

*A Collection of Writings*  
*by*  
*Learners of Core Skills*



Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna  
**LÚIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR**  
LIMERICK & CLARE  
Education & Training Board

**COLLEGE OF FURTHER  
EDUCATION & TRAINING**

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## Foreword

Welcome to the 35<sup>th</sup> edition of *Simply Said*, the annual collection of writings by learners taking part in programmes with Core Skills, which is part of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. This issue marks 35 years of published writings, which is a great testament to the hard work and commitment of our learners and staff.

*Simply Said* stories are the work of learners who attend classes across the six campuses in County Clare, North, South, East, West and Ennis. Some of the stories are funny; some are fascinating; many are tinged with sadness and loss but there is also hope and new beginnings. They serve as a record of this past year and all it held for people living in County Clare. There are a variety of stories, poems and recipes included. Topics cover farming, travelling, tips about life, hobbies, weddings, sports, living in Ireland, the outcomes of returning to education as well as the very moving stories about the impact of the war in Ukraine and settling into life in Ireland.

The cover of this year's book is a Family Learning art piece called Home. It expresses the beauty and warmth of home, the homes we have and the homes we long for. It shows nature mixed with the colourful homes of Ireland. The project was made by a group of learners from Ennis Educate Together school with their art tutor Mary Khalil.

Thank you to all of the Core Skills tutors, who meet learners where they are on their learning path and support them to see the value of telling their own stories along the way.

We would like to congratulate everyone who contributed a story and helped to make this edition a unique record of this year in County Clare. Each of them has helped to create a valuable cultural archive for us all to look back on.

Sincere thanks to the wonderful Core Skills team, each of whom has worked so hard behind the scenes to bring this book to print and organise the launch in glór on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

*Kerry O'Sullivan*

June 2024

## Table of contents

<b>Title</b>	<i>Author</i>	<b>Page</b>
My new life	<i>Alona</i>	15
My challenge	<i>Adebayo</i>	15
Carpe diem	<i>Oleksandr</i>	15
Doing good deeds	<i>Margaret</i>	16
Doing something decent	<i>Patrick, Holly &amp; Annmarie</i>	17
Easter traditions in Ukraine	<i>Zoriana</i>	17
Child of Prague	<i>Mary</i>	17
About last night	<i>Dew</i>	18
Elnara's journey	<i>Elnara</i>	18
Encounter with Ireland	<i>Ann</i>	19
My hometown	<i>Ervin</i>	20
Friend	<i>Oleh</i>	21
Happy Easter	<i>Oleg</i>	22
House hunting	<i>John</i>	22
Clare People	<i>Husam</i>	22
Old New Year	<i>Iaroslav</i>	23
Ireland	<i>Hanna</i>	24
Irish coffee	<i>Lavrentiú</i>	24
Irish seafood chowder	<i>Yuliia</i>	24
My life	<i>Khaled</i>	25
My story and my ethnic history	<i>Kolonii</i>	25
Sound of the island	<i>Kseniia</i>	26
Literacy at the college	<i>Margaret</i>	26
Christmas delivery	<i>Lionel</i>	27
Summertime	<i>Elizabeth</i>	28

West Clare	<i>Julia</i>	28
Things I like in west Clare	<i>Olha</i>	28
In a cosy workshop	<i>Mary</i>	29
Things I like in west Clare	<i>Olga</i>	29
Things I like in west Clare	<i>Svetlana</i>	29
Things I like in west Clare	<i>Oleksandra</i>	30
My stained glass class	<i>Adil</i>	30
My stained glass class	<i>Ann-Marie</i>	30
My stained glass class	<i>Maria</i>	31
Life	<i>Geraldine</i>	31
Life in Ireland-my story	<i>Polina</i>	31
Life in Ukraine	<i>Maksym</i>	32
Living and leaning in Ireland	<i>Svitlana</i>	32
The Banshee	<i>Tony</i>	33
My Ukraine	<i>Nataliia</i>	33
My story	<i>Larysa</i>	34
My story	<i>Nadiia</i>	34
My story	<i>Karolina</i>	34
A little bit about myself	<i>Tetiana</i>	34
History of millions of represented by one person	<i>Denys</i>	35
A swallow	<i>Nataliia</i>	36
My trip to Cork	<i>Helen</i>	36
Mary's story	<i>Mary</i>	36
My holiday in Spain	<i>Teresa</i>	37
My next adventure in Waterford	<i>Gerard</i>	37
London	<i>Margaret</i>	38
Things I like to do	<i>Julia</i>	38

Things about me	<i>Emma</i>	38
How I spend my week	<i>Shannon</i>	38
Medicine is truly the noblest of all arts	<i>Liliúa</i>	39
Mother is the name	<i>Lela</i>	39
Dymtro and hurling	<i>Dymtro</i>	39
Limerick	<i>Dymtro</i>	40
My collection	<i>Yuliia</i>	40
My favourite book	<i>Olena</i>	40
My favourite Crimea	<i>Marlen</i>	41
My journey to Ireland	<i>Elvira</i>	41
My favourite recipe – dumplings	<i>Serhiu</i>	42
My hobbies	<i>Maksym</i>	42
My hobby - gardening	<i>Maksym</i>	43
My hobby is work	<i>Vitalii</i>	44
My homeland	<i>Tanya</i>	45
My journey to Scariff	<i>Fatma</i>	45
My life in Ireland	<i>Zarem</i>	47
I'm from Ukraine	<i>Oleksandr</i>	47
My little gift to the Irish	<i>Nataliia</i>	47
My parachute jump	<i>Helen</i>	48
My profession as a teacher's assistant	<i>Svitlana</i>	49
My story	<i>Sanyida</i>	50
My thanks to Ireland	<i>Mykola</i>	50
My year in Ireland	<i>Natalia</i>	51
Nature connects cultures and unites people	<i>Iryna</i>	51
My life in Ukraine	<i>Ihor</i>	52

Our literacy class	<i>David, Emma &amp; Jonathan</i>	52
Poem	<i>Georgiú</i>	52
My favourite sayings	<i>Mary</i>	53
My life	<i>Salif</i>	53
Who I am	<i>Tomasz</i>	53
How Ukrainians celebrate Easter	<i>Iryna</i>	54
Joining an LCETB class has changed my life	<i>Jimmy</i>	55
Hastings' Cottage	<i>Debbie</i>	56
Taras Shevchenko	<i>Olena</i>	57
My favourite place	<i>Dermot</i>	58
Coronation Street	<i>Mary</i>	58
Baking	<i>Philomena</i>	59
My love for Liverpool	<i>John</i>	59
How I spend my week	<i>Travis</i>	60
My favourite time of the week	<i>Maria</i>	60
Margreat and I	<i>Yun</i>	61
Big Brother	<i>Mary</i>	62
Don the Music Man	<i>Nora</i>	62
Me and my family	<i>Marian</i>	63
My best friend	<i>Maíread</i>	63
A day at the zoo	<i>Olena</i>	63
The past	<i>James</i>	64
My story	<i>Eileen</i>	65
Ramadan and Eid	<i>Abdelazaeim</i>	66
Going shopping	<i>Anastasiúa</i>	67
A short story of my life	<i>Hafida</i>	68

Living in Ireland	<i>Ka Fung</i>	68
The Crescent Shopping Centre	<i>Ka Fung</i>	68
Eyre Square	<i>Ho Fu</i>	69
Living in Ireland	<i>Ho Fu</i>	69
Dinner Out	<i>Khadija</i>	70
A short review of Morocco	<i>Khadija</i>	70
Emerald country	<i>Tetiana</i>	71
Poem	<i>Magdalena</i>	71
Interesting facts about Ukraine	<i>Yevgeniia</i>	72
Ireland	<i>Anzhela</i>	73
A love poem	<i>Ricardo</i>	73
Live and love	<i>Oksana</i>	73
What love means to me	<i>Uzma</i>	74
Love & lost - Portugal	<i>Paula</i>	74
My story	<i>Anna</i>	74
A new adventure	<i>Ricardo</i>	75
A brand new start	<i>Paula</i>	75
A review of Silver Restaurant, Ukraine	<i>Olena</i>	76
Review of Arkham City Restaurant	<i>Oleksandr</i>	77
My trip to Inis Meáin	<i>Anastasiia</i>	77
My best weekend	<i>Eduard</i>	78
My story	<i>Iryna</i>	78
A special day	<i>Kataryna</i>	79
My work	<i>Zinoviï</i>	79
My story	<i>Volodymyr</i>	80
About me	<i>Liliia</i>	80
My holiday	<i>Hiyam</i>	81



About me	<i>Rayan</i>	82
About me	<i>Ibraïm</i>	82
My wedding in Pakistan	<i>Shabana</i>	83
My wedding in Ghana	<i>Vida</i>	83
My wedding in Nepal	<i>Haire Kumari</i>	84
My wedding in Syria	<i>Sanaa</i>	84
The best day	<i>Fatima &amp; Fatma</i>	85
The best day	<i>Fatima</i>	85
The best day	<i>Fatma</i>	85
Our favourite time of the year	<i>Fatima, Fatma, Mayssa &amp; Amal</i>	85
The most difficult moment	<i>Tetiana</i>	87
My name is Linda	<i>Linda</i>	87
Friendship	<i>Olena</i>	88
Ukraine	<i>Líubov</i>	88
My story about the first day of war	<i>Inna</i>	89
A new home	<i>Oksana &amp; Margit</i>	91
My name is Yuniia	<i>Yuniia</i>	91
Gardens	<i>Yuliia</i>	92
My name is Igor	<i>Igor</i>	92
My name is Anna	<i>Anna</i>	93
I enjoy cooking	<i>Anna</i>	94
My name is Ira	<i>Ira</i>	94
My name is Hanna	<i>Hanna</i>	95
My name is Elena	<i>Elena</i>	95
The choice	<i>Anna</i>	96
Medicine in Ireland for pensioners	<i>Líubov</i>	97

Irish opportunities for families with children	<i>Yeva</i>	97
The kind hearts of the Irish	<i>Halina</i>	97
The kind smiles of the people of Lisdoonvarna	<i>Larysa</i>	98
Ireland - our second home for a while	<i>Tatiana, Mark &amp; Mariia</i>	98
I love Ireland	<i>Liudmyla</i>	98
Support	<i>Ilona</i>	99
Beautiful country	<i>Mariia</i>	99
St Patrick's Day	<i>Olena</i>	100
My name is Yuniia	<i>Yuniia</i>	100
My name is Zhanna	<i>Zhanna</i>	101
My name is Svitlana	<i>Svitlana</i>	101
Summer of 2023	<i>Olha</i>	102
Ireland	<i>Tetiana</i>	102
Ireland - a country of hope	<i>Tamara</i>	103
Sitting	<i>Elaine</i>	103
Snow	<i>Pavlo</i>	103
Home	<i>Olha</i>	104
Brazil versus Ireland	<i>Cissa</i>	105
My life in Ireland	<i>Alex</i>	105
My family	<i>Svitlana</i>	106
To the rescue	<i>Svitlana</i>	106
Studying English	<i>Alina</i>	106
Green grass	<i>Svitlana</i>	106
My beautiful Kiev	<i>Vira</i>	107
Make our future better	<i>Tetiana</i>	107
Love for Kharkiv	<i>Dmytro</i>	108

Ukrainian dumplings	<i>Dmytro</i>	108
My two homes	<i>Amad</i>	109
Woodwork to treats	<i>Inha</i>	109
The zoo	<i>Inna</i>	109
New life, new story	<i>Denys</i>	110
Ireland in watercolour	<i>Elena</i>	111
Me and Ireland	<i>Yurii</i>	112
Woodwork course	<i>Vitalii</i>	112
An unexpected encounter	<i>Serhiu</i>	113
My funny fishing trip	<i>Yurii</i>	114
My life	<i>Alain</i>	114
The Duke from the manhole	<i>Denys</i>	115
Thoughts from a Ukrainian	<i>Eduard</i>	115
Suffer little children	<i>Liam</i>	116
My ambitions and dreams	<i>Taisiia</i>	117
Thank you Ireland	<i>Svitlana</i>	117
The 1922 medal	<i>Aileen</i>	117
Theatre, love and war	<i>Olga</i>	118
Ukraine and Ireland	<i>Oleksandr</i>	119
Three crazy stories	<i>Edwin, Anthony &amp; Nymul</i>	120
My crazy story	<i>Dew</i>	120
My crazy story	<i>Ruman</i>	121
My crazy story	<i>Anthony</i>	122
Magic potion	<i>Thuihlapru</i>	123
To love myself	<i>Tony</i>	123
Irish festival	<i>Olena</i>	124
Life between Ukraine and Ireland	<i>Vitalii</i>	124

Irish traditions	<i>Yurri</i>	125
Ireland	<i>Aider</i>	125
People	<i>Alona</i>	126
What makes you laugh	<i>Anastasiia</i>	126
The power of reading	<i>Anna</i>	127
The meeting	<i>Gurami</i>	128
The duck incident	<i>Liubov</i>	129
Differences between Ireland and Ukraine	<i>Olena</i>	129
My job	<i>Olena</i>	130
E-books	<i>Veronika</i>	131
The Internet as a homework tool	<i>Yuliya</i>	131
My baby goose	<i>Yulya</i>	132
My story	<i>Nataliia</i>	133
My homeland Ukraine	<i>Svitlana</i>	133
My trip to the Cliffs of Moher	<i>Anna</i>	134
My weekend	<i>Gabriel</i>	134
My weekend	<i>Laura</i>	134
How I started running	<i>Noel</i>	135
My baptism	<i>Simon</i>	136
My missed flight	<i>Fehima</i>	136
Our similarities – Ukraine and Ireland	<i>Alla</i>	137
Ennis	<i>Valeria</i>	137
The art class	<i>Angela</i>	138
My woodturning class	<i>Anthony</i>	139
My story	<i>Olga</i>	139
Odessa	<i>Yelena</i>	139
To a stranger	<i>Maria</i>	140

A small country with a big heart	<i>Olena</i>	140
My life in Ireland	<i>Hanna</i>	141
My city – Kharkov	<i>Lapina</i>	142
Ireland	<i>Oksana</i>	142
The beauty of Kilkee	<i>Tetiana</i>	142
Irish people	<i>Hanna</i>	143
I like Ireland	<i>Lapin</i>	143
Kilkee	<i>Larysa</i>	143
My journey to Ireland	<i>Liliia</i>	144
Living by the ocean	<i>Iryna</i>	144
Dnipro city	<i>Vika</i>	144
Listening to your inner voice	<i>Ammy</i>	145
My favourite time of year	<i>Monica</i>	145
My favourite time of year	<i>Michelle</i>	145
Attitude	<i>Marian</i>	146
Swimming	<i>Oleksii</i>	147
Black swans	<i>Victor</i>	147
Repentance	<i>Alexandr</i>	148
Varenyky	<i>Halyna</i>	149
Silent Prayer	<i>Margreat</i>	150
Ode to Further Education and Training courses	<i>Bernie</i>	151
My favourite time of year	<i>Peig</i>	151
My favourite time of year	<i>Sahl</i>	152
My favourite time of year	<i>Mary</i>	152
My favourite time of year	<i>Eileen</i>	152
My favourite time of year	<i>Niamh</i>	152
My favourite time of year	<i>Martina</i>	152

My favourite time of year	<i>Tina</i>	153
My favourite time of year	<i>Patricia</i>	153
My favourite time of year	<i>Elizabeth</i>	153
My favourite time of year	<i>Mary</i>	153
My favourite time of year	<i>Maura</i>	153
My favourite time of year	<i>Tonya</i>	154
My favourite time of year	<i>Bernie</i>	154
My favourite time of year	<i>Louise</i>	154
My favourite time of year	<i>Sawsan</i>	154
My favourite time of year	<i>Sanaa</i>	154
My favourite time of year	<i>Oksana</i>	155
My favourite time of year	<i>Olha</i>	155
My favourite time of year	<i>Olga</i>	155
My favourite time of year	<i>Olexandera</i>	155
My favourite time of year	<i>Yuliia</i>	155
My favourite time of year	<i>Svetlana</i>	156
My favourite time of year	<i>Ger</i>	156
My favourite time of year	<i>Dolores</i>	156
My favourite time of year	<i>Jola</i>	156

## **My new life**

My name is Alona. I'm from Ukraine. Before I came to Ireland I was a worker in the post office. I worked with newspapers. Sometimes it was a bad job because I worked 24 hours with no sleep. I got up at 3:30 a.m. to get to work by 8:00 a.m. Work finished the next day at 8:00 a.m. I got home at 11.30 a.m.

I have one brother and a sister. They are older than me. I am married and I have three children. They are eight, four, and one and a half years old. Now I live in Miltown Malbay. I like it here because it is quiet and there is not a lot of noise. My eldest daughter likes school very much.

I like doing nail art. I relax and I am happy when I do it. I would like to have a job doing nail art someday.

*By Alona*

## **My challenge**

My name is Adebayo, I'm from Nigeria. I want to share the worst experience I have encountered in my life. My family and I were attacked by Fulani herdsmen. It was eight months before I got rescued and I finally set eyes on my wife and my kids again.

I relocated to Ireland in January 2024. The Irish government and people in Miltown Malbay really show me true love and care. God bless Ireland.

*By Adebayo*

## **Carpe diem**

I find it so amusing when people, who have lived a long life, start doing things they have never done before. Now it's my time to do something like that. Let this be an appeal to my younger relatives, who have their whole lives ahead of them.

From the coast of gold, across the seven seas, I travel far and wide. Now it seems that I'm just a stranger to myself and all the things I sometimes do, as though it isn't me but someone else.

I close my eyes and think of home. Another city goes by in the night. Isn't it funny how, you never miss it until it's gone away? My heart is lying there and will be until my dying day. By now I have too much time on my hands and I got you on my mind. I can't ease this pain so easily. When you can't find the words to say, it's hard to make it through another day. It makes me want to cry and throw my hands up to the sky. Understand this, don't waste your time always searching for those wasted years. Face up to it, make your stand and realise that you're living in the golden years.

There is nothing left to say, changes will come and dreams disappear. I remember the good times, so don't miss the chance to make yours. Does life seem worthwhile to you?

*By Oleksandr*

## **Doing good deeds**

The world would be such a great place if we all did a good deed for someone from time to time.

Someone who lives alone, whose loved ones have passed away, or who doesn't have family close by, would really love a visit. Loneliness is one of the hardest things for any person living alone. They might not be able to drive so going to town or going to mass is difficult. Offering to take them, or offering to do their shopping, or take them to the doctor would be a lovely thing to do.

We all need to help one another in life. Some day we might be alone ourselves. We are all on a journey through life and it goes by so fast, so do what we can while we still have the time and the energy. Make life worthwhile and make the most of it. A smile brightens up everyone's day, it does not cost anything to smile and say hello.

*By Margaret*



## **Doing something decent**

Wouldn't the world be a better place if everyone was a bit kinder to each other.

Give someone a smile, a wave or a 'hello' instead of having your eyes down on your phone. Remember, 'a smile a day keeps the frowns away', and 'a smile can turn a frown upside down'.

When you do good things for others it not only makes them feel good but it makes you feel good also. We should try to make visitors to our country feel welcome by saying hello, smiling or offering to show them around.

Kindness doesn't cost anything, so why not try it? Remember 'what goes around comes around'.

*By Patrick, Holly and Annmarie*

## **Easter traditions in Ukraine**

Every family has a lot of work to do before Easter. Children paint eggs and make Easter eggs. Women bake an Easter cake. It's a sweet round bread with raisins and candied fruit. Men cook sausage meat. A basket is brought to church on Sunday. It contains meat, Easter eggs, butter and cheese.

*By Zoriana*

## **Child of Prague**

Irish brides hoping for good weather on their wedding day ritually place a Child of Prague statue outside their homes. Devotion to the Child of Prague and belief in its power to influence is still strong in many parts of Ireland.

*By Mary*

## About last night

During the Halloween period I read a story about Dracula and it was very scary. I was asked to write a scary story using descriptive words, set in a place that people would find frightening, using language that is scary. Here is my story.

It was a beautiful Sunday night when everyone was happy celebrating the birthday of Price, the son of the chief. There was drinking, eating good food and dancing. The music was good, the vibe was good and children were popping balloons.

Suddenly, we heard an extraordinary noise, everyone was very scared. We looked at each other wondering what the noise was. It was a sound of the heavy winds that were coming. There was a black-out so that we could not see each other. Children started crying. Suddenly, we saw hyenas coming towards us, everyone was scared like they had already died. The hyenas surrounded us. Two old women fainted with fear. Nobody attended to them as everybody was concerned about the safety of their own lives. Hyenas caught three children and went away with them. Everybody started crying. People ran for their lives and the two old women died on the spot as they were helpless.

What started out as a beautiful night ended up being a terrible night that will never be forgotten.

*By Dew*

## Elnara's journey

My name is Elnara. I am married and have two children. When the war began, my husband and I decided to leave Crimea. We choose Ireland because it's known for its friendliness and low crime rate.

Crimea has been under Russian occupation for ten years, because of this, our family does not have complete Ukrainian citizenship documentation and thereby circumstances led to my husband leaving

first. After some time, with two children and two suitcases, I embarked on the long journey from Crimea to Ireland.

At first, we travelled for about four days by bus to Warsaw, passing through countries such as Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. We were supposed to fly from Warsaw to Dublin, but unfortunately, due to incomplete documentation for the children, we hadn't managed to sort out at the customs stage, the plane left without us. As there were no tickets available for a flight from Warsaw in the near future, we travelled on to Szczecin. Two days later, we finally flew to Dublin.

Volunteers greeted us in Dublin and we went to City West. My husband was there. Finally, our family was reunited. Following the processing of our documentation, we were assigned to East Clare Holiday Village, where our new chapter in life begins. A huge thanks to Ireland for its hospitality.

*By Elnara*

## **Encounter with Ireland**

When I came to Ireland fleeing the war, I was greeted by very friendly people. They provided accommodation for my family, which was the most important thing for me. I learned that in Ireland, unlike Ukraine, winters are warm and snowless, but it often rains here. I also heard that Ireland is the Emerald Isle because everything is green here. It's true. I saw it with my own eyes. It is so calm here because shades of green calm the human nervous system.

The people here are very responsive and treat us well. Local residents are trying to create the same conditions as we have at home in Ukraine. They put aside their affairs and communicate with us, teach something new. The local residents of Ireland say how they support our Ukraine, and they know exactly what a bloodthirsty neighbour is. Thanks to Ireland and its people for everything they do for us.

*By Ann*

## **My hometown**

Although I was born and raised in a village, I spent my student years and adult life in the city of Simferopol and therefore I consider it my hometown.

Simferopol (Its Crimean Tatar name is Aqmescit, which translates as White Mosque) is the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, located on the Salgir river. It has a population of more than three hundred thousand people. Simferopol has a convenient geographical location almost in the middle of the Crimean Peninsula and it is from here that roads and railways diverge in all directions.

Simferopol is located at the end of the steppe zone of Crimea, closer to the mountains, so its climate is that of 'dry-steppe and foothills'. It has very mild winters with rare frosts and snow. Summer here, although a little shorter than on the southern coast of Crimea, is still quite long and hot with many sunny days.

Simferopol is not as beautiful as other tourist cities of Crimea that are located on the coasts or among mountains, with their rocks and evergreen trees. In these cities it is good in the summer and there is a lot of work during the tourist season, but they are boring in the winter and there is little work. Simferopol, on the other hand, is convenient for year-round living. After all, Crimea is not that big and, in the summer, you can visit other cities quite often. Almost the entire population does this when they go to the sea or to the mountains for a weekend.

The population of Simferopol has great opportunities both in education and in finding work, since many of Crimea's higher educational institutions, industrial enterprises and the central offices of large travel companies are concentrated here. Here you can see monuments of ancient history and architecture, museums, theatres and the beautiful and green embankments of the Salgir and Small Salgir rivers.

The inconveniences, like most similar cities, are overcrowding, frequent traffic jams during rush hour in the morning and evening and the air is not as clean as in villages. It is also a little noisy.

The most famous of the ancient predecessors of the city is Scythian Naples, which was the capital of the Late Scythian state. This arose around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. The ruins of Naples are now located in the Petrovskaya Balka area on the left bank of the Salgir River. During the period of domination of the Kipchaks and the Golden Horde, there was a small settlement called Kermenchik (translated from Crimean Tatar as a small fortress). During the period of the Crimean Khanate, the city of Aqmescit arose which was the residence of the Kalgi – the second person in the state after the Khan. In 1783, Aqmescit was renamed Simferopol (translated from Greek as City of Benefit), and made the capital of Crimea.

*By Ervín*

## **Friend**

I was born and raised in Ukraine, in the city of Bakhmut. Due to the war and the destruction of our home, my wife and I had to leave Ukraine and move to Ireland.

A year ago, I met a teacher of mathematics and the Irish language. His name is Cormac. He suggested that we attend English classes. His help made it easier for us to learn English in the courses we attend.

Cormac comes to us once a week and we write correctly the sentences in which we made mistakes. A year on, we talk a little and understand each other. Cormac has begun to study Russian and we help him learn. Our conversations have become interesting. We talk about nature, religion and holidays as well as family and our hobbies.

We are so grateful to Cormac for his help. Many thanks to the country of Ireland for the help they provided us in our lives.

*By Oleh*

## Happy Easter

Even I'd never heard of Ireland before,  
A fate gift it became to me during the war,  
Such kind, noble people as there are here.  
That also so well, brew their delicious beer.  
Easter is celebrated behind every door,  
Right, the Irish are best, don't say anymore.

*By Oleg*

## House hunting

I started looking to buy a house in August 2021. The first house I looked at was in Carrigaholt in County Clare. I was out bid on that house. Then I tried Kilrush, Kilkee, Doonbeg, Bodyke and Whitegate.

On each occasion I was outbid by people buying the houses as holiday homes. I viewed so many houses that it isn't easy to remember them all.

I eventually found a house in County Roscommon which is only 5 minutes from a fishing lake. After six months of paperwork the closing date for handing over the keys was in April 2024. Fingers crossed I will be happy there.

*By John*

## Clare people

I found myself stepping into a world unlike any I had known before. The people welcomed me with open arms, embracing me as one of their own from the moment I arrived.

Life in Clare opened my mind. I was surrounded by caring and supportive individuals, and quickly found my footing in this new environment. Despite being a newcomer, I felt a sense of belonging that warmed my heart. The people of Clare weren't just kind; they were

pillars of support. They guided me through the obstacles I came across, offering advice and lending a helping hand whenever I needed it.

I live with deep gratitude for the community that embraced me. It feels like a second home to me. As I continue my journey in this extraordinary place, I am filled with a deep appreciation for the bonds of friendship and support that have enriched my life beyond measure.

*By Husam*

## **Old New Year**

I want to tell you about 'Old New Year' which is celebrated in Ukraine on 14<sup>th</sup> January. It's an old tradition.

'Old New Year' is New Year's Day according to the Julian calendar. Now Ukraine lives by the Gregorian calendar. The difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendar is 14 days. By the old tradition in Ukraine, Christmas is celebrated on 7<sup>th</sup> January which is 14 days after 25<sup>th</sup> December. Traditionally people fast before Christmas. They don't eat rich food such as meat, eggs and sweets. Some very religious people would not allow any form of entertainment during the fast time.

The tradition to celebrate 'Old New Year' goes back to 1918, when people began to celebrate New Year by the Gregorian calendar. This tradition still exists in Serbia, Russia, Montenegro, even in Switzerland. For the whole day on January 13<sup>th</sup> people prepare a lot of food. On New Year's Eve (13<sup>th</sup> January) girls come and sing songs. The most important one is called 'Shedrivka'. In this song girls wish happiness and health to the owner of the house. For these songs, girls receive sweets and money.

In the early morning of 14<sup>th</sup> January only men must enter the house, before any women are allowed to, and they sow grain. Men throw the grain, mostly wheat, and say the phrase: 'I sow, I sow with Happy New Year. I congratulate you and wish you happiness, I wish you joy.

For this, men receive food and money. This wheat should be spread throughout the whole house and it must not be thrown away. The

wheat should be stored until the next harvest. It will bring good luck and happiness and health.

*By Iaroslav*

## **Ireland**

Everyone knows that Ireland is famous for its wonderful landscapes. Another lesser known aspect of this beautiful country are its incredible festivals that take place here and are celebrated on a large scale.

Ireland's number one festival is the St Patrick's Day festival which is celebrated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. In this festival, parades are put on in different cities. Everyone wears green - as it is Ireland's national colour. So far, I have really enjoyed the festivals in Ireland.

*By Hanna*

## **Irish coffee**

In the 1940's there was a bartender named Joe Sheridan in Shannon Airport, who wanted to warm up a group at the airport. He added whiskey to their coffee and topped it up with cream. Thus, Irish Coffee was born. It is my favourite drink.

*By Lavrentiú*

## **Irish seafood chowder**

Seafood has always had a prominent place in the culinary tradition of Ireland. After all, this island is not so large and is surrounded on all sides by an unusually generous expanse of sea.

The crown jewel of Irish seafood dishes is, chowder, a thick rich stew. Historians say, that initially everything the fishermen were unable to sell



in a day was put into a pot. They also added shellfish, which women and children were usually sent to the coast to collect at low tide.

Chowder, first of all is saturated with easily digestible proteins, so it is recommended to eat it to restore physical strength. In this country, the preservation of traditions and love for folk cuisine is noticeable. Many Irish people love fish chowder because it can be made from whatever you find at home as long as the ingredients include seafood.

Chowder is one of the best culinary inventions of mankind. A bright, original soup in which, despite all the variety in its preparation, one can feel the influence of the culinary tradition of Ireland. It's one of my favourite soups. I try different variations but the essence is always the same – it's very tasty.

*By Yuliia*

## **My life**

My name is Khaled. I am from Jijel in Algeria. It is a big city in a big country. I have a big family. I have seven brothers and five sisters and I have one nephew and two nieces. They all live in Algeria. Three sisters and six brothers still live at home together with my parents. I have a good family.

Before I came to Ireland, I was a security guard. I worked outside. Now I work inside in a shop. I like playing and watching football and I like dancing. I want to get married some day and have a big family.

*By Khaled*

## **My story and my ethnic history**

My name is Kolonii, I come from Ethiopia. I was born in the Oromia region in Ethiopia. I am an Oromo. You will be surprised to read that the Oromo people have been under slavery in Ethiopia for over 140 years. There is not complete freedom yet.

The name of my birthplace is Shekadam. I was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1998. When I was six years old my family took me to school. The school name was Mana Barumsa Shekadam which means Shekadam School in our language. I completed my education in Shekadam school up to the fourth grade, then my family moved to Chiro town in West Hararghe. Chiro is the capital of the West Hararghe zone. When my family took me to Chiro town with them, I started grade five in Chiro Elementary School. I studied there until the sixth grade. After that I didn't go back to school. I left school in July 2011.

Surprisingly, I came to Ireland through many countries without getting on a plane. It's not just that which will surprise you. I was born in Ethiopia, the largest coffee producer in Africa, and where coffee was found first. Since I moved to Ireland I have taken a barista course. I knew how to plant coffee but I didn't know how to steam coffee, which is why I took a barista course in Ireland.

*By Kolonú*

## **Sound of the island**

I have certain ambitions. I'm a musician and travel inspires me. I intend to visit the islands of the planet, at least the largest, and write my impression of the trips and create melodies. The name of the project is 'Sound of the Island'. I have been to Ireland, Iceland and Sri Lanka so far.

Islands aren't a part of the mainland and the melody of each of them is part of a great song. The main thing is to feel the soul of the place.

*By Kseníia*

## **Literacy at the college**

Every Monday, I have a literacy class with Pauline at the College of Further Education and Training in Kilrush. I practice reading and writing.

I joined the library in Kilrush and I borrow books. I have a special pencil and pen grip to make it easier to practice my writing. On days that I can't go to my class, Pauline sends me coursework on elli.com which I do on my tablet. I'm getting much better at using the tablet and computer. I also practice my typing skills on the computer. I really enjoy learning all these new skills.

*By Margaret*

## **Christmas delivery**

I knock on the door and call out, 'Hello, it's me'. The voice from within shouts, 'Come in, it's open'. As I enter the cosy kitchen, she pulls herself up from her chair. 'Welcome', she says, 'it's good to see you again'.

'I've brought your messages from the store, but most importantly, how are you?', I ask. 'Never better', she says, with a spring in her step. 'Not bad for a 74-year-old', she says. 'It's 47 you look, not 74!', I reply. She grabs me by the arm, 'I've got great news. I'm spending Christmas with my son and his family'. She points to a picture on the wall, 'That's him, his wife, and two boys, aren't they beautiful?' she says.

Her eyes move slower to another picture of a fine-looking man and an incredibly beautiful woman on their wedding day. 'It's been a hard seven months. I miss him every minute of every day. I've been so lonely without him, but now I'm looking forward to Christmas'.

After a chat and a cup of very strong tea, I say, 'I better go or they will send out the posse, I'll see you after Christmas again'. She grabs me by the arm, 'Thank you for your kindness during this year, and may God bless you'. 'All part of the service, have a safe and happy Christmas', I said.

As I closed the door, I realized what a chat and a joke can do for someone who is old and alone. I know that I have gotten more out of what she has just said than what I have done all this year. When I get home, I'm going to phone my mum.

*By Lionel*

## **Summertime**

Summertime is best,  
warm sunny days,  
long bright nights,  
seaside and sand,  
relaxing in the strand.

*By Elizabeth*

## **West Clare**

Ireland is a country with a rich cultural and historical heritage, famous for its symbols and traditions. I live in West Clare, in the resort town of Kilkee. Walking through this place, you can see beautiful landscapes, huge rocks, plump seagulls, other species of birds, and sometimes you can see a fur seal. In the evening, loud laughter and music can be heard on the streets. These are the Irish who relax in pubs, drink beer, whiskey, and play billiards. Here you can see people of different ages. Pubs serve traditional Irish beer, Guinness and Jameson whiskey. Sometimes you can see a fox running in the evening near houses. Beautiful landscaping, featuring colourful varieties of flowers and plants surround the lovely homes in Kilkee.

Kilrush has a lovely park, and charity shops for helping animals, blind people and helping in Africa. The wonderful traditions and holidays of Saint Brigid and Saint Patrick fill life with new bright colours. Glory to Ireland! Kudos to Clare!

*By Julia*

## **Things I like in west Clare**

When I walk in the park, I like to listen to the birds singing. Everything around town turns green. Grass, trees, and daffodils bloom.

*By Olha*

## **In a cosy workshop**

In a cosy workshop, stitches start to sew,  
With love and care, teddy bear begins to grow.  
From soft plush fabric, a body takes shape,  
A little friend to cherish, no matter the scrape.  
With gentle hands, the stuffing is placed inside,  
Creating a cuddly companion to be by my side.  
Buttons for eyes, a smile stitched with glee,  
A teddy bear is born, ready to bring joy and glee!

*By Mary*

## **Things I like in west Clare**

I really like the nature in west Clare. Camellia bushes, daffodils, and crocuses bloom in winter. In the morning and evening, the birds sing with beautiful trills. I really like watching the ebb and flow of the Shannon river and the rainbows that often appear in the sky.

*By Olga*

## **Things I like in west Clare**

I came from Ukraine to Ireland a year and a half ago. All this time I have been living in the town of Kilrush. I really like this beautiful and quiet town. The local people here are very friendly and hospitable. I also admire Irish nature.

In Kilrush, there is a cozy cafe with a beautiful luxurious garden, which is located inside a dense emerald forest. I really like to take walks along the local embankment with a picturesque view of white yachts and fabulous sunsets. All of this makes the atmosphere of Kilrush unique.

*By Svetlana*

## **Things I like in west Clare**

I like the park where there are many green trees and flowers and the blue sea. Many seagulls fly over the sea.

My favourite colours are yellow and blue. These are the colours of our country's flag. Yellow is a wheat field. Blue is the sky.

I like the people in Ireland. They are very attentive and sensitive people.

*By Oleksandra*

## **My stained glass class**

I am an artist, originally from Azerbaijan but I grew up in America. I have been living in Ireland for a few years now. Most of my work is focused on marine animal sculptures and other local wildlife. I always wanted to learn about stained glass and the stained-glass process. I have found the perfect class here with Declan. He has taught me a lot about the art of stained glass. I am so glad to have found the creative space and like-minded people to make art with. Over time I have managed to produce a decent body of work that I can use in my portfolio.

*By Adil*

## **My stained glass class**

The course that I want to go to every Thursday is the stained-glass class. It is given by a very talented tutor. It is so much more important to me than just a class. I have made some solid friendships with my class mates and I have learnt the craft of stained class from my tutor Declan.

*By Ann-Marie*

## **My stained glass class**

The class that I attend is stained glass with the leadership of Declan our tutor. My classmates and I have learned so much in the short hours we have on campus. We create from our imaginations bright and beautiful things that are not to be replicated. Our pieces have brought happiness to many. Many friendships have been made and many great discussions had. Long may it continue.

*By María*

## **Life**

Life can be very strange indeed. It can be full of ups and downs. We have no control over events. The best attitude is to let life unfold. Life can be joyful, ecstatic, jubilant and full of hope for some people. For others, it can be unbearable.

We must be kind to others, because we do not know what they may be going through. Be mindful of one another. Happy days to everyone!

*By Geraldine*

## **Life in Ireland – my story**

My name is Polina. I was born in Ukraine and lived there for seventeen years. I really love my country, people, nature and traditions. Ten months ago, my boyfriend and I had to move to Ireland.

At first, I missed my home, my parents and my friends but after a while, I wanted to get to know this country. The first place, I encountered was the city of Limerick. It reminded me of Kiev in Ukraine, just as beautiful and filled with people who live in their own place, some walking around the city with friends and some going to work.

Next, was Spanish Point beach. I had only seen such a place in films. It was my first encounter with the ocean and I really liked it. Then we went

to Kilkee, to both the beach and cliffs. The beach was very clean and perfect for relaxation. The cliffs are included in the most beautiful places in Ireland list. My boyfriend and I climbed almost to the very top of the cliffs where emotions cannot be described or put into words. Blue ocean and high waves that hit the rocks, it was a truly breath-taking sight.

I also liked Lough Derg. It borders many towns. I've seen it in the towns of Scariff, Killaloe, Mountshannon, Nenagh and Portumna. In every town, it looks special.

We can talk for a long time about beautiful places in Ireland but I would also like to mention the holidays. I was in Galway on Christmas Eve. It was very festive there, streets decorated, Christmas songs, happy people choosing gifts for their families and joyful children riding the rides. It was super. I was back in Galway on St. Patrick's Day. People who support the tradition of celebrating in green amaze me. Music and a wonderful parade created a holiday mood in the air. By this, I see the Irish as amazing people who celebrate all traditions with the whole family and love their country very much. This is worthy of respect!

*By Polina*

## **Life in Ukraine**

My name is Maksym. I'm from Ukraine. I was born in Brovary in the Kiev region and lived there. I like photography. In Ukraine, I often photographed landscapes and cars. I trained as a welder and worked in a factory in Ukraine.

Late in the summer of 2023, I arrived in Ireland and my new story began.

*By Maksym*

## **Living and learning in Ireland**

I'm from Ukraine. I came to Ireland with my husband. This is our second year here.



The weather here is unusual, often raining but we are used to it. Nature is beautiful in Ireland. I made a flowerbed and planted flowers behind my house. Every morning I love and rejoice to see the flowers.

Ireland has very friendly, good-natured people. They teach us a lot. Besides English lessons at our village, we attend classes at Scariff College of Further Education. We do what we love there. I do crafts with paper and threads. Now I'm doing Mosaic, which is very interesting. Thanks to this country and its people for their good relationship with Ukrainians.

*By Svitlana*

## **The Banshee**

One of the old Irish legends is the story of the Banshee. This is an Irish word and means fairy woman. It was said that when a person close to you was near death the Banshee would visit and give a warning. She had a long, sad cry like a sad song and she would be dressed all in white.

The older generation never liked to hear of anyone seeing or hearing the Banshee as this was a bad sign that death was near to someone in the area.

*By Tony*

## **My Ukraine**

Ukraine is my motherland. Ukraine is a democratic country. Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Europe. Ukraine borders are with Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

The nature of my country is beautiful. There are rivers, lakes, mountains and forests in Ukraine. There are a lot of cities, towns and villages. The population of Ukraine is about 43 million people. Kyiv is the capital of Ukraine. The biggest cities are Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, Lviv and Mykolaiv. It is on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. I love my country and I am proud to be a Ukrainian.

*By Nataliia*

## **My story**

My name is Larisa. I am from Bezdyansk. The city is located on the shores of the Azov Sea. My city is now under occupation. I miss Haberezhnaya by the sea, parks, squares, avenues, greenery and flowers. I live in the hope that I will return to my native city, my home.

Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes.

*By Larysa*

## **My story**

It is spring in Ukraine now. I think this is the most wonderful season. Everything blooms and comes to life. Now, here in the world, the nightingale sings. It is very painful that our Ukraine is suffering like this. I feel sorry that the war made us value the world and our motherland so much.

*By Nadiia*

## **My story**

My name is Karolina, I came from Ukraine. Now, I live in a small town I feel comfortable in it. The nature surrounding the town is calming and relaxing. Birds singing brings back memories of the motherland, and good-natured people who are always smiling at you.

*By Karolina*

## **A little bit about myself**

My name is Tetiana. I came to Ireland from Ukraine, from the city of Kherson. This is a beautiful city on the banks of the Dnieper. It's as green as Ireland. Only there are more sunny days there. I have a husband, mom, daughter and two grandchildren. Now, we all live in Lisdoonvarna.

*By Tetiana*

## **The history of millions represented by one person**

This is the story of one man. His name is Maxim. He woke up one morning and went to the store. He saw many groups of Russian soldiers in an ordinary Ukrainian city in eastern Ukraine. Maxim felt that something bad was happening. Every day there were more and more Russian soldiers in the city.

A few weeks later they completely occupied the city. A lot of military equipment began to appear on the city streets. The Ukrainian army tried to expel Russian soldiers from the city, but nothing worked. The forces were unequal. Russian soldiers captured some cities in eastern Ukraine. They installed their own government and banned everything Ukrainian. Maxim often saw explosions in his city. Houses were destroyed and people died. Maxim lived in his city all his life, but when the war began, living in the city became dangerous. He waited 10 months for the war to end and life to become calm again.

One day he left his hometown for another city in central Ukraine, where there was no war. He had to start his life from scratch. He had nothing in the new city. He rented an apartment and found a new job. Maxim changed his office job to working with his hands. He was ready to do anything to live in a new city.

Maxim lived in the new city for 7 years, his life improved. One morning Maxim heard the sounds of explosions again. Russia attacked 2 regions 7 years ago, and now it has decided to occupy all of Ukraine. Houses began to collapse again and people died. Maxim has already seen all this. War came into his life for the second time. Life became harder and more dangerous every month. After some time, Maxim packed his bag again and left, but this time to another country.

Maxim's dream is to be safe and live in peace. Today he does not know what will happen tomorrow. But he knows for sure that he has already seen a lot in his life.

*By Denys*

## **A swallow**

I flew like a swallow,  
But at the end of the day  
You shot me with your evil love

I fell at your feet  
Believed in love  
My crazy blood bubbling cooled

I'm a toy for you, you didn't love me,  
And you just laughed  
Stepping over me

You thought you killed me  
But I stayed alive  
I will laugh and fly  
But I won't be able to love

*By Natalia*

## **My trip to Cork**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, I am going to see my brother in Cork for the weekend.  
We will be driving, eating food and doing a bit of sightseeing.

Hopefully, the weather will be fine. I will return on bank holiday Monday.

*By Helen*

## **Mary's story**

My name is Mary. I like to do many things such as cooking, baking, sewing, word search, computer, bingo, listening to music, art and walking.

I like to go for a walk over the weekend on my own. I like to go to see my sister. I am looking forward to seeing my niece's wedding in September.

I like to watch TV. I like watching the soaps and *The Chase*.

*By Mary*

## **My holiday in Spain**

I went to Spain with Sylvia, Dorothea, and Mags. We had to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning to go to the airport. I was happy to go on holidays. I stayed in my own room in the hotel. I hung up my clothes when I got there.

We walked around the town, swimming in the pool and the sea and we went shopping. I bought two dresses and presents for my brother Michael and my two sisters, Mary and Michelle. After our dinner we went for a drink every night and we went dancing. One of the days, we went on a boat that flew around the sea. We saw the water, fish and the town from the boat. We went on a blue train around the town. I really enjoyed my holiday. I was sad to come home. I hope I can go on another holiday next year.

*By Teresa*

## **My next adventure in Waterford**

I like to attend different events about trucks. They usually show different trucks with different models. It is organized by one family. They usually start from Limerick and go to Galway.

This year they will start from Waterford and they go to different places. They have so many trucks that they show all around the country. The event is only for one day, it is usually over the weekend. They show the trucks during St. Patrick's Day too. I always attend their events as I love to watch the trucks and trailers. It is always nice to attend their events and enjoy the day.

I like to take many pictures of the trucks shown and share them with my family and friends. After the show, I have lunch with my friends and enjoy the rest of the evening.

If you were interested to know more about trucks, I would recommend this website [www.truck1.eu](http://www.truck1.eu). You can find much information about trucks on this website. I can't wait to attend the next event in Waterford.

*By Gerard*

## **London**

I went to London for my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. I went shopping with my sister Nica. We went out for lunch and we went out for dinner after. We had some cocktails in London.

We went on the train and we had a good time together.

*By Margaret*

## **Things I like to do**

My name is Julia. I like dancing and music. I go to Zumba classes every week. I also do yoga once per week. On Fridays I go to bowling with my friends. I also like to attend my craft class every Friday.

*By Julia*

## **Things about me**

I like to attend the art class with my best friend Shannon. We do lovely projects every week. I like to give my art projects to my family and friends but I also like to keep some for myself. I also like to go to the cinema with my boyfriend.

*By Emma*

## **How I spend my week**

I like to go to the cinema with my friends. I like to go to my art classes. We do a different art piece every week. Sometimes, I like to give my art projects as gifts to my friends and family. Sometimes, I like to keep them.

I like to eat pizza with my boyfriend and watch TV together. We like to watch different movies every week.

*By Shannon*

## **Medicine is truly the noblest of all arts**

My name is Liliia. I am from a beautiful town, Hola Prystan. In 1992, I graduated from the specialist medical school in the city of Kherson. For 30 years, I have worked as a nurse in our hospital in Hola Prystan but at the moment our city is under occupation.

You know, it brings such happiness when patients recover before my eyes, and, as a sign of gratitude, they give me their smiles. As Hippocrates says, 'When you burn yourself, always shine for others.'

*By Liliia*

## **Mother is the name**

Mother is the name,  
Mother earth, motherland, mother tongue.  
The mother's power was given by the mother,  
Mother leads everything, our shrine, our government.  
Because mother gave her strength,  
Mother protects the earth.  
I wish all mothers health and happiness.

*By Lela*

## **Dymtro and hurling**

I moved to Ireland five months ago and this was the best decision that I ever made. I haven't been here for a long time, but I already love this country, especially the Irish nature. There are amazing views with green hills and beautiful coastlines everywhere you look, and a lot of old castles here.

One day, I saw many kids with sticks in their hands. I looked on the internet about what they were. That's how I found out about hurling. Hurling is a popular sport in Ireland. It's played with a small ball and sticks called hurleys. Players hit the ball with their hurleys, trying to score points and goals. Hurling matches are really exciting to watch. Hurling is a big

part of Irish culture and tradition. People of all ages enjoy playing and watching hurling in Ireland. The Irish also have many holidays and traditions that can be discussed for hours. My favourite is St. Patrick's Day.

*By Dymtro*

## **Limerick**

You are the best you can see.  
You always wanted to see the sea.  
I didn't bring you to the cliffs.  
I'll do it next time, I promise  
I ask you, forgive me please.

*By Dymtro*

## **My collection**

I adore cooking and when I'm travelling, I like to try the local cuisine. I always bring back recipes of favourite dishes as well as souvenirs.

Now my husband and I live in Ireland. My favourite Irish dishes are undoubtedly chowder soup and fish pie. Of course, we haven't tried everything yet, so I hope there are many discoveries ahead of us.

*By Yulíia*

## **My favourite book**

There are good books you can read in one sitting and there are those that you can re-read after many years. One of my frequently read books is *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle.

The hero of the story is a private detective, undoubtedly a genius with charisma and deductive thinking. He knew how to see through and find criminals.



A few years on, pouring a cup of tea, I take a tattered book from the shelf and I exclaim, 'Elementary, my dear Watson'.

*By Olena*

### **My favourite Crimea**

Somewhere on earth, there is Paris and Rome.  
Only, my beloved Crimea is dearer to me.  
I can't forget Chatyrdag in the snow.  
I could only be happy here.

Crimea is forever young,  
With rocks and dunes.  
The dawn over the sea is unique.  
Crimea is a song sung together.

Our bright land amazing Crimea.  
Black Mountain, White Rock, Angaza River, Babugan Yaila.  
Swallows nests and the flight of an eagle  
Our priceless home the Crimean land.

The blue of the sky from the sea and the peaks,  
This suits you my beloved Crimea.  
The silver of the slopes, the gold of the fields,  
These suit you, Crimean land.

*By Marlen*

### **My journey to Ireland**

My name is Elvira. I am from Ukraine. I live temporarily in Ireland where we were met by very kind and helpful people. I study English here. We have a wonderful and very talented teacher, Lena.

*By Elvira*

## **My favourite recipe – Dumplings of Ukraine**

Ingredients:

½ cup sour cream

½ cup kefir

½ tsp baking soda

½ tsp salt

500g white flour

The filling can be assorted: strawberries, prunes, raisins.

Method:

1. Sift the flour
2. Add the liquid ingredients
3. Knead the dough for about 5 minutes
4. Divide it into portions
5. Roll into circles to a diameter of 8cm
6. Add the filling
7. Seal the dough well
8. Cook in salted water for 5-6 minutes
9. Take out the dumplings
10. Grease them with butter
11. Serve with sour cream

Advice: The dough should not be very stiff.

There are more than 600 types of dumplings. Some examples are manti, ravioli and sorcerers, but the most delicious dumplings are Ukrainian. Those with cottage cheese, potatoes and cherries are the best.

*By Serhiu*

## **My hobbies**

My name is Maksym. I'm 35 years old. I was born in Ukraine but currently live in Ireland. I want to tell you about my hobbies, music and books.

I was interested in music from an early age. I like listening to music of such genres as blues, country and rock and roll. When I watched live performances, I always looked up to guitar players and wanted to learn how to play the guitar. After some time, my mother bought me an

electric guitar and I learned to play it. I liked to play it in my free time. My daughter loves music too. She is eleven years old and she is learning to play the piano and the violin. Then she wants to learn to play the guitar.

I also like to read books. I prefer classical literature but there are some modern writers such as Stephen King, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and others, who I also like. Every day I read the Bible. This is how I spend my free time

*By Maksym*

## **My hobby – gardening**

Growing tulips in Ukraine has always been a cherished tradition for me. Ordering bulbs online from the Netherlands added an international flair to my gardening endeavours.

Planting the bulbs in October marked the beginning of my journey. With meticulous care, I nurtured them in a greenhouse, aiming to bloom by March 8<sup>th</sup>. Each bulb held the promise of vibrant colours and delicate petals, a testament to the beauty of nature. As winter unfolded, I tended to them diligently, ensuring they received just the right amount of water and sunlight. Despite the challenges posed by the weather, the tulips thrived under my watchful eye. With each passing day, they grew taller, their stems reaching towards the sky in anticipation of the imminent blossoms.

Finally, as spring approached, my efforts bore fruit. The tulips burst forth in a riot of colours, painting the greenhouse with hues of red, yellow and purple. It was a sight to behold, a testament to the magic of nature and the joy of cultivation. As I stood amidst the blossoms, I felt a profound sense of satisfaction, knowing that I had played a part in bringing such beauty into the world. As March 8<sup>th</sup> dawned, I gathered armfuls of tulips, ready to share their splendour with the special women in my life, a symbol of love and appreciation on International Women's Day.

*By Maksym*

## **My hobby is work**

My work is my hobby. I would like to write about how I turned by hobbies into work that did not become boring and tiring for me.

Initially, I didn't know what I wanted to do, and after graduation, I tried myself in different kinds of jobs. I quickly noticed that routine bores me and I prefer not to work in a team. I prefer to work somewhere you need to think through your actions in advance, where there are no ready-made solutions but only a common task and each step in the solution follows from the previous one.

Somehow, unplanned for myself, I took up welding work. This turned out to be the activity that interested me 25 years ago and still interests me now. I didn't want to turn a hobby into a routine, so I took on individual orders, worked with different clients and personally participated in the construction of their facilities from the initial stages to final completion. When you do interesting work, time flies, you gain more experience and as tasks become more and more difficult, they become more interesting.

As you become more proficient, you meet a very large number of people who, even after decades, turn to you when they need you, or recommend you to their friends. In turn, I can also contact them with my own queries. With many people, communication around work turned into friendship, which still lasts.

I also noticed that living in a city of a million inhabitants, and moving around it with my business, I remember every street and every house where I did something. There are no places in my city where I haven't been at different times. My advice - look for an interesting job for yourself. Do not make your life boring and monotonous.

*By Vitaliú*

## **My homeland**

I want to tell you about my country. Ukraine is the largest country in Europe. Kyiv is the capital of Ukraine. Ukraine borders Russia, Belarus Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

The nature of my country is beautiful. There are rivers, lakes, mountains and forests in Ukraine. It has a coastline along the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. The largest desert in Europe is located in the territory of our country.

Ukraine is a fascinating country with a rich history and culture. The Ukrainian language is the only official language in Ukraine. Interestingly, the Ukrainian language was rated the third most beautiful language in 1937, after French and Persian. It was also rated the second most melodious after Italian.

Popular traditional dishes include varenyky and holubtsi. The most famous Ukrainian dish is borscht. Our national clothes are vyshyvanka.

I love my country and I'm proud to be a Ukrainian.

*By Tanya*

## **My journey to Scariff**

My name is Fatma. I am here in Scariff with my husband and son. To this exact moment, I cannot believe that we are alive after we survived the bloody war in Gaza, which we lived through for almost three months. It is difficult, but it helps me to tell this story.

'Am I burned? Where is my father? Where is my grandmother? Are they OK?' These were the words of my son Tayeb after we were awoken at midnight on the first day of the war against Gaza, to the sound of an airstrike that hit adjacent land. It was horrific and it shook our house. All the windows were broken. The house was filled with stones, sand and dust. Then we realised that this war was different to the previous four wars.

Next morning, we received a call from the Israeli occupation ordering us to leave, as our neighbourhood would be turned into a war zone in two hours. We gathered our strength as the sounds of Israeli bombing was everywhere in the Gaza Strip. My mother was absolutely terrified, so we left for my husband's family's house in the Beach camp. We stayed there for four days, under the sounds of horrific bombing everywhere, until the calls of the enforced displacement to the southern part of Gaza started. With a mother who is suffering lung fibroses, and a mother-in-law who is crippled and blind, we left for the Nuseirat camp in the middle area.

There, with thirty other relatives, we were in a classroom at an UNRWA school, which was designated to be a safe shelter for displaced people. The school gradually filled, with up to eight thousand people, including women, elders, and children, living in classrooms and small tents, play yards, corridors, and everywhere. Days passed and we could barely get a simple meal a day, as the Israeli occupation closed the crossings from the first day of the war.

The occupation cut off communications. We had little news about our own family who remained in Gaza. Many of them died after the bombing of their homes. Many were unable to come to the south. The occupation placed a barrier between the north and the south. Many were tortured and killed. Very few were spared from the brutality of the occupation.

After staying for about two months in the shelter, we left again for Rafah, as life had become unbearable in Nuseirat. We were exposed to death several times. On one occasion, bullets passed in front of my eyes and settled in a mattress in our room. In Rafah, despite the fact that it was announced as a safe area, an institution beside the house we lived in was bombarded and as a result destroyed most of the walls of the house.

In the meantime, my children, who hold American citizenship, were contacting the embassy in an attempt to get us out of Gaza. After a lot of effort, it was agreed for us to leave through the Egyptian Rafah crossing and here we are in Ireland among our lovely Irish friends.

I am a former school principal, and thankful for the gift of accessing learning to help me cope with the trauma we have been through. At this moment, I can only thank Margaret and the Scariff centre for providing and, continuing to provide me, and my family, with tremendous support. I am trying to return to living. Just a reminder that we love life, and we want it in all its most beautiful phases. Please pray for me, my family and for this ugly war to stop.

*By Fatma*

## **My life in Ireland**

My name is Zarem. I'm from Ukraine. I come from Crimea. This is a very beautiful place with coastline, mountains and forest. I worked there as a doctor by profession.

After the occupation of Crimea, I had to leave my homeland. I came to East Clare Golf Village in Bodyke in January 2023. I've been living in Ireland for more than a year now. It's a wonderful country with kind people.

*By Zarem*

## **I'm from Ukraine**

I'm from Ukraine. I hate war. I live in Miltown Malbay now. I am very happy that I have the opportunity to be here with people dear to me, to communicate with my grandson and to take care of him.

I'm learning English. I hope this helps me adapt, make new friends and help other people.

*By Oleksandr*

## **My little gift to the Irish**

Since I came to Ireland, I have met many good and kind people. I am very grateful for their care and support for Ukrainians and I want to do something nice for them. Here, I present an ancient recipe of Ukrainian

cuisine, which is now almost forgotten. Many young people do not even know about it.

I have been using this recipe for many years. It's from my mother. It's quite simple but I'm sure that it will be liked by adults and children alike. I can't say exactly what it's called in English. Let's call it cake with poppy seed sauce.

**Ingredients:**

1 cup of poppy seeds

1 cup of kefir

1 egg

½ tsp bicarbonate of soda

A little salt

Some plain flour

100g white sugar

**Method:**

1. Rinse the poppy seeds in hot water, then put them into a bowl and add boiling water and let it infuse for 1 hour.
  2. Mix kefir, egg, bicarbonate of soda, a little salt and enough plain flour to make a soft dough.
  3. Roll out the dough into a circle about 2-3cms thick.
  4. Bake at 180° for 20 mins.
  5. Let the cake cool.
  6. Drain the poppy seeds and grind them in a blender.
  7. Add sugar and ½ litre of cooled boiled water.
  8. Cut the cake into small pieces and put into a bowl.
  9. Pour on the poppy seed sauce and enjoy.
- Bon appetite!

*By Natalia*

## **My parachute jump**

My name is Helen. I did something amazing last year. I did a parachute jump in Co Offaly. I went with staff where I live. I did 10,000 feet. I had an instructor. His name was Dean. He was very nice and supportive and kind to me. I had to wear a suit. I got a certificate for it. I was so excited.



I did it on 12<sup>th</sup> of September last year. When I got on the plane, I got very nervous. When I jumped out it was scary, but at the same time it was amazing. You could see everything so high up, and I was flying. When the parachute went up that was the best bit.

I was floating. I could not believe it. I kept on saying, 'Oh my God!' At first, I said, 'Oh Jesus!' I was so shocked. I didn't always want to do a parachute jump. I decided to do it because I have always had dreams about flying. I kept it from my family for a year and a half. I decided to do it in February 2022, and I didn't do it until September 2023.

I was very proud of myself. I was so happy to have done it. I also got photos and a video of myself doing it and staff took a few photos also. Doing a parachute jump is a great achievement for me. I enjoyed every bit of it. I did it for fun. I loved it so much that I would like to do it again. I am hoping to do it again in 2025. I would like to do it for charity. Next year in 2025 I am going to do fundraising and do a parachute jump for charity. My charity is Irish Red Cross, Clare area. I am looking forward to doing it again.

I have got so confident in myself. I know I can do anything I want to do. Being able to do a parachute jump and drive. I can do anything once I put my mind to it. Anything is possible. I believe in myself and I'm proud to be able to do it. I did think I was going to change my mind because it looked scary. If I did I would have regretted it. I am so happy to have done a parachute jump and I'm looking forward to doing it again.

*By Helen*

## **My profession as a teacher's assistant**

Working with children is interesting and responsible. I adore it. We are responsible for the life and safety of children. We help them to acquire vital skills. However, the most important thing is to have a nice, fun time with them, so that everything we do together brings pleasure. Parents bring their child to kindergarten and together we begin to learn independence as it is very important that the child preserves his individuality.

The teacher's assistant must be aware of new cartoons, the appearance of new superheroes, songs and dance, in order to find a common language with children, and to be able to interest or distract them at a given moment. It is very important to have good mental health and to be diplomatic, sometimes to be a psychologist. Working with children, we always cooperate with parents to find the right solutions to problematic issues.

Every day of mine is different, interesting, fun and unique. We teach a lot but we also learn a lot from children. Would I choose this profession again? Yes, of course.

*By Svitlana*

## **My story**

I came to Ireland on a family visa on 19<sup>th</sup> September of 2023. I wanted to meet my brother because I had not seen him for 5 years so I didn't miss the opportunity. When I was in Bangladesh, I studied at Comilla University and my major was Information and Communication Technology. I have claimed asylum due to political reasons in our country and now I want to continue my studies in Ireland. That's why I did the IELTS test and am doing a B1 English course in the College of FET. Then I applied to do Biomedical Science through the CAO.

*By Sanjida*

## **My thanks to Ireland**

My name is Mykola. I am Ukrainian. I am sixty-one years old. I live in Ireland now.

I like Ireland. It is a beautiful country. Thanks to God, I am here. I thank the Irish people for helping Ukrainians.

*By Mykola*

## **My year in Ireland**

I've been living in Ireland for a year now. Every day, I fall more in love with this fabulous country. Everything fascinates me, nature, the mild climate and plants. Even in winter, you can see the colour of the violets and orchids and a variety of green colours. It really is an emerald island.

Beautiful Ireland is rich in castles. Their story is connected with the history of the country, its sorrows and joys and they are mystical, enigmatic and secretive.

Ireland's greatest wealth is its people; kind, generous, hardworking, responsible, cheerful and friendly. I'm very grateful to them. They accepted and helped us Ukrainians. I wish the Irish people happiness, health and prosperity. Many thanks to all of them.

*By Natalia*

## **Nature connects cultures and unites people**

My name is Iryna and I am from Ukraine. I want to share with you what amazed me when I came to a country that is thousands of kilometres away from my homeland.

There is a similarity of nature between Ukraine and Ireland. Lush green landscapes, rolling hills and picturesque villages remind me of home. The bright colours of the flowers, the fresh scent of the air and the tranquillity of the countryside all seem familiar to me. It is as if, I have found a piece of Ukraine in Ireland, a connection that makes me feel at ease in this new place.

Nature has the power to connect cultures and unite people. This helps on the difficult path of learning a new language and culture. It is necessary to accept challenges with a smile on your face and determination in your heart.

*By Iryna*

## **My life in Ukraine**

My name is Ihor. I was born and raised in Ukraine. When I was 4 years old we moved from the city of Kyiv to Odessa. I like Odessa. Everything suited me there and I was not going to move anywhere.

My job was that I changed the batteries in watches and did minor repairs, such as replacing the straps, locks, keys on the watches, the glass and much more. I also sold new watches, wall clocks, lighters, chargers, batteries of all kinds and alarm clocks at the same place. I can say my work suited me.

After we were attacked on February 29<sup>th</sup>, I worked for about a year and decided we needed to leave the country. That is how we ended up in Ireland, where everything suits me. Ireland has good and kind people and is a good state.

*By Ihor*

## **Our literacy class**

We enjoy this class a lot. We like learning with Shane. The class is interesting. We like to meet with our friends and our spelling and writing is improving. Learning with nature is fun.

*By David, Emma and Jonathan*

## **Poem**

I'd like to talk about my dream.  
I dream of being happy and walking a dog named Peppy.  
I want to lie on the beach and drink beer,  
It's the ultimate summer elixir.  
Let there be peace in the world, and we will say so to the court.

*By Georgiú*

## **My favourite sayings**

- There is nothing better than a friend, unless it's a friend with chocolate.
- Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance you must keep moving.
- Whoever is doing the rain dance, it worked! Now stop!
- One day I'm going to make onions cry.
- It's OK if you don't like me, not everyone has good taste.
- Of course I talk to myself, sometimes I need expert advice.
- Housework: I clean my house every other day. Tomorrow is the other day.
- Prayers go up, blessings come down.

*By Mary*

## **My life**

My name is Salif. I am from Burkina Faso. I come from Dori. It is a small town. My family lives in Burkina Faso. I'm the first son in my family. I have one sister and two brothers. I'm older than them. I'm married. I have two kids, a thirteen-year-old and an eleven-year-old. Before I came to Ireland, I was a farmer. I worked outside. It was a good job but it was hard work. Now, I live in Miltown Malbay. I like it. I want to become a good citizen.

My star sign is Pisces. I was born in the month of March. I am full of life. I am sensitive and I am determined. If I watch a film and I see something bad, I cry. I like to help people. Dreaming makes me happy. I have big dreams but sometimes I am lazy.

*By Salif*

## **Who I am**

My name is Tomasz. I am from Poland. I will be 25 this Saturday. I go to the local gym once a day. I love it. I can ride my bike. I want to learn

how to play the guitar. I like to cook and bake. I have a nice dog. His name is Goldi. In the future I want to meet a nice woman. I love my life.

*By Tomasz*

## **How Ukrainians celebrate Easter**

Easter day is one of the most favourite days for many Ukrainians. Preparation for the holiday starts a week before Easter. For instance, on Thursday, called Clean Thursday, Ukrainians clean their houses, decorate icons with embroidered towels. It is important for the whole family to bathe before sunrise under running water, which supposedly washes away all sins and diseases. Also, this day we usually bake Easter cakes and decorate Easter eggs. First, we dye eggs in different colours and then we paint various patterns or ornaments. This is our family tradition and I definitely love it.

The next day is Good Friday. Religious people should go to the church on this day. Saturday is considered a day of calm. It is on Saturday night that the Easter Night Mass in churches begins, where Easter baskets are taken for blessing.

The Easter basket is something incredible. It is decorated with willow branches, church candles and embroidered towels. Then filled with Easter cake, Easter eggs, water, special wine, sausages, bacon and other dishes that will be eaten at lunch.

Finally, on Easter Sunday in the morning, the whole family gathers for breakfast where they eat Easter cake and eggs and drink special holy wine on an empty stomach. After breakfast, everyone begins celebrating. Some go out with friends or family, others go to the city festival. Everyone greets each other with the words 'Christ is risen' and 'He is risen indeed'. My family usually goes to our parents on this day. We exchange Easter cakes and eggs and then we meet with our friends and enjoy a barbeque picnic. It is always a wonderful day full of fun and happiness.

In addition, I should say that Easter celebrations don't end on Sunday. In some regions of Ukraine, especially in the western part, there is a tradition of pouring water on yourself and other people. This happens on the first Monday after Easter and is called 'Watering Monday'. People believe that water on this day becomes healing and protects from evil spirits.

*By Iryna*

## **Joining an LCETB class has changed my life**

Elaine and I left Cork city in November 1980 along with our two children Andrea and Stephen. It was work that brought us to Shannon. I joined the local soccer team, Park Rangers and formed new friendships. I decided to run the Dublin City Marathon in 1984 and met with a few lads who were also runners and we formed Shannon Senior Athletic Club where lots more new friends were made.

In the early 1980s we added two more children to our family, Conor and Finbarr. I did a coaching course in athletics and got involved in training teams in soccer, hurling and camogie and more new friends were made. I took up golf with work a few years ago and found that I enjoyed it and so I eased back on my running.

I retired from work in 2018 and my job gave me membership to Dromoland golf club on my retirement. It was playing golf three times a week and made many new golf friends.

About a year and half ago I had a setback with my health. I got a heart attack and was in intensive care. After a week I was allowed home on thirteen tablets daily. Elaine was my nurse, morning, noon and night. As the song goes when I was recuperating; 'I got cards and letters (and texts) from people I don't even know'. Every club I was involved in from Park Rangers to Dromoland Golf Club sent me letters and texts and called to my house to wish me well.

Before my health setback, I was involved in classes with the LCETB which was one of my saving graces when I could not play golf or be involved in sport while I was getting better.

Sport is a great way of meeting new people, and your club can become like your second family. In most cases, you make friends for life, so if you are feeling down and lonesome, join an LCETB class in Shannon. You will never look back.

*By Jimmy*

## **Hastings' Cottage**

I woke up this morning to the dawn chorus. I just lay there and closed my eyes and listened to their natural symphony. It was so uplifting. Then I remembered it was Wednesday. The ladies and two gentlemen would be coming to the polytunnel today. Wonderful!

Sure enough, a car appeared and there was the lovely tutor. Next, came the lively and cheerful group of ladies and gentlemen. They exchanged news and stories showing photos of their grandchildren to each other. Their lively chatter never ceases to amaze me. They are so animated.

The tutor calls them and it being spring, they are going to sow seeds in prepared raised beds. They are weeding and sowing with non-stop chatter and laughter. I am so excited just listening and watching them. They sow tomatoes, basil, and marigolds to eliminate the pests. Sounds delicious. They follow with peas, cucumber, courgettes, beans and salad leaves.

When they arrive during the long hot days of summer, although not so predictable, they are still happy. The polytunnel protects plants and class during rain showers. Watering and succession planting go on. Winter cabbage, cauliflower and sprouts are planted. I love their interest.

Autumn sees more salad leaves planted and they went last because of the cooler weather. Harvesting begins with beans, peas, carrots, blackcurrants and gooseberries and the final crops rhubarb which first appeared in spring.



During winter, onions are planted along with leeks and beetroot. Brussel sprouts are picked as well. The polytunnel is cleaned thoroughly along with the gardening tools. Talks of Christmas wreaths and centre pieces being made during the craft season.

I am full of the joys of the spring. The air outside is full of the scent of the daffodils. Now, they are packing up and heading to somewhere called the Family Resource Centre to do some paperwork and have tea.

Oh dear, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is John, John Hastings and I lived here in the 1800s. This was my old home and land. I am truly content that my land is making people happy and fulfilled.

Slán go deo!

*By Debbie*

## **Taras Shevchenko**

I would like to tell you about the Ukrainian national poet and artist Taras Shevchenko. Taras Shevchenko was born in 1814 into a poor family. He lived in the countryside and from childhood he saw the life of peasants and their hard work on the land.

As a child, he began to write poetry and paint pictures. His parents saw his talent and sent him to a religious parochial school. Later, he wrote many poems and painted many illustrations for his poems. He became a famous Ukrainian poet. His most famous book was *Kobzar*, which was translated into more than 100 languages. It includes poems from different periods of his life and views, and is illustrated with his drawings. The main themes of his work are the life of the Ukrainian people and the struggle for freedom of Ukraine against the Russian occupiers. His poem 'Testament' is like a Ukrainian anthem, which says that Ukrainians will live well when they defeat the Russian occupiers. Taras Shevchenko's poetry is studied in schools and universities and is a model for fostering patriotism for Ukraine.

He had a difficult fate, he failed to have family and had no children. He was forced to serve in the Russian army for 25 years, because at that

time, there was enslavement of people. However, he never forgot about Ukraine and its suffering people. He died in 1861 and was buried on the Dnipro cliffs in Kaniv, from where he looks down on the Dnipro, on the Ukrainian land, and watches over the Russian invaders.

Taras Shevchenko was, is, and will remain, in the memory of Ukrainians as a national hero and patriot of Ukraine.

*By Olena*

## **My favourite place**

I like to come every day to my day care centre, Rehabcare. I like my programme that I do there. We do many activities such as art, crafts, cooking, singing, colouring, quizzes, music, dancing, exercises and much more. I really appreciate how I always get the support with my key workers during the day. I really appreciate that I was elected to be part of the disability committee for my second year. I love being part of this committee and representing my team here in Rehabcare.

Some of my favourite dishes, that I love to cook are, sweet and sour chicken and fish chowder. I will share with you my secret recipe for my fish chowder. I use 2 onions, mussels, 3 carrots, 2 cloves of garlic, vegetable soup and frozen beans. I chop the carrots, onion, garlic and add them to the soup. I put the mussels and frozen beans into the boiling soup and leave them together until it is ready. I am delighted that soon I will be celebrating my second anniversary here.

*By Dermot*

## **My favourite Coronation Street episode**

I love to watch the soaps, *Coronation Street* and *Home and Away*. *Coronation Street* is very good for high drama. It is on 3 nights a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are many things happening each night. It is brilliant. It has so many characters like, Max, David,

Daniel, Roy, Jenny, Daisy, Ken, Rita, Roy, Sarah and many more. It started in 1960 and is still going strong since that time. It has a big story line now.

One of my favourite episodes was about Daniel and Sinéad. Sinéad passed away because of cancer. That was really sad. Sinéad was the girlfriend of Daniel and they had a son. Sinéad was a lovely character and it was heart breaking to watch her dying. Daniel went out with Daisy after a while and he dated her for a little while. Daniel broke up with Daisy. Daniel is living with his son. The story keeps going about Daniel and Ryan, Ryan falls in love with Daisy. Ryan and Daisy are still seeing each other. I hope that it will have a good ending.

*By Mary*

## **Baking**

My name is Philomena. I love baking one day a week in Rehabcare. I bake with staff member Wayne. Myself and Wayne usually laugh a lot while baking. My favourite things to bake are chocolate brownies and banana bread. I bring the final product over to my job the next morning and the boys there eat it. A few months ago, I made cheese buns for a coffee morning in Limerick. In the coming weeks, I'm going to learn how to make an apple tart.

*By Philomena*

## **My love for Liverpool**

I started following Liverpool 1975. The good old days. In the first couple of years following Liverpool, I enjoyed watching them win lots of trophies, from league to the European cups. Unfortunately, in the 90's and 2000's Liverpool did not enjoy the same success. A few cups here and there but no league title.

In 2015, Jürgen Klopp came to manage Liverpool. Jürgen rejuvenated Liverpool football club. In the last couple of years, Liverpool have won a number of trophies under Jürgen. My most enjoyable win, as a fan was, the Premier League title win in 2019-2020. This was Liverpool's first time winning the league in 30 years. Unfortunately, in the last few months Jürgen has decided to step down as manager of Liverpool. Like many fans, I was upset to hear this news but I would like to thank him for the last couple of years.

*By John*

## **How I spend my week**

Today, I would like to share with you how I spend my week. I usually like to have cereal for my breakfast and enjoy a cup of tea. I am not a coffee drinker - I don't like it at all. I like to listen to music, both old and modern. I like to listen to Clare FM in the morning. I like to listen to the news also. I enjoy reading a good book before going to bed as it helps me to sleep better. I like crime books. They are very enjoyable. I like to watch TV during the day, such as *Only Fools and Horses*. It is a TV drama show with many seasons. I enjoy watching crime drama as it always makes you curious to know what is going on. I like to go for a walk every day for one hour around the town. I really enjoy my art classes. They are very good and I always learn new skills that help me to improve my art.

*By Travis*

## **My favourite time of the week**

In the autumn of 2015, I moved to Shannon. I knew no one but my husband. I saw an advert stating that there was a craft class starting in 2016. I signed up for it. It was my only way of getting to know people of my own age.

I went in the first morning full of apprehension. I sat down and we introduced ourselves. Then we all got into our arts and the chatter

started. The hours flew. I really enjoyed it and couldn't wait for the following week. It was the start of meeting a bunch of lovely ladies. We all become friends. I know I learned a lot of skills but the most important thing was, I made very good friends.

*By Maria*

## **Margreat and I**

My name is Yun. I worked as a Chinese teacher in China. I have been living in Ireland for six years. In my Chinese college, we did not have to choose to study English, so in my first year in Ireland, I studied English at home every night. It was very difficult for me at that time. I did not give up, because I have the spirit of challenge and progress in my heart.

In my fourth year living in Ireland, I met my teacher Margreat at the College of FET in Shannon. At that time, my pronunciation had a very strong Chinese accent and my teacher spent time after every class helping me to correct my pronunciation (consonants and vowels). She was very patient and encouraging. She was great. She helped me to make a lot of progress and keep me going.

With her encouragement and motivation, I was more confident to try looking for work. It was not long before I found a permanent job. During this one-year course, my life changed a lot. I can communicate with my bank, agent and solicitor about buying my house. I can also communicate with colleagues and clients. Of course, there is still more English to study while I work.

In December 2023, I got another job. This is my job as a Chinese teacher. I can teach Chinese at a local primary school in the coming April. I was excited when I saw the proud look on Margreat's face when I told her the news. This look came from her heart. At that moment, I told myself that I will work hard to be an excellent teacher like Margreat.

I am glad that I have met such an excellent and beautiful teacher. She is my good teacher, friend and a teacher worthy of my respect. Finally,

I want to say that knowledge can really change your fate and create wealth, life and learning journey.

*By Yun*

## **Big Brother**

I love *Big Brother* because it is funny and interesting. The game and the tasks are pretty good. My favourite character in the house is Nikita. Nikita was in this year's *Strictly Come Dancing*. It's on BBC1 every Saturday night. It is a very good dancing series that I love to watch every week. I love my dancing class in my daycare centre here with my friends.

I love everything about the *Big Brother* house. *Big Brother* has about 14 characters going into the house and they do different things. Such as dancing, singing, playing games and different challenges. Whoever wins they will get a party or win a prize. There's a late-night show called *Big Brother Late and Live*. It is about interviewing the characters and they show the inside the house for an hour. It's on every night. They have fun and laughter. I love to watch it and enjoy it on my own.

*By Mary*

## **Don the Music Man**

My name is Nora and I attend Rehabcare in Shannon. My favourite days to attend the day service are the days Don the Music Man, comes. I love to sing along with Don and listen to him play his guitar. My two favourite songs that I like to sing are 'One Day at a Time' and 'Ballyhoe'.

*By Nora*

## **Me and my family**

My name is Marian. I have been living in Shannon for a long time now. I'm originally a proud Tipp woman. Every couple of weeks I go back to Tipperary for the weekend to stay with my sister. I really love going home for the weekend to see my family. I love catching up with my nephews and their children. My nephews live very close to my sister so I get to see them and the kids a lot when I visit my sister. I love weekends with my family.

*By Marian*

## **My best friend**

My best friend is Philomena. She went to Glenmaroon with me. She is good to me. I like to spend time with her. We like to talk and listen to music together. We love to watch a movie together. We do some quizzes.

I like to go for a walk with her to the park. She is very good to me, she gives me sweets. She is friendly and keep me company when I need it.

*By Mairéad*

## **A day at the zoo**

Friends invited me to the zoo on Sunday. They offered to take my children. I don't believe in horoscopes, but Sunday should be my awful day this year.

I was really busy that day. First, my boss called me and for 2 hours we discussed a new project. While I was talking on the phone, my sons got into a fight and broke my favourite vase. After that, we got stuck in traffic and were very late.

At the zoo, instead of walking, I ran after my sons. I didn't look at the animals at all. Suddenly it started pouring rain. We hid under a tree near

the monkey cage. I saw that the monkeys were holding something in their hands and looked at it with interest. It was my wallet! How can you not believe in the horoscope after this? It was a terrible day.

The zoo staff helped me to get my wallet. I came home wet, angry and very tired.

*By Olena*

## **The past**

I was born in a small farm in west Clare. My four elder siblings were born at home. My younger sister and I were born in Kilrush hospital. A few days later, I was baptised in the local church. The countryside was a great place to grow up. Most houses had big families. A few men who didn't marry lived alone or with brothers when their parents passed away.

I walked about a mile to school every day. During winter we brought a sod of turf each for the fire. We had two lady teachers. It was many long years after we left school that we realised how good they were. The only thing that we feared were the orders, 'Come up here to me.' 'Hold out your hand', 'and the other one.' It was not pleasant at the time but later on we learned from it. Some of our friends have passed 20 to their reward very early in life. The school house was closed for years until a local family made a home out of it. It is great to pass by and see it still standing. It was opened in 1895.

There were some local shops that stocked all that was wanted at that time. There were also two local pubs. One of them is still going strong.

The garden always had to be started by Paddy's Day and anyone who failed was a 'lackey'. We learned how to cut turf and to save it. After the bog, it was then time to save the hay. Very often when I got home from school my mother would send me to the garden or the bog with tea and bread for my father. It was always homemade bread and the tea would be in glass bottle in a woolly sock to keep it warm.

After leaving the national school, most went to secondary school for a few years. The only 'Leaving' most of us did was leaving! Some went to



learn a trade which meant you might never be out of work. Pay was very small but it went a long way. I remember my first car would not take £2 of petrol if there was much in the tank. You got change from £1 for four pints. Those were the days! Life is very difficult today, some things better and lots worse.

*By James*

## **My story**

I remember that morning as it were yesterday. I'd woken up in my aunt's house and hadn't felt well. My sister and cousins got up, but I decided to stay where I was for a while hoping some rest would help me feel better. As I lay there, the sudden dawning, of the possibility of being pregnant, hit me like a ton of bricks. I was terrified as any 16-year-old would be with the realisation that everything was about to change. I had a sick feeling that I had let everyone I loved down.

As I lay there, going from panic to hysterics and back again, I made the decision to tell my aunt. She brought me to her doctor who confirmed my fear and said I was, indeed, expecting. The next step was to tell my parents. To my surprise, they were very supportive, which made me feel worse, if that was possible. They never made me feel like a disappointment but in my heart, I knew I was.

My aunt knew someone in Dublin who was looking for an au pair for her kids and so it was decided that I would move there for the duration of my pregnancy with the hopes that no one back home would find out about it.

All during my pregnancy I didn't know the outcome, whether it would be adoption or if I could keep my baby. I treasured being pregnant with her as I felt it might be the only time I'd have her to myself. There were many lengthy discussions between me and my parents about what was best for the baby and me. It was decided that adoption was the best idea as I was too young at 16 to be a responsible parent. As time went on, I panicked about never seeing her again.

Luckily, my aunt and uncle were actively looking to adopt at the time. If they adopted my baby it would mean that I'd get to see her from time to time. So, she was adopted by them, and I got to see her a couple of times a year. I was also named as her godmother, which, I'm sure, messed with people's heads a bit.

Nineteen long years passed before she wanted to know who her birth mom was. That day we all drove to Dublin as, 'Eileen and her three daughters'. We came home as, 'Louise's birth mom and her three sisters'. Louise's bonus dad, Paul, was also in tow. Louise came to Shannon a few weeks later and was introduced to her biological father and his family.

From then on, our relationship only grew and will continue to do so now that she has bought a new house around the corner from mine. Talk about a full circle moment! This is all still very fresh in my mind and now that 50 years, which I cannot believe has gone by, I thank God every day that she, her husband and their kids are part of my family.

*By Eileen*

## **Ramadan and Eid**

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month in the Hijri calendar. It is a special month for Muslims, as the Quran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad - may God bless him and grant him peace. Ramadan is an important month in the Islamic calendar. It is a holy month and some of the Islamic acts of worship are establishing prayer, praying for zakat, fasting during Ramadan, and performing the Hajj to the house of God in Mecca.

Ramadan fasting consists of not eating or drinking from before sunrise until sunset, turning a blind eye to everything that harms others, treating others well, performing prayers and reading the Quran. When the sun sets, we break our fast. Starting first with dates, then milk, then after that we perform the maghrib prayer. This is followed by the al maghrib prayer, then we pray the evening prayer and several tarawih prayers. The number of their rakaat ranges to seventeen rakaat in order to bring

them closer to God Almighty. Then at around three in the morning we eat the suhoor meal, which helps us fast the next day.

After thirty days, it is the first day of Eid and we start eating breakfast. Then we wear the most beautiful clothes and perfumes. We decorate the houses with everything that is beautiful. We go to the mosques to perform Eid prayers. After the end of prayer, we congratulate each other on the arrival of Eid as well as in our homes offering sweets and special accommodation to celebrate a happy Eid.

We celebrate Eid because it is an Islamic act of worship and brings great joy after fasting for thirty days. Ramadan is one of the spiritual acts of worship in Islam, it is for every Muslim to carry out in order to complete the teaching of Islam that God has commanded and enshrined for him.

*By Abdelazaeim*

## **Going shopping**

I went shopping last month. I went to a very large store on the outskirts of Limerick. It's located in a large area among various shops. It has one floor. One of the best things about it is that it has many of the latest technologies and appliances. Another good thing is that you can look and touch the products before purchasing. There is also a large car park, where you can park your car.

The worst thing about this shop is that there are not many staff and they don't often pay attention to you. You have to look for them and wait for help for a long time. Another negative point for me is that many of the products presented on the website are not in store. Of course, you can buy online, but customers complain about their delivery – it takes too long and often they don't receive any delivery notifications.

Overall, I wouldn't recommend this shop and I'm not going to go back there next time I'm in the city.

*By Anastasiia*

## **A short story of my life**

I was a student in Morocco. I came to Ireland for work experience in 2003. At first it was difficult for me to work and live here. The weather was completely different from where I came from, and my English was not as good as it needed to be for work.

A few years later, I got used to living here as I got married and had children. Now, I feel more comfortable than before, surrounded by family but my husband and I are thinking of going back to Morocco one day. You never know what will happen tomorrow.

*By Hafida*

## **Living in Ireland**

My husband needed to work with his brother in Ireland, so we moved here in 2001. I arrived in May, the weather was nice and the skies were blue. In wintertime, it was awful – windy and raining all the time. It made me very depressed and I wanted to go home.

I feel relaxed and comfortable living here now. Life in my own country is faster and more difficult than here in the last few years. There is less freedom than before. My children were born here. All their friends are here. I wouldn't think of living anywhere else.

*By Ka Fung*

## **The Crescent Shopping Centre**

The Crescent Shopping Centre is a major shopping centre serving Limerick. It is located in Dooradoyle. The complex opened in 1973.

I found most of the things I wanted there: sports stores, clothes stores, a cinema, plenty of good cafés, a few restaurants, phone shops and more. The people were friendly and helpful. The centre and toilets are clean, and there are plenty of free parking spaces.

The bad thing about it is that there isn't a good electronics store. Overall, the trip was worth it and I would recommend it.

*By Ka Fung*

## **Eyre Square**

I went to Eyre Square last Friday. It's located in the heart of Galway City. It's a very famous park near the train and bus station. It has a historical background.

One of the best things about it is that it provides so much space for people's gatherings, picnics and exercise. Another good thing is the Christmas market when there are so many stalls in the park. They sell different kinds of goods.

The bad thing about it is that the traffic is awful and it is not easy to find parking spaces. Overall, it's a nice park to spend time with family, especially at Christmas time. It is full of festive atmosphere. I would recommend it and I am going to go back there.

*By Ho Fu*

## **Living in Ireland**

I was an environmental protection technician in Hong Kong. My oldest brother needed me to work with him, so I moved here in 2001. I liked the environment the most. I arrived in May. The weather was fantastic and the skies were blue. I didn't find any environment pollution here. This is a big difference for me. In Hong Kong, the public transport is very convenient, very efficient and frequent. It starts in early morning and finishes at midnight but the pollution levels are high.

Ireland is a quiet, peaceful and democratic country. You are free here. You can say and think what you like.

I would like to travel to Hong Kong every two years. My children were born here and they feel Irish now. Where my heart is at peace, there is my home.

*By Ho Fu*

## **Dinner out**

I went out for dinner to a local Indian restaurant with my family. The restaurant is located in the town centre and it has a big car park. The best thing about it is that the food is delicious and the menu has a lot of different dishes.

The only bad thing is that we had to wait a long time for our table to be ready and the service was a bit slow. Overall, I would recommend it. We had a great time and I am definitely going to go back next time.

*By Khadija*

## **A short review of Morocco**

I have some friends who are foreigners living in Morocco. They love it. One of them is an American retiree. He says, 'Morocco is a true paradise.' It is a Muslim country with traditional values and he has accepted them with respect and genuine friendship for the past 43 years. He was employed at The American School for 25 years and now, he is enjoying his retirement.

It is important to have a secure income in Morocco, but life is not very expensive. The Moroccan population are friendly and they open their homes easily to foreigners and share what they have with delight.

The weather is pleasant and you can enjoy the ocean or the Mediterranean Sea. There is also plenty of snow in the high Atlas Mountains, where you can go skiing or snowboarding. Riding horses is also a part of the Moroccan culture and you can find some of the most valuable horses there.

The food quality is very good and it is known as the second-best gastronomy in the world. Arabic is the official language in Morocco, but French is widely spoken.

*By Khadija*

## **Emerald country**

As children, my brother and I watched TV programmes about all the countries on earth. In one of the episodes, they showed Ireland. It said that the country is located on a small island, with warm winters, not hot summers and frequent rain. This climate is good for plants. You don't have to watch out for snakes and dangerous spiders: there are none at all, so it is safe to walk everywhere. After many years, I had to leave my home and since I had the opportunity to choose the green island, of course I chose it.

Upon arrival I saw that the island was truly emerald. Birds sing and there are flowers all year round, without significant frost or heat. I now understand why people are so happy about the short appearances of the sun. I still haven't got used to the constant rain and strong winds, but it's very beautiful here.

I'm living with an Irish family. We went to the ocean. I hadn't seen it before. I was captivated by the power of the water and the wind. It's interesting to watch the ocean change colour. Passing clouds, the sun peeking out, light or heavy rain, each time the mighty ocean is different. It's fascinating. I'm very glad that I have seen the emerald country that my brother and I liked so much.

*By Tetiana*

## **Poem**

Maybe it's good to be alone,  
You can do whatever you want.  
But if you want to make your life full,  
Come with me and be a fool.

*By Magdalena*

## Interesting facts about Ukraine

Ukraine is a unique country that has a lot of amazing facts.

1. For example, the oldest map in the world, engraved on a mammoth bone, as well as the oldest settlement of homo sapiens were found in Ukraine. They are about 15 thousand years old.
2. The world's only active underwater river is in our Black Sea.
3. Ukraine has one of the largest deserts in Europe.
4. There are 4 ski resorts in the Carpathian Mountains.
5. Ukraine has its own Maldives – amazing beaches with white sand and clear blue sea. They are located on the Russian-torn, protected island of Dzharylgach.
6. In a 1934 language beauty contest, Ukrainian came in third place after French and Persian; and in second place in melodiousness after Italian. The competition was held in Paris.
7. One of the world's most famous Christmas songs is 'Shchedryk', a folk song recorded by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych. The world knows it as 'Ring Christmas Bells'.
8. Ukraine built the largest airplane in the world 'Mriya', which was destroyed by Russian forces at the beginning of the war in 2022.
9. Ukrainians are one of the most educated nations in Europe in terms of the number of citizens with higher education.
10. In 1933, the first kidney transplant operation in the world was performed in Ukraine.
11. The world's deepest subway station is in Kiev. Its depth is 105 metres.
12. Kiev water park is considered to be the largest in Europe.
13. Ukraine has given us the world's third largest arsenal of nuclear weapons (after the United States and Russia).

However, the most amazing fact of modern Ukraine is its brave and desperate struggle against the Russian invaders, which proves that Ukrainians are truly amazing people.

*By Yevgeniia*



## **Ireland**

Ireland is a delightful country that I fell in love with at first sight. As soon as I found myself here, I was captivated by the rich green colour of the grass, the diversity of flora, the riot of colours and all sorts of shades of green everywhere. Everything here is amazingly beautiful, fresh air, clean water, picturesque landscapes everywhere, mountains, the ocean, cliffs, beaches, bays, lovely cities, fascinating ancient castles and cathedrals.

The most important treasure of the island, which especially amazed me, are the people who live here. They are always friendly, hospitable, sweet, cheerful, open, smiley people, ready to give good advice or come to the rescue.

Thank you very much for your hospitality, your support and your sweet, kind souls. I love you with all my heart!

*By Anzhela*

## **A love poem**

Reaching and sharing  
Is an amazing feeling  
Being happy in life  
Means you are in love  
With love and kindness,  
All in the world must shine  
And your love will be mine

*By Ricardo*

## **Live and love**

Hardly anyone could overestimate the importance of life for every human being. There are lots of books written about love, with love stories, tales, poems, etc. but I can give an example of how your everyday routine may be improved with love.

I got used to following my mother's wise words that she gave to me in my childhood. She told me, that in order to do well, whatever I needed to do, I had to love it! The best option was to love what you do. Having said that, she also meant that if I found something attractive in any of my activities and I would see good results.

*By Oksana*

## **What love means to me**

U - urge someone on, encouraging them to continue trying

Z - zesty, being excited and full of energy and having a zest for life

M - magic away any problems your family might have, make them disappear quickly

A - abide by the rules of your marriage

*By Uzma*

## **Love and lost - Portugal**

I opened the book,

From inside, the smell of roses woke up all my senses.

The image of you invaded my mind and time stopped.

The memory of your embrace brought a warm comfort to my body.

My heart ached, but just for a moment.

I looked up to the sky and a tear fell.

Wherever you are, no matter what, my love will always be with you.

*By Paula*

## **My story**

My name is Anna. I have been living in Ireland for 2 years. I love the nature of this country. Every day I can hear the birds singing from the big green tree they have their nest in, which is outside my window. I like to observe different kinds of birds. For the first time in my life I saw a bird

which looked like a hummingbird. It was amazing. It was the size of my little finger.

*By Anna*

## **A new adventure**

One year living in Ireland, and all the amazing references about the beauty of the island were not wrong. I feel welcomed by the friendly, helpful and cheerful people. It's been an amazing experience with so many centuries of history and culture. In my opinion it's a great place to know how humankind developed their social behaviour from then to the present day. I recommend visiting Ireland and Portugal, where I'm from.

*By Ricardo*

## **A brand new start**

Last year, my husband and I moved from Portugal to Ireland. It wasn't an easy decision, but after a year, the experience has been quite good. We challenged ourselves to improve in the language, to search for better professional opportunities, and to learn more and more about Ireland.

People have been asking us why we chose Ireland. The answer is pretty simple; in general, Ireland is not much different from Portugal. Apart from the language and the opportunities, everything else is very alike. The weather is a little bit more cloudy and wet but the temperatures are similar. The people are warm and welcoming, always trying to make you comfortable. The cost of living is not so different but here the income is higher than in Portugal.

Before we moved, we had done in-depth research and analysis to find out all the pros and cons. We took one year developing and studying this research and we finally found that Ireland could be the best place for us to make a big leap and change our life paths.

After our first year here, the balance couldn't be more positive than this. We are truly happy with our decision to embrace this challenge, our first big leap. We don't know about the future but I truly believe that we will call Ireland our home for a long, long time.

*By Paula*

## **A review of Silver Restaurant, Ukraine**

Great place, but pay attention to prices on the menu!

I visited a beautiful lake and SPA complex with my family. It's located near the restaurant, so we decided to have a meal in such a beautiful place, which was highly recommended by my friends. It's in a small village with a huge forest around, so there are no other places to choose. This kind of monopoly does not harm the Silver restaurant.

The main hall of the restaurant can accommodate up to 50 guests. In the warm season it also has an open summer terrace, which allows you to enjoy excellent dishes and good company in any weather.

The central hall is made in a marine theme, with a mast, a map and an aquarium with fish. Massive tables and chairs are made of wood and covered with white tablecloths. The menu has a large selection of fish and seafood dishes, some Italian meals and a separate menu for children. They cook quite quickly and some dishes are tasty. I cannot recommend the pasta, but the soups, salads and desserts are awesome.

When the waiter brought the bill, I saw that the prices were not the same as on the menu. They were higher. I asked the waiter about the mistake, but he said that they hadn't changed the menu yet. How can they give incorrect menus to guests without warning? I was excited about visiting Silver and hope they will fix those mistakes to make every new visit unbelievable.

*By Olena*

## **Review of Arkham City Restaurant, Gotham City**

I came to this restaurant at the invitation of my friend Bruce Wayne. This restaurant is located in the city centre and is one of the most expensive.

I would like to start with the architecture of this building. The Arkham restaurant is designed in a Gothic style. You will be greeted by sensitive staff and enter a luxurious hall when you enter Arkham. There are a lot of powerful people here, from the mayor and police commissioner to the heads of the Mafia. The service here is the best of the best. The food is delicious. I felt like I was in paradise, until he came.

The music from the circus started playing and a huge cake was brought out. We thought it was someone celebrating something, but then the Joker came out of the cake. At the same time, the Joker blocked the exits and we became hostages. Then, a lot of things happened until finally, Batman saved us.

In the end, I can recommend the Arkham City Restaurant if you like to eat delicious food but you can also get into a bad situation.

*By Oleksandr*

## **My trip to Inis Meáin**

I would like to tell you about my trip to the island of Inis Meáin (Inishmaan). It was in the summer, in August, and the weather was very warm and sunny. We got there by ferry. It was my first time on a ferry. I really enjoyed it. I was on this island when there was a running race, I forget the name, and there were a lot of people there.

On this island, there really are a lot of donkeys and they are friendly. It's an incredible place that I would like to go back to. The nature there is very beautiful. There are a lot of hills and delicious blackberries just in the fields. We just walked along the roads of this beautiful island and enjoyed nature. We were at the landmark and walked on the stones.

Then we decided to relax on the beach near the ocean. The sand was very white and warm, it was very sunny, and the ocean was clear blue.

This place was very similar to paradise. It was very windy. We also visited a beautiful old church with beautiful stained-glass windows.

*By Anastasiia*

## **My best weekend**

Three years ago, I was hiking in the mountains in western Ukraine. I had two days away from civilization without mobile communication. Any meal in such conditions seems like a banquet. Sitting by the fire, you could watch it burning mesmerisingly all night. After such a weekend, we can safely say that all the negativity accumulated before will burn in the flames of the fire.

*By Eduard*

## **My story**

Since childhood, I was afraid of only one thing – war. I was proud that I lived in a country in which there could be no war. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

The morning of February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 was the worst in my life. The war broke everything, but also it opened many new aspects of life. You have to live now. Look around and learn to enjoy the little things, the weather, nature, rainbows, etc. Love yourself and your loved ones. Spend your time communicating with them. Wear nice clothes and eat from good dishes. Don't leave anything for later. Live here and now. Life is beautiful but short. You need to have time to see and do so much.

*By Iryna*

## **A special day**

Essentially, a special day is special for a certain period of time. Then, it doesn't seem so special. Maybe someone can say that every day is special. In my life special days are not many.

I think when you feel freedom then you are happy. Every day we depend on something or somebody, for example, every day we need to go to work, or need to take children to school etc. This is not freedom. For me, freedom is when you can go out and be in contact with nature. The ocean, the sea gives you freedom and tranquility. You don't even have to swim, just look at the waves, listen to the sound of the surf, drink hot coffee. You don't need to think about anything, just enjoy the moment of peace and solitude with yourself.

*By Kataryna*

## **My work**

Let's start in 2018 when I finished law university in Ukraine and started to work as a lawyer's assistant. At the start, it was very hard because everything was unusual and new, especially, talking with different people and realising that I should find out the special ways of each of them.

After a while, it started to be easier, and I got my lawyer's license. Then, it all started again, but even worse because now I realised that I should take care of myself. But soon, it began to normalise, finally.

Then the war began, and now I work in a medicine company in Ireland. I like this job because everybody respects your work and supports you. But, if I was to compare, they're very different kinds of jobs, because in Ukraine I used to work more using my head and now I'm just using my hands. Although, there are a few similar things like responsibility, attention to detail, punctuality, and a desire to help people.

*By Zinoviú*

## **My story**

My name is Volodymyr. I'm from Ukraine. Of course, most of the time I have lived in Ukraine. Now I'm living in Ireland, for about 10 months.

I think my life was better before, because I lived in my own house, in my city and everybody was with me, my family and friends. Most of the time, in Ukraine, I studied. I have two higher education qualifications, and I had plans to graduate from being a student. Sometimes I worked, sometimes I had a practice in another country, like England and Germany.

In Ukraine I had a girlfriend. It was a good time. But now, I'm in another country, alone, living in a hostel, but it's OK. I'll start my life from scratch. In Ireland, I had more free time than in Ukraine, but recently, I found a job and now have little free time. In my free time here, I go to the gym and sometimes, I go to pubs and restaurants.

Travelling around the country last summer, my friends and I went to Lahinch. It was amazing. It was the first time that I swam in the ocean. Later, we rented surfboards and tried surfing. It was so hard, but so funny. We had many positive emotions and were so tired when we got back home.

In Ukraine, I never did things like this. For me, it's a new experience and a great time and if my family were here, I would be really happy.

*By Volodymyr*

## **About me**

My name is Liliia. I was born in Ukraine in the beautiful, cheerful city of Odessa. This is a city on the Black Sea coast. After school, I studied to become a lawyer in university and then worked in my profession. I always wanted to have a more interesting job, so I decided that I needed to change my profession.



I found a new job and I started working as a gas station manager. There I had a lot of communication with people. I learnt how to receive fuel trucks with oil, manage people and many other things. I worked as a gas station manager for 18 years. It was a very responsible job. I had 60 staff from 18 to 64 years old.

However, in February 2022, war began in Ukraine, so my life changed. When it became very scary two years later, I had to leave my country. Me and my 2 children arrived in Ireland. We arrived with one suitcase. I had to start my life again in my 40<sup>th</sup> year.

At this current time, I have lived in Ireland for one month. My children go to school, and I go to study. I found work. I'm working as a cook, but when my English becomes better, I have a plan to change my job and try to work in a gas station like in Odessa, because I like this job. It is very interesting. I hope I will succeed.

My children like it here. They like their schools. They are different from Ukrainian schools. My children feel free and happy here. Sometimes, I miss my mum and dad, my sister and nephews but I don't want to go back to Ukraine.

I like the weather. I like nature. I like the people, the living conditions and traditions of Ireland. That's why I like living here. I want to learn to work and benefit this country.

*By Liliia*

## **My holiday**

My name is Hiyam. I'm married and I have four children. I live in the town of Ennis and I am from Sudan. Today, I will tell you about my holiday.

In 2019, we went to Sudan for three weeks and stayed in the city of Port Sudan, which is in eastern Sudan near the seaport. I stayed with my family in the family home. We spent many enjoyable days there. We went to the beach and ate fish and ice cream. I met my friends, some of whom I longed to sit with for a period of time. I asked them to go to the university where I was studying. We actually went, but a big change

had happened because we had a period of time that we did not visit the place.

The important thing is, it was a beautiful trip to my city and my children enjoyed the trip very much. I spent the most beautiful days with my father, mother, sisters and also my neighbours. Honestly, I missed every corner of the city and every place that reminded me of my childhood. Now I miss my family, but I cannot go because Sudan is suffering from war. I hope to meet my family soon.

*By Hiyam*

## **About me**

I am Rayan. I am tall and fat. I have black hair. I have small eyes. My skin colour is wheat. I am from Sudan. Drawing is my favourite hobby. I don't like ironing and I don't like the weather in Ireland, but I like to go shopping.

*By Rayan*

## **About me**

My name is Ibraim. I am 24 years old. I am a young boy because everybody who sees me says that I don't look my age. I am short, and dark haired. Because of my height, I sometimes have a complex about it.

I am from Crimea, Ukraine. I am a Crimean Tatar. My life in Crimea went from kindergarten, school and university there. I never thought I'd ever be abroad and now I am here. Unfortunately, I didn't finish university. Five years of my life were just empty, but I hope that this is just a test of fate.

Here, I am able to indulge in a very beneficial hobby for my health, both physical and mental, I like to just throw a ball into the basket. I don't like reading books, but I know that it is necessary so now, I have started

reading. The most amazing thing about Ireland is the people. I enjoy communicating with Irish people every day because they are very friendly and kind. Of course, I really enjoy the nature in Ireland, but I don't like the rain.

*By Ibraím*

## **My wedding in Pakistan**

The day I got married was a happy day. I got married in Pakistan when I was 25 years old. My family were very happy. They invited people to our home for a party after the marriage in the marriage hall. There was piano music. We had 2 parties for our wedding, one in my family home and the other one at my husband's family's home. The families prepared all the food for the parties. There was a big wedding cake. I had 3 new dresses for my wedding and the parties after; a green and yellow one, a red one and, a pink and light green dress. We went to Islamabad on our honeymoon after the wedding.

In Pakistan, it is good luck if it rains on your wedding day. It rained on the night of my wedding so I was happy. My husband is a very good man and we are very happy.

*By Shabana*

## **My wedding in Ghana**

My name is Vida and I got married in Ghana. It was a very, very happy day. I wore a white dress, a white veil and white shoes. My marriage was arranged by my husband's mother and I am very happy with my husband. We got married in church and had a party for our family and friends in my family home after. Caterers made the food. There was a big wedding cake and lots of music and dancing. We had a lovely honeymoon after the wedding.

In Ghana, we say if it rains on your wedding day God is blessing you. There was heavy rain on the day of my wedding so I was very blessed.

*By Vida*

### **My wedding in Nepal**

I got married in Nepal when I was 15 years old. It was an arranged marriage. It was not a happy day for me. I was crying and frightened. I wore a red sari for my wedding. I got a ring, a bracelet and a red necklace from my husband. I wear a red spot called a tika on my forehead and my husband put red paint on my hair on our wedding day.

Now, we are married 37 years and we have 4 children. My husband is a good man. Ireland is our honeymoon.

*By Haíre Kumari*

### **My wedding in Syria**

I got married in 2005 in Syria. We got married in a big hall and had a big party after. In one room there was a party for the men, and the women were in a separate room. There was music and dancing for everyone. Caterers made the food. I wore a white dress and a white veil in my hair. It was a great wedding. I celebrated with my family, friends and neighbours.

After the wedding, I went to live with my husband's family. They are good people and I was happy there. We had 3 children before the war in Syria. Then we moved to Lebanon and came to Ireland in 2016. Now we have 5 children and we live in Ennis. This is good for our family and we are all very happy here. Ennis is our home now.

*By Sanaa*

## **The best day**

Friday is the best day for Muslims. It's a special day – the men go to mosque. The women make a big lunch. In our countries there is no work or school on Fridays. Everything is closed in the afternoons. After lunch people go visiting each other. If the weather is nice you can go to the beach or the park and have a picnic.

*By Fatima and Fatma*

## **The best day**

My birthday is the best day for me. I am a twin and, on our birthday, I talk to my sister. She lives in France. She calls me and tells me her news. I like talking to my sister.

*By Fatima*

## **The best day**

When my children get good results in college it is a very happy day for me. It's great have good news.

*By Fatma*

## **Our favourite time of the year**

Ramadan is a time of fasting and prayer for Muslims. It lasts for around 29 to 30 days. Ramadan is a time of good routine for us. In normal times, we prepare and cook food for our children and husbands who come home from school and work at different times. We have a lot of work and washing up to do.

During Ramadan, it's easier because we cook once and everyone sits to eat together at the same time. Every day in Ramadan we have a special dinner called, iftar. After our meal we usually have something

sweet with our tea or coffee. Every evening after iftar some men go to mosque for special prayers called salat tarawee. These are long prayers for Ramadan. We say these special prayers at home. My husband leads the prayers and my children and I answer him.

After prayers, we usually watch TV together as a family for a few hours. Some people watch TV about the Quran, others watch a special drama series. Many countries make these special TV series for families to watch during Ramadan. We sometimes visit our friends and family in the evening. It is usually late when we go to bed during Ramadan.

Before sunrise we get up to eat and then pray. We have a special breakfast together called, suhoor. We have tea, cheese, eggs, bread, bananas, fruit and yogurt. After suhoor, we pray or read the Quran. Then we go back to sleep for a few hours.

One of the last nights of Ramadan is called, Lailat al-Qadr. This is an extra special night. Some people stay awake all night to pray. Women and children also go to mosque on this night. After Lailat al-Qadr we start to make biscuits and desserts for Eid. We buy chocolate and sweets. We clean the house. We buy presents and new clothes for the family. We get ready for Eid.

Eid is a big celebration for Muslims. It is at the end of Ramadan. It lasts for 3 days. On the morning of Eid, we give the new clothes and presents to the children. The men and the boys go to mosque for Eid prayers. After mosque they come home and we have a big family breakfast. We have a nice time together. Then the men give the children and their wives money or presents. This is to say thank you for our hard work during Ramadan and Eid. Now, we send the money home to our families to help them.

After breakfast, we call our families in our home countries to say, 'Eid Mubarak'. This means, 'happy Eid.' This phone call is a little bit happy and a little bit sad because, we miss seeing our families and they miss seeing us. In the afternoons of Eid, we go visiting our friends and people come to visit us as well. In our countries there is no school or work for the 3 days of the Eid celebrations. In Ireland it's different. My children

stayed off school for only 1 day because they had exams. My daughter had to go to work as normal for Eid but they still enjoyed it.

*By Fatima, Fatma, Mayssa and Amal*

## **The most difficult moment**

The most difficult moment came when an unjust and bloody war began in my country. Many civilians die every day. I really did not want to leave Ukraine and the city of Odessa, which is dear to my heart.

I had been with my children for a long time and didn't want to leave our family home but we moved out of the country for the sake of the children's safety. We lived in Poland for six months, in the city of Gdynia. However, we missed home a lot and decided to return.

When we returned home, we found ourselves under stress again. There were constant explosions and for several days we were without water, heat and electricity. We lived in such a difficult situation for a year. Again, we packed our things and flew to Ireland. Away from stress and again with sadness in our hearts as we were leaving our native home. We are grateful to this country for shelter and a warm attitude to us. There is great hope that soon the war will end and we will return to our homes.

*By Tetiana*

## **My name is Linda**

My name is Linda and I am from Ukraine. There is a war in my country and I live in Ballyvaughan now. There are very good and kind people here. They have helped us a lot. I go to English classes.

Before the war, I worked in a jewellery store, as a sales person. I loved my job. I liked making people happy and beautiful. It was nice when men shopped for gifts for their wives and girlfriends and when adult children bought gifts for their parents for wedding anniversaries and

birthdays. The joyful events of my customers had a positive impact on my mood. I loved this job very much. It was very interesting. I hope I can find a similar job here in Ireland when my English improves.

*By Linda*

## **Friendship**

My name is Olena. Photography has always been a part of my life. For almost a year, during the occupation of my hometown in the south of Ukraine, I did not pick up a camera. Horror, destruction and mutilated life is not the photography for me.

I am grateful to those professional photographers who took it upon themselves to capture this flood of horrific images of war. They truly deserve the highest awards, e.g. academy awards. The civilised world must see and react and take proactive actions to prevent similar situations in the future.

As for my future, I have to thank the people of Lisdoonvarna and north Clare. It was they, who returned me to the perception of a peaceful life. It is the people in this lens with their multi-faceted lives, that encourage me to believe in life, and to develop and affirm my faith in other people. I have faith in the inexhaustible potential of every person.

*By Olena*

## **Ukraine**

Ukraine is my native country. Our country is located in the very heart of Europe and has a significant cultural heritage. People in Ukraine are always open and friendly. The language we speak is very rich and melodious.

I am happy to be Ukrainian, and I will always love my incredible country. Ukraine will always have a special place in my heart. Every time I look at



the flag, my heart fills with pride and warmth. Ukraine is not just a country on the map, it is a part of my soul.

I am proud of our great history and rich cultural heritage. Our ancestors left us unforgettable customs and traditions, which we pass on from generation to generation. Ukraine also has an incredible landscape, wide fields, mountain forests and picturesque rivers make our country extraordinary and unique.

Ukraine has had a difficult journey as a country through the ages. Ukrainians selflessly fight for their future and a better life for their children. I believe that my country has a great future, after which we have everything necessary for a happy and successful life.

*By Ljubov*

### **My story about the first day of the war**

On February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, I woke up at 5:00 a.m. to strange and loud noises and I couldn't figure out what was going on. There were explosions. My son and I were home alone. My husband had already been on a business trip for several days, building a boarding house on the seashore.

A few minutes later, my husband called and said that the war had started and he was urgently returning home. People called their friends and families. Everyone was very scared. I didn't know what to do. It was a very scary time. I had to go to work and my son had to go to school. I called my boss. He told everyone to go to work, although the explosions continued. My son stayed at home as my husband was supposed to return from work in a few hours, and I went to the bus stop. The first thing I saw was a lot of cars, kilometer-long queues at gas stations, people were filling up their cars and driving somewhere. I was going to the bus stop in the hope that the bus would not come and I could return home and be close to my son. But the bus arrived, all my colleagues got ready for work, and then I thought that everything was not so scary.

We tried to work on production for several hours, but not knowing what was happening and what would happen next sent everyone into a panic. We increasingly heard machine gun fire and explosions. We learned about what was happening on the street, from the internet, or by telephone.

The Russian military captured our city. We had a lot of military equipment in our city. There was fear. One of our company's vehicles, which was making deliveries to stores, came under fire and returned to the company covered in shell fragments. There were thoughts in my head - What to do? How do we get home? What will happen next? Maybe, all this will end. Everyone who had arrived by car began to go home. My job was out of town and I needed transport there and back. We usually took the bus, but that day we were told that the bus home was cancelled due to danger. My colleague and I decided that we would go on foot.

We left work and saw that everything around was burning: fields, grass and trees. My first thought was to go back, but I needed to go home. Then we went out onto the main street, where there was a huge number of Russian armed service men. It was very scary to pass by them. A tank drove past us and, further along the road, there was military equipment lined up, tanks, armored personnel carriers, guns, cars. There was a lot of it. We walked, guns were pointed at us, bullets were flying past, there were explosions, corpses lay on the road, there was blood. My husband called and said that he could drive through the side streets to the outskirts of the city and would be waiting for us.

When I got into the car, I couldn't believe what I had seen with my own eyes, that all this was happening to us. I said to myself, 'How? Why? For what?' When I returned home, I burst into tears.

From the first day of the war to this day, my city is under occupation and there is daily shelling. There are holes in my fence from shell fragments, my house is flooded with more than two meters of water because of the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station.

We lived in the occupied city for 1 year and 16 days. It was hell. My city was bombed, my house was destroyed. I have nowhere to return to but that's another story.

Many thanks to Ireland and the Irish people for your help, care and safety.

*By Inna*

## **A new home**

Our life has changed completely since the war started. My mum and I had to escape to a safe place. Ireland became our new home. We have been living in the lovely town of Ballyvaughan in the west part of the country for two years.

We could never have imagined that we would live on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean and enjoy beautiful landscapes every day!

We are very thankful for the hospitality, care and support in every aspect of our lives from the Irish people. We highly appreciate the help that Ireland gave us in difficult times and we will never forget this. We are very pleased and happy to live here and it is God's blessing for us.

*By Oksana and Margit*

## **My name is Yuniia**

My name is Yuniia and I have been living in Ireland for one and a half years because of the war in my homeland of Ukraine. My husband and our daughter Alisa live with me. She is six years old. Alisa goes to school, where she fits in well and has made friends with her classmates.

In Ukraine, before the war, my husband and I had a kennel of American Akita dogs. I don't know if this is possible for me in Ireland, but I would really like to go back to breeding. This is very interesting for us. We simply love what we do and treat our pets with respect and love. Our dogs currently remain in Ukraine, I dream of taking them to Ireland.

*By Yuniia*

## **Gardens**

My name is Yuliia. I am from Ukraine. In my hometown, my family and I owned a beautiful house with a plot of land. The soil in Ukraine is very fertile. I grew a lot of different vegetables, fruits, berries and flowers.

Growing plants is hard work, but I enjoyed my hobby. My greatest love was growing flowers. I had so many beautiful flowerbeds. I grew roses, chrysanthemums, lilies, tulips, hyacinths, daisies, daffodils, yucca and many, many others. Every spring I gave flower seedlings to poor people who had no money to buy flowers for their garden. The beautiful flowers make us happy.

The Irish people are also very fond of growing a lot of beautiful flowers. I see a lot of awesome flowers in Ireland. Ireland is a very beautiful and amazing country. I am very grateful to the people of this country.

*By Yuliia*

## **My name is Igor**

My name is Igor. I am 46 years old and I am from Ukraine. I currently live in Ballyvaughan, County Clare, Ireland. Very pleasant and friendly people live here. It is very calm and safe.

In Ukraine, I lived in the city of Chernihiv. On 24<sup>th</sup> February, Russia attacked Ukraine and started a war of occupation against our country. At the beginning of the war I signed up as a volunteer in the armed forces of Ukraine. For more than one year I was a soldier on the frontline defending Ukraine. I took an active part in the successful operation to liberate the Kharkiv region from the Russian invaders.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023, my wife and I had twin boys and I was discharged from the army. My wife Hanna and I decided, that it is dangerous to raise children in a country where there is a war, so we came to a very beautiful and safe country, Ireland, with our two sons, Vladyslav and Maxim.

I am now taking English lessons. My knowledge has improved and I hope that this will help me find a good job in Ireland, I really want to thank the Irish people for taking care of our family and for the opportunity to live in safety and warmth. I want to bring and give this country my warmth and maximum benefit.

Although I have one technical and two higher education qualifications (economist-manager and human resources), it will be difficult for me to find a job with the same qualifications as in Ukraine. I had a business in Ukraine before the war and I hope that in Ireland I will be able to try to open a small business. For this, I really need a good knowledge of English.

Food plays an important role in our family. My 34-year-old wife Hanna plays an important role in feeding our family. Our favourite dishes are Ukrainian borscht with meat and sour cream, dumplings with potatoes and sour cream, dumplings with cheese and sour cream, dumplings with meat, steamed veal manti (dumplings), adjarian khachapuri with two cheeses, banush with cheese and crackers, pie with apples and many other delicious dishes. The diet of our twins, who are now 1 year and 3 months old, consists of cereals, yogurts, milk mixtures, vegetable purees, fruit purees, fruits, meat, cookies, and mother's breast milk.

*By Igor*

## **My name is Anna**

My name is Anna. I am 34 years old. I'm from Ukraine. I have a husband Igor and two sons - Maxim and Vladyslav. They are twins and they are 1 year and 3 months old.

In Ukraine, we lived in the picturesque city of Chernihiv. I worked as an administrator and my husband had his own business. On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, a war began in our country. The men joined the army as volunteers to protect our Ukraine from the country of the aggressor.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023, I gave birth to two sons. Because of the war and after the birth of children, we left Ukraine for Ireland.

We now live in the village of Ballyvaughan in County Clare. My husband studies English, and I take care of the children. We dream of the war in Ukraine ending as soon as possible, opening our own business and raising beautiful and intelligent children.

*By Anna*

## **I enjoy cooking**

I enjoy cooking for my husband Igor, as he loves to eat. He eats everything I cook and in large quantities. He calls himself the biggest fan of my cooking.

We have a family tradition, once a week on Sundays, I prepare flatbreads for my husband. The main ingredients for this dish are fresh milk and eggs, flour and oil. They are cooked in a pan. The fillings can be varied, but my husband loves them with strawberries, various fruits and a glass of fresh milk.

*By Anna*

## **My name is Ira**

My name is Ira, I am a wife and a mother of two daughters. I am from Ukraine. I think you know that there is a war in Ukraine now.

Now, I live in Ireland with my sister. It's one of the best countries in the world. There are kind and understanding people who have given me great support. The nature is very beautiful here. Life is good here but I am not happy.

Before the war, I had a normal life and I loved it because my children, husband, relatives, and friends were nearby. We had a tradition of gathering everyone around a big table. It made me happy but the occupiers took it away from me. However, they cannot take away my faith and hope for a better future.

*By Ira*

## **My name is Hanna**

My name is Hanna and I am from Ukraine. I lived with my family in the city of Bakhmut. I worked in a store as a salesperson. Bakhmut was a very beautiful and flourishing city.

When the war began, my children were forced to leave the city and go to Dnipro. I continued to work because renting an apartment is very expensive. I went to work until a shell killed people near the store. I went to visit the children in Dnipro.

My sister and I decided to go to Ireland from Dnipro. When we arrived in Ireland, we were put in a camp for 4 months and then we were put in a hotel in Ballyvaughan. I go to English classes.

*By Hanna*

## **My name is Elena**

My name is Elena. My daughter and I came from the front-line city of Kharkiv to Ireland. Our journey was not easy. In Ireland we were accommodated in a hotel in the village of Ballyvaughan, County Clare.

This is a small but very cosy village. It is located near the ocean. There are many beautiful flowers and shrubs here. Among the residents, elderly people are prominent. They are kind, friendly and active. There is a school in the village. Ukrainian children also study there. My daughter goes to school in Carron. She enjoys her studies.

My profession in Ukraine is related to education. I teach political science. I don't work in Ireland yet. I go to English class.

*By Elena*

## The choice

My name is Anna. I arrived in Lisdoonvarna a year ago after leaving my native Ukraine. My hometown Kherson, in the south of Ukraine, is constantly being destroyed by the cursed war. I was not asked if I wanted to leave the motherland, I was simply left with no choice. They forced me and many other people to do it. A series of tragic events preceded my move. This decision was extremely difficult for me.

At the same time, I am glad that fate gave me an acquaintance with a new unusual place. Here, I found friendly and sensitive people who can really support me in a difficult time. It is such inspiring actions that keep the universe and civilization in sustainable development. This is what changes society, and makes it capable of building a truly extraordinary new world of sincerity, authenticity, and naturalness. It was here that I saw how it is possible to live qualitatively for different nationalities in the same territory while preserving the identity of each person.

I am glad that I became a participant in the Lisdoonvarna workshop, 'Vision for a sustainable, inclusive and thriving future for Lisdoonvarna'. My ideas and aspirations were heard and embodied in the design of the co-cultural centre of north Clare. I am glad that the photo with my hand has been recorded in the 'Tapping the Well' brochure. I have already become a part of this wonderful place among extremely kind and talented people. I am confident that the potential created by the sincere intentions of the residents of the North Clare, combined with investment in human capital, will allow the region to develop strongly. I also believe in the development of regions in Ukraine.

It so happened that life connected two extremely distant parts of the world. In reality, only kind human hearts unite.

*By Anna*



## **Medicine in Ireland for pensioners**

I sincerely thank and bow with gratitude to the state of Ireland, to the government, senate and its benevolent people. They accepted me, fleeing from a terrible war. Many thanks to the host of our guesthouse, in Lisdoonvarna. He has a sincere, kind, sensitive heart and understands our needs. I am grateful to the doctors of the hospital in Galway, the doctor in the city of Limerick and to the doctors in Lisdoonvarna, who support my life and health. I ask God for mercy and divine support for all the people of Ireland.

*By Lúbov*

## **Irish opportunities for families with children**

My name is Yeva. I thank the country of Ireland, the government and people for supporting the refugees from Ukraine. Thank you for the safety of life and health and providing opportunities to get an education for my five children. We felt the warm welcome and friendly attitude of the residents of Lisdoonvarna. May the Lord bless you abundantly with development and prosperity. Special thanks the owner of our guesthouse for his hospitality and care.

*By Yeva*

## **The kind hearts of the Irish**

My name is Halina. I am a pensioner who was forced to flee from the war in Ukraine. I am very grateful to the country of Ireland, the government, people and medical workers for their kind reception and support. I am grateful that despite the fact that there has been a war in my native country, Ukrainians are confident in the future as there is material, mental and spiritual support from good and friendly people. I am writing with an open heart and a wish for peace.

*By Halina*

## **The kind smiles of the people of Lisdoonvarna**

My name is Larysa. I am grateful to the country of Ireland and its people for their sincere, benevolent support to our refugees from Ukraine. Thanks to the residents of Lisdoonvarna for their friendly smiles, care and welcome in their homes. I see the future and development for my family in this country in a joint effort to build a civilized, ecologically oriented world.

*By Larysa*

## **Ireland became our second home for a while**

We are a family from Severodonetsk, Luhansk Region, Ukraine. We arrived to Ireland to Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. This is a very picturesque place. Ireland surprised us with many green colours. It is interesting to get to know the culture of Ireland. The ocean near the west coast fascinates us with its appearance. You can look at its waves for a long time without taking your eyes off it.

Special thanks to the owner of our guesthouse for his hospitality and responsiveness. Ireland has become our second home for a while. We thank the country for the hospitality.

*By Tatiana, Mark and Mariia*

## **I love Ireland**

I am Liudmyla, a pensioner. I am 73 years old. Before, I knew nothing about Ireland except the name of the country on the world map. I arrived in Ireland on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023. The first thing that struck me on the street in Lisdoonvarna were the people with genuine smiles. The cleanliness and orderliness of the streets in Ireland added to the impressions. The Irish are very nice people, attentive to our needs. This impression will remain in my heart forever.

I'm grateful for the emerald fairy tale in my life, for wonderful nature, for blackberries that taste great. Medical support and travel benefits are important to me, as a pensioner. It is Ireland that gives them. Every day I pray for peace in Ukraine. Now, I am also praying for Ireland. I wish her prosperity and preservation of kindness, mercy, cheerfulness in all spheres of life. In Lisdoonvarna, thank you to all the residents of this wonderful, worthy place of development and abundance. Special thanks to the owner of our guesthouse for his friendly attitude towards Ukrainians and his sincere treats during celebrations. Thank you Ireland.

*By Lúdmíla*

## **Support**

The war brought a lot of pain and grief to the Ukrainian land. Millions of Ukrainians suffer from Russian aggression and lose their homes, health and even their lives every day. However, even in dark times, there is something that gives warmth and hope. Good deeds do not go unnoticed - they shine like beacons to those who are waiting for help. That is why I sincerely thank the Irish people. Your help brings hope to Ukrainian families and saves thousands of human destinies and lives.

*By Ilona*

## **Beautiful country**

I have been living in Ireland for more than a year. This country fascinated me from the first days. Here, nature is unique and so is the climate and of course, the people. They are very kind and friendly. One of them is a famous musician, Charles. He teaches us to play the tin whistle. As well as that, we communicate, talk about ourselves and learn about the traditions of the Irish people.

*By Mariía*

## **St. Patrick's Day**

What's St. Patrick's Day?  
A day to find your way.

A way through life's endless tide,  
Guided by Ireland's pride.

For children, men, and all,  
Women, cousins, hear the call.

Rainbows gleam, leprechauns plot,  
Hunting gold to fill their pot.

Gather 'round, in one embrace,  
Shamrock leaves, a verdant grace!

Patrick taught with wisdom's might,  
Three leaves for God, Jesus, Holy Spirit.

And legend says, in grand display,  
Patrick chased the snakes away.

So let's raise our voices high,  
St. Patrick's Day, let's glorify!

*By Olena*

## **My name is Yuniia**

My name is Yuniia. I am 39 years old. One and a half of these years have been lived in Ireland. I came here with my daughter, since a full-scale war has been going on in my homeland for two years now. I don't know if I would have come here if these terrible circumstances had not forced me.

I came to Ireland and immediately fell in love with it. The Irish people are kind, sympathetic, shy and very hardworking. Nature in Ireland is beautiful, although it is very different from Ukraine. For the first time in my life, I saw the ocean. To be honest, it was my dream to see the ocean in

which the Titanic sank. Ireland's culture and castles preserved through the efforts of her people is wonderful.

I don't know when the war in my country will end and how our fate will turn out, but now I forever love the 'green waves' of Ireland and its beautiful people!

*By Yuniia*

### **My name is Zhanna**

My name is Zhanna. I'm from Ukraine. I have a husband and two adult sons. Now, there is a war in my country and that's why I came to Ireland with my sister.

Before the war, I had a perfect job. I worked as an economist at an educational institution. The college where I worked trained many different highly qualified specialists in the field of mechanical engineering. Our college has international agreements in student exchanges. I really loved my job.

Now, I live in Ballyvaughan and take English classes. I want to learn English so I can get back to work sooner. To all Irish people I want to say thank you for your concern and kindness. We wish you good health, happiness and prosperity to your country.

*By Zhanna*

### **My name is Svitlana**

My name is Svitlana and I am from Ukraine. There is a war in my country and I had to flee the country. Before the war, I had a perfect job. I had my own business. I was engaged in growing ornamental shrubs, fruit bearing trees and various types of flowers. I had a lot of roses.

I had to give up everything the moment our city of Bakhmut was completely destroyed. When the war ends, we have nowhere to return to, but we really want to go home. Now, we live in Ballyvaughan. There

are very good and kind people here. They have helped us a lot. Thank you very much to the Irish people for the warm shelter you have given us.

*By Svitlana*

## **Summer of 2023**

I love all seasons but I like summer the most. The summer this year gave me the opportunity to see my closest people like my children and grandchildren. The war in Ukraine separated us.

My younger daughter and her family live in Tralee in County Kerry. My granddaughter lives in Poland in Lublin city. Meeting them was very warm, like the feeling of summer in Ireland.

My eldest daughter's family and I live in Lisdoonvarna in Ireland. Last August, we went to the Cliffs of Moher. The trip was very interesting. The landscapes in Ireland are incredibly beautiful. The rocks around the ocean are incredible. We went to the ocean to see the beach at Lahinch. We bathed and sunbathed. The sea was cool, like a mirror of water under the rays of the sun. On the shore, we built sand castles with our little granddaughter. Then everyone ate ice cream together in the café. It was delicious. We sailed in a yacht to Doolin. The panorama from the side of the ocean is such a fairy tale. I like Ireland, I am very grateful for the shelter.

*By Olha*

## **Ireland**

A country that extended a helping hand to us Ukrainians. A country where there are very kind and sympathetic people. People who help us learn a language, get out of depression, even teach us to play musical instruments. I have no words to express those emotions of gratitude, which overwhelm me every day.

*By Tetiana*

## **Ireland – a country of hope**

I like the country very much. At first, it was very sad, but now people are giving me hope. I am in a good country. I like the nature and music. When I walk in the park, I admire nature. I am very grateful to this country for everything.

*By Tamara*

## **Sitting**

Daffodils arise with golden luminance.  
Sitting.  
Light stretches shadows on the wall.  
Sitting.  
Alone together the candles flicker.  
Sitting.  
Still mirrors reflecting  
You and I.

*By Elaine*

## **Snow**

It is evening. It is bright. The snow falls gently to the ground. You cannot see the moon, but it is still bright without streetlights. It is quiet and calm. The odd car breaks the silence, not with engine roar and brakes, but smoothly and quietly going in different directions. Underfoot the snow is quietly crunching it's a pity to walk along the virgin road. I just want to stand still and look at this beauty, just to watch how the snow falls shimmering under the light of lanterns, to look at the trees shrouded in snow, their branches under its weight. My thoughts are drifting far away, and I want to stay here, not to think about anything because tomorrow daylight will return and all this beauty will disappear as if it had never existed.

The road will be cleared where people do not walk. There will be the tracks of dogs walking at dawn. For now, it is all untouched, perfectly smooth, and indescribably beautiful.

My thoughts are restless, but I do not care about them. My eyes are fixed on the street, unpleasant thoughts for later, and nature for now. The street is empty. Everyone is sitting at home, and they do not even suspect what beauty they are missing. Someone sits at the window and observes nature in warmth. It is not cold outside. There is no frost. There is no wind. It is really warm.

Winter is a talented artist. Its brush is smooth and clean. The colours are fresh and bright. Night is the perfect canvas on which to paint a magnificent picture. My anxious thoughts have fled away. What's left is only admiration of nature and its amazing ability to create miracles, creating 'something' from 'nothing' and sometimes this 'something' simply mesmerizes, and sometimes throws you in a shiver and fright. What a pity that tomorrow the magic will melt away, but today, I witnessed a miracle.

*By Pavlo*

## **Home**

My name is Olha. I'm Ukrainian. When I lived in Ukraine I worked in a hospital as an accountant. I also had a small apartment by the sea. I liked to spend time with my family there. My younger daughter Masha liked to play with a kite and swim in the pool and sea. My husband made barbeque, sat on a lounge and drank my cocktails. My older daughter liked to lie down on the lounge and listen to music. It was an amazing time.

*By Olha*



## **Brazil versus Ireland**

I lived in Brazil for a long time. It's a beautiful country but it's a difficult country to live in. It has a lot of corruption and everything is very expensive. The population has a difficult life. Brazil has good people with beautiful smiles and they will always help you. The kids usually read one book every week in Ireland but in Brazil they don't. I think it is very good for kids to read because it opens their minds to new worlds. Ireland is very cold but it's very nice to live here. It's a wonderful country and the Irish are very friendly and offer work to non-Irish people. The sky is very grey but you can hear beautiful bird sounds. I love Ireland.

*By Císsa*

## **My life in Ireland**

I'm Alex and I'm from Ukraine. I'm 48 years old and I'm married. My wife's name is Helen and I have a wonderful daughter who's 25 years old. My daughter's name is Anna. We live in Ireland now. In Ukraine, I was an engineering/technical worker and was the shift supervisor in a metallurgical factory. My job was very interesting but not very easy.

My normal daily routine now is to get up at 7 o'clock. Then I brush my teeth and I shower. I have breakfast at 8 o'clock and then I have English classes. I have lunch at about 1 o'clock. After lunch, I often go to the gym. I have dinner at 6 o'clock. After dinner, I usually read a book and watch TV. At about 10 o'clock I go to bed and fall asleep around midnight. The weather in Ireland is usually rainy and cloudy, sometimes it's sunny. Now in April the weather is OK.

*By Alex*

## **My family**

My name is Svitlana. I am 58 years old. I'm from Ukraine. I have a family. My family is small. Just my husband, my son and I. In Ukraine we had a house and a nice garden with trees and flowers. In Ukraine I worked as a chief accountant in a grain processing factory. My husband and I live in Ennis now in a hotel. My son lives in Dublin, he works in construction. I like to read books, listen to music, travel and cook delicious food. I like Ireland but I want to return to Ukraine.

*By Svitlana*

## **To the rescue**

I am Svitlana. I am Ukrainian. In Ukraine I lived in Kherson. Last summer I came to Ireland with my family to escape the war. I like it in Ireland. The people here are helpful and friendly. They will always come to the rescue. I study English to be able to speak more easily with the people here.

*By Svitlana*

## **Studying English**

My name is Alina. I came with my family from Kherson last summer to Ireland. I go to class to study English, I like it very much. The people here are very nice and they treat us well.

*By Alina*

## **Green grass**

Hello, my name is Svitlana. I'm 57 years old. I'm from Ukraine. I love my homeland very much. I love my house and garden. I came to Ireland a year ago because of the war in Ukraine. Ireland is a beautiful country

and the people here are very nice and friendly. They will always come to the rescue. The weather here is unique, sometimes rain, sometimes sunny. I like that the grass is always green here and that the trees and bushes are blooming and yet I still want to go home.

*By Svitlana*

## **My beautiful Kiev**

I was born in the beautiful country of Ukraine. Kiev is the capital. It's located on the banks of the River Dnieper. It's an old city with modern architecture. Kiev is called the 'Town Garden' because there are many trees, plants and flowers. It's especially beautiful in spring time.

Ukraine got its independence in 1991. I love my country and I'm proud of Ukrainians. It's a difficult time now for Ukraine since the start of the war. Many buildings are destroyed and thousands of soldiers and civilians have died or have been injured. A lot of our territory has also been occupied. I hope one day there will be peace in Ukraine.

*By Vira*

## **Make our future better**

We are now living in a time when people are changing their priorities. In the time of coronavirus, when we were all locked up at home we started to appreciate walks in the fresh air and the ability to go to the store without restrictions. We had learned to live without haste again.

Then wars began in different countries. It showed us our precarious position in the world. Many people are helping those affected. Many other people blame it on the increase in the price of goods. Many people feel anger and this anger can create new conflicts.

I am one of those who sought refuge in a foreign country. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. Now I have a chance to tell the reader about how I want to see the world. Our thoughts and dreams

can create our future and more than one book has already been written about it. I hope that when you read my words you will allow yourself to dream a little and together we can create a better world for our children. Don't you agree?

*By Tetiana*

## **Love for Kharkiv**

My name is Dmytro. I'm from Ukraine, from a very large, beautiful, green city of Kharkiv. Kharkiv can confidently be called one of the greenest cities in Ukraine thanks to its unusual beauty of parks and squares. It is located in the northeast.

Kharkiv is a major scientific and student centre. There are many research and educational institutions here. In the city centre, there is a beautiful garden named after Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko. In spring, when curly maples and chestnuts bloom, apricots and cherries blossom, the grass turns green, and the first dandelions appear, my city becomes especially beautiful. I love my city very much.

*By Dmytro*

## **Ukrainian dumplings**

I really enjoy our traditional Ukrainian dumplings with various fillings such as fried cabbage, potatoes, apples, cherries, served with sour cream and crackling. It's a classic Ukrainian cuisine full of flavour and tradition. Traditionally, it's served on the table in clay dishes. We cook them ourselves, but we also enjoy this dish in Ukrainian restaurants.

*By Dmytro*

## **My two homes**

My name is Amad and I am of Egyptian origin. I moved to Ukraine when I was 24 years old. I have been living in Ukraine for 16 years. Life was beautiful and I worked hard in the clothing industry and as a taxi driver.

I love Ukraine very much but I also love Egypt too. In Ukraine, the weather is cold in the winter but in Egypt, the weather is beautiful all year round. Egypt has beautiful pyramids and I lived close to the Red Sea. Both places have great things to offer and people are very friendly.

Nowadays, I am writing the chapter on my third home, Ireland, but I am only starting my adventure.

*By Amad*

## **Woodwork to treats**

I'm taking a woodworking course at Kilrush, Co. Clare. I have always had a desire to learn this profession, and Ireland gave me this chance. Although it is very difficult for me because of my lack of knowledge of English, but I try. I am very grateful for the teaching staff in the College of FET Kilrush. In parallel with my studies, I started working as a pastry chef, which is a hobby that I love. I love the Irish scone with butter and jam and especially Irish apple tart.

*By Inha*

## **The zoo**

Nowadays, when everything is rapidly changing, being built up, urbanising, monstrous wars are arising on the planet. I want to escape from that madness of the race and spend at least a short time in a place secluded from civilization.

I had the opportunity to take a day trip to the zoo in Cork. That day, even the weather turned positive, after long rains and strong storms we were accompanied by a sunny, calm day. How joyful it is to see animals in the zoo who are in their native element. All the inhabitants of the zoo looked well-groomed and were in a slightly lazy state.

The territory is huge. Natural forests were combined with artificial devices, taking into account the preferences of animals in the form of different designs. We didn't even notice how the time of visiting the zoo flew by. This heavenly place will remain in my memory for a long time.

*By Inna*

## **New life, new story**

I was born and raised in eastern Ukraine, in the city of Lugansk, until 2014. I graduated from school, entered the university as a mechanical engineer of hoisting and transport, road and construction machines and graduated in 1999. After graduation, I did not start working in this speciality, but went into the family business of trading in spare parts. The knowledge I gained at university helped me in business e.g., understanding how the internal combustion engine, transmission and suspension of cars, work.

In 2003, I got married. In 2010, we had our first child (a boy). After that we had two beautiful daughters. All this time I was developing and growing in every sense of the word. In 2012, I began building a house.

After the outbreak of war in February 2014, I was in Lugansk until 17<sup>th</sup> June 2014. On that day, I left my home with my wife and three children. From that moment on I was never at home. After travelling around Ukraine, in May 2015, I settled in Bucha, in the Kiev region. I lived there until March 9<sup>th</sup> 2022. After that evacuation, my family and our friend went to the Chernivtsi region of Ukraine. We went in a convoy of 40 cars. On the way to Novodnistrovsk we made a decision to leave the country, since the fate of Ukraine was unclear. After our departure from Bucha, the city remained under occupation for another month. Bucha is a city

7km from Kyiv. On March 13<sup>th</sup> I left Ukraine with my family and since that moment I have not been home.

I can say that life in Ireland (starting on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2022) is my second experience of building everything from scratch. The method, the image, the language, the relationships, the rules and the new view outside the window - all for the second time. It is an interesting experience. For me this situation did not come as a shock - unlike many Ukrainians, for whom February 2022 became a new stage in life. I am extremely grateful to Ireland for your help, support, understanding of the situation we find ourselves in. In 2014 we lost 7% of our territory. By 2024, we have lost 20% of the territory and a huge number of people. But we believe in a peaceful ending to this story.

In the meantime, I am learning the language, gaining new knowledge and professional skills. I'm in the fourth year of woodwork. My wife is also pursuing an education in accounting (as she has education and experience in this field). The children are busy. They study and try to make friends among their Irish peers. We adapt to the next new living conditions.

*By Denys*

## **Ireland in watercolour**

My name is Elena. I am a professional artist. I studied in Donetsk and in Kharkov, Ukraine. When I first came to Ireland, I was amazed by the beauty of this country, its amazing architecture and of course wonderful, friendly, calm people.

First, I bought an easel in Ireland and then found out where the nearest shop for art supplies is. It is located in Ennis and is called the Art & Craft shop.

Constantly changing weather, wind and humidity create unique landscape views with a fabulous mood. Beautiful clouds dynamically changing every minute, bright green, a unique palette of shades- all this inspires and attracts me.

I managed to do two solo exhibitions in Kilkee, where I live. I felt the lively interest of the Irish in my work. Ireland is so beautiful and diverse, it inspires new canvases. I am planning a series of portraits with the title of the exhibition – ‘Amazing people of Ireland!’ I am happy here.

*By Elena*

## **Me and Ireland**

My name is Yurií and I am from Vinnitsa city, Ukraine. I moved to Ireland because of the war in Ukraine with my family and pet cat. Ireland is a beautiful and wonderful country with unusual weather which can change many times a day. We are really grateful to Ireland and its people for their welcome and hospitality.

My family live in Kilkee now. It's a small resort town which is located in west Clare. It has a beautiful beach, which leads to the Atlantic Ocean. Many tourists visit Kilkee in summer time when it is sunny and warm.

I like to travel. I have visited many cities, towns and regions in Ireland. It was interesting and exciting. I saw many beautiful heritage places in Ireland. Castles, hills, mountains, fields, valleys, lakes, rivers, forests, stones, cliffs, rocks and caves - these are all great and real Ireland's heritage and treasures. Everyone should visit to, see and feel the heritage. Thanks to God for the beautiful and wonderful country of Ireland.

*By Yurií*

## **Woodwork course**

My name is Vitalii and I live in Kilkee. I am from Ukraine. I arrived in Ireland one year ago because my country is at war now. I am a student on the College of FET woodwork course. I try to improve my English and learn more about Irish customs and traditions. I thank my teacher for helping me to learn more. It will help me to adapt to this new country.



I would like to tell you about my native city Kharkiv. It is the second biggest city in Ukraine. The population was more than 1.5 million people. It was a big industrial and cultural city in the eastern part of Ukraine. It was the most beautiful student city in the world, with big parks and wide streets. But now, it is the most dangerous city in my country because it is situated only 30km from the Russian border and is bombed every day.

It is very sad when your hometown is being destroyed day after day. I hope that Ukraine will win this war and we can invite my new Irish friends to visit our beautiful city with its great theatres, monuments, zoo and new reconstructed streets and squares. I hope dreams come true and we will be able to go back home.

*By Vitalii*

## **An unexpected encounter**

This little story is about how big and at the same time, how small our world is. Once, my wife and I had a holiday in the Ukrainian Crimea. We love the outdoors and like to be organised. We planned our trip in advance and one of our plans was to visit the famous mountain peak Ai-Petri, 1234 metres high, which offers a wonderful panoramic view of the Black Sea and the southern coast. To get to the top, there are several routes: motorway, hiking trails or climbing by funicular. It was the latter option that we chose.

Entering the small cabin, with a capacity of about twenty people, we began a leisurely ascent. There was beauty all around, stones, rocks, trees, nature. Everyone took pictures, admired and enjoyed the natural beauty. At the end, of the short journey before everyone stood up and the doors opened in front of us, I noticed a familiar person. It was my classmate, Alona, from university. We were very good friends but I hadn't met Alona in over twenty-one years. We were so happy to meet. I met her husband and she met my wife. We had a nice chat in the cafe with a cup of tea made of mountain herbs. We recalled moments from our lives and laughed. Later, we said goodbye and went our separate ways.

As our meeting showed, our world is very small and there are many good people in it. Always find time to relax, travel, enjoy the unexplored beauty and be kind.

P.S. The probability of such a meeting was one in a billion, so, Alona, if you are reading this, just smile.

*By Serhiu*

## **My funny fishing trip**

Early in the morning, my friend and I went fishing. We were both 12 years old at the time. We had old, primitive gear. We arrived at the pond, surrounded by silence, with other fishermen scattered around us. That day, nobody seemed to have any luck. Suddenly, I felt a bite. I reeled it in and realised it was a big catch. It took me a long time to pull it to the shore, I asked my friend to help me grab the fish. He tried but couldn't hold onto it. The fish thrashed its tail, broke the rod, and escaped. Everyone around us was surprised that we missed such a chance. Despite leaving empty-handed, we were still satisfied with our fishing trip.

*By Yuriu*

## **My life**

My name is Alain. I was born on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1974 in Douala. I am married with two children, a boy and a girl. I am the second child in a family of eight children. I started my primary education at Saint Joseph's School in Douala. I was very bright at school but unfortunately my father passed away when I was 12 years old, so my mother was left to take care of the whole family.

I left school very early after passing my B.E.P.C. (Brevet d'Etude Primaire du second cycle) and I learned to tile floors and walls for several years. In 2023, I decided to travel and by the grace of God, I was lucky enough to get a visa from the United Kingdom (UK). I found myself in Ireland, this

country has been my dream country for a long time. Ireland is a hospitable country, the Irish are very nice, but the weather is very cold.

I regularly go to English language classes to learn how to read and write, I also downloaded apps onto phone to improve my vocabulary and grammar. By the grace of God, I know that things will go from one place to another.

*By Alain*

## **The Duke from the manhole**

In Odessa, Ukraine, there's a funny tradition that locals have with the Duke de Richelieu statue. They joke that if you look at it from the water utility manhole on the left, you'll see something amusing. The Duke's clothing that folds, creates a funny image. It's a playful joke that shows how creative and fun-loving Odessa locals are.

*By Denys*

## **Thoughts from a Ukrainian**

I thank God that there is such a country as Ireland, although I never could have imagined that I would live here. My mother said, 'Learn English, son', but I didn't think I would ever leave Ukraine. However, a change came to our lives. Now, I live here and I'm learning English.

I saw the Atlantic Ocean with my own eyes. I felt the active sun of Ireland. Although the weather here is like a woman's mood. It's very changeable.

My wife draws a lot in pencil. My daughter loves to cook Ukrainian borscht. Like my wife, my hobby is also drawing only I use watercolour paints. I am very grateful to this country.

*By Eduard*

## Suffer little children

In spite of myself I have lived long and very much alive,  
A life so full of dreams to achieve I did strive.  
Seeing no danger but gaps in the wall,  
Never feeling of the dreaded word fall.

But tonight, it's different, my world has changed,  
The beauty of nature has been rearranged.  
Respect we were taught to have for man and beast,  
Instead my friend, we have become the devil's guest.

My mind is racing around the place,  
Trying to escape this troubled rat race.  
Humans we are, locked in a cage,  
Nowhere to turn to in madness and rage.

Trying to sleep now tossing and turning,  
The images I see, oh my heart is burning.  
The tears are flowing within and without,  
Tearing my mind, rolling and tossing about.

In times like this I am really scared,  
Where madness and aggression have really flared.  
What is there to do, pray we are told,  
When gathered together in our cherished fold.

But blast it man, time for praying is over,  
Just pull the plug and hear for clover.  
Our leaders are dressed in well-presented gear,  
But there is a large vacancy from ear to ear.

I look at the news and the little children,  
To try and make sense, I just can't begin.  
If there is a God of whatever race,  
You are falling asleep man, wake up and show your face.

*By Liam*

## **My ambitions and dreams**

I want to live with my family in my own home so that my relatives are happy and we can live in a safe place to realise our plans and dreams. I plan to study and improve my English, find additional work, and relax for the weekends with my family.

The main thing is that I want id for Ukraine to win this war and bring the long-awaited peace, not only to our land, but also to the whole world.

*By Táisiúa*

## **Thank you Ireland**

My name is Svitlana. I am Ukrainian. I was born in the Kirovohrad region in the centre of Ukraine. Now, I live in Ireland and thank the Irish people for helping me.

*By Svítlana*

## **The 1922 medal**

I would like to share my story with you. It relates to my father, Daniel, from, Glenbeigh, Co Kerry. In 1922, my dad, aged 22 years, the eldest of eight children, decided to join An Garda Síochána. This was not an easy decision to make at that time as it was at the end of the civil war.

My dad travelled from Glenbeigh to the train station in Farranfore, Killarney, and then on to Dublin. This part of the journey was not without huge risk. The IRA were on the lookout for young men who intended to serve their country, and they didn't want that. If caught, he would have been questioned and maybe even executed. At Farranfore railway station, a very small railway station, he was advised to hide in the toilet until the train arrived. On boarding the train, he was again advised to lie on the floor until the train was well out of the station.

About 7 months after joining An Garda Síochána, he was promoted to sergeant. Over the years, he was stationed in Clare, Mayo, Garda

Headquarters in Dublin and Limerick. He retired in 1963 as a detective sergeant.

Fast forward to March 7<sup>th</sup> 2024. I was presented with a medal in honour of my dad. This medal was awarded to the families of men who joined the force in 1922. The presentation took place in Killaloe Garda Barracks. I was presented with the medal by a Garda Inspector. Thank you Dad.

*By Aileen*

## **Theatre, love and war**

I really love the theatre. Before the war, I attended performances very often and enjoyed them immensely. Even in wartime, people want to go to the theatre when the siren sounds. It fills you with energy and gives you strength to survive the horrors. When there is no electricity, gas or water, alarms often blare and it's not known where the bomb will land. There is constant fear and uncertainty. People don't know what will happen tomorrow. There is so much grief, death, ruined destinies, fear for your life and the lives of loved ones.

This hell must be stopped altogether. There is always one question in my head. Why? Why can't the world stop those few who want to kill people, burn houses, cars and entrances, have schoolchildren hide in bomb shelters instead of being in bright classrooms at school, while pensioners and disabled people cannot make it to bomb shelters from their apartments? Could the joint efforts of all countries not relieve this grief and misfortune?

This is the theatre of life. Ukrainians are waiting for a happy ending to this tragic drama. End the war! Liberate Ukrainian land so people can safely return to their country! Wishes of victory to Ukraine!

For now, this wonderful country, Ireland, has given us its protection.

*By Olga*

## Ukraine and Ireland

Now, in Ukraine there is a war to preserve national independence and European choice. After the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Ireland became one of the countries who supported Ukraine. Why is that? To understand this, let's look at the history of our countries.

Ireland and Ukraine have striking parallels and little-known common ground. The peoples of our countries fought for their independence for a long time and suffered the bitter experience of genocide, Ireland between 1845-1949 with the great famine (An Gorta Mór) and Ukraine from 1932-1933. This did not subdue the people and they won their independence.

History is made by people and here is some of our shared past. This first is about Constance Markiewicz, from the Gore-Booth family. She married Count Kazimierz Markiewicz. She spent two years with her family in Vinnytsia region of Ukraine. Later the couple moved to Ireland where Constance chose the path of political and military struggle. She headed the Ministry of Labour for three years, becoming the first female minister in Europe.

The second link involves the O'Connor family. Alexander O'Connor left Ireland and went to Russia during the Battle of Borodino. After his retirement, he settled in the Poltava region in Ukraine. He married Oleksandr Storozhenko, who came from an ancient Cossack family. His granddaughter Valeriia O'Connor was elected a member of the Ukrainian central council.

Against the background of these events, Ireland was one of the first to recognise the state of Ukraine on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1991, so the history of Ireland and Ukraine has a lot in common. This caused the longing for independence and national memory and the basis for active assistance from Ireland. For this, the people of Ukraine are sincerely grateful to you. Go raibh maith agat Éire.

*By Oleksandr*

## Three crazy stories

Our class wrote a story together. We each took turns, adding a sentence, trying to use as many words (or a form of the word) from a list. We made up a very crazy story. As homework, everyone was asked to write down the story as they remembered it and add their own ending. When the stories were compared, they were all different, but they were still all crazy.

Here is the list we started with: acrobat, apologize, bottle opener, bridge, bucket, bus driver, camel, cave, chase, computer, cruel, destroy, detective, enjoy, expensive, explain, extraordinary, fat, film star, fish, football pitch, forget, frying pan, glasses, grand piano, greedy, hide, independent, investigate, Japanese, key, kick, mad, miss, monster, muscular, musical, noisy, northern, open, overcoat, pink, pretty, pudding, purple, queen, regret, scream, seventy-five, shirt, show, smash, sneeze, stammer, striped, swan, swim, telescope, unhappy, violinist, waterfall, wheel and whistle.

Here are three of our stories.

*By Edwin, Anthony and Nymul*

### My crazy story

It was a Saturday morning when the bus driver drove us to the beach. He was wearing a purple shirt and sunglasses. After driving for seventy-five minutes we realised that we forgot to take our computer. We explained this to the bus driver and asked him to go back to collect our computer. He was very upset, but we apologised to him.

After travelling for an hour, we heard an extraordinary noisy voice in front of us. The bus bumped and smashed into a film star's car. It was a very expensive Japanese car. The film star reported the matter to the detectives who came to the football pitch to investigate how it happened.



By the side of the football pitch there was a fat pretty queen wearing pink trousers, carrying a key and a bottle opener in her hands. This was the woman who witnessed everything there. She explained what she saw to the detectives and the detectives opened a case against the bus driver. It was a terrible journey. Nobody enjoyed this trip and everyone regretted going there.

*By Dew*

## **My crazy story**

Today, I went to Spanish Point. There, I saw a fat girl who was wearing a purple dress and was seated on a bench on the beach. Her husband, who is Japanese, sat beside her. They have a baby and she was wearing a pink dress.

After that, I saw the queen with a camel in the field and she was wearing a royal overcoat. She was screaming and looked unhappy. Her bodyguard investigated the problem. He appointed a film star, a violinist and a grand pianist for a show that was organized for their queen. The show was held in a football pitch beside a waterfall.

The show started the moment a bus driver came to the field with his bus. After that very moment, the queen's bodyguard chased a man. The man fell in a river, which was beside the field. He was swimming there and had no regret. The man was greedy and he wanted to destroy the queen's kingdom for money. He enjoyed his work very much. He lived in the northern side of his country and had a muscular body.

Finally, a detective was assigned to catch the culprit. The man hid himself in a cave, but the detective was very clever and found him. Then the queen charged him and put him in prison.

*By Ruman*

## **My crazy story**

It was a sunny morning and on my way to Spanish Point I saw a pretty girl. She was extraordinary, she was wearing a purple shirt but she was unhappy because there was a noise coming out from the roadside. She screamed because she saw a camel, so I chased the camel and destroyed one of its legs. I looked through my telescope and found a big fish on the shore. I took it. On my way home I passed another road, came across a bridge and my key fell in the water. When I got home, I went into the kitchen and put the frying pan on the fire and used the big fish for a meal.

The next day, a Japanese police detective wearing a beautiful pink uniform with a stripe on it and with the number seventy-five written on the back, came and informed me that an investigation was going on about the camel's broken leg. I quickly escaped into the bush and hid myself. In the bush, I came across a waterfall and I saw a swan. 'The swan swims about an hour everyday', said one man in the area. I heard a musical sound near me at the waterfall and found out that there was a muscular violinist with a queen who was wearing an overcoat. The queen blew a whistle for everyone to be alert that there was a cruel monster around.

I ran out from the waterfall and met a bus driver. He opened the bus for me and I sat in the bus. On my way on the bus, I did not know where the bus was going. Finally, we reached a bus station where there was a football pitch and I alighted there. On the pitch I saw a group of acrobats training. I went closer and saw another group rehearsing an Independence Day parade. I stood there for about an hour and saw a lady in a corner dancing like a mad person so I approached her and asked her her name. She said her name was, 'Miss World'.

Suddenly, I saw a muscular man holding a bucket full of rice pudding and a bag. He asked me to enjoy the pudding with him. After that, the man kicked me down and took my phone out of my pocket and smashed it. He opened his bag and pulled out a computer and showed me the wounded camel.

I found out that he was one of the detectives and I became ashamed and regretful and started talking with a stammer and I apologised. The detective laughed and sneezed and gave me an expensive car and a wheelchair to wash as my punishment.

*By Anthony*

## **Magic potion**

If I could make a magic potion, I would first cure all the sick people in the world in a second. I would stop any dangerous people with the magic medicine and prevent them from doing evil things.

I would not use it to commit any crime. You must not use the magic potion for any selfish purpose. I would always keep the magic potion in my pocket and use it when needed.

To make a real magic potion I think I would need chili, garlic, cinnamon, ginger, four spiders, a lotus flower from every country and some dust from the sun. Lotus flowers are symbols of peace. I believe we can conquer everything with magic, medicine, love and compassion.

*By Thuihlapru*

## **To love myself**

It is important to love myself  
To get out and keep going  
Make the best of life

It is OK to love myself  
To make life easy for myself  
Enjoy myself in this life as much as I can

*By Tony*

## **Irish festival**

Speaking about Irish culture, it's necessary to talk about holidays and festivals. The Fleadh Nua is a traditional music festival that takes place every year at the end of May in Ennis. It is organised by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. There are 10 days of music celebrations for the whole family.

Since the first Fleadh Nua took place in Ennis, Co. Clare in 1974, the festival has grown. It becomes more popular every year. The concept of bringing together concerts, music, song and dancing workshops, street entertainment, and much more was innovative in its time. However, it's still a winning formula today as evidenced by the thousands of visitors who flock to the festival every May for a week of unsurpassed traditional entertainment.

Its fifty-year anniversary will take place in Ennis 2024. Everyone can enjoy different activities: from concerts and street performances to dancing workshops and Irish dancing competitions. Everyone who visits the Fleadh Nua will be amazed at the great talent of the performers and the wonderful sounds of the traditional Irish music. It's definitely worth seeing.

*By Olena*

## **Life between Ukraine and Ireland**

My name is Vitalii. I am from Ukraine, from the big city of Kyiv. It is the capital of Ukraine. In Ukraine, I worked as an internet connection engineer. I really liked this work, thanks to it, I visited the roofs of many buildings and saw the views of the city from interesting places. I currently live in Ireland in the small town of Miltown Malbay with my wife and three daughters. What I like most about Ireland is the friendliness of the Irish people and the very beautiful scenery.

I have various hobbies, but I especially like playing the guitar and listening to music. Most of all now I like to study English. I believe that living in a country, you need to know the culture of that country, and

this is impossible without knowing the language. Of course, I want to find a great job and adapt to Irish society, so I attend English classes three times a week. Twice a week in Miltown Malbay and once a week in Lisdoonvarna. I hope that I will be able to learn English to a good level, and like every person, I believe in a good future.

*By Vitaliú*

## **Irish traditions**

I really like the Irish tradition of a large family and their respectful and honourable attitude towards parents. In modern Irish families there are often 5-8 children and families treat parents and grandparents with respect and love. When the whole family gathers for family holidays such as Christmas, 4 generations of a family gather at the festive table. A huge amount of delicious dishes are prepared. A large table is set. In this way Ireland is very similar to Ukraine. We also gathered at my grandmother's house. More than 15 people gathered for such family holidays. This was 4 generations of our family. It was heartfelt and warm.

*By Yurri*

## **Ireland**

Ireland, known as the Emerald Isle, is surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic and is distinguished by its lush green landscape. This island nation is divided into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the latter being part of the United Kingdom. Ireland is rich in cultural traditions, especially in music, literature, and language. The Gaelic language is still alive in some rural areas.

The Irish economy is largely dependent on agriculture, with exports of food, livestock, and dairy products. Tourism also plays an important role, attracting visitors with its scenic landscapes, ancient castles, and traditional pubs.

Among the famous attractions are the Cliffs of Moher, which rise up to 214 meters and stretch for 8 kilometers along the coast. They are home to a unique colony of seabirds. The Ring of Kerry is a popular tourist route that runs along the coastline of the Iveragh Peninsula. The archaeological complex of Brú na Bóinne, which includes the tombs of Newgrange, Dowth, and Knowth, built about 5,000 years ago, also attracts many tourists.

Ireland is a country with a rich heritage, friendly people, and magnificent landscapes, making it the perfect place for those looking for a peaceful retreat or adventure.

*By Aíder*

## **People**

I am sure that a person must be developed. It is education and a wide range of interests that shape our personality. There is nothing wrong with a person being advanced in one area of expertise. Everyone chooses their own path according to their spirit and the outer world.

Our life is woven from hours, minutes and seconds. It is truly a priceless wealth but we do not always distribute our time correctly and evenly. Free time for a person should be a holiday for the soul, which means any hobbies are an additional meaning to life.

*By Alona*

## **What makes you laugh**

What is the best thing that you can share with your friend? Obviously, it's a laugh. Remember, when you laugh loudly, the person next to you starts doing the same. It's contagious. It's the healthiest virus I can imagine. Isn't it?

Let's talk about what can make you laugh. The first things that come to mind are jokes. Even a simple funny story could make you laugh or a sudden hilarious situation. Who knows? What about me?

Personally, I like watching funny videos, especially if they are about animals. My mood always improves when I see a dog doing something unusual or a horse playing with a big ball. So many videos exist on the internet, you can watch them every day. Actually, this leisure time could be better if you share these moments with someone who shares your sense of humour. It might be a best friend or somebody from your family. I always send the funniest video to my friends. It's a great way to 'infect' someone with laughter.

It's a fact that laughing extends our lives. When we laugh, our brain produces special happiness hormones - oxytocin, endorphin, dopamine, serotonin etc, that affect our physical and mental health. I can conclude that laughing is important for our lives. Moreover, considering its quality, it's the cheapest treatment ever!

*By Anastasiia*

## **The power of reading for personal growth**

Reading is essential for personal growth. Books introduce us to new ideas, cultures and emotions. Fiction helps us understand different people's lives and emotional experiences. Non-fiction tells us about the world, from science to history. Poetry touches our hearts with its beauty and emotion.

When we read different genres, we train our brains in different ways. Scientific literature forces us to think critically and learn new things. Poetry enriches our language skills and emotional understanding. Fiction sparks creativity and empathy. When a person reads fiction novels, as many areas of brain activity as possible are activated. This effect is possibly due to the combination of critical thinking and emotional intelligence (a person empathizes with the characters).

For me, reading is more than just a hobby. It's a way to expand my consciousness and become a better person. I also experience different situations based on the experience of others.

*By Anna*

## **The meeting**

This is a story about a boy and a teacher who meet after 25 years. At first it was a normal conversation. How are you? How is your family? etc.

Finally, the teacher asked, 'What profession did you choose after graduation?' The boy answered, 'I am a teacher. Like you, I chose to be a teacher'.

'That is interesting', answered the teacher. 'Why did you decide to become a teacher? What inspired you?'

'You inspired me', answered the boy.

'Really? Why's that? Can you tell me the story?' asked the teacher.

When I was in the second grade, our classmate's parents bought him an expensive watch. I stole this watch from him. When you heard this and entered the class, you asked everyone one by one, but you did not find the thief.

Then you put us all facing the wall and checked us one by one. When you came to me you found the stolen watch in my pocket. I was very worried and thought that was the end of it, but to my surprise you continued to check the others. I thought you would punish me for that, but you didn't say anything to me. This was the inspiration that pushed me to become a teacher. 'Really? I am very happy. I didn't know that', said the teacher.

'But, how did you not know? You found a watch in my pocket'.

'Yes, but my eyes were closed'.

*By Guramí*



## **The duck incident**

It was a sunny April afternoon when I was returning home from shopping. The weather was wonderful. There was no rain, which is not typical for this place. I enjoyed spring. Suddenly, coming around the bend, right on the pavement, I saw a duck with ducklings walking right in front of me. I was surprised, how could a duck end up in the town centre among cars and people, and also with such tiny ducklings? Apparently, she laid eggs nearby, hatched them and the chicks had just been born. Mother duck intuitively led them to the river.

It was a very nice sight. People stopped to admire and take photos. They did not understand that their persistent attention was very frightening and stressful for the birds. Besides, there was still danger from crows above who were circling above the ducklings, trying to steal some of them. The duck hissed at them, saving her ducklings.

They moved forward and crossed the road, risking getting hit by the wheels of a car. That's why I had to change my route, become their guard and accompany them all the way to the river.

I waved my hands to the drivers so that they would drive more carefully. I explained with gestures to people to be quiet so as not to scare the birds. We reached the place where the ducks were able to enter the river. They were very very happy. The difficult and dangerous path was behind them.

I was happy too, and so were the people who were watching. My soul felt light and joyful. The mission was accomplished!

*By Lúbov*

## **Differences between Ireland and Ukraine**

You will be pleased to hear that I feel there are very big differences between life in Ireland and life in Ukraine. Some things impress me, some upset me.

I wanted to tell you that I've compared people, weather, transport, medicine and much more. People here are friendlier than in Ukraine. They smile more and enjoy small talk, regularly enquiring about people's feelings. I like the weather because there is no snow here in winter.

As for public transport, there are no problems with this in Ukraine. Different types of transport travel every 5-15 minutes in the cities of Ukraine and people have the opportunity to get to work every day using public transport.

Medicine in Ireland unpleasantly surprised me. In Ukraine, medicine is free. You can see any doctor in a short time, sometimes on the same day. If a person feels unwell, you can call an ambulance for free. There they will give you a cardiogram, an injection, or take you to the hospital, if it's necessary. There is an option - call an ambulance and ask which hospital you can go to immediately to get help. No matter how bad a person feels, he will be hospitalized in any case and will be helped.

Have you had a similar experience living in another country? If so, what surprising differences have you noticed?

*By Olena*

## **My job**

I love my job. I love it when people enjoy my food. They especially like Chicken Kiev. I made them at home, in Ukraine. I also make pancakes. They are thin and sweet. The dough is very tasty, with a lot of eggs.

The kitchen where I work is large, bright and easy to use with modern equipment. We don't need anything. It has everything you need to work with pleasure. Very friendly and open people work there. At first, I was scared because I didn't know English. They understand this and make sure that I don't feel this fear. They are very kind and helpful. I am very grateful to them. I've found my home here.

*By Olena*

## **E-books**

It is often questioned if e-books are suitable for studying material at school nowadays. At first glance, the idea to make the process easier with the help of up-to-date tools can be great. Yet, the opinions are generally conflicting.

On the one hand, using electronic devices is a common way of looking for information. Children are used to surfing the net and handling modern technologies, thus they would be in a natural ambiance during the lessons. Moreover, there would be an opportunity to take with you only one gadget that has plenty of digital books inside. It is extremely convenient, particularly for pupils.

On the other hand, a screen of any device could harm our vision and steals the focus of attention. Due to the fact that kids and teens spend the majority of their spare time using gadgets, it would not be appropriate to use them at school due to the risk of addiction. You know perfectly well that devices, including e-books, are forbidden in class in a big number of schools. They are likely to want paper books to be unforgettable in students' lives and keep the classical way of reading alive.

To sum up, using electronic books has its pros and cons, so it is hard to say definitively whether modern technologies are good or not for school studying.

*By Veronika*

## **The Internet as a homework tool**

In our modern society and with 24-hour access to the Internet, it is not surprising that students are using it as a homework tool. They have an opportunity to find out about everything they need and work it out more quickly and efficiently.

There is no doubt that using the Internet as a homework tool has its advantages. First, it is a quick way to find any kind of information. Hence,

it saves time, and the students have more spare time for other activities. Second, the Internet provides a great number and variety of sources which they can use according to their interests and tastes.

However, there are some drawbacks to using the Internet during preparing homework. A lot of students just copy the information without thinking thoroughly over the topic. Moreover, some websites contain inaccurate data which is not checked by students. In addition, more and more children don't use their writing skills, which is bad for their brain development.

To sum up, although the Internet is a great tool for making students' learning more effective, they should be careful and considerate while using it.

*By Yuliya*

## **My baby goose**

This story happened in the summer. I was 6 years old. My family and I went to Vinnitsa to visit my great-grandmother. My great-grandmother had geese and she gave me a baby goose.

I loved him very much and played with him often. The next day my goose disappeared. Before that, I had played with the neighbour's children. I realised that they had stolen my goose and my childish heart was filled with anger.

I went to these neighbours for tea and saw my goose. It was smaller than the others, so I knew it was him. When no one saw me, I grabbed my goose and ran home. I saved my child.

This goose grew up and lived a very happy life.

*By Yulya*

## **My story**

My name is Nataliia. I am from the beautiful city Kherson which is located in the south of Ukraine. We have a very good climate for growing vegetables and fruit. Kherson is famous for both watermelons and tomatoes. I felt comfortable and calm in Ukraine but on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 I woke up to shell explosions and realized that trouble had come to my house. The war had begun. On the first day of the war, Russia occupied my city. I was forced to leave Ukraine.

That's how I ended up in Ireland where I was welcomed. Irish people are very kind. I'm very grateful to the leadership of this country and its people. When I return to Ukraine I will remember this country and the wonderful people with their warm hearts. God bless the Irish people for their kindness.

*By Nataliia*

## **My homeland Ukraine**

I love my homeland Ukraine very much. I would never have left it if not for the war. Ukraine is very beautiful. In winter we have deep snow. In spring everything blooms and smells lovely. In summer it is warm, all the vegetables and fruits ripen. We relax at the sea, swim and go sunbathing. In autumn leaves turn yellow and fall. It's beautiful in its own way. I flew to Ireland in June 2023. I really liked this beautiful and ever-green country, its wonderful people who are nice and friendly. Irish people will always listen and come to the rescue if needed. Thank you for your attention and warm welcome.

*By Svitlana*

## **My trip to the Cliffs of Moher**

I went to the cliffs on Saturday and it is a beautiful place. I saw the sea and the very beautiful landscape. It was a sunny day so it was very busy there. I was it my family and we enjoyed it very much. When we got back home we were so tired but we were so happy about the trip.

*By Anna*

## **My weekend**

On Saturday, I met my friends and played soccer at the Fair Green in Ennis. After, we went to town and we went to the park again and talked a lot. Then we went to McDonalds and I came back to my house.

On Sunday, I went to my friend's house and we went to the lake and met Laura at the lake. We went swimming and when Laura went back to her house, me and my friends went to town and we met other friends. We all went to the park to play soccer. After that, I met my girlfriend and played soccer with her. Then I went back home.

*By Gabriel*

## **My weekend**

On Saturday, I met my friends in town. We walked around town and after we went to the park and played soccer and volleyball. We talked a lot and listened to music. After that, we went to McDonalds and ate delicious hamburgers. After eating we went to the park again and listened to more music and talked about everything. After that, I came home and ate again.

On Sunday, I woke up very late and I didn't have much time. The weather was very sunny. I went to the lake and met some friends there. We played soccer and I watched some friends swimming in the lake. After that, I went to Supermacs with my mom and we went home.

The weather was really good and sunny on both days. My weekend was really lovely.

*By Laura*

## **How I started running**

In October 2014, a few months after my wife died, my daughter saw a poster for a men's 'Couch to 5k' starting in Gort. I went to up to the community centre on the first night. There was a small group of four of us but later we grew to a bigger group of twelve. We did six weeks of training with a coach. We did walking and running. After the six weeks, we had a 5k run in Peterswell. We were all to stay together but I didn't. I ran ahead. I just wanted to get going. I thought I'd get in trouble for not staying with the group. I finished before them.

My coach was delighted with me and how I got on. Then we did another few 5ks and I did a 10k on my own after a few weeks. In March 2015, I did my first half marathon in Kinvara in 1hr 58mins. Then I set my sights on the Dublin Marathon later that year. I started training for Dublin. I joined the South Galway Running Club to train for the Dublin Marathon. We trained three days a week. We did long runs on Saturdays. I really enjoyed it.

The marathon was a great experience. I was never in Dublin before that in my life. There was great support along the route. My daughter and granddaughter came up to support me. I finished in 4hr 11 mins. I got the bug for running then. I wanted to do more.

Running is very good for my mental health. You meet lots of nice people and we all want to finish and get home safely. That's the most important thing. It doesn't matter about time. It's a major achievement to do a marathon. Now, I've 40 marathons done and I've taken up swimming lessons. It's great to be fit.

*By Noel*

## **My baptism**

The best day of my life was when I got baptized. I was 17. My baptism happened in Accra in Ghana. I was one of a big group of people, men and women, who came to be baptised that day. There were five pastors and some helpers. Each pastor baptised 10 people in the sea. We wore white clothes. Some of my family came to see me being baptised. It was a happy day for me because I had waited a long time for it. As a child, my mother told me, when you are baptised you become a new person in Christ. When Christ is with you, you will live a better life.

After my baptism, I went back home and my mom prepared a special dinner to celebrate with all the family. Now, after baptism and through the teachings of my church, it has changed my life and the lives of my friends, to be good people, to do good things and to love everybody.

*By Simon*

## **My missed flight**

I got the bus in Ennis. I went to Dublin airport. I got the plane to Germany and another plane to Ethiopia.

I had a lovely holiday in Ethiopia. I visited my family and friends. I saw my mom. I gave my phone to my mom when I was leaving. I flew back to London but I had missed my flight to Dublin.

I had to sleep on a chair in London airport for one night. I had a little English, no money, no phone but it was no problem! The next day people helped me to get a new flight to Dublin. I got the bus back to Ennis. My sister was very worried in Ennis when I didn't come. She was very happy to see me.

*By Fehima*



## **Our similarities - Ukraine and Ireland**

I would like to draw attention to the similarities between our cultures, traditions and lifestyles, and even the components of different beliefs. In Ukraine a large percentage of people despite their Christianity continue to celebrate many pagan holidays. For example, winter and summer equinoxes, harvest festival, the beginning of spring and thunderstorms.

We are also a very family-oriented people and our traditions require us to gather the family around the table during major religious, historical holidays or family events. In their free time or on holidays Ukrainians like to have picnics, sing songs and dance a lot. We have many folk songs that every child knows from childhood as well as traditional Ukrainian dances. Our songs glorify the heroic history of our people, the beautiful nature of our native land, and our love for our homeland. I see and feel the same thing here in Ireland. Studying the history, traditions and lifestyle of the Irish people, visiting your festivals and even just seeing people relaxing in pubs or outdoors, I realise that we are very similar to each other.

Perhaps Ukrainians do not immediately let new people into our lives but we are just as friendly. We know how to smile and we love to hug when we meet. Thanks to the support of the Irish people, the government and the local community in Kilkee, I feel the desire to move on and do better for my country in the future.

*By Alla*

## **Ennis**

Ennis, my new home in Ireland, is a welcoming town located in County Clare. Surrounded by verdant hills and the Fergus River, the old part of town captivates with its cobblestone streets and historic buildings. Here, local markets offer fresh produce and charming handicrafts.

One of the things I most appreciate about Ennis is the music. Live music sessions in pubs are a tradition, where local musicians play traditional Irish tunes. Additionally, we have the grand music festival called the

Fleadh Cheoil, which brings everyone together to celebrate music and dance.

For nature lovers, Ennis is a paradise. We're close to the famous Cliffs of Moher, which offer breath-taking views of the ocean and are perfect for a day trip.

The best part of Ennis is the people. They are incredibly friendly and always willing to help. Living here is like being part of a big family. It's a special place that I'm fortunate to call home, even as a Brazilian.

*By Valéria*

## **The art class**

On Wednesday morning I dust down my chalk clothes and head to art class. I go into the room with the big windows, with light bouncing all around as I sit at my desk. A bit of happy banter chases around the room and some laughter follows. We are very happy.

I start snipping away with my scissors cutting out shapes and sizes to create a new picture called collage. Another Wednesday comes, I chalk with lots of colours and create a masterpiece. Wow!

Oh, those long slender colour pencils running away all over the page making a splash of magic, I think I'm great.

Yet another Wednesday, we hear about Pablo Picasso, Georgia O'Keeffe, William Turner, etc. We even went up the country to see W. Turners famous works of art - nice.

Most artists live long lives. It must be good for body and soul to be an artist. I picked the right hobby.

Thank you Joan, for the knowledge I have soaked up and the squiggles I have penned to paper.

*By Angela*

## **My woodturning class**

My name is Anthony and I attended a woodturning course in the College of FET, Kilrush. My tutor's name was PJ and he was very helpful. He showed me how to use the machinery and the parting tool to shape the wood. I made a candleholder. I would like to thank Linda for helping me get on the course. I really enjoyed it and I hope to do more courses in the future.

*By Anthony*

## **My story**

I arrived in Ireland in November 2023 from Ukraine. I live in Kilrush now. I like the people in Kilrush. They are friendly. The town is small but it has wonderful places to relax and walk. I like to go to the park and listen to the birds singing along the bank of the Shannon river. I like studying English classes in college. Here I have met new people.

*By Olga*

## **Odessa**

I live in the beautiful city of Odessa. It is also called 'the Pearl of the Sea', as the city is located on the shores of the Black Sea. It is a touristy city so it is very famous. It is home to many nationalities. Odessa has very beautiful architecture. Odessa is humour and romance and when you visit Odessa you won't want to leave. Sometimes in the seaport you can see cruise liners as tall as five storey houses, a vivid confirmation that Odessa is known beyond its borders.

*By Yelena*

## **To a stranger**

Hitting the path,  
mind the curly grass,  
Under your feet,  
Bending it, say:  
'Forgive me.'

Tearing the waves  
By your boat, which saves  
You from the Death,  
Ask the Ocean: 'Bless  
And forgive me!'

Clenching your fist,  
When you meet a beast  
With the haunted eyes,  
Mind your common skies.  
Say: 'Forgive me!'

Felling the Oak,  
Mind the dewfall-hawk  
And its broken nest.  
Being here a guest,  
Say: "Forgive me."

Running from love,  
Standing high above  
Our weightless cloud,  
Mind the earth is round!  
When you're found  
At home, say: 'Forgive me.'

*By María*

## **A small country with a big heart**

I am from Ukraine. By fate, I live in Ireland. I like this small country of Ireland very much. Kind and sympathetic people live here. They always smile, are in no hurry, work hard and have fun on vacation. In Ireland, it

often rains and there is a strong wind. I like rain and rainbows. In Ireland, you can see full rainbows and they are often double rainbows.

In Ukraine, the summer is very hot and there is no rain. In Ireland, the summer is cool. I like the summer in Ireland. I like to swim in the cold ocean and to rest with my children on the beach. I like Irish music and dancing. I love Irish coffee, ice cream and spicy food. I love travelling around Ireland, visiting museums, castles, parks and going to the cliffs. It is a very beautiful and evergreen country. I want to say thank you to this small country with a big heart and to the Irish people for their kindness and participation.

*By Olena*

## **My life in Ireland**

War is a painful test, an indicator of humanity, friendship and support. A year and a half after the beginning of the war in Ukraine I decided to leave my native country. I left behind my beloved home, close people, friends and pets. Of course, we knew about Ireland before the war. We knew that there was an emerald country with magnificent landscapes, cosy houses and friendly, kind people. I think this knowledge influenced the choice of the country we wanted to ask for protection. The longer we stay here the clearer we realise that the choice was very right.

In Dublin and here in Kilkee, we were warmly welcomed and understood. We got a chance to get away from sleepless nights, explosions and other nightmares of war. This is a sign of true friendship and the kindness of Ireland and the Irish to Ukraine and Ukrainians, to provide housing to protect us, to give the opportunity to study and work. This is wealth.

The local nature and sights turned out to be really healing for soul and body. I do not know how my life will turn out in the future but I know for sure that I will consider Ireland my second home. The country that extended its helping hands in such a terrible time for Ukraine and for me.

*By Hanna*

## **My city, Kharkov**

I came to Ireland from Ukraine two months ago. I lived in the beautiful city of Kharkov until the war began. The war is destroying our city, which had many parks, squares and entertainment centres. Despite this, the residents of the city are trying to restore the city's destroyed buildings and houses. In the spring, our city blooms with a lot of sakura, magnolias and different flowers. I really hope that the war will end soon and our beautiful city will live its former life and maybe even better.

*By Lapina*

## **Ireland**

I like Ireland because it is very beautiful and attractive. The people here are very nice, friendly and benevolent. If you look at it from a height it is like a puzzle consisting of many pieces of land. During the short period of my stay in Ireland, I have fallen in love with this country.

*By Oksana*

## **The beauty of Kilkee**

My name is Tatyana. I came from Ukraine in 2023. Kilkee is a charming Irish town by the ocean. Kilkee has many hotels, mansions, cafes, pubs, restaurants. There are small cottages along the coast for vacationers. During the summer, the population increases due to the large number of tourists. I am very grateful to enjoy this natural beauty, the expanse of the bay of rocks and the mesmerizing whisper of the crashing waves. I will always remember this wonderful town.

*By Tetiana*

## **Irish people**

My name is Hanna. I am from Ukraine. When I came to Ireland the first thing I encountered was that the Irish are amazingly hospitable, cheerful and genuinely love their country. Ireland welcomes everyone as its own. The scenery here is incredibly beautiful. All residents of Irish cities always say hello when you meet. The people of Ireland are very fond of all kinds of holidays and festivals, which are held here in huge numbers. Thank you very much for your hospitality.

*By Hanna*

## **I like Ireland**

I arrived in Ireland two months ago. I fell in love with the beauty of this country, its very beautiful nature, hills, rocks and ocean. The ocean fascinates me. I can't get enough of it. It is different every day. I really hope that I can learn the language, find a good job and stay in this country.

*By Lapin*

## **Kilkee**

I want to tell you about Kilkee. This is a beautiful, quiet and cosy village. Very nice, polite and kind people live there. They are always ready to support and give advice. There are amazing views of the wild ocean and cliffs. There is a hiking trail along the coast. There is a beach. Every evening my friends and I go to 'watch a movie', 'Sea and Sunset'. This is what we call the view in front of us when we sit on a bench on the beach. Kilkee is a wonderful place. You should definitely come here.

*By Larysa*

## **My journey to Ireland**

I came from Ukraine. Ireland greeted us very well. We were settled in Kilkee. The living conditions are very good. Friendly and responsive people try to understand us. It's difficult to adapt without knowing the language. I take English courses. We have a good teacher who teaches us in an accessible way. I am very grateful to the state of Ireland for the care and support for Ukrainians.

*By Liliia*

## **Living by the ocean**

I have long dreamed of living with my family by the ocean, learning English from native speakers, exploring other cultures, traditions, cuisines and visiting new countries. And voila! We are in Ireland, on the shores of the Atlantic.

My daughter can practice her favourite hobby, surfing. There are several surf camps nearby, magnificent nature, and wonderful and interesting people who treat us like family. Everything we wanted and dreamed about has come through. This could have been the best time in our life, if not for the circumstances that unexpectedly threw us here and didn't allow us to enjoy all the beauty and opportunities of this region – the war in our homeland. Hence, the conclusion, your dreams must be worked out to the smallest details and circumstances because they can always come true even in the most unexpected ways.

*By Iryna*

## **Dnipro city**

Dnipro is a city in Ukraine. It lies on both banks of the Dnipro River. Dnipro is the administrative centre of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Dnipro District and Dnipro Urban Community. The city is the fourth most populous in Ukraine. Dnipro has a large scientific research and innovation



centre. Dnipro is known as the space capital of Ukraine. Dnipro has the longest embankment in Europe. It is called the Dnieper embankment and is more than 30km in length. In modern Ukraine, as throughout its previous history, Dnipro remains one of its most prominent political, scientific and cultural centres. Dnipro has a population of almost 1.5 million people.

*By Vika*

### **Listening to your inner voice**

When people hear good things about you, they remain silent. When they hear bad things about you, they spread them like wild fire, but when they hear nothing about you, they make things up.

It's important to remember that you have no control over what others say or how they perceive you. Instead of worrying about what others think, concentrate on becoming the absolute best version of yourself and let your actions speak for themselves.

*By Ammy*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is spring, just because winter is over and new life appears.

*By Monica*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is autumn. The colours all change to golden, and it cools down and feels mystical.

*By Michelle*

## Attitude

I believe staying positive when facing life's changing challenges is vitally important. Through my art and writing I have learned to live with the experience of cancer. This poem is from a collection of poems which is in the process of being published. I hope you will find some solace in this poem if you too are in need of reassurance in your everyday life.

Attitude, attitude  
What to make of attitude  
If I get it right  
It can lead to such delight

When I get the news  
And it is a bad review  
I'll bolster up my confidence  
And tell myself I'll conquer it

A picture in my head  
Of a hammer in my hand  
As I beat the cancer cells  
Till everything goes well

Then have a cosy shower  
And get dressed to feel the power  
While I live for just today  
And tomorrow's on its way

So beat the drum for fun  
Cause attitude is cool  
Attitude, attitude  
I just need some attitude.

*By Marian*

## Swimming

I really love swimming. For as long as I can remember, I have always liked water. Since childhood, I went to the pool for swimming lessons and I also like to dive. It's a long dive, hold your breath and swim underwater. If the water is clean, then you can also look at the underwater world.

One day, my friends and I went to a lake not far from my hometown. It was a summer evening. There weren't many people on the beach or in the water. I dived into the water with great pleasure. I swam underwater until something hit me on the head. I felt the blow and did not immediately surface. I swam a little further underwater and surfaced. Two women were swimming not far from me, and one was laughing with slight notes of panic, her eyes were frightened. She repeated, looking at me: 'Thank God, it was a man!' Then I realized what a sudden blow from the bottom of a dark lake meant to her, when there was no one around for 30 meters.

*By Oleksiú*

## Black Swan

In old Ireland, on the shore of a mysterious lake, there lived a solitary black swan. His feathers were a deep shade of black, as if they held the secrets of the night. The swan spent his days gliding across the water, observing the fish and algae. He was alone, yet not lonely, for in his heart, he harboured hope for something greater than the mundane existence he knew.

One day, as the sun began to dip below the horizon, the black swan heard an unusual sound. He raised his head and saw another black swan hovering over the lake. It was a female, her feathers just as dark as his, and her eyes held a mysterious spark.

Approaching her, they struck up a conversation. The female shared tales of her wanderings and how she had travelled across seas and oceans, seeking this very lake. She too was alone and yearning for something more.

The black swans spent their days together. They swam across the lake, discussing the world and its mysteries. Their feathers merged as one, symbolizing the union of two souls. Their love ran deep, like the black waters of the lake.

Curiously, they noticed changes in the lake. The water grew more chaotic, winds carried new scents, and plants sprouted and withered. The black swan pondered the connection between this process and entropy - the law stating that in a closed system, everything tends toward greater disorder.

One day, as they glided across the lake, the male swan said, 'We are like entropy. Our love, our merging - it alters our surroundings. We create new possibilities, new futures. We are black swans born from chaos, yet capable of giving it meaning.'

The female smiled, touching his wing. 'Yes, we are black swans, and our love is our strength. Let us continue changing this world together.'

*By Viktor*

## **Repentance**

In the beginning of the world  
Our Father had a word  
He created everything  
For eternal life but we sin

I repent, my Lord forgive  
You know better how I live  
I believe that You exist  
On the distance of my breath

Make my clothing pure again  
I am Your servant till the end  
Hold my hand and never leave  
I repent, my Lord, forgive

*By Alexandr*

## Varenyky

My parents and I lived in the south of Ukraine and we had a tradition at home - on Sunday we cooked dumplings (Ukrainian varenyky) all together, but not typical dumplings. These are made with raw potato filling.

### Ingredients:

1. All-purpose flour - 4 glasses
2. A pinch of salt
3. Hot water - 400ml
4. Sunflower oil - 2 tablespoons.

### For the filling:

1. Potatoes - 3 big ones
2. An onion
3. Salt and pepper to taste
4. Bacon - 100g

### Method:

1. Put the flour into a bowl and add the sunflower oil to it.
2. Mix together hot water and salt in a separate bowl.
3. Add hot water to the flour and knead the dough, first with a spoon and then with your hands until you get a soft, elastic dough that is a little sticky when touching it.

### Preparing the filling:

1. Peel the potatoes and grate them. Then squeeze out the juice.
2. Peel the onion and chop it.
3. Cut the bacon into small cubes.
4. Mix the grated potatoes, chopped onion, bacon, salt and pepper.

Once the dough has rested, it will be even softer. It will be easier to work with and it should not stick to your hands. However, it may stick a little to the table. Therefore, it is better to sprinkle the table with some flour.

Then cut off half of the dough and roll it out until it's very thin, creating circles. The thickness of the dough should be approximately 1-2mm. Next, in the centre of each circle, put a teaspoon of the filling. Don't

add too much of it, otherwise it will be difficult to close and seal the dumplings.

Now fold the dough over to cover the filling and pinch the edges together. You can pinch the edges in any convenient way, e.g. you can use your thumb and index finger or you can use a fork.

Gather the leftover dough and add it to the other half of the dough. Roll it out and repeat the steps until you have used up all the dough and filling.

Now the dumplings (varenyky) are ready for boiling.

Bring water to a boil in a large saucepan or pot, season it lightly (2 pinches of salt to 3 cups of water) then add the dumplings to the water and wait until they float to the top. After they float, boil them for 5 more minutes. Enjoy!

*By Halyna*

## **Silent Prayer**

Remembering memories  
Whispering cries  
Drying a river of tears  
Admitting my weakness  
Smiling while suffering  
Thinking of a silent prayer  
God listened to my silence  
Removing my pain  
Heavens play music again

## **Paidir Chiúin**

Cuimhní cinn ag cuimhneamh  
Caoín ag cogar  
Abhainn na ndéor á thriomú  
Ag admháil mo laige  
Gealgháireach is iad ag fulaingt  
Ag smaoineamh ar phaidir chiúin

D'éist Dia le mo chiúnas  
Is bhain Sé díom mo phian  
Seinneann na Spéartha ceol arís

*By Margreat*

## **Ode to Further Education and Training courses**

Our Community Ed class is our life saviour  
At FET Campus Ennis we all gather together  
For crafts with our tutor on a Tuesday night  
We all experience the same delight  
We, as learners can spread our wings  
and without doubt, learn new things  
We never know what's about to unfold  
Rest assured, it's a joy to behold  
We create decoupage, lamps and mosaics too, jewellery making,  
footstools  
to name but a few  
At Christmas it's decorations for trees,  
table arrangements and wreaths  
And along with all that, we have knowledge for keeps!  
Not alone do we have great group camaraderie  
the support and encouragement is exemplary  
Friendships are developed and life is discussed,  
the caring, the sharing, an absolute plus.  
Our potential unleashed, our families amazed  
they cannot believe what we have achieved  
We have found fulfilment and broadened our capabilities  
Due to wonderful tutors and first-class facilities  
The confidence, the motivation, the energy gained too,  
all culminate in a new and positive you!

*By Bernie*

## **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is definitely the spring as everything is waking up and it's a joy to see the colours.

*By Peig*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is summer, because I can go for walks and get my skin tanned.

*By Sahl*

### **My favourite time of year**

I love spring because I love to see the daffodils, and the days get longer.

*By Mary*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is spring, as I love waking up to the bird song.

*By Eileen*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is winter. It's cosy and there is extra time for hobbies.

*By Niamh*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is autumn as everything is calming down, and the colours are beautiful in the trees and the berries.

*By Martina*



### **My favourite time of year**

I love Halloween. It's my favourite time as it's the last get together of the year before winter sets in, and it's full of mythology.

*By Tina*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is the summer because it's my birthday in July.

*By Patrícia*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is Christmas because all the family get together.

*By Elizabeth*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is spring because everything comes back to life. Flowers pop up, birds start to sing and nest.

*By Mary*

### **My favourite time of year**

I really like the summer because I can enjoy the sunshine and get out and about.

*By Maura*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is summer because it's really warm and we can swim in the sea.

*By Tonya*

### **My favourite time of year**

All seasons have a lot to offer, however I love spring as nature reawakens, the clocks spring forward and we get to spend more time with Mother Nature.

*By Bernie*

### **My favourite time of year**

I particularly like May because the days are lovely and long and bright, and there's lots of energy in the air.

*By Louise*

### **My favourite time of year**

I love spring because I like flowers very much.

*By Sawzan*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is spring and summer. There's no rain and the children can play in the park.

*By Sanaa*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is spring because of the new leaves on the trees, the singing birds, and the flowers blooming.

*By Oksana*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite season is summer when the sun shines and it's warm. You can swim in the sea, play, and travel.

*By Olha*

### **My favourite time of year**

I love summer very much because it means swimming in the sea. A warm gentle sea, sandy beaches, a lot of sun, and lots of fruits and vegetables. And of course, it is nice to travel in the summer.

*By Olga*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite season is summer. I love the sun and the warmth. My favourite colour is green. I like lots of fresh vegetables and fruits. I love green salads with spinach and rocket, green onions, and garlic.

*By Olexandera*

### **My favourite time of year**

My favourite time of year is summer because I was born in the summer. I like to go to the beach to swim. Summer is easy. I also like barbecues.

*By Yuliia*

### **My favourite time of year**

I love summer when everything is green everywhere. Flowers smell beautiful. I have a dacha (holiday home) and work in the country. I really like it.

*By Svetlana*

### **My favourite time of year**

Autumn is my favourite time of year, but I also enjoy the summer with all the flowers blooming and the vegetables. Autumn has the blackberries and late fruit to be picked and stored for the winter.

*By Ger*

### **My favourite time of year**

Nothing is as beautiful as spring. Tiny spots of colour hint at the flowers to come; crocus', daffodils, hyacinths, tulips, purples, yellows, whites, and reds. Nothing is as beautiful as the spring.

*By Dolores*

### **My favourite time of year**

Every season has its favourite beauties. Spring, with fresh, new delicate leaves, and warm rays of sunshine. In summer, walking barefoot on the grass. In autumn, searching for wild mushrooms in the forest, harvesting fruits in the orchard, and vegetables in the garden. In winter, the surprise of morning snow through the window, walking on a crunchy surface because of frost, seeing the trees covered in snow, and the long evenings spent by the fireplace.

*By Jola*