superb guitar player who is more about evoking a feeling than showing off the technique. He was formerly a guitarist in Kurt Vile's live band The Vivaltors and he collaborated with so many musicians that

he sometimes finds it hard to keep track of all the albums he's worked on. Notable recordings include the many releases he has made with John Truscinski with whom he has collaborated for over a decade and a half, making improvised music and "exploring the fiery conjunctions between experimental drone and rock and roll". The Gunn Truscinski Nace album entitled 'Glass Band' was issued on Three Lobed Recordings in July 2023. Matador Records released his albums 'Eyes on the Line' in 2016, 'The Unseen in Between' in 2019, as well as the more recent 'Other You', recorded during two visits to Los Angeles in late 2020 and early 2021.

Currently touring the Iberian Peninsula and France with David Moore, Steve Gunn will play in Ireland as part of Oisín Leech's band along with Donal Lunny and fiddle player Roisín McGrory in early April, and then embark on a solo tour of Europe throughout the month of April. He will then be back in Ireland for a co-headline tour with American indie-rockers Cass McCombs that will see the two musicians perform across the island for seven dates from the end of April to early May. "I'm looking forward to going back in April with Cass," Steve enthuses. "I never really get a chance to take long vacations or holidays, so I sometimes try to fit things in, but I've always been wanting to visit Ireland as a somewhat normal person", he continues. "I think it's going to be really great. We're both really excited to travel through Ireland and play these different places that I've only heard of."

Steve Gunn and Cass McCombs play at DeBarra's on April 26 and Live at St Luke's on April 27.

## Folk supergroup 'Bonny Light Horseman' record new single live at Levis'

Bonny Light Horseman — the acclaimed trio made up of Anaïs Mitchell, Eric D. Johnson, and Josh Kaufman — have

released a new single, 'When I Was Younger', produced by Kaufman and recorded at Levis' Corner House in Ballydehob. The song is released alongside a video filmed on location by Jason Lee, Donal Scannell, and Colm Rooney, and credits the 'Levis' Town Chorus' on backing vocals.

'When I Was Younger' encapsulates the rich musical heritage and intimate atmosphere that define both the venue and

the band. Levis' rustic charm and intimate setting provided the perfect backdrop for capturing the raw emotion and authenticity inherent in Bonny Light Horseman's sound.

"There's a whole genre of trad songs with this 'domestic frustration' sentiment, like 'Single Girl Married Girl,' 'Wish I Was A Single Girl Again,' etc.," the band comment. "This song is inspired by those, but we wanted to write it as a duet,

to tell two sides of a story. We recorded it live, so you can hear coughing, cars, and the whole audience did that wordless wail with us in the middle. It felt like a primal collective shake-off. Next morning we were collecting our things from the pub and the owner Joe was out front in flip-flops sweeping up the cigs from the street singing, 'When I was younger, I used to dress fancy...'"

## March Gig Listings

Compiled by Lauren Guillery

- Mar 1 AINM | Artichoke Ballydehob  
Caolían Sherlock | Connolly's of Leap
- Mar 2 James Keegan | DeBarra's Folk Club  
Seamus Fogarty | Levis Corner House
- Mar 3 Lady Bird Lad | DeBarra's Folk Club
- Mar 7 John Spillane and the Band of Wrens | DeBarra's Folk Club
- Mar 9 Moon Looks On | Levis Corner House  
Overhead, The Albatross | Connolly's of Leap
- Mar 15 Declan Sinnott & Evelyn Kallansee | St Matthew's Baltimore  
Grooveline | DeBarra's Folk Club  
Patrick Stefan | Levis Corner House
- Mar 16 Keenan Flannery | Levis Corner House
- Mar 17 The Ocelots | Levis Corner House
- Mar 22 JD Meatyard – Rendition night | DeBarra's Folk Club  
Uiltan O'Brien | Ballydehob Traditional Music Festival
- Mar 30 The Kates | Levis Corner House

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# Clonakilty raising much needed funds for Doctors Without Borders

A concert raising funds for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) will take place at DeBarras Folkclub in Clonakilty on Sunday, April 7 at 6.30pm.

This event is an evening of sublime words, music and song with the impressive line-up of Peter Broderick, Susan O'Neill, Liam O'Maonlaí and Little John Nee.

Organisers are hoping to raise much needed funds for MSF to help some of the thousands of children displaced and orphaned by the brutal conflict in Gaza.

According to UNICEF, before this onslaught on Gaza started, more than 500,000 children were already in need of medical services; today the organisation estimates that more than one million children are in need of such help.

As well as providing medical aid on the ground and looking after thousands of traumatised wounded children, MSF are working hard to secure the flow

of essential supplies including water, food, fuel, medicines and medical equipment.

The organisers say the generosity of contributing artists has been wonderful.

"Their eagerness and willingness to partake is heartwarming. We are so grateful to them and all the other selfless contributors, giving their time to this humanitarian cause."

As always, the Clonakilty community has stepped up: DeBarras Folkclub, Walsh Printers, Lettercollum Recording Studio and Geata Arts are all playing a big part in putting together this event.

Sunday April 7 will play out in three parts with the concert closing the event. For the whole of that afternoon some wonderful local musicians including Kevin McNally, Eithne O'Mahony, Paula K O'Brien and Oisín Walsh Peelo will play a 'session' in the front bar of DeBarras where there will be a 'pass the bucket' for donations.

Local culinary genius Caitlin Ruth will be doing one of her pop-up's at The Olive Branch Healthfood Emporium on Spiller's Lane early in the afternoon serving up her mouthwatering empanadas that will have your tastebuds doing a salsa dance. Meals must be pre-booked. Keep an eye on Caitlin's Instagram page for the menu and booking

link.

All information and tickets for this will be announced closer to the time on Instagram @caitlinruthfood and @theolivebranchclonakilty.

This wonderful food event is generously sponsored by The Olive Branch, Caitlin Ruth Foods, Down2Earth Materials, and The Clonakilty Food Company. For any more information regarding any of the above events please contact Olive at olivefinn1@gmail.com

All online tickets for the evening concert are now sold out but some remaining tickets are still for sale in-store from The Olive Branch Healthfood Emporium.

The organisers would like to thank all the amazing contributors and supporters of this day.

All proceeds will go to The Gaza Emergency Regional Fund.

To make a donation any time please go to [www.msf.ie](http://www.msf.ie)

Little John Nee will host the evening concert. A good friend of Clonakilty since the 1980s, when he arrived with Galway's street theatre group Macnas during the town's renowned busking festival, Nee is an award-winning writer, performer and musician. His unique style and wit is sure to add a special energy and entertainment to the evening.

American musician and

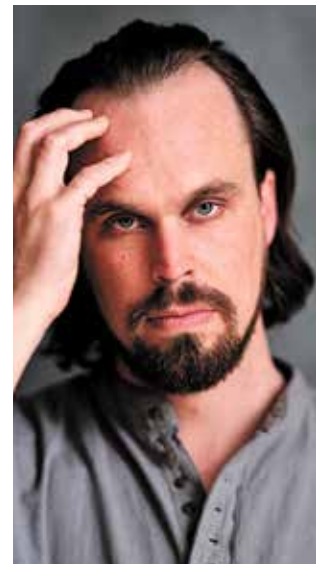
composer Peter Broderick is no stranger to West Cork, having played at a number of venues in recent years but this will be his first gig at De Barra's in Clonakilty. Known internationally for a wide range of solo projects, collaborations and compositions for cinema and dance, this gifted multi-instrumentalist boasts a range of styles, from discography with labels including 'Bella Union', 'Erased Tapes' and 'Beacon Sound' to classical and experimental music.

Described as a songwriter of many depths with a timeless voice, Susan O'Neill, who also performs under the moniker 'SON', is one of Ireland's brightest talents. Her first album 'Found Myself Lost' was one of Hot Press magazine's 'Albums of the Year' and garnered her a number of opportunities, including joining Sharon Shannon on her sold-out tour of Australia and New Zealand. She has collaborated on a number of occasions with multi-platinum, award-winning artist, Mick Flannery, with whom she released a duet, 'Baby Talk' to rave reviews. Eclectically fusing traditional Irish folk with rock, soul, gospel and blues, O'Neill's husky vocals combined with her superb guitar technique, loop pedals and trumpet, have wowed audiences all over the world.

One of Ireland's most charis-



Host Little John Nee



Peter Broderick



Susan O'Neill



Liam Ó Maonlaí

matic and soulful musicians on the traditional Irish music circuit, Liam Ó Maonlaí is possibly best known as the frontman of The Hothouse Flowers. Ó Maonlaí's passion for music sees him blending an eclectic mix of folk, blues, gospel, soul, rock, and more with his amazing vocals

and an array of instrumental mastery from piano to flute, harmonica to bodhran. Spanning over three decades, his career has seen him achieve number one hits in over twenty countries and he continues to reinvent himself with each performance.

## Celebrating our language in a long Irish week

This month starts with a week that's pretty unique shares **Moze Jacobs**: Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Week) lasts over a fortnight (March 1-17) and is billed as, "the biggest Irish language festival in the world". It was founded in 1902 by Conradh na Gaeilge, the Gaelic League, as part of Athbheochan na Gaeilge (the Irish revival) that aimed to breathe new life into Irish culture. The Irish language was the fabric connecting folklore, literature, mythology, music, theatre, sports.

"Seachtain na Gaeilge highlights the Irish language," says Máire Ní Chéileachair, the multiple-award winning Irish traditional singer with an international reputation. Before her singing career took off, she was a teacher in a secondary school in Cork City. "I was very involved in promoting Irish there. A hard language to learn but very special. It presents another "eye on the world". As Gaeilge, we say that something is "at us" instead of the English, "we have". There is less of a sense of ownership, whether it

is of objects or of the land. Also interesting is a different take on emotions. In English you'd say, "I am sad." In Irish it would be "Tá brón orm" which translates as "Sadness is upon me". Same for happiness, jealousy, anger. Emotions move and pass through us but they do not define us." She believes the appetite for Irish is growing. "There is a buzz, a positive appreciation around it. People want to learn, to engage with it."

Kevin O'Shanahan, a clinical nurse specialist, musician, and manager of 49, North Street in

Skibbereen (a creative space promoting positive mental health and wellbeing) agrees wholeheartedly. "Books like Manchán Magan's 'Thirty-Two Words for Field,' which stresses the importance of holding on to a culture through language, have been very influential. Here at 49, throughout the year, we have weekly Friday gatherings dedicated to Irish trad and tunes, as well as a monthly Irish-language group, 'Fite Fuaite' (interwoven or connected) on the last Thursday of the month, led by the bilingual poet/musician Pól O Colmáin. During Seachtain na Gaeilge it will also take place on Thursday, March 14 (2-3pm). Plus, we will be trialling outside sessions around language and music called 'Am Spraoi' (play-time) Saturday, March 2, 2-3pm, and Sunday, March 17, following the St. Patrick's Day Parade,

on the Bridge next to O'Sullivan's, as part of our collaboration with Let's Play Cork. A playful and fun approach.

"It's such a beautiful and musical language. I play drums and percussion using instruments from around the world. Many rhythms come from words and language. Irish has such wonderful rhythms and sounds. Tuesday, March 12 (7-8:30pm) sees Abair Amhrán (Sing along), an excellent opportunity to learn and sing songs together 'as Gaeilge'."


There are also the Gamelan Spréacha Geala sessions (Wednesday, March 6 and 13, 7-8:30pm in the Skibbereen Family Resource Centre), which combine Javanese gongs with Irish language songs. They are led by Kevin McNally, who says, "Lots of people have 'absorbed' Irish songs or poems.

You can expand your vocabulary naturally through song or conversation. I'm going back to the Irish that I've learned before. When I was younger, it wasn't seen as attractive or cool or progressive. Now having your own language is perceived as really important. There are lots of innovative projects where Irish is used."

According to Thaddeus O Buachalla, winner of the An Post Irish Language Book Award 2022 with his magic-realist novel 'El' and, together with Sam Uí Bhuachalla, organiser of a Night of Irish Language Conversation and Music in An Teach Beag, Clonakilty (March 15, 8pm): "Seachtain na Gaeilge is a reminder to us all that we must come together to celebrate our language whenever we can."



## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT



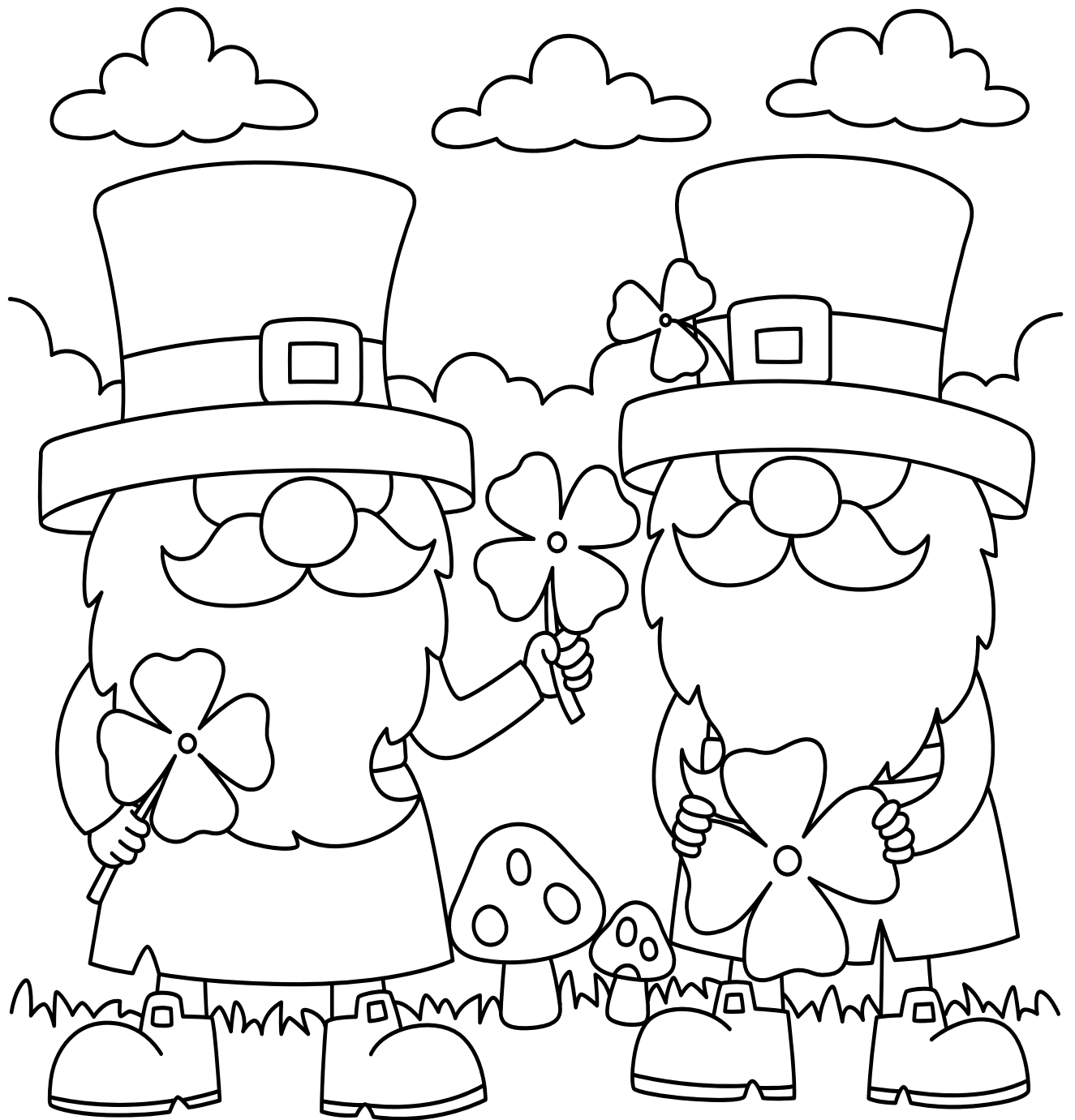
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## Colouring Corner



## Peace is paramount in Clonakilty's St Patrick's Day parade



Clonakilty's St. Patrick's Day Parade is once again being organised by Clonakilty Town Twinning, who have done so since 1999. This year the theme is 'S'fóchan Le Chéile' in support of peace around the world. The committee is inviting as many groups, schools, clubs and societies as

possible to take part.

The Twinning Committee is very appreciative of the donations and sponsorship it receives, especially its main sponsor Clonakilty and Dunmanway Credit Union, as well as the time and help given by the people of Clonakilty and surrounding areas.

The parade begins at 2.30pm from Faxbridge with pre-parade entertainment with Clonakilty Brass band in Astna Square from 1.30pm.

If you would like more information on how to participate in the parade or to help as a steward please email [info@clonakiltytwinning.ie](mailto:info@clonakiltytwinning.ie) or telephone 087 3325005.

## Full steam ahead for Kinsale St. Patrick's Day Parade

The Kinsale St. Patrick's Day Parade committee is busy planning for a memorable 2024 event.

Friday night, February 16, sees the annual Fun Family Bingo Fundraising Night where great fun and prizes are guaranteed. The Trident Hotel is the venue for the event, with doors opening at 7.30pm, eyes down at 8pm. A night not to be missed! The annual Church Gate Collection will take place on Saturday, February 24 and Sunday, February 25.

Enjoy the wonderful sight of beautifully lit boats sailing in under the night sky at the unique Maritime Parade in the harbour on Saturday, March 16. Festivities commence at 7.30pm with music and free family fun,

culminating in a spectacular fireworks display at approximately 8pm.

The committee is delighted that the Grand Marshals for this year's Street Parade on St. Patrick's Day will be headed by Carmel Murphy of 'The Well' at Kinsale Community Health and Wellbeing Centre, a volunteer led community-based charity, located in the former HSE Health Centre Building in the heart of Kinsale. The aim of the project is to provide accommodation for three community groups, which are involved in promoting mental health and wellbeing in the community. These organisations are Kinsale Youth Support Services (KYSS), Kinsale Men's Shed, and Kinsale Youth Community

Centre.

On St. Patrick's Day itself, the Blessing of the Shamrock will take place at the 11.30am Service in St. Multose Church. Festivities will then commence around town from 1pm with free face painting, balloon modelling and music. Buskers are also welcome to come along on the day. The prize-giving for the Children's Art Competition will take place at 1.30pm in the Tourist Office before the Street Parade, which will start at 3.00pm from the New Road car park. The theme for this year's Parade is 'Peace and Kindness on Earth', which participants are welcome to interpret that in a multitude of ways.

The parade will weave its way along The Glen, Pearse



Street, Barry's Place and the Pier Road to the reviewing stand near the Pier Head.

Since the revival of the parade in 2012, local businesses, who 'Go Green' for the occasion in the weeks before the event, have been very support-

ive. Combined with the wonderful effort the businesses make to decorate their premises and the flags and bunting erected by the parade committee, Kinsale always looks spectacular. Once again there will be prizes for the Best Dressed Window in ad-

vance of the festival weekend. If you are interested in sponsoring or contributing funding, please contact 086 3177642, wish to help out with stewarding on the day please contact 087 9244613, or email [kinsalaparade@gmail.com](mailto:kinsalaparade@gmail.com)



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# Baltimore Fiddle Fair welcomes new faces and old friends

One of Ireland's favourite music festivals, The Baltimore Fiddle Fair takes place this year from May 9 to 12, with musicians from USA, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Scotland, England and from all over Ireland.

Baltimore Fiddle Fair has evolved from humble beginnings to become

one of the most loved and respected festivals in the country. It is famous for its intimate settings, beautiful surroundings, friendly atmosphere, and primarily perhaps for its consistent ability to present a world-class line-up of national and international acts. This year's festival is no exception and features an eclectic programme of incredible artists from Ireland and around the world.

The 2024 line-up includes six Irish premiere performances, featuring American folk sensations Nora Brown and Steph-

anie Coleman, Swedish/USA fiddle whizz's Lena Jonsson and Brittany Haas, Norwegian Hardanger maestro Alexander Aga Røystrand, amazing Scottish trio Lyre, powerhouse Swedish/Scottish five-piece Ian Carr and The Various Artists and the incredible young Finnish four-piece Polenta.

The festival also welcomes back some old friends from the early days, back in the legendary McCarthy's Bar in Baltimore. These include the mesmerising UK quartet Flook with special guest Patsy Reid, astounding Shetland seven-piece Fiddlers' Bid plus three incredible Irish acts: Tola Custy and Laoisie Kelly from counties Clare and Mayo, Connemara's The Kane Sisters with John Blake and Cork's very own North Cregg.

One poignant event this year promises to be a very special tribute to Clonakilty native and Boston's premier promoter of Celtic music and culture Brian O'Donovan, who sadly passed away a few months ago. This concert, on the Saturday afternoon, will feature a gathering of amazing singers and musicians

who knew him well.

These intimate concerts will be held in unique venues across Baltimore, including small churches and cosy marquees, and all in one of the most stunning festival settings on the planet. Baltimore Fiddle Fair will also include a host of additional events includ-

ing musical boat trips on the river and on the ocean, top class workshops, a documentary film screening, an informative historical walking tour, outdoor musical yoga, a concert for local primary schools, a very special photographic exhibition and a plethora of great sessions in and around the village.

For many musicians and music lovers, the annual pilgrimage to the Baltimore Fiddle Fair is definitely the highlight of the year and this year's festival promises to be no exception.

A few remaining tickets for Baltimore Fiddle Fair are still available at [www.fiddlefair.com](http://www.fiddlefair.com).



Alexander Aga Røystrand



Nora Brown & Stephanie Coleman

## 'Interconnections' at Gallery Asna

Three artists working in distinctly graphic styles feature in Gallery Asna's second exhibition 'Interconnections' for 2024.

Polish collage artist Karolina Kaja Kant, German artist-designer Johanna Legnar, and Cork artist Aoife Nolan each

explore inter-connectedness, from the merging of interior and exterior landscapes, the emergence of surprising visual associations and emotional resonances, to the links between politics, economics and climate justice.

Aoife Nolan is a multi-disci-

plinary visual artist working in drawing, painting, photography, film and textiles. The main concern within Nolan's work is the primal human need for connection. Connection to sense of self, connection to each other and connection with our collective home, earth. Inspired by nature and yogic practice, the interior and the exterior merge in the creation of contemporary landscapes.

Through a series of seven images, Karolina Kaja Kant interprets the invisible reactions and interactions within the human mind, translating these complex processes into captivating collages. Each collage invites the viewer onto a visual journey that stretches the boundaries of imagination.

Johanna Legnar shows graphic artworks about issues related to climate justice in a minimal and typographic design style. For Johanna political posters are an ideal way to express her thoughts, pointing out what's wrong and giving solutions to create a change. Furthermore she likes to inform people by engaging and appealing infographics.

All are welcome to the exhibition opening on Saturday, March 9 at 5.30pm. The exhibition runs until March 30.



## FIDDLE FAIR 2024 Baltimore • Ireland May 9-12

In order of appearance

- Alexander Aga Røystrand
- Tola Custy and Laoisie Kelly
- Lyre
- Flook with special guest Patsy Reid
- The Kane Sisters with John Blake
- Lena Jonsson and Brittany Haas
- A Song for Brian O'Donovan
- Ian Carr & The Various Artists
- Fiddlers' Bid
- Laurie Wilkie with Ian Carr
- Nora Brown and Stephanie Coleman
- The Nordic Fiddlers Bloc
- Polenta
- North Cregg

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

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# ‘HUH?’: An exhibition of darkroom prints by Thady Trá 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.

In Thady Trá's third successive exhibition at Gallery Asna, titled 'Huh?' the young photographer reveals, to those who have been following his work, a shift in creative emphasis: from concerns of composition and quietude, to an interest in narrative and drama; from subjects of a local nature to those of international import.

The composer is still present, of course, but what emerges most strongly in 'Huh?' is the storyteller: the photographer as documentarian; the photo-journalist who captures, in successive images the drama, whether that be the quiet, but tragic closure of a local store, or a noisy climate protest in the centre of London.

Trá divides his exhibition into four parts: images from the 'Oily Money Out' protests in London, a series from a trip to Germany, a collection devoted to Ireland, and a special series documenting the closure of Atkins in Clonakilty. If the exhibition suffers at all it is from too many images. Hung from pegs, in double rows on four walls, it is difficult to initially focus on any one print. Better spacing and fewer photographs would have enhanced the exhibition as a whole. In saying this if over-abundance is one's only complaint, then it's a good complaint to have.

What is most compelling in this body of work, and what might have been explored more in its presentation, is the contrast between a narrative told through images of absence (photographs of empty shelves and vacant aisles), and a narrative told through images of dramatic presence (police confronting, and at times yelling at and step-

ping over, protesters). Images of absence typify the Atkins series, whilst images of dramatic presence are most compelling in the 'Oily Money Out' series; it is the contrast between the two that I would like to dwell on here.

There is something quite daring in photographs such as 'Bare' and 'Empty Shelves.' Unremarkable on their own, they combine with others to tell the story of a greatly loved store's untimely closure, the threat of which has faced many iconic businesses in West Cork over the last year. The corollary to 'Bare' (literally an image of empty shelves) is a poignant photograph of the Atkins team at the store entrance on the day of farewell. Atkins had goods to sell; that was the business, but it was always the people who sold them who drew the customers back time and again. A friendly word, some knowledgeable advice, time graciously given: these were the hallmarks of the Atkins team who, through their own personal qualities, made the store integral to the community. Trá has captured something of this simply by being present, by opening his shutter and capturing the last hurrah.

Trá's images from 'Oily Money Out,' a week of climate actions and workshops in London last year, contrast markedly with the Atkins series. The narrative is international, high profile, loud and dramatic, where the Atkins series is local, low profile, quiet and subdued. Having said this, quietude may also be found in a crowd and Trá has a keen enough eye to see it. One stand-out for me is an image of an elderly man wrapped up in a coat and beanie,



on his knees, grasping a banner. His expression, in the midst of the crowd, is forlorn, almost one of despair. One gets the feeling that he has tuned out of the noise and clamour around him; that he is far away, somewhere perhaps in the past. His expression is inscrutable; a note of loss and abandonment in the middle of a maelstrom. There are other memorable works from this series: 'Fossil Free London' with its banner, police and protesters

arrayed together, feels iconic, as does a work which captures the moment when a policeman roars at a protester. Such images can only be captured when the shutter is constantly at work, when the photographer's eye is constantly watching; these images are a testament to Trá's commitment.

Thady Trá's 'Atkins' series and 'Oily Money Out' series reveal an artist whose finger is on the pulse of what is vital to com-

munity, both on the micro level and the macro; both in the local sphere and the international. His work reflects his spirit; one of passionate enquiry into the world around him. 'Huh?' taken together is a vibrant, if eclectic body of work, by a young photographer with talent to burn. A little more finesse on his presentation and greater focus in his curation can only enhance what is always engaging work.



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## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# Irish classics to contemporary drama featuring at this year's West Cork Drama Festival



Opening in Rossmore theatre on Saturday March 9, the 61st West Cork Drama Festival runs until Saturday, March 16 with eight participating plays staged. Dark comedies (*The Lonesome West*), Irish Classics (*Dancing at Lughnasa*), Dark Tragedy (*On Raftery's Hill*), Hilarious Romps (*Out of Order*), Contemporary Drama (*The Ferryman*, *Stolen Child*) and Classical Drama (*Antigone*, *The Trojan Women*) all feature in this year's impressive line-out.

Wayside players from Blackwater, Co. Wexford open the festival on Saturday, March 9 with Marina Carr's powerful dark tragedy 'On Raftery's Hill',

a tale about Red Raftery and his family who lives by his own rules. While dark and disturbing, comical aspects run through this play which has been described as 'theatrical writing of the highest order'. Recommended for adult viewing only.

Holycross-Ballycahill Drama Group from Tipperary take to the stage on Sunday, March 10 with Friel's classic 'Dancing at Lughnasa'. This multi award-winning tender play about the five Mundy sisters is set in 1930s Donegal. The play revolves around one character's (Michael) reminiscences of a summer in his aunts' cottage as a seven-year-old and is punctuated with a memorable dance

sequence. A film version of the play starring Meryl Streep was released in 1998.

On Monday, March 11, Brideview Drama from Tallow Co Waterford present 'Antigone' by Sophocles and adapted by Don Taylor. This is one of Sophocles' trilogy 'The Theban Plays', a powerful tragedy, which dramatises the clash between the family and the city and the tragic consequences that follow.

Tuesday, March 12 sees the local Kilmeen Drama Group perform the popular Martin McDonough play 'The Lonesome West'. This macabrely funny play is the third of his well-known Leenane trilogy.

In the wild west of Ireland, two brothers Coleman and Valene are at loggerheads, fighting over unresolved childhood grievances (and crisps), following their father's death.

On Wednesday, March 13, Memory Lane Theatre Group from Lixnaw, Co Kerry (pictured) stage fellow county playwright Brendan Kennelly's adaptation of the Euripides 2,400-year-old tragedy 'The Trojan Women'. A play exploring the loss incurred from war and the impact of war on womanhood. It was adapted by Kennelly when the Balkan war was ongoing and resonates now with events in Gaza and the Ukraine.

Ballyduff Drama group from west Waterford present Jez Butterworth's 'The Ferryman' on Thursday, March 14. A play about the 'disappeared' of the Troubles and the disturbing impact of the silence that surrounds these. At a nuanced level, it examines the differences between the Irish people's idea of themselves and the English people's idea of them and also draws parallels with Greek my-

thology. A contemporary play likely to evoke much discussion amongst theatregoers.

Friday, March 15 sees Wexford's Ballycogley Players take to the stage with their production of the popular Ray Cooney comedy 'Out of Order'. When a government junior minister, plans to spend the evening with one of the opposition's secretaries, things go disastrously wrong leading to a hilarious chain of events. Lies, deceit and disguises leads to a whirlpool of mayhem. A night of laughter looks promised for theatregoers.

Closing the festival on Saturday, March 16 is the production of 'Stolen Child' by Yvonne Quinn and Bairbre ní Chaoimh presented by Clann Machua Drama Group from Kiltimagh Co. Mayo. An emotive yet humorous play, set in the 1990s, about a woman adopted at birth who searches for her mother with the aid of a quirky private detective and his unorthodox ways. This search opens more than just her family history, as the care of mothers and children in the past is laid bare.

Paddy Farrelly, manager of

the Ramor Theatre, Virginia, Co. Cavan is the adjudicator for the festival. Paddy holds a MA in Theatre Studies from UCD and has worked in a variety of acting, direction and production roles. In 2013 he directed 'Trad' by Mark Doherty for Millrace Drama Group, which won the Confined finals that year. The nightly adjudications are always enjoyed for their informed perspective on everything from the set design, lighting and sound as well as the direction and acting of the production just watched.

This year the Confined finals take place in Mountmellick, Co Laois from April 18-26, while the Open finals take place as usual in Athlone from April 27 to May 5.

All plays start sharp at 8pm and patrons can't be admitted after the play commences. Nightly tickets (€15) and season tickets (€100) can be booked online from February 26 at [www.rossmoretheatre.com](http://www.rossmoretheatre.com) The festival committee would like to thank all the festival sponsors and supporters for their continued and valued support.

## Bandon Art Group spring exhibition at the Grey Heron Gallery



For the month of March, Bandon Art Group will be showing their work at the Grey Heron Gallery in Bandon. The pictures are a mixture of the artists' own personal styles, in oil, acrylic, watercolour and fabric collage. This happy group meets once a week both to paint together and to enjoy an exchange of ideas. The exhibition runs from March 1-31.

*Morning at Barloge, Lough Hyne, by Joan Sutton.*

### West Cork 3 Act Drama Festival 2024

March 9<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>

Adjudicator: Paddy Farrelly

<p><b>SATURDAY</b> MARCH 9<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Wayside Players</i></p> <p><b>ON RAFTERY'S HILL</b></p> <p>by Marina Carr Over 18's</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY</b> MARCH 10<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Holycross Ballycahill Drama Group</i></p> <p><b>DANCING AT LUGHNASA</b></p> <p>by Brian Friel</p>	<p><b>MONDAY</b> MARCH 11<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Brideview Drama, Tallow</i></p> <p><b>ANTIGONE</b></p> <p>by Sophocles adapted by Don Taylor</p>
<p><b>TUESDAY</b> MARCH 12<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Kilmeen Drama Group</i></p> <p><b>THE LONESOME WEST</b></p> <p>by Martin McDonagh</p>	<p><b>WEDNESDAY</b> MARCH 13<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Memory Lane Theatre Group</i></p> <p><b>THE TROJAN WOMEN</b></p> <p>by Brendan Kennelly</p>	<p><b>THURSDAY</b> MARCH 14<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Ballyduff Drama Group</i></p> <p><b>THE FERRYMAN</b></p> <p>by Jez Butterworth</p>
<p><b>FRIDAY</b> MARCH 15<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Ballycogley Players</i></p> <p><b>OUT OF ORDER</b></p> <p>by Ray Cooney</p>	<p><b>SATURDAY</b> MARCH 16<sup>th</sup></p> <p><i>Clann Machua Drama Group</i></p> <p><b>STOLEN CHILD</b></p> <p>by Yvonne Quinn and Bairbre Ní Chaoimh</p>	

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**STRICTLY NO ADMITTANCE ONCE SHOW BEGINS**

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Craft Corner

This month **Natalie Webb** is showing us how to make a St Patricks Day rainbow mobile

*"I hope you have loads of fun making this colourful rainbow mobile...maybe it will bring you good luck!"*

Materials:

- Scissors
- Glue
- Pencil
- Cardboard
- Black, yellow and green card
- Red, Orange, yellow, green, blue and purple paints.
- String

Method:

Draw and cut a rainbow shape out of your cardboard.

Mark six even stripes along your rainbow then paint them in from the top, starting with red, then orange, yellow, green, blue and finishing with purple.

When the paint has dried do the same on the back of your peice of cardboard.

Cut out two pot shapes from your black card.

Cut out approximately 10 circles of the yellow card –



they can be all different sizes if you like – these are the gold coins.

Stick on the coins, overlapping each other, at the top of one of the pot shapes then stick the other pot on top of these so that it looks like the gold is sticking out of the top of the pot.

Draw and cut out a shamrock shape from your green card.



Make a hole at the base of your rainbow and then make another one at the top, also make holes in the top of the pot and the shamrock.

Putting string through all the holes, attach your pot of gold and the shamrock to your rainbow. The string through the top hole can be used to hang your mobile up...Happy St Patricks day!

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Sudoku

The goal of Sudoku is to fill a 9x9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3x3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9

		6				5		
8				2		1	7	
				8				
				7		3	4	
		1	5					
7			3					9
								5
1	8		6					3
	2			5		7		4

#214280

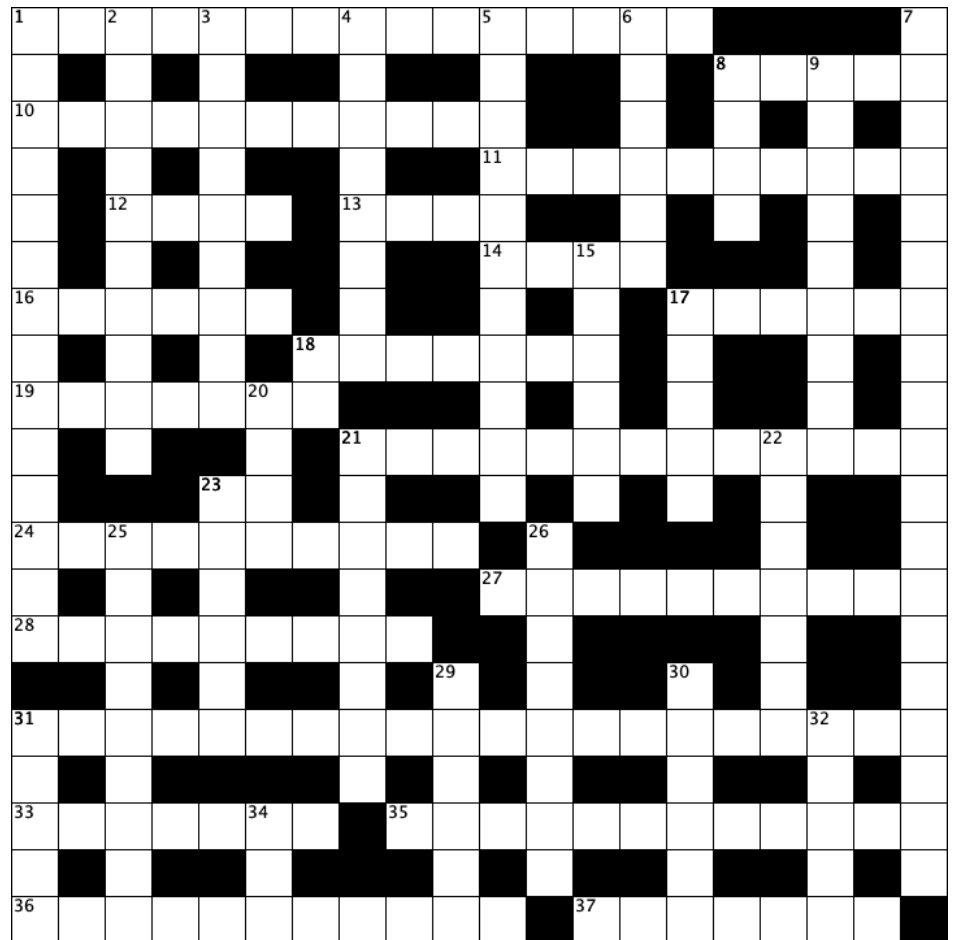
Difficulty: hard

		2				9		
7			5			3		
								1
3							4	1
8	2				6			5
4			9					7
		8		2				
			6				7	
9	6						4	5

#75290

Difficulty: moderate

In the news Crossword



ACROSS

- Full name for crystal meth (15)
- Worry found in gang, strangely (5)
- Biblical execution method (11)
- Legally not there and a bit insane sadly (2,8)
- Flood refugee (4)
- Posh exclamation (4)
- A bit up in the air (4)
- It's neither solid nor gas (6)
- Indian port city (6)
- Japanese word meaning "harbour wave" (7)
- World's smallest continent (7)
- Agrees enough's converted into methane maybe (10,3)
- Prefix for partisan or annual (2)
- Lasting impact (10)
- Very often (10)
- Hanging around (9)
- Fictional character created by Mary Shelley (13,7)
- A short literary work (7)
- With many sides (12)
- Disease of the cowardly (6,5)
- Triumph of Nelson's ship (7)

DOWN

- First Minister of Northern Ireland (8,6)
- Blood-stemming bandage (10)
- Fomenting of political protest (9)
- Honeycomb cells (8)
- Wiped out (11)
- With great agility (6)
- Irish holiday march (2,8,3,6)
- They're shared by twins (4)
- Famed bible printer (9)
- Sudden scare (6)
- Soul mate ate out in this Iraqi city (5)
- Thanks (inf) (2)
- Biometric scan identifier, maybe (4)
- Drink thought to build up iron stores (8)
- Black piano keys, informally (7)
- Lavishly adorn part of ship (6)
- Of earliest time in history, as seen on Amazon (9)
- Fishing tackle used to get the villains? (8)
- Shelter from danger or hardship (6)
- Picture of small parts (6)
- A liking for (5)
- Member of a Turkic group (5)
- Jude of "The Young Pope" (3)

Across: 1. methamphetamine; 8. angst; 10. crucifixion; 11. in absentia; 12. Noah; 13. gosh; 14. fifty; 16. liquid; 17. Mimbra; 18. tsunami; 19. Oceania; 21. greenhouse gas; 23. bit; 24. impression; 27. frequently; 28. loitering; 31. Frankenstein's monster; 33. novella; 35. multifaceted; 36. yellow fever; 37. victory. Down: 1. Michelle O'Neill; 2. tonight; 3. agitation; 4. hexagons; 5. annihilated; 6. numbly; 7. St Patricks Day Parade; 8. ages; 9. Gttenberg; 15. freight; 17. Mosul; 18. ra; 20. rts; 21. Guinness; 22. ebones; 23. bedeck; 25. primaevd; 26. dragnets; 29. refugee; 30. mosaic; 31. fancy; 32. Tatar; 34. law

HOME & GARDEN : FOCUS ON SPRING GARDENS

# A Little adventure into the natural world



Latitude Festival 2018

A person of the world, sculptor and horticulturist Peter (Pete) Little was born in Australia to English parents, before spending much of his childhood travelling, his family's adventures taking him to places like Bali, Malaysia, India, Afghanistan, Iran and Newfoundland in Canada. After following love and adventure to West Cork, he settled with his own family between Bantry and Glengarriff, in the wild mountainous landscape of the Beara peninsula. With a background in fine art and blacksmithing, later moving into landscape design and permaculture, Pete shares with **Mary O'Brien** how he has fused these disciplines, combining his love for the natural world with art to create a concept he calls Hortisculptures, the most well-known of which are hanging 'pods' – essentially cocoon-like moss plant-covered pods that people can sit inside while immersed in audio.

The 'pods', which have featured in his sculpture gardens at many well-known festivals including Glastonbury and Bloom since 2007, were inspired by a trip into the jungle of Brazil, where pools of water teemed with life under trees and the bright colours of the cacao fruit were reminiscent of lanterns glowing in the under-story of the jungle. "Its incredible sensory experience felt like a protective sanctuary in a rich healthy eco-system," shares Pete. "I wanted to try and recreate it."

Pete's aim was to create an installation that would allow the viewer to become immersed within the art, effectively becoming a part of the installation, viewing it from the inside. He achieved this by merging music and acoustics with the elements of fire, water and living plants to create an extraordinary multi-sensory



Portach at Bloom in 2011

experience.

One particular installation favourite of Pete's was 'Portach', which he created at Bloom in the Park in 2011. The design was based on a

rare bog woodland habitat that has disappeared along with Ireland's woodland culture. The installation took home Best in Show and the RHS Gold award and went on to win Best Show Feature at RHS Tatton Park in the UK, which led to an invite to the international art garden festival, Chaumont Sur-Loire, in France, in 2012. "We were the first team ever to represent Ireland and our design both shone through and stood out among hugely sponsored gardens for companies such as Christian Dior," he says.

While the awards and accolades are of course important, the greatest joy for Pete had come from knowing how many people have been in his 'pods' at festivals over the years and the experiences and meetings, even marriages, that these have facilitated. "The installations

Continued on next page...

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## HOME &amp; GARDEN : FOCUS ON SPRING GARDENS

A Little adventure... *cont'd from previous page*

have always offered a sanctuary and a haven at events, and that is something I am proud to have created. Several people have contacted me over the years to tell me how they met in the pods and had an incredible experience."

Ultimately the most important side to his work is changing people's perspectives and opening people's eyes to

the beauty and connectivity of nature and the massively positive benefits of working sustainably with it. "Witnessing a collective response among the crowds," is always the highlight.

At Glastonbury 2014, a surge of some 60,000 people overwhelmed security and passed through Pete's installation space, surging through

the sculptures and plants. "Thankfully there was no damage or injuries, but seeing my sculptures surrounded by a sea of people as far as the eye could see was both dramatic and terrifying!" he shares.

His own eyes were opened to our rapidly disappearing natural habitats when he took time out to travel after his mother's death in 2002, on a trip that brought him through the jungle in Indonesia and face to face with orangutans, creatures who are critically endangered.

In 2015, a mysterious phone call asking him to partake in a secret exhibition later in the summer led to a missed opportunity or even perhaps a lucky escape!

"It was a busy time in the summer and I was often getting late requests to come and exhibit at events, so I said no, with the excuse that my plants would be looking pretty worn out and dead by the end of the summer. They insisted that really wouldn't matter, which left me slightly confused," he shares.



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Pete with Jess, Tallulah and Archer



A permanent installation at the Fusion festival site in Germany

The irony of the situation hit Pete when street artist Banksy's 'Dismaland' exhibition, a pop-up installation that was "a sinister twist on Disneyland" hit the headlines later that summer!

After years of creating transient installations, in 2020, Pete was commissioned to create a permanent design for the well known Fusion festival in Germany. It marked a huge step forward in his career. "This was something I had been keen to do for a while at a festival site, to allow the garden to fully mature and grow. Basically to create a micro-climate and habitat with the aim of rejuvenating landscapes," he explains.

Right now Pete is taking a break from his transient lifestyle with encouragement from

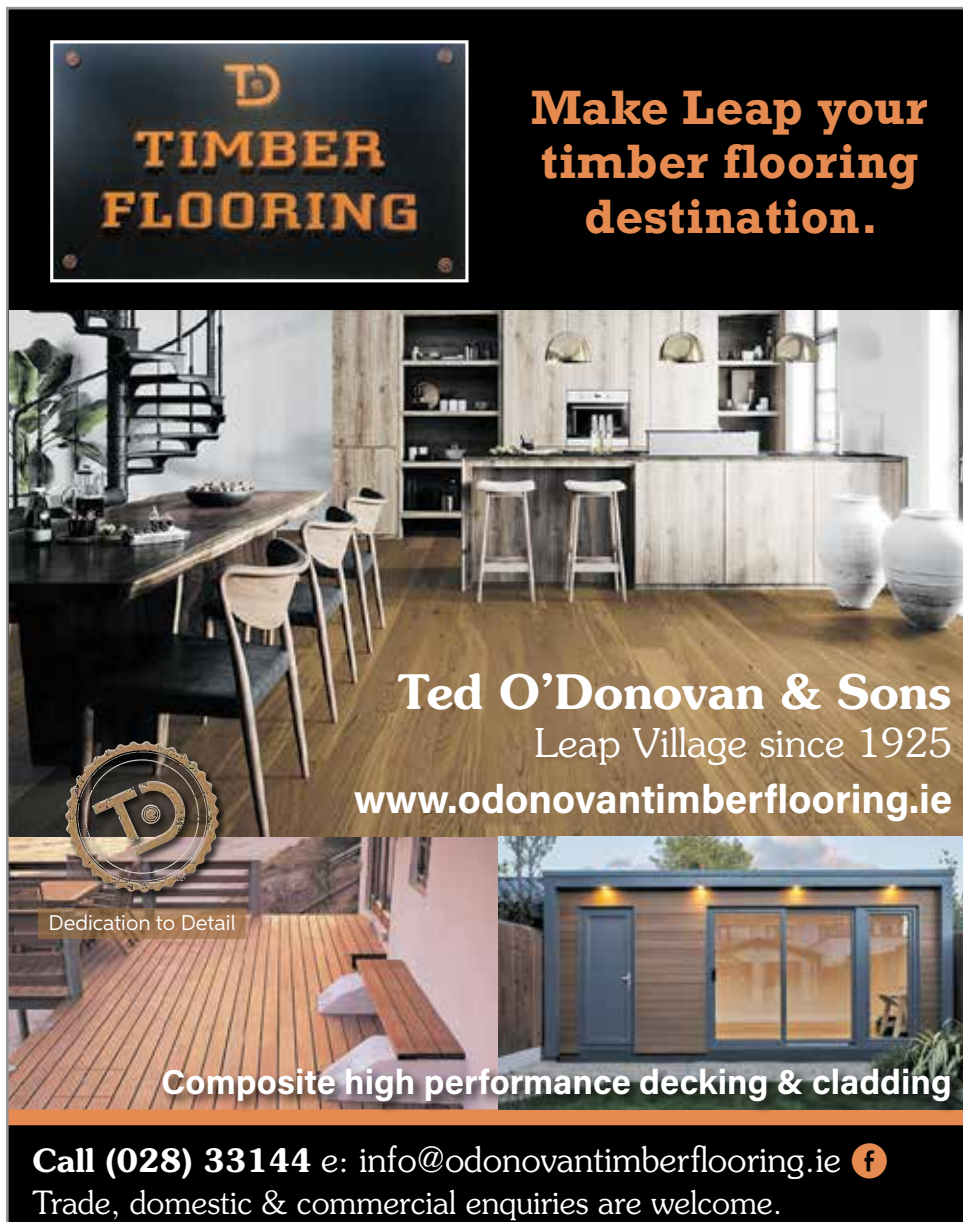
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his teenage children to stay put for a while. As a result, he has created some unusual accommodation at their homeplace using an old truck and one of his pods with the intention of creating a nature arts retreat in Coomhola. At the same time, he is focusing on projects closer to home and currently creating a decorative steel canopy for Goleen Harbour

eco experience on the Mizen peninsula.

The spirit of the adventurer is difficult to contain however and plans are already afoot for taking part in a major sculpture exhibition in the UK, as well as Glastonbury, this summer.

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



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HOME & GARDEN : FOCUS ON SPRING GARDENS

# Go green with West Cork Grass Services

West Cork Grass Services is a small company based in Courtmacsherry, offering a variety of gardening services, which can be tailored to suit any client's needs. Started in early 2023 by David Crowley and Tadhg McCarthy, the company has now grown to employ three full-time and two part-time local people.

“We saw a need in Courtmacsherry for a lawn maintenance company, which has now grown to offering maintenance almost county wide,” shares David. West Cork Grass Services covers from Rosscarbery in the west to Ringaskiddy in the east but the company is always open to branching further afield into

new areas.

The primary service offered by West Cork Grass Services is regular lawn maintenance but the company also offers hedge cutting and garden clearing services.

Refreshingly, while the aim of the company is to create neat and tidy gardens, David and Tadhg are also very focused on bio-diversity, encouraging wilding areas, eliminating the use of chemical sprays and keeping tree removal to an absolute minimum.

With unpredictable weather patterns increasing due to climate change, the biggest challenge for David and Tadhg is working a regular schedule during large parts of the growing season. It hasn't held them back however, and since starting, the company's client base has grown from small private customers to include large commercial sites with multiple on-site needs.

Now with their sights on further expansion, the future includes new machinery, the

expansion of battery technology, bigger reach for prospective clients and offering a larger range of services – which will hopefully result in more local employment opportunities.

“We have made a huge investment in battery equipment in the last two years and we're not done yet, we have a great supplier, Douglas Forrest and Garden, who gives us great service and product range,” shares Tadhg. By the start of the 2025 season, West Cork Grass Services aims to be operating completely petrol-free, making their own impact on reducing carbon emissions in Cork.

It's a rewarding job and both men get great satisfaction and enjoyment from their work.

“We enjoy the versatility,” they share. “Every single site is different, every one has different needs and requirements.”

“We love working in all seasons, the fresh spring air, the summer sun, watching the leaves change in the autumn and the crisp winter mornings. Dealing with clients that are so appreciative of our hard work.”

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For more information [www.westcorkgs.ie](http://www.westcorkgs.ie)



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## Encourage frogs and toads into your garden for a healthier ecosystem

Frogs and toads are cold-blooded, tailless amphibians that both belong to an order of animals called 'Anura' – an Ancient Greek word that roughly translates to 'without a tail'. There is only one species of each of these wonderful creatures in Ireland; the Common Frog and the Natterjack Toad, which are sadly close to becoming endangered due to urbanisation and climate change. But there is good news writes **Ella McSwiney**; if you have even a small garden, you can help both these species to survive by creating a habitat that is attractive to both.

There are two factors that must be considered if you want to welcome frogs and toads into your garden, the first being a water source. While frogs spend all of their lives in creeks, ponds, marshes, swamps and streams, toads mostly live on land, albeit near water. Both species can only reproduce in water.

To encourage frogs, create a pond that is two to three feet deep and roughly six feet wide. Although toads are more likely to be found living in Kerry or Wexford's Sloblands, for a home that is more suitable, dig your pond just one to two feet deep. In both cases make sure the pond has a gradual slope so your little buddies won't struggle to climb out!

Ponds will also need to include shelter for their new residents, so they can hide from the sun and predators. You can make

or buy amphibian-friendly shelters, examples of which include rocks and aquatic plants.

The second factor that holds equal importance for the survival of 'Anuras' is to eliminate chemicals and pesticides – any use of these in your garden will make it too toxic for these creatures. Luckily, if you have a thriving resident 'Anura' population, you won't need to use any chemical nasties! Frogs and toads work hard at pest control, eating flies, slugs, spiders, beetles, cater-

pillars and many more insects. Spotting these creatures in your garden proves that you've looked after it well. Because frogs and toads are so highly sensitive to pollutants, if they come to your garden at all, it is a good sign that it has a healthy ecosystem.

Finally, you may be wondering how you can tell the difference between these two 'Anura'. Although the Common Frog and Natterjack Toad look similar, there are several visual hints that will help you distinguish the amphibian-in-question. One is their skin; the Common Frog has moister, smoother skin in lighter shades of green, brown and sometimes yellow, while the Natterjack Toad's skin looks dry and bumpy with darker shades of brown and green. Look out for a long yellow line on their back, as this is a feature that only appears on the Natterjack Toad.



The Common Frog. Pic: Mike Brown

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## HOME &amp; GARDEN : FOCUS ON SPRING GARDENS



## GARDENING

John Hosford

The Weekend Garden Centre

## Gardening in March

well as reassessment and analysis. The clocks going forward and the ever-increasing stretch in day length gives a time boost to do extra work in the garden.

This is the month to check and correct any prolonged waterlogging in the soil, which can result in plant failures and a greater susceptibility to root-borne diseases.

March brings many reminders of Spring with early shrubs and bulbs in flower. Do take the opportunity to see some superb Magnolias in gardens such as Fota, Birr Castle and Mount Congreve Gardens near Kilmadaden in Co. Waterford.

**Containers**

Do replenish the top layer of containers with fresh compost, top dressing with a slow release fertiliser. Dress up your containers for Easter with hardier plants such as Pansies, Polyanthus, Primroses and Violas. Potted Spring bulbs such as dwarf Narcissi, Tulips, Hyacinths and Scillas can be added to provide extra colour and fragrance. Bowls and containers can also be planted with some delightful alpine plants such as Arabis, Aubretias, Campanula, Dianthus, Anemone blanda and Cerastium (snow in summer). Alpine/rockery plants will thrive best with good drainage and location in a sunny position. It is too early to plant out half-hardy, tender bedding plants but these can be planted in the protection of a greenhouse to allow them to become established before planting outside in late May/early June.

**Lawns**

Mow established lawns when the weather is mild and soil conditions permit. Don't cut too short initially – keep the mower at a higher cutting height for

some of the earlier cuts.

Add grass clippings to the compost heap in thin layers. Alternate with selections of other compostable material. Too much all at once is likely to cause wet, poorly-aerated conditions, resulting in smelly slime rather than compost.

If you have bulbs in your lawn such as Daffodils and Crocus, wait at least six weeks after flowering before you mow the area. Feed the bulbs for a good display next Spring.

Give the lawn a spring feed to give it a boost. Straighten lawn edges with a half moon (edging iron).

Prepare ground for an April sowing.

**Weed Control**

Hoe weeds on a dry, sunny morning to maximise wilting. Don't allow invasive weeds to get established and watch out for briars, nettles and Japanese knotweed.

**Slugs**

Protect the tender young shoots of emerging Delphiniums, Hostas, Lupins and Spring Bulbs. Slugs and snails can do a lot of damage to young buds before they have barely emerged from the soil and you may not be aware of the problem until the leaves begin to open up.

**Perennials**

Cut down all growth left over winter. Even if seed heads and stems continue to look good, you need to get rid of them now to make way for new growth.

Once all the tidying up has been done, you can dress the soil with a good, organic fertiliser followed by a good mulch of bark mulch or Gee-up. Lift and divide summer-flowering perennials. Lift each clump with a fork, using two forks back to back and prising them apart. Add organic material and an organic fertiliser to revitalise the soil. Plant the new divisions in groups of three, five, seven or more depending on the available space. Water well if the soil is dry.

**Dogwood and Willow**

Prune back hard now Cornus and Salix, grown for their colourful bark.

**Summer Bulbs**

Dahlias and Begonias can be encouraged into growth by potting in pots or trays in moist compost. Start off in a frost-free area such as a greenhouse or conservatory. They can be hardened off for planting in their summer quarters at the end of May/early June. When

choosing bulbs or tubers, check the bulbs before buying and ensure they are good-sized bulb, sound, with no signs of fungus mould or rot.

The following summer bulbs can be planted out when weather becomes milder and risks of frost diminishes: Eucomis, Galtonia, Gladioli – in variety, plant every three to four weeks from mid March to early June to provide continuity and a succession of delightful blooms over the summer and autumn. You can plant in rows for cutting, in tubs, or in groups of five or more. Plant 10cm-12 cm apart, 10 cm deep. Continue to plant Lilies – plant three times the depth of the bulb. If the soil is heavy or badly drained, add a layer of coarse grit to help drainage. Nerines are an excellent choice for late autumn colour. Plant in a sunny, very well-drained position. Plant with the neck of the bulb proud of the soil. Nerines come in pink, red and white shades,



the pink Nerine bowdenii being the hardest variety – other varieties need winter protection, especially in more frost-prone inland areas.

**Vegetable Garden**

Plant early potatoes. Keep frost protection fleece or cold frames on standby for frost. Plant onion sets, asparagus.

**Fruit Garden**

Protect early flowering fruit from frost damage especially peaches, nectarines and cherries. Use a heavy, frost protection fleece, sacking or jute.

Hand-pollinate peaches and nectarines.

Complete planting of bare root fruit trees and bushes.

**Glasshouse and under cover**

Sow seeds of tomatoes, aubergines and peppers in a heated greenhouse or heated room. Check the reverse of the packet for full growing advice and recommended optimum temperatures. 21 degrees Celsius is the recommended germination temperature. Germination takes two to three weeks.

Buy fresh grow bags and lay out in the greenhouse to warm up in readiness for planting.

Continue sowing of half-hardy bedding plants.

Prune Fuchsias, Geraniums and Pelargoniums with a sharp, clean, disinfected secateurs.

Over-wintered indoor plants should get increasing amounts of water as days lengthen and growth increases. Use clean, fresh lukewarm water.

Commence feeding now at weekly intervals with an organic seaweed based fertiliser or you can get a specialised feed for plants such as Cacti, Orchids, Fuchsias, African Violets and Citrus.

Re-pot Geraniums and Fuchsias into fresh, clean compost.

Watch for pests and deal with them immediately.

Ventilate the greenhouse on fine, sunny days. Consider an automatic ventilator if you are out all day.

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## FARMING

# Making the switch to organic

With over 5,000 participants in the Organic Farming Scheme in 2024, the area being farmed organically in Ireland has tripled since 2020.

While this shows a significant pace of growth, it is however still far off the EU target of 25 per cent of agricultural land in the EU to be used for organic farming by 2030. With a background in agriculture and organic food production, Fruit Hill Farm owner **Elmer Koomans** is well placed to assist West Cork farmers interested in learning more about making the move to organic.

For any farmer considering converting to organic, geographical location, soil type, and soil fertility must all be taken into consideration when deciding on crops and fertilisers.

For a dairy farmer, the ease of making the move into organic production will depend on the stocking rate of the farm and the quality of the soil. According to Elmer, with no collection of organic milk in West Cork, some dairy farmers, instead of going certified, farm as close to organic principles as possible. “The farmers I have spoken to reckon that the animals perform better, are healthier and the margin at the end is better,” he shares.

Whether it is organic principles or the bottom line that a farmer is more interested in, with the rising costs of chemical fertilisers, the the hardier variety-rich clover-grass mixes needing less input, provide an attractive alternative.

“Instead of a monoculture of perennial ryegrass and a smidgen of white clover, it is better to grow a mix with a much wider variety of grasses, more white clover, possibly some red clover and some grassland herbs like chicory, plantain, yarrow and so on,” explains Elmer. “These mixtures with a wider variety last much longer and are not so dependent on fertiliser inputs, although it is still important to maintain a good pH and reasonable levels of phosphorus and potash.”

Due to the more diverse and intensive root system, these variety rich pastures are also much more resilient during prolonged spells of very dry or wet weather.

“An existing pasture can be improved by overseeding or stitching in,” explains Elmer. “One doesn’t always have to plough, which is not always possible anyway for various reasons.”

Environmentally-friendly and non-toxic in nature and to humans, organic fertilisers will improve soil health rather than degrade it. Fruit Hill Farm carries a mixture of plant origin, animal origin and mineral origin fertilisers, all approved for use in organic growing. “Most are

for horticulture or tillage, but for example PatentKali (25 per cent K, 17 per cent S, 6 per cent Mg) and Kalisop (42 per cent K, 17 per cent S) are two great fertilisers for grassland,” shares Elmer. “It can be hard to keep up the level of potash and sulphur during the season on lands that are naturally low in potash already, especially when heavy cuts of white or red clover silage are being produced. These fertilisers are very effective and a good response will be noticed. On land low in phosphorus, granulated rock phosphate 11 per cent phosphorous can be applied. We also have granulated lime now which is approved for use in organic.

“For tillage crops, grassland or when reseeded, an application of 250kg/acre of chicken manure pellets can really make a difference to the crop. We have this now in 600kg bags at a very cost-effective price.”

Taking the location and the soil into account, crops that typically grow well in the Irish climate using organic principles are oats, triticale, rye (hybrid) and in better soils barley and wheat.

“Combicrops, which means a combination of cereals and a bean or pea variety, are very popular as a combining crop in organic farming,” says Elmer. “These combicrops are less prone to diseases, and also the weeds get suppressed better than in monocultures of either. When these crops are grown for a silage cut before they are fully ripe; they are called wholecrops.”

With a large selection of blight resistant seed potatoes now available, while proper management of the crop is still essential, it has become much easier for farmers to grow a good yielding crop without the use of fungicides. The more blight-resistant genes in a variety the better, which are bred by crossing existing varieties.

“The advantage of these varieties,” shares Elmer “is that there is a lot less risk of losing a crop, and much more security of a good yield. The disadvantage is that a lot of these varieties are quite new and consumers are used to certain varieties that

they like and can be slow to change over to new varieties. We have some really good varieties though and customers are very happy with varieties like Connect, Alouette, Vitabella, Sarpo Mira and Axona. “Blight resistance is only one of the criteria of selection, the potato also needs to have resistance to other diseases, like viruses spread by aphids, it also has to yield well, look good, harvest well, cook well and taste good.”

When any crop is harvested nutrients are removed from the soil, so replacing these nutrients and preventing soil degradation is essential to maintaining quality of yields. Diverse crop rotation or cover crops can hold nutrients and maintain and improve the overall structure of the soil.

“Leguminous cover crops are able to fix nitrogen with the help of the nitrogen fixing bacteria living on their roots,” shares Elmer. Some cover crops are short term and only grown during the winter period, while others can be left in for two years.

One of the biggest challenges for organic growers is weed control, as without the ease of herbicides, weeds can compete with new seedlings. For a successful crop, it is essential to put preventive measures in place for controlling weed seeds, which can stay dormant in the soil for a long time. “in organic farming weed control has to be mechanical or thermal,” says Elmer “so it has to be done with hoes or hoeing machines depending on the scale.

“In horticulture, flame weeders are used at the early stages of a crop when weeds are only just germinating. Ploughing can be a very effective way of burying weeds, also the creation of a stale seedbed is important, which means let the weeds germinate first, then lightly cultivate to kill them and then sow or plant the crop into a clean seedbed.”

While applications for the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) have now closed, if a farmer is serious about converting to organic, then putting the research in now will pay dividends. “Every time the organic farming

scheme opens up, there are very good subsidies available, making it a lot less painful to convert,” says Elmer. While even with the subsidies the cost of switching to organic can be high, there are many advantages to embracing this more sustainable alternative to conventional farming. “There can be a better margin due to lower inputs; healthier soil, plants and ani-

mals; less pollution and erosion of the environment and a more resilient farming system, which may be very important with the climate change that is happening,” says Elmer.

Whether you’re committed or still on the fence about the switch to organic, Elmer advises a slow and steady approach for optimum results. “Don’t rush into it, do the research first, do

some trials first and see how they go. Go to as many organic farm walks as possible and talk to farmers and growers that have converted and learn from their experience. It has to fit the farm and the farmer — it will be easier to convert for a less intensive farm. A lot of the principles can be applied without ever going fully certified.”



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## FARMING

## A West Cork Farming Life: Joe Collins, Collinsfort, Gurraneigh, Lissarda

Interview by Tommy Moyles

### Describe your farm

The farm is a bit east of Coppeen and I'm milking 75 Holstein Friesian cows on 130 acres supplying milk to Dairygold. It's all owned ground and it's all in one block, which is a big help. I farm with my wife Rosalie and we have two daughters, Maria and Rebecca. Maria is a teacher and she's in Australia at the moment. Rebecca is just back from Australia; she's a nurse and has been a great help looking

after the calves at the moment. The nursing background is a great help.

We used to milk all year round but have moved to a spring milk herd now.

I keep a few pedigree Aubrac suckler cows as well. It's a bit of a hobby. I like them, they're beautiful cattle. We keep a few of our own calves every year and sell them as stores or finish them. It gives us options anyway.

*Continued on next page...*



*Joe Collins and his daughter Rebecca with their cow Collinsfort Pim Daffodil EX90 and her triplet calves.*

## New life on the farm and elsewhere farmers voice frustration



### FARMING IN WEST CORK

Tommy Moyles

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

In association with



Calving wasn't due to get underway until February 24 but cows wouldn't be the greatest fans of calendars. About two weeks out from the first due date, I was away all day and when I got home, I went to put in silage and turn on an extra light for the calving cameras.

I was convinced I heard new calf noises, as I walked into the shed but on reaching the heifers, they all looked settled, so it was probably my mind playing tricks with me. You'd always be a little apprehensive before calving

begins, wondering would you be able to remember what to do and all that. Anyway there wasn't a budge until I pushed a bit of fresh silage out for them.

A few started to move for the extra grub, as I turned on the light in the feeding area. They'd be clearer to see on the calving camera then at least and I could head for bed and not need to see them until the morning. Heading for the door is when I heard the lowing sound again. As the heifers moved, I spotted the small white head tucked in near the straw at the back. I went in home to put on the work clothes and came out to find the calf sucking and the audience looking on. I got the calf pens bedded and brought them out there for a bit of peace and quiet away from the curious crowd.

The smallest heifer in the place got calving 2024 under way with a heifer calf. The main straw shed evolves into a calving area every spring and has been home to most of the in-calf heifers since the end of January.

A lean-to off it, is home to the old dairy stall section, which serves as the calf pens now, and between them there's a high wall with a few vents that divides them.

On the stall side, there's a walkway that runs from the length of the house.

It was used to fill up the head feed of the stall with hay when previous generations wintered dairy cows there and it serves a similar feeding function now.

It's 12 paces from the dairy door to that opening and over those dozen steps, I challenge my senses every spring. Now, it only works if you haven't seen



*Calving got under way ahead of schedule on Tommy Moyles farm this year when the smallest in-calf heifer gave birth to a heifer calf.*

the calving camera in a while but the sounds and smells are different when there's a new calf in the shed.

Once I open the door, I'm listening for the different tones of lowing, the 'hmmms' and 'mms', the sound of a cow vigorously licking her calf and humming at the same time. The sounds are different again if it's all heifers in the shed and a new calf has arrived. They're all unsure and inquisitive.

You can hear multiple nostrils sniffing as they work out what has gone on. They appear to have extended their necks, as they try to get close, but not too close, to the new arrival.

On the odd occasion, there have been a few cows that have gotten extra vocal too but, luckily, they are few and far between.

It will be fairly full on in the maternity ward for the next six weeks, so hopefully we get

some respite from the rain. I've never known the farm to be so wet. The evenings are stretching out so we hope to get stock out in some form from the start of March.

### Farming news

The much-heralded ACRES payments that were due in December last year still haven't landed in farmer's accounts. The Department of Agriculture said these would arrive by the end of February, yet few farmers have received them yet. This has put immense financial strain on farmers, particularly those in more marginal land. That pressure, on top of no let-up in rain, has hit farmer morale and the frustration is growing. A frustration that led in part to Cork farmers holding a protest outside County Hall ahead of Cork County Council's meeting at the end of February. As part

of the IFAs 'Enough is Enough' protests, they wanted to highlight to local politicians the level of regulation they face.

At the protest, Matt Hurley, Cork Central IFA chair said farmers are very frustrated and angry at the moment. He had fielded a lot of calls from farmers since the recent 'Enough is Enough' protest that took place in Cork city, as well as other venues around the country.

"There's a lot of disappointment that there was little coverage of the last protest. Their sentiment is that their concerns aren't being taken seriously. Farmers are beyond frustrated at this stage. They're fairly angry and the last protest seems to have whetted their appetite for more.

Prior to the gathering at County Hall a number of farmers held a protest at Cork airport. Vice chairman of the IFAs

national dairy committee Alan Jagoe said: "Farmers felt frustrated after the last protest in Cork city. They believe that their concerns are being swept under the carpet.

"They're angry too at Dublin Airport Authority looking for 25 per cent extra capacity. Farmers are on to me saying this is ridiculous, as while we're being asked to reduce emissions, at the same time aviation can expand.

"Airlines are looking to source sustainable fuels to reduce emissions. Those are mainly coming from biofuels. If farmers put these same crops into our cows, we are said to be emitters. It highlights the hypocrisy of Government policy.

"This is not anti-aviation, we're all for more economic activity in the country, but our only indigenous industry should not be sacrificed to enable this."

## FARMING

**You experienced a first on the farm recently. Tell us about it.**

We had our first ever set of triplets recently. We'd have twins most years but never triplets, even back in my father's time it never happened. I went up to check on one of the cows that was scanned with twins after the supper and there was one calf on the ground. I had to handle the cow then and the second calf wasn't presented right, its leg was down, so I fixed that. I found the third one was lying down behind another cow that had calved the day before. They were two bulls and one heifer off my own Aubrac stock bull. They were all healthy and were up and sucking within half an hour. We'll be keeping them anyway.

**Had the cow had twins before?**

She had twins in 2019 and 2020 and had her first calf in January 2016 so these are her 11th, 12th and 13th calves. Her name is Collinsfort Pim Daffodil EX90 and she's from a homebred family of cows we bred up since my father's time. She was born in January 2014 and has done very well for us. She's produced 62,145kg of milk in eight completed lactations so far, this will be her ninth and she's averaged 3.78 per cent protein and 3.76 per cent fat.

**What's happening on the farm at the moment?**

Calving has been going on with a few weeks but it's at a lull now. We had a slower start this year compared to other years. If the rain would ease we'd be able to get cows out to grass more so its mainly yard work at the moment.

**Changes to the nitrates derogation have been a major talking point over the last year. Has your farm been impacted and if yes to what extent?**

We've been majorly impacted. My initial reaction was that it makes no sense to me, as we're here in a blue river area. The blue indicates pristine water but we're reduced down to 220kg of organic N/ha now. Because my cows were high yielding, they were placed in band three, which meant they were classified as producing 106kg of organic N/year. That change put me over 250kg of organic N/ha so we had to sell a lot of stock last year that we would normally have held onto. We did that in order to maintain cow numbers and I wanted to be comfortable heading into 2024 in order to have my average for the year below 220kg N/ha. I sold in-calf heifers and beef stock that I normally would have finished in order to be comfortable. Normally we'd finish our empty cows and they had to go too. I think we'll end up in a

situation where we'll have more grass than we can manage. To keep good enough quality in the grass is going to be difficult

The galling thing about it is public servants are getting a pay rise of around 10 per cent but we're going to take a 10.2 per cent reduction and no one will say anything about it.

**What was one of the most frustrating things about the derogation issue for you?**

The lack of notice I suppose. We only got notification of what was happening in November and were expected to have changes made by the first of January. That lead in time was too short and it disrupted the business from a financial point of view, stuff like that needs to be signalled a lot further out.

I built a new slatted tank last year thinking I'd have loads of room and now no one knows if the slurry storage they have will be enough. You plan for one figure and it could end up somewhere else. For young people trying to do a five year plan it's next to impossible.

**You're kept busy off farm too?**

Ya, I'm also involved in the Cork Holstein Friesian club, my herd prefix is Collinsfort. We're busy this year as it's the club's 50th anniversary so we're organising a celebration and we'll have a book launch later in the year too.



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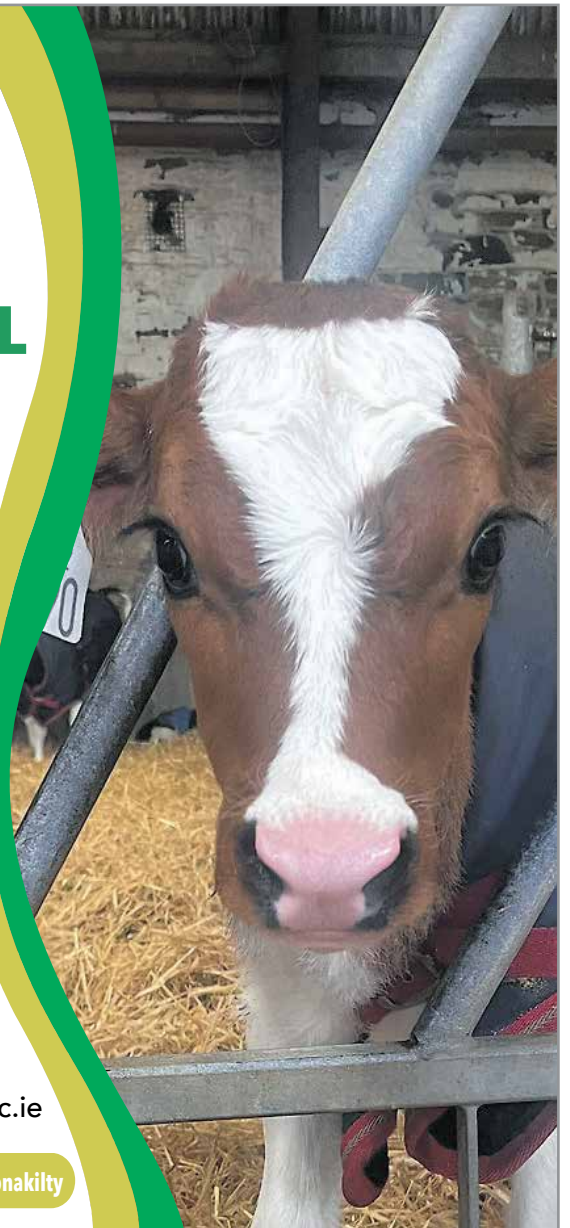
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## Kinsale Boys scoop top honours at West Cork Student Enterprise Finals with innovative farm safety device

Four bright minds from Kinsale Community School have clinched the coveted first prize at the West Cork Student Enterprise finals, held by the Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West on Tuesday at The Celtic Ross Hotel in Rosscarbery. DJS Engineering, the brainchild of David Forde, John Quinn, Jack Good, and Seán Dinneen, wowed the judges with their innovative farm safety device designed to revolutionise calf dehorning and mitigate the risk of accidents on farms. They will now represent the West Cork region at the national finals in Mullingar in May and showcase their product's global appeal.

The winning product, crafted from robust galvanised steel, not only enhances the safety and efficiency of dehorning but also addresses a serious incident that inspired the project. A farm shed catastrophe due to a dehorner catching fire near straw on the family farm and destroying the shed propelled

the team to create a device that can be securely hung on a gate to hold the dehorner and other equipment, eliminating the threat of fires and burns.

Speaking of their win, David Forde said, "We are thrilled to take first place in the West Cork finals as the standard was so high. We believe our business and this product can and will save farmers time and provide added safety and peace of mind on the farm when dehorning calves. There is nothing else like it on the market and the feedback we have received from farmers has been outstanding which has led to sales and being stocked by farm suppliers. It is a product which has global appeal and will save time and negate accidental fires and burns on the farm."

Other prize winners on the day included 'Precision Fit' (Best Innovation) from Clonakilty Community College, 'Smart Scrunchies' (One to Watch), Beara Community School, 'West Cork Firewood'

(Best Sales), MICC Dunmanway, 'Natures Nest' (Best Marketing), Clonakilty Community College, 'Bantry Barks', (Best Social Media) Colaiste Pobail Bheanntaí, 'Showcasers', (Best Business Plan), Presentation College Bandon, and 'Eco-designs', (Sustainability Award), Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí.

Speaking at the final of the West Cork Student Enterprise Awards, Kevin Curran, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West said, "It is extremely encouraging to see the level of enthusiasm of the students at the end of a programme, which has given them the invaluable opportunity to see for themselves what it takes to build and grow a business. I congratulate all the teachers and commend them for their hard work and dedication, and giving their students the opportunity to partake in the programme which teaches them lifelong lessons.

All of the participating schools put in a fantastic effort and I would like to congratulate



Left to right are Kinsale Community School Students Jack Good, John Quinn, David Forde and Sean Dinneen with their innovative farm safety device designed to revolutionise calf dehorning and mitigate the risk of accidents on farms. Photo Darragh Kane

all of them for participating. I would also like to give special thanks to our judges Tim Casey, Cork Grasslands Services, Jane

O'Regan, AIB Dunmanway and Emily Keane, KOKO Kinsale for being so helpful and generous with their time in choosing

worthy winners for the West Cork region."

## MOTORING

## BYD Dolphin could turn on a sixpence

CAR  
REVIEWS

Sean Creedon

“The biggest car brand you have never heard of.” That’s how Ciaran Allen, Sales Manager at Motor Distributors Ireland signed off his presentation last June at the launch of Chinese company BYD’s first electric car to be sold in Ireland.

The first model we got to see last year was the Atto 3; last week I drove the Dolphin

version and I also attended the launch of the luxurious Seal version, which is already doing very well in the sales charts.

BYD stands for ‘Build Your Dreams’ and their cars are being imported and distributed in Ireland by MDL, who are also the Irish agents for Mercedes.

Basically BYD is a battery company that is now building cars, taking on their rivals that frequently buy in batteries modules. In 2022 BYD overtook Tesla to become the largest manufacturer in the world of electric cars. Now it has the European market firmly in its sights.

The Atto 3 had the words ‘build your dreams’ written on the door of the boot, just under the rear window, but those three words were more discreetly used in the Dolphin. The words are still there, but included in the lighting strip under the rear window.

The car came in a very attractive shade of blue and during a week of very heavy frost I thought that the Dolphin

had a white roof. But by the end of the week, when the weather changed I found that it was really a sun-roof!

Yes, a cold week for an electric car and normally when you turn on the air con to heat the car or clear the windscreen you will see the estimated range drop rapidly, but as BYD are also a battery company thankfully I didn’t see any drop in the range, which was around 420km when fully charged.

Inside that blue colour is replicated on the dash and doors, complimented with a neat touch of red stitching. The dash is dominated by a huge infotainment screen which rotates from horizontal to vertical with the touch of a button. There is plenty of room in the back seat for two adults, maybe three at a squeeze. And you also get a decent-sized boot with two levels, but as usual with E.V’s no spare wheel.

The only problem I had was with the radio and I have to admit that I had to get help from my tech-savvy son-in-law

Anthony to help me find Marty on Lyric and Ryan Tubridy on Q102.

Up to now the price of electric cars, even with government grants, has been seen as too expensive for many car owners to make the switch from a petrol or diesel. But now it looks like the Chinese manufacturers are going to force the prices down. Of course there are also problems for E.V.s with the hap-

azard charging network, but that’s a story for another day.

The basic Active version of the Dolphin starts at €25,570, while my Comfort model with a 60.4kWh battery will cost you €29,318. Next up from BYD is the Seal which is a very impressive saloon and starts at 44K

Make no mistake the affordable Chinese brand is here to stay. Figures released by SIMI for the month of January

reveal that BYD have jumped straight in at number two in the best-selling EV charts. They are behind Hyundai and VW, who are joint top.

I loved it and it has a brilliant turning circle, you could turn on the proverbial sixpence. The use of that lovely shade of blue in the cabin would lift your spirits in the morning, especially on a frosty one.



## PETS

## Anticipating problems with your dog before they happen



## CANINE CORNER

Liz Mahony

Liz Mahony is an experienced Dog Trainer and Holistic Therapist for all animals. In her monthly column, Liz aims to promote mutual respect between carer and dog. Contact Liz at [corkdogtrainingclasses.com](http://corkdogtrainingclasses.com).

Anticipating any problems with your dog before they happen seems like a huge ask – or wishful thinking! Not true. If you pay attention to your dog’s body language in any given situation, you will be better prepared to avoid future situations that could turn disastrous.

I’ve been a people and animal watcher all my life, as I’m fascinated by the dynamics of their

interactions. But, anyone can learn to read signals so they can be prepared for the unexpected. Not only is it satisfying for you, it means that you are helping your dog. If you’re in control of the situation, then he can trust you to choose the right option for him.

Let’s say you have a fearful dog and walking him is a nightmare because he starts losing the plot as soon as he sees another dog, person, or whatever object triggers his fear. Many people think that ‘flooding’ the dog with opportunities to see and even meet and greet the object of his fear will get him used to it.

Not so. All it teaches him is that you are not listening or watching his body language. Therefore, he can’t trust you because you are presenting him with those subjects that feed his fears. So your pet becomes more frustrated and stressed until he goes over the threshold and becomes dangerous to himself, you, and whatever is in front of him and he’s now a liability.

It’s very hard to understand but if you subject your dog to stressful situations that push him into OTT behaviour, it can often take 72 hours for his stress levels to return to normal. So,

imagine if you take your dog who’s fearful of other dogs for a walk where dogs appear from every direction, each interaction becomes more difficult for him to deal with, and by the time that walk is over, he’s completely exhausted with the feeling he has to be continuously ‘on high alert’. It could also happen that the last dog he meets or a young child trying to stroke him is the ‘final straw’ and he bites.

You then think you have an aggressive dog on your hands and your first reaction might be to get rid of him. If you don’t do that, you may become a nervous wreck yourself, unsure of how your dog will react in any situation. That adds to your dog’s stress because instead of you dealing with each set of circumstances in a positive and calm manner, your dog now feels he has to protect you too so his layers of stress build exponentially.

Let’s continue with the analogy of the fearful dog. It’s highly likely that he has displayed a tendency to be confrontational to visitors to your home. Berating your dog for growling, barking or lunging will only make him worse. You first ask why he’s doing it. Is he just a basically fearful dog? Did he get a fright which precipitated



...by the time that walk is over, he’s completely exhausted with the feeling he has to be continuously ‘on high alert’. It could also happen that the last dog he meets or a young child trying to stroke him is the ‘final straw’ and he bites.

this reaction in the first place? Think back to the circumstances and what exactly happened.

In both instances, you need to teach your dog to focus on you and understand that you will deal with anything and everything. That means firming up on his basic obedience training so that when you issue a command such as ‘the Sit’, he automatically manages to sit despite his stress levels rising. There is a confidence in having a routine to fall back on. You also need to be very calm. If you’re shout-

ing, and so on, the stress levels in both of you will immediately rise appreciably.

Place your dog on his lead and bring him close to you. Don’t try to reassure him verbally but you will instill confidence in him by being calm yourself. Ask your visitor to ignore your dog. Staring at him is very confrontational and making overtures to him will be seen as a form of attack. Your visitor is also less of a threat when seated than when standing upright. And putting a safe distance between you, your dog and your guest is a necessity.

Remember that your dog takes his cue from you so if you are positive and friendly towards your caller, your dog will learn how to behave in a similar fashion. When your dog relaxes and sits or lies down, be sure to reward with praise and a treat to reinforce his good behaviour.

I always say that you achieve good behaviour in the outside world by firstly doing your homework at home. Once your dog is able to accept visitors without reacting and can even allow them to close the gap between you and him, then you’re beginning to make headway. Only then do you consider addressing the outside problems.

## SPORT



Niall Geaney is a qualified solicitor since 2009 having worked in Dublin for almost 17 years before his relocation to West Cork in 2020 with his wife and young family. He opened his Clonakilty office on Emmet Square in 2021. Niall has acted for many small and medium sized businesses on legal issues including business structures, sales and purchases of businesses, corporate governance and employment law. He is one of a handful of solicitors in Ireland specialising in sports-related governance and disciplinary matters and acts for many sports groups and individual athletes nationwide. He currently sits on the governance board of Golf Ireland and is the chairperson of their grievance and disciplinary panel. He acts for many parents and players involving GAA and rugby and is a disciplinary judge for the Football Association of Ireland. Internationally he is a panel judge at the highest level of motorsports in the FIA Formula One and Formula E Cost Cap adjudication group.

Whether it is an employment or a sports law dispute, on many occasions processes are put in place without any real understanding of the basic rules set out by the Romans as to how those involved are to be treated to ensure a balance is achieved. The scales of justice, held by the goddess Justitia, is a well known image but just how do we ensure Justitia's scales are kept level in these cases. Judicial and quasi-judicial bodies rely on the surety that those making decisions must always consider natural justice in decision making and use fair procedures throughout. This however is not always the case and in sports and employment-related investigations, decisions and hearings, these basic principles can be overlooked. It is always good to have the knowledge to understand what the requirements are so you can easily identify unjust decision making. While primarily focused on sports and employment law situations in this article, solicitor Niall Heaney says the rules of natural justice

## Natural justice and fair procedures in sports and employment tribunals

and fair procedures apply to all situations where decisions are being made that can adversely affect a person.

### What is Natural Justice and Fair Procedures?

Essentially, natural justice requires that a person receive a fair and unbiased hearing before a decision is made that will negatively affect them.

The European Convention on Human Rights notes the basic rights for all individuals in relation to the requirements to respect natural justice and fair procedures when accused of any criminal act. The same basis can be applied to any individual accused in a quasi-judicial setting for non-criminal acts such as sports tribunals and for employment law-related cases such as an employer lead investigations and hearings.

The main requirements of natural justice that must be met in every case are adequate notice and information to be provided, a fair hearing with a right to reply, no bias by the decision makers and the right to appeal.

### History of Natural Justice and Fair Procedures

The concept of natural justice is legal language for two ancient rules –

The first is a rule against bias is known as “nemo iudex in causa sua”.

This phrase is the Latin for “no one should be a judge in their own cause”. It is one of the most important rules of natural justice that no one should act as a judge in a case where they have a personal or bias interest. As such, anyone conducting a review, investigation, hearing or appeal must be sufficiently removed from it if there is any question as to their independence. In employment law scenarios for example those tasked with being the investigators should have no direct management responsibility for the department within which the alleged disciplinary issue occurred. Also try and keep the investigation team as independent as possible. Sometimes this can be done by bringing in an entirely external panel. This is often advisable in sports situations and I frequently put together panels of legal and sporting experts to hear various cases where bias or perceived bias could be an issue otherwise.

The second rule, “Audi alteram partem”, means “hear



the other side too”.

No person should be judged without a fair hearing in which each party is given the opportunity to respond to the evidence against them. Again proper training of either an internal panel of investigators or bringing in an external qualified team to conduct the hearing is the safest approach to ensure fair procedures.

### Requirements to show the use of Natural Justice and Fair Procedures

In each case the following should apply –

1. Notice to the accused of the specific allegation to which he or she must answer and of the likely consequences if the allegation is established. The notice should include a term of reference (agenda) and the identity of any individual who will give evidence against the accused. The accused should also be given the opportunity to be accompanied to any hearing or meetings related to the proceedings, call their own witnesses to give evidence and cross examine (ask questions) any of the other witnesses or accusers.

2. The accused has to be given the opportunity to refute the allegation or to explain or mitigate their conduct. The accused may also raise a grievance of their own during the process. This often arises in employment law situations but can also arise during sports tribunals.

3. An unbiased consideration of the explanation given which must be free from pre-judgment and uninfluenced by irrelevant considerations.

4. The conclusion must be provided to the accused with a clear explanation as to why

the conclusion has been made. This essentially is known as a reasoned decision and is most important in the process of decision making to show that natural justice has been applied through fair procedures. If no reasoned decision is given then a clear avenue for appeal is

opened.

5. The accused must always be given the right to appeal the decision and must be informed of the process of the appeal, subject to reasonable timelines. You can never over-emphasise a person's right to appeal.

If you are unsure if the decision making forum you are part of acts within the rules of natural justice and fair procedures then simply use the above points as a check list to be applied uniformly in all cases. Stick strictly to those rules in all cases so that there is continuity in your decision making. Make sure to keep detailed notes throughout and create a precedent bank of past decisions which you can refer to later. In relation to employment-related cases the Workplace Relations Commission have clear guidance documents as to how to run a disciplinary hearing within the rules of natural justice and where possible these should always be followed. In sports-related cases ensure your sports group has a

written policy for grievance and disciplinary matters setting out the above points as a template for how all panels should hear cases. If in doubt bring in external qualified individuals who can guide you through the process in order to avoid lengthy appeals and litigation afterwards.

Transparency is also key to show what you considered and how you applied your considerations to the end result. This is why reasoned decisions are always required.

Cases can and will be appealed for a variety of reasons however if you can show you have applied the rules of natural justice and fair procedures throughout the decision making process then you are already a step ahead of any arguments that can be made by those appealing.

Niall Geaney can be contacted at his office on Emmet Square on (087) 2308797 or by email - niall@geaneysolicitors.ie

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For over 14 years I have advised clients participating in sports, sports clubs and sports governing bodies all over Ireland and abroad – GAA, soccer, boxing, tennis, rugby league and union, motorsport, golf and others – in relation to the above matters.

## SPORT

## Cronin adds British Championship to 2024 campaign



Keith Cronin (right) and co-driver Mikie Galvin. Photo: Martin Walsh.

Current Irish Tarmac Rally Championship leader, Ballylickey's Keith Cronin, has opted to expand his programme for 2024, and is to mount a challenge for the British Rally Championship title with

co-driver, Mikie Galvin. The Killarney and District Motor Club duo got their season off to the best possible start at the beginning of February, taking victory on the opening round of the Tarmac series, the Galway International

Rally, on their first outing in the latest version of Ford Fiesta Rally 2, and will now add the six British rounds to their schedule. The first of the BRC events will be the North West Stages Rally, based in Garstang, Lancashire, taking place

on March 22-23.

"Our original ambition was to concentrate on the Irish events this year, the plan was to return to the BRC in the future," said Cronin. "In conjunction with our partners, we have reached a decision to take on the two championships, and I am very grateful to them for their support." Cronin previously won the British Rally Championship in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2017, and was runner-up in 2022. Only Jimmy McRae has more BRC titles to his name, with a tally of five. Cronin was also Irish Tarmac Champion in 2016.

The 2024 British Championship calendar will consist of six events across England, Scotland and Wales, held between March and October. The BRC is unique in Western Europe in that it is a dual-surface series, having some rounds on gravel and some on tarmac, and this year features an even split of three and three. "I enjoy the mix of different surfaces in the BRC, it adds to the challenge," noted Cronin. "I like the

Irish events too, they are usually longer and obviously there is less travel involved for us. It will be a major undertaking to take on the two series, but this opportunity has arisen and I am very much looking forward to it," he added.

Cronin is one of an elite group of five drivers who have won both the Irish Tarmac Championship and the British Rally Championship, along with Russell Brookes, Billy Coleman, Mark Lovell and Jimmy McRae.

The BRC management team has recently announced that the championship will be televised on the free-to-air terrestrial channel, ITV4. The package will include a dedicated one-hour highlights programme after each round of the series, to be broadcast at prime time, with further later repeats, plus an end of season round-up programme. In addition, the coverage will have availability on the accompanying online catch-up service, ITVX.

In advance of their first outing across the Irish Sea, the attention

of Cronin and Galvin is firstly focused on round two of the Irish Tarmac Championship, the West Cork Rally, which will take place over St. Patrick's Weekend. This year sees the event expand to a three-day format for the first time, with four stages on the Friday afternoon and evening, followed by the traditional eight on Saturday and six on Sunday.

Keith Cronin and Mikie Galvin are being supported during 2024 by M O'Brien Group of Companies, Lyons Motor Group, Shane Casey Electrical Services, Molson Equipment, Pirelli, EARS Motorsport Ireland, Cronin's Centra (Ballylickey, Union Hall, Leap, Millstreet and Dundrum), Cronin's HomeValue Hardware, Westlink Service Station and Daybreak Shop, Cremin Coaches, Keohane Seafoods, M-Sport and Wurth Ireland.

## Golf fundraiser to tee off Easter weekend in support of Scoil Fhiachna

The picturesque Glengarriff Golf Club will play host to the Easter Open Singles fundraising event from March 29-31. This event promises three days of competitive golf, camaraderie, and community spirit, all in support of Scoil Fhiachna National School in Glengarriff.

Supported by the dedicated Parents' Association at Scoil Fhiachna, this fundraiser raises vital funds for ongoing education-

al initiatives in the school. Lead organiser, Katie Hourihan, of the Parents' Association said: "We are delighted to organise this golf fundraiser for Scoil Fhiachna. It's not only a fantastic opportunity for golfers to test their skills but also a wonderful way for our community to come together and support our school."

The Easter Open Singles is open to both ladies and gents, welcoming golfers of all skill

levels to participate. Entry into the tournament is €20, with a re-entry available for €15. Participants can expect an exciting competition with €1,000 worth of prizes for the winners, generously sponsored by the Eccles Hotel & Spa, Zenith Energy, and CILr. Danny Collins.

Officers of Glengarriff Golf Club expressed their support for the event, with Captain Owen Dineen saying, "As host sponsors

of this fundraiser, we are proud to be part of such a worthy cause. We look forward to welcoming golfers from near and far to our beautiful club for a weekend of great golf."

For those interested in participating, please contact the lead organiser, Katie Hourihan, on 087 610 3657 for a timesheet.

Grab your clubs and join in at Glengarriff Golf Club for a memorable Easter weekend!

## 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.**

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Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus In the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask for this special one(mention favour). Take it Dear Heart Of Jesus and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will be your favour not mine. Amen. Say the above prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. D.L.

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### THANKSGIVING PRAYER

O, most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, Fruitful Vine, Splendor of Heaven. Blessed Mother of the Son of God, assist me in this my necessity. O, Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein you are my mother. O, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to secure me in my necessity (make request). There are none that can withstand your power. O, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee (say 3 times). Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands (say 3 times). Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine. Amen. This prayer must be said for three days after which the favour will be granted and the prayer must be published. E.G.

### ST. JUDE'S NOVENA

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and revered throughout the whole world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us. St. Jude worker of miracles pray for us. St. Jude, helper of the hopeless pray for us. Say this prayer nine times daily and by the end of the 8th day, your prayers will be answered. Say it for nine days. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thanks St. Jude. N.M.C.C.

### 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. R.F.

### MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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