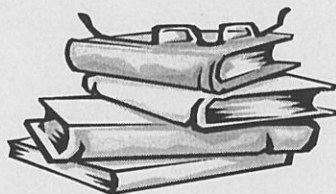
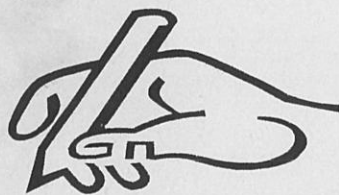
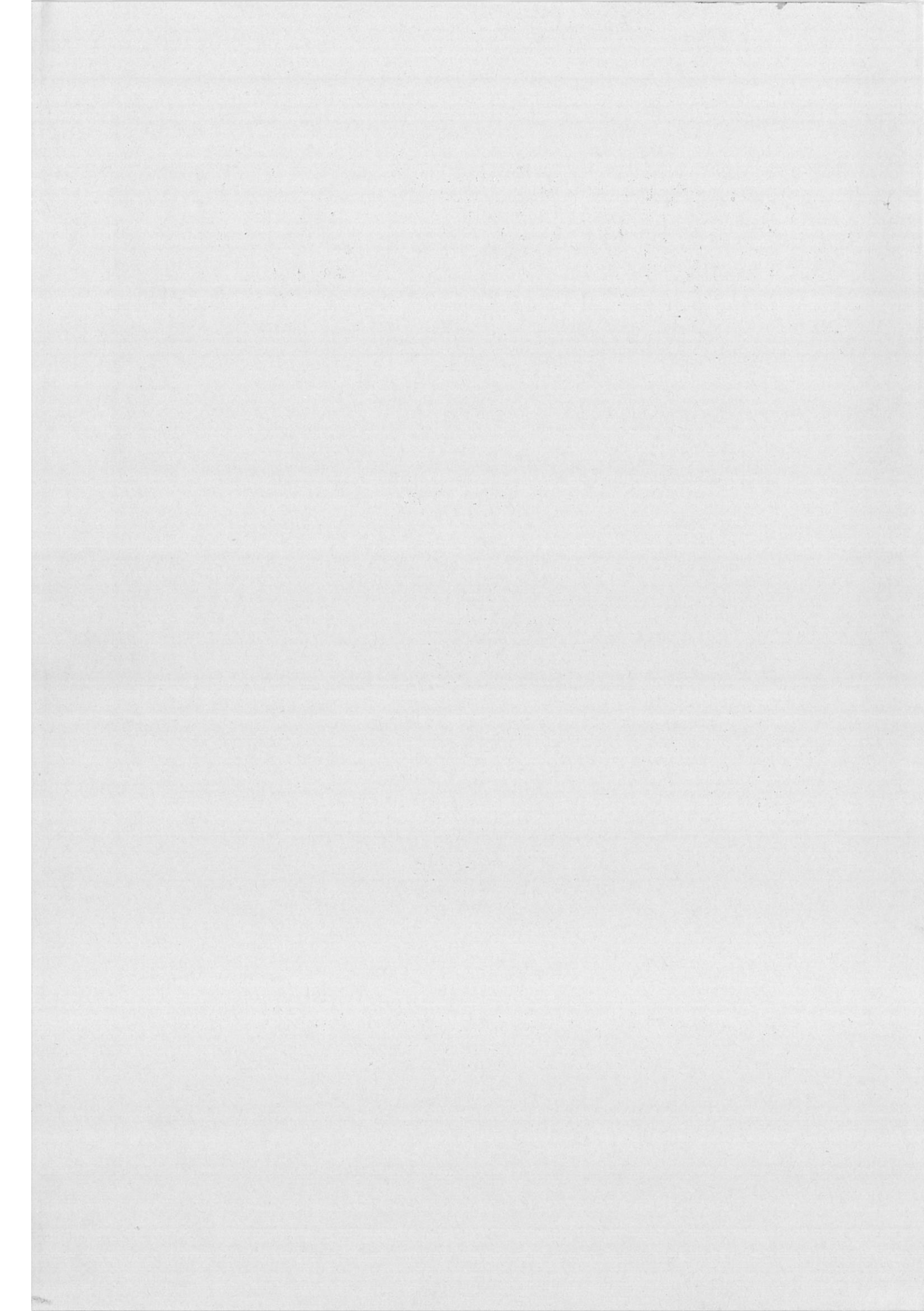


Simply Said 2000

ISSUE 12



CO. CLARE READING & WRITING SCHEME
CO. CLARE V.E.C.



*A Collection of Writings
by Students
of the
Co. Clare
Reading & Writing Scheme*

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FOREWORD

The students, tutors and staff of the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme are very pleased to present the twelfth issue of Simply Said, our annual student magazine.

Many students have contributed their stories, reflections and personal experiences to this year's publication. We hope you enjoy reading Simply Said 2000.

On behalf of the scheme, I would like to thank the students, tutors, staff members and other supporters who have helped in the organisation and production of this year's magazine, and in other ways throughout the year.

Most especially, congratulations to all the students whose work is represented here. Well done and best wishes for continued success!

Maira

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When I Was Small

I was born deaf, but my parents did not realise it until I was two years old. Mam said I was like any other child, only that she thought I was slow to talk.

Mam called me as I played with toys or games in my parent's bedroom but I didn't turn. Then she began to think there was something wrong with me, so she set the alarm clock and brought it near me. I turned when it went off. She didn't understand and talked to Dad about it.

They were advised by a local doctor to send me to Galway for the hearing test. Poor Mam and Dad were heartbroken when they heard that I was deaf. Mum had German measles when she was three months pregnant with me, but at that time she didn't know what was wrong when she had a rash. Even the doctor didn't say. So it was because of that that I was born deaf.

They were even more upset when they were told that the only school for the deaf I could go to was in Dublin. It was very hard for them to send me away when I was only nearly four years old.

I don't remember my first day trip to Dublin or any till I was maybe five or six years old. All I know is that I was going home every four weeks for the first few years. And when I came home first, I didn't know anybody at home or didn't know what had been going on around because I had been away so long. Mum said when I first arrived home I spoke my first word, which surprised them. They were very happy at my progress.

Mam and my two sisters used to call to see me in boarding school and at other times Mam came with my brother to visit me. They used to come every two weeks. Mam had always

travelled with me on the train to Dublin. She stayed at a B & B after dropping me off at boarding school. Then she went home the next morning.

When I was about seven or eight years old, I told Mam that there was no need to travel with me up to Dublin any more because I was a big girl and able to go on my own. There were a few other deaf girls travelling on the train.

All that happened over twenty years ago. I had some hard times in school, but also great fun. I am grateful to school for teaching me how to speak and lip read, but I would be happier if the teachers had been allowed to use sign language in teaching us.

Now I am a happy independent adult with my own circle of friends, my own job, my own car and the love of my parents, brothers and sisters.

By Geraldine



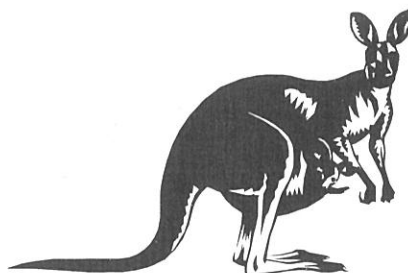
My Trip to Australia

I went to Australia for three weeks. My brother John and his wife came with me.

We stayed in a hotel. We hired a car. Every day we drove around visiting different parts of the country. I really enjoyed my holiday in Australia.

We had a TV in our hotel room. One day we went shopping. I bought some new clothes for myself. I bought some presents as well. I bought a present for Pauline.

By Paddy



Waiting ! Waiting! Waiting!

I was playing football in Ennis on Sunday. The weather was nice and the ground was hard. By accident, I kicked the ground and hurt my leg.

I went to hospital on Monday evening but the doctor was gone home. I went there again on Tuesday morning. The nurse asked me my name, address and telephone number. I saw the doctor and he told me to go to the waiting room.

The doctor called me and he sent me for an x-ray. I spent thirty minutes in the x-ray room. The nurse called me to come and do the x-ray. It took five minutes. After that she told me to wait for the results. When the results came I went to the doctor. He wasn't there. I went for lunch.

After one hour, I came back and met the doctor. He told the nurse to bandage my ankle. After six hours in hospital I went home.

By John



My Best Friend

Susan is my best friend. She works in the kitchen in the Brothers of Charity.

Susan and I went to St. Claire's School together. We sit together in the canteen at lunchtime.

Susan is a good friend to me.

By Teresa



A Kid Called Johnny

On the road where I grew up as a kid, it was there I met Johnny for the first time. Johnny was about my own age, he had just come over from England where he was living with his mother. She had decided that Johnny would live in Ireland with his grandfather.

Johnny had brought something special with him from England, and that was the game of soccer. My friends and I had never seen this game being played before, and from that day on every kid on the road was playing soccer.

I started to play in goal and it was there I stayed for the next twenty years. As the years went on some people decided to get a team together, and they would call it Hermitage F.C. I was playing well for my club at the time, then I was picked to play in goal for the Clare soccer team. This was the day I was looking forward to but I did not play well and we got beaten.

I put that day behind me and I continued to play for my club Hermitage. I have had a lot of good years playing soccer, and it all goes back to that first day, the day I met a kid called Johnny.

By Mike

A Ghost in the House

It was a cold night and I was alone in my house. I had watched television all night and my eyes were getting tired so I decided to go to bed.

Just as I closed my eyes I felt something touch my leg. I jumped up in the bed and I screamed loudly. I looked around my room and saw nothing. Then I heard my telephone ringing downstairs. I jumped out of my bed and crept down the stairs. When I answered the phone there was no-one there.

I sat down in the kitchen for a few minutes. While I was there I could hear someone calling my name from upstairs. As I came to the top of the stairs, I saw one of my mothers white sheets floating in the air. I thought it was a ghost. I swung my brothers bat. I ran down the stairs and out the front door.

By Walida



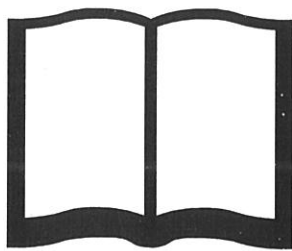
A New Beginning

My name is Ann.

I have two girls and one boy. I am proud of them.

I am learning how to read.

By Ann



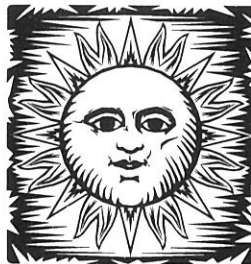
My Summer Holidays

I look forward to my summer holidays because my two sisters and their families are coming home on holidays in August.

We will go visiting our relatives and friends while they are here. We might go to bingo and win some money.

Sometimes we go to Kilkee if the weather is fine. We buy ice-cream and walk along the beach. We go up to the market stalls and look around. If there are any bargains I might buy something. We have good crack trying to get a bargain. Afterwards, we might go for something to eat. I hope the weather will be fine, and I look forward to seeing my sisters.

By Phil



My Boss

I work in the Shannon Community Pottery Workshop. My boss is Sylvia. She is in charge of the glazing section and looks after seven people, me included.

First thing every morning she explains and shows us what work needs to be done for the day. If you make a mistake she helps you out. I love doing the kiln work.

She will go into the shop next door and buy us whatever we need. On Friday she goes into the restaurant and gets us our lunch, quarter-pounders and chips.

She has a good sense of humour and lots of patience. I would like her to be my boss for another while.

By Ger



Jokes

What did one traffic light say to the other traffic light?
Don't look I'm changing!

Why do elephants have trunks?
They'd look silly with little overnight bags.

What do you call an overweight pumpkin?
A plumpkin

What game is played by twenty people in a telephone booth?
Squash.

What do you call it when an ice-cream sundae makes a fast exit?
Banana Split.

Waiter, waiter, there's a fly in my soup!
Do keep quiet, or everyone will want one.

Why did the seamstress go to the bowling alley?
To get some extra pins.

What do you get if you cross a stereo with a lamp?
Light music.

Why couldn't the two elephants go swimming?
Because they only had one pair of trunks.

Mack: why did you buy all those duck feathers?
Jack: because they were marked down!

What paper do cows read?
The Daily Moos.

What did the vampire say to his girlfriend?
Let's go out for a bite.

What do you get if you cross a conjurer with an aeroplane?
A Flying Sorcerer.

What's Dracula's favourite spot in New York?
The Vampire State Building.

What do you give an injured lemon?
Lemon aid.

Why are elephants bad dancers?
Because they have two left feet.

By Noel



Meet my Family

I have four brothers and one sister and my Father and my Mother. My brother Gerard works in the garage serving petrol to the customers. My other brother Michael works in the Bunratty Castle Folk Park, cleaning out the cottages. The cottages must be clean for tourists. A lot of tourists come to Bunratty in the Summer time.

My brother Pat works down in the garden in the Brothers of Charity. Pat is living in 57 Elm Park. He only goes home during the holiday time. My brother Joseph works on the farm at home. Joseph feeds the cattle in the slatted house in the Winter time. In Summer time Joseph lets out the cattle on the land.

My sister Mary is married to Michael. She has three children, their names are Flan, Sarah and Aidan. They are living in Tulla.

My Father used to work in Clare County Council. He is retired now. My Mother is a housekeeper. She works around the house doing the cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing.

By Elizabeth

The Lost Friends

There was a girl named Amy. Today was her birthday. At school she thought about having her birthday party after school.

While Amy was walking home, her friends went to her house to hide before she got home. When her friends were ready, she opened her front door.

Everything was quiet. She went upstairs, she changed her clothes and came back downstairs. She wondered where everyone was, as it was her birthday today.

Everyone shouted SURPRISE! HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMY!

Amy's friends had lots of fun.

By Andrei



First Holiday

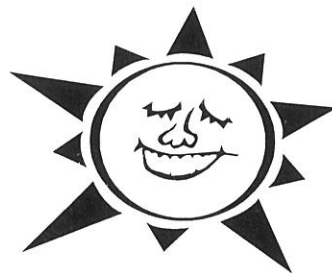
My name is Nellie Mongans. I was married in 1986. We never had a honeymoon or a holiday, as we couldn't afford it.

My husband's niece got married early this year. Herself and her husband went to Gran Canaria for their honeymoon. They were there for a week and they videotaped all the scenery and places. We saw the tape and it was just fabulous.

That night myself and my husband were talking about how nice the Gran Canaria looked. We then decided that we would save up and go there. We will be going this October. We also persuaded two more couples to go as well.

We are really going to enjoy this as it is our first holiday, and we hope it won't be our last.

By Nellie



Dolphin Watching in West Clare

I am looking forward to the summer coming. On the long weekends during the summer, I go dolphin watching in Carraigaholt in West Clare.

I like watching them jumping up in the air and splashing in the water. I could spend a half hour watching them in the water.

Afterwards I go for a long walk. I have had many nice meals in the Long Dock Restaurant in the village.

Carrigaholt is a lovely place to visit in the summer.

By Paul



My Work in the Brothers of Charity

I work in the altar bread section in the Brothers of Charity. I put the altar breads into boxes. We have to wear gloves, a white coat and a hat while doing our work.

Kathleen is my supervisor. My friend Sonny works in the altar bread area too. We have a special box to collect the breads which are broken. These are thrown in the bin every evening.

The priest comes to collect the boxes of altar breads from Kathleen every week.

By Paul

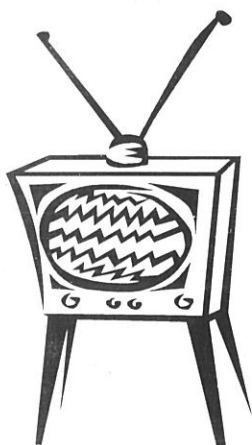


Television

My favourite television programmes are Glenroe and Mike Murphy. Sometimes I watch Fair City as well.

I would love to be called for the Mike Murphy show. I would hire a bus and bring all my friends.

By Martin



History – Dohapsonbal

Dohapsonbal was founded by Sean Burke in 1997 and two years before that the School of Korean Marital Arts Association was founded.

Dohapsonbal has its roots tracing back to 1502. It has roots in Tae Kwon Do, Hapkido, Wing Chun Gun Fu, Boxing, Muay Thai Kick Boxing and Karate.

The concept of the art of Dohapsonbal is to bring harmony to both mind and body, also Dohapsonbal is an art that assumes all forms of art and in itself is a formless art.

Stances

Horse Stance is executed from a relaxed position: first you step to the left with the left leg and assume left Horse Stance.

Forward Stance is executed from a relaxed position by stepping the left foot forward and keeping both feet shoulder width apart assuming a left Forward Stance.

Defence Against A Punch to the Face

Step left leg forward and assume left Forward Stance. Now rise left arm keeping a bend in it, (this is called a High Block). Now punch to the face with the right hand, stepping forward with the right leg.

Defence Against Collar Grab

Put the right hand on top of arms and hold left wrist. Now strike the neck with the left hand. Please note that this defence can be done with either hand.

Defence against choke to the neck.

Hold his or her wrists: Now kick their knee and step back with right leg, now assume Horse Stance, holding wrists with right hand. Now elbow with left elbow.

Even though you can practise these moves at home. It is advised to train under a good instructor.

By Sean



Student of the Year

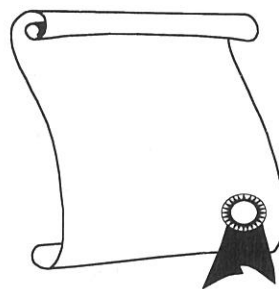
In October 1999 I won an award for overall student of the year. The award was presented by Aer Rianta.

At St. Joseph's Training Centre I studied two subjects for Foundation Level N.C.V.A. and one subject at Level 1. I also studied for Junior Cert Foundation Maths and English.

The awards ceremony was held at the Old Ground Hotel. I felt proud of my achievement and grateful to all those who helped me.

When they were giving out the award I was very nervous. When they called out my name I couldn't believe it. I was very excited. I had a lovely day and I enjoyed myself.

By Elizabeth



Sport

I enjoy most types of sport including football, hurling, soccer, rugby and motor racing.

Most weekends I go to a match with my brother-in-law – sometimes locally, sometimes as far as Dublin.

During the week there is plenty of sport on the TV T. na G4 especially gives a great coverage of the Sunday games.

So there is never a dull moment.

By John



Taking Control

In early March 1998, I had the radio on in the car one day. Mary Coughlan, the singer, was talking about how depressed she had been when growing up. She did not know it at the time.

The previous summer, a cousin of mine drowned, probably due to alcohol and depression. In November that year a younger cousin went for treatment for alcohol. The way she talked really put me thinking about my own life.

Even though I never drank alcohol, I knew things were not all so well in my own life. I had a low opinion of myself and felt my life was going around in circles.

I decided to go and meet a counsellor. After he examined me, he said if I was prepared to put in the work for about twelve months it would make a big difference. By June the following year, I had finished my course and I felt so much better about myself and happier with life.

By Raymond



Where I Work

I go to work five days a week. I start work at half past nine every day. On Mondays and Fridays I finish work at half past three.

When I get to work I change into my uniform. Then I go into the kitchen and sign in. When all of that is finished, I start preparing dinner for the restaurant. When dinner is ready and everything is prepared, wash up has to be started and that takes up most of the afternoon.

I take a break for about ten minutes to write into my diary about what I had done for the day. When that is finished it is time to go home.

By Ann



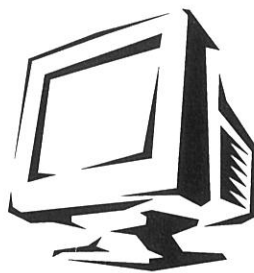
Computers

Computers are good to have. I like them. I first did the course in 1997, and then every year since, I have done the course.

The two hours are great, from ten o'clock to twelve noon, each Tuesday. I meet other people at the course. We take a break at eleven o'clock, for 15 minutes and we make a cup of tea. We go back to the computers and Caroline helps me if I make a mistake, and she helps other people. I like the help I get from Caroline. She makes sure I don't go wrong. The computer class is easy to understand, she explains what to do.

Since 1999, I have been very happy. I'd like to say. "Thank you Caroline", from Frank. "You have helped me a lot, and I am happy to say you are easy to work with. It was hard at first, but now it has got easy. Thanks Caroline for all the help."

By Frank



Being Well

We had eight meetings about eating healthy food. Then we had a talk about everything we did as a group. There was no knock at the door when a meeting was on. Pat, Mary and Michael gave the talks in turn. We did exercises as well.

Celia and I went for a stroll around the gardens one lovely day. We had a most enjoyable group. It was nice to get a certificate at the end. There were sixteen in the group and we all got certificates.

By Marie



Limerick

There was a girl from Feakle,
Who had an obsession with treacle,
She poured it down her pants,
And up went the ants,
That scampered right up her ankle.

By Robert



The Day Trip to Galway

Every year we go on a day out. Last year we went to Cork. This year we are going to Galway.

When we get there, some of us might do some shopping. The lads might go and play pool. I would like to go in a horse and carriage for a jaunt around the streets of Galway.

We have lunch in the hotel. In the afternoon, if the weather is good, we might go to Salthill to walk on the beach. The lads might go for a pint. Myself and my sister Anna will have a mineral.

We then go and buy some little presents to bring home. We go and have our tea in the hotel, the meal would always be very good. We get back home about nine o'clock at night.

I really enjoy my day out every year and look forward to it.

By Marion



My Accident

I had a really great Christmas this year. On Christmas morning I was in the kitchen opening the washing machine door when all the water spilled out. I slipped onto the floor and banged my shoulder. It hurt a lot. I knew something wasn't right. I was in too much pain and I couldn't move my arm. What would I do?

I was on my own in the house. I was a little bit worried. I decided to ring my brother Chris. I gave him a bit of a fright. He said he would be over as soon as he could. We went to Casualty in Limerick Regional Hospital and we were seen straight away. They took an x-ray, they said it wasn't broken but dislocated. They put my arm into a sling and gave me an appointment for outpatients.

Then I went back to my brother's house in Raheen for my Christmas dinner.

By Robert



My Best Friend

My best friend's name is Evelyn. She lives in Limerick. We go to town every weekend to shop. We go drinking on a Saturday night and go to the disco.

I can talk to her about anything. She really understands and listens to me. I have know her for two years but it feels like I've known her all my life. Our friendship has grown.

We laugh and talk about everything. Nothing could come between us. So Evelyn, if you are ever lonely, hurt or sad about things, I am your best friend. I will be there to hold you.

By Jason



Tractor

When I was building my new house two years ago, I had a lot of work and so I bought a second-hand tractor. I did a lot of work with it around the lawn. When I was finished the lawn I decided to restore the tractor.

I knew that there would be a lot of work in it. I got a lot of help in repairing it. I had to look for some second-hand parts for it. I knew a place in County Meath that scraps tractors.

One morning, I got up at five o'clock to go to County Meath to the scrap yard. I got there at nine o'clock. I met one of the workers and he showed me the scrapped tractors, old and new. I saw five like mine that were in very bad condition. I bought some of the parts that I needed.

When I came home with the parts, I put them in the tractor. I had to get a panel beater to spray it. There was a lot of work in getting it ready for spraying. I had to sand it all down. It took me two weeks to get it ready. When it was sprayed it looked lovely.

The next thing to be done was the wiring. I got a friend to wire it. There was a lot of work in wiring it. He was two days at it.

This tractor is like new now.

By Noel

Legion of Mary

I've been a member of the Legion of Mary for many years now.

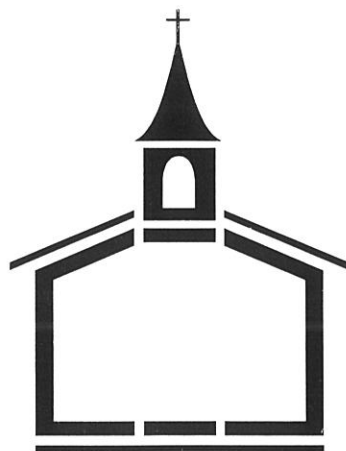
Last Sunday we had a special Mass in Ennis Cathedral at three o'clock. There was a great crowd at it. The singing was lovely and we all sang along with the choir.

Afterwards we went to the Temple Gate hotel for tea. I don't like tea so I had coffee instead. There was no cake but I didn't really mind. The biscuits were nice.

There were a good few people I know at the hotel so we had a nice chat while we were having our tea.

The Legion holds a party once every year and we all really look forward to it.

By Brendan



Springtime

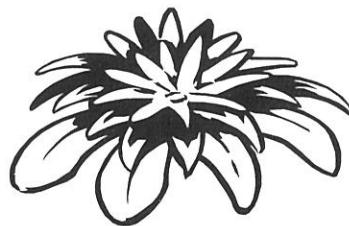
I love to go for a walk with my dog. Sometimes if the weather is fine, I will go for a walk around the Short Sweep. It is about three miles and takes me an hour to do it.

I like to weed the garden. There are lovely flowers in the garden. Snowdrops, Daffodils, Primroses, Tulips and Pansies are my favourite spring flowers.

The evenings are getting long and the weather is getting better. It's good to see the children out playing in the long evenings.

I really enjoy this time of year and I am looking forward to the Easter holidays.

By Phyllis



My Work in the Garden

I work in the garden in the Brothers of Charity. I helped Ray to build a new wall in the garden. My job is to bring gravel down to the garden in a wheel barrow.

Every morning I have to water the plants in the garden. Michael and Ray help me to water the plants. I help to sow the plants in the window boxes too.

I like working in the garden.

By David



Dublin

Every year I go to Dublin for Easter. I go to my oldest daughter's house. Her name is Mary.

On Saturday we go to the local market in Blackrock. There's all kinds of stalls there – clothes, shoes, spuds and everything. I like to buy cigars and clothes.

Afterwards Mary and I go to evening mass in Blackrock and then we go for something to eat.

My daughter comes to Ennis station to meet me and travels to Dublin with me. I wouldn't like to travel that long journey on my own.

By Kathleen



Brothers of Charity

I work in the kitchen at the Brothers of Charity. We do different jobs so that we don't get bored with the one thing.

At the moment I do the washing-up in the morning. After dinner I clear off the tables and wipe them down. I then re-set the tables for tea.

My supervisor is very helpful and is a good friend to me.

By Teresa



Darkness to Light

I stood on the rocks in Lahinch looking out across the ocean into the great unknown wondering what would become of me. I was 19 years old. I could not read or write. I was with the FCA at the time and I could not even sign for my wages without help. I felt ashamed and very alone.

During that dark time I would often go to the Holy Well in Fenlow and pray there to God and to Our Lady. I begged for many favours. My prayers were heard and answered and to this day Fenlow has a special place in my heart.

Then I met a beautiful young lady. It was love at first sight and we were married on June 11, 1966. I was 25 years old. We have six wonderful children – four boys and two girls. When they were very young I told each of them that I could not read or write. I wanted them to hear it from me. They all did well in school and my wife worked with them at home. They are successful in life and are very good to their mother and me.

Six years ago I decided to go to Adult Literacy Classes to learn how to read and write. It was the best thing I ever did. I still have a long way to go but I will hang in there. I want to say thank you to all the teachers who have helped me along the way.

By John

My Work with Eircom

I spent five days working in Eircom. I did lots of different work there.

I had to keep the toilets clean every day. I had to Hoover the office every morning. I had to tidy up the canteen after the lunch break. One of the days, I had to clean the windows.

I really enjoyed working in the Eircom office.

By Kevin



School Days

I get up at eight o'clock.

I go to school at nine o'clock. I finish school at four o'clock. It is a hard day's work.

In the evening I have some fun. I play football for two hours, then I watch television. My favourite program is sports.

I study before I go to bed.

By Gezim



My Trip to London

On the 4th of October last year, four of us from the Dulick Craftshop were lucky enough to be brought on a trip to London. In our craftshop we sell handmade pottery. The purpose of our trip was to visit similar shops there.

I had never flown on an aeroplane before so I was nervous. But I had to forget about my nerves fairly fast because a member of the group sitting next to me was so terrified that I spent most of the flight consoling him.

I found it very hard to sleep the first night in the hotel. Myself and my room mate found the room strange and besides that we spent half the night laughing and giggling. We only got around four hours sleep because we had to be up early the next morning to go into London.

The first place we visited was a craftshop like our own Dulick Centre. We had a great time there and they made us very welcome. Later on that day we went on a sightseeing tour of London. It was an open top bus and my friend and myself sat upstairs. London is a lovely place, the buildings are different to anything here. It's much bigger than Dublin.

One of my favourite things was eating out all the time. Once we went to an Italian restaurant which was good fun but the best place was the pizza restaurant we went to on the second day. Another thing I really enjoyed was shopping.

London is a great place and I'd love to go back sometime.

By Helen

Cats

I like cats.

They have black coats and white coats and they are very furry.

They catch mice and rats. They also catch birds. They are my friends. They sleep in the bed.

I have lots of cat toys and books that I get from the library.

Cats have lovely coats on them.

By Mary



Medjugorje

A pilgrimage to Medjugorje was being organised by a group associated with the training centre.

There were two tickets free with this group and they decided to raffle them among the women in the centre.

My name was drawn out of the hat. I was terrified of flying so I hoped I could give the ticket to someone else but that was not allowed. So I had to go myself.

I was very nervous of travelling but all the women in the centre encouraged me to go as they had been there the previous year. They said it was a fantastic experience and I would really enjoy myself. So off I went.

I had a fabulous time. It is a beautiful country. I found it a very holy and peaceful place to be and the people were very polite and kind. Medjugorje is a very religious place and I am really looking forward to going back this year, please God.

By Bridget

Grafters

Grafting is a word used in England meaning working. In this story it is used especially in Dublin for street-vendors. Street-vendors is probably an expression known all over the world except in Dublin, in Dublin they are grafters. We've all seen them and more importantly heard them.

Clare people would be most familiar with them outside Croke Park, one shouting louder than the next, "get your hats, scarves, rosettes and flags". The Dublin grafters are never biased, they will always have all the colours of the teams playing on the day, even though they probably had to look up a GAA book for the colours of the teams.

The great thing about the grafters is that they might know nothing about hurling or football, they may not even know where exactly Clare is on the map but they will waffle away about the sport and the County and leave you thinking they are the greatest fans.

However it is not only for matches that the grafters are seen, they are on the streets for nearly every occasion. They have never done a business viability study or a selling techniques course, but they could sell ice to the Eskimos or sand to the Arabs and make these people think they are getting a bargain.

The two biggest occasions in their calendar are St. Patrick's Day and Christmas. On St. Patrick's Day, they are split into two groups; the first group spend the two days before digging up every green area in Dublin. It doesn't matter if it is the neighbour's garden or Aras an Uachtaran, the President is just another neighbour as far as they are concerned. They then go on to sell every weed, thistle and nettle to any unsuspecting visitor as genuine shamrock.

The second group go into a discount fabric shop and buy yards of green material and pass it off in small pieces as part of St. Patrick's cloak or leprechaun hankies.

Christmas is the feather in the cap of any self-respecting grafter. I have known people to take two weeks holidays from work to go grafting for Christmas on Moore Street or Henry Street and they manage to make enough money from selling wrapping paper, key rings, cigarette lighters and hairbrushes to afford three weeks sick leave in Jamaica.

I have tried my hand at most jobs including grafting, however, I did not make enough even for a week-end in Kilkee; instead I got a day pass to the local Garda station for selling without a license. I think grafting is one job that is not for me.

By Brendan



St. Patrick's Weekend

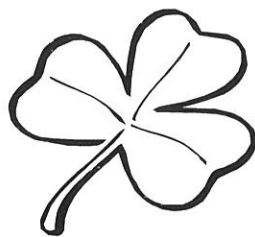
I really look forward to St. Patrick's Day. After Mass I go to see the parade in Feakle. I love to see all the children dress up in pretty outfits, some come as clowns and some come as Tellytubbys.

The floats were good also, people put a lot of work into doing them up and thinking of new ideas from year to year.

When the parade was over I went to my Mum's for dinner. My sister and her boyfriend were also there. During dinner my sister said she had a surprise for us all. "Well, Helen", Mum said. "What is it". "I have just got engaged", she said. Mum, Dad and I were really delighted, and Helen said she would like me to be her bridesmaid. I am so looking forward to that as I have never been a bridesmaid.

It turned out to be the best St. Patrick's Day I ever had. Now I am looking forward to the wedding. I went home feeling very happy.

By Anne Marie



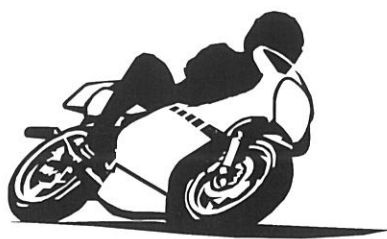
My Independence

Three years ago my sister taught me how to drive her moped. I loved the sense of freedom it gave me.

Last year my parents took me to Galway where we bought a three year old Suzuki motorbike. It gets me everywhere I want to go; to work, to town, to hurling and football matches.

I love my new independence.

By Martin



Charlie

Charlie was a Connemara pony, 13 hands high and grey in colour. I bought him at a local horse fair in Kilrush. He was a beautiful animal. Being skilled in the ways of the horse by my late father, I trained him myself and put a set of tackle together for him that would fit him just right. I made a harness from other old harnesses. By the way, tackle was a slang name given for harness. I proceeded to build him a cart which I made of wood, nails and steel bolts which had two wheels that the pony could pull which brings me to the reason why I bought him.

Years ago I used to harvest seaweed for a living from the seashore not far from where I lived. I used Charlie to pull the loads of seaweed from an island not far away. Later I would come along with my tractor and load it. From there I used to draw it to the local seaweed factory, which has since closed down. I remember this one morning when we made our journey to work. It was one Summer's morning, the sun was shining and there wasn't even the slightest breeze and the birds were singing. I took him from under the cart and let him loose to wander around and rest after our three mile journey.

I would cut the weed and put it into small cots. When I was ready all I would have to do is put Charlie under the cart and off we would go. He had wandered all the way down the sandy flats on this particular occasion. I decided to call him with a whistle. Well, low and behold, he came right up to me from that distance and playfully nudged me with his head.

When I am bent over working I always remember that morning from time to time. Man and beast working together, the like you will never see again.

By Martin

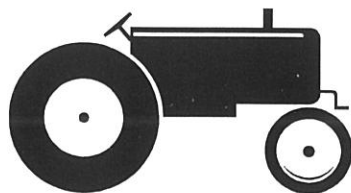
Saving Hay And Corn

The meadows are closed early in the year so that the hay may grow to be saved in time.

The farmer cuts the hay in June. It's turned to save it and trammed in July. Then it's brought in to the hay shed as herd fodder for the Winter.

The corn comes in handy for thrashing. It's for feeding chickens, hens and ducks. A lot of corn is brought to the mill, and brought back as flour when it is ground.

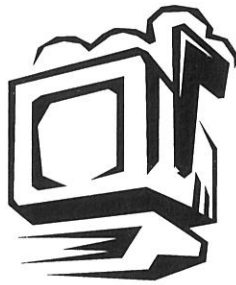
By Paddy



Information Age

This new information age
Seems to be all the rage
Technology has become alive
But I don't know if I'll survive
Because I am not at a young age.

By Hilda



My Sister's Wedding

My sister got married on the 14th August, 1999. I was one of the bridesmaids, with my sister Pauline. The chief bridesmaid was Catherine, the bride's twin sister.

In the morning we got our hair done in Twin Blades. We got our make up done in Fingers and Faces. Then we went home to get ready.

The bride wore a white dress with a train. She wore a veil as well. Her bouquet was made up of purple and white flowers. She had one page boy and a flower girl. We wore lilac dresses and carried bouquets of purple and pink flowers. We had pink and white flowers on our heads.

The Mass was on in Ballyea and the reception was in the Auburn Lodge. Her husband is from Donegal. He had one best man and two grooms men. We had a lovely meal. Country Fever were playing afterwards. The bride and groom went abroad on their honeymoon. They went to New York. The disco was over at four o'clock in the morning. I enjoyed being a bridesmaid.

By Joan



Nature

I like to go out for a walk in the countryside. It is very relaxing to be out walking in the countryside. It's nice to see swans swimming out in the lake.

The Springtime is when all the trees are starting to go green, and the birds are starting to build their nests. There are a lot of daffodils already starting to grow and come out and turn yellow.

There are some lambs already out, jumping about in the fields. It's good to see the lambs up in the mountains too. It's nice looking at old cottages where our Grandparents used to live.

It's very relaxing out walking by the coast road. It's nice to be picking shells too.

By Anne



Lourdes

I am going to Lourdes in June for five days.

I am going with my friends.

It is my second visit.

I love going in an aeroplane and staying at a hotel.

By Anne



My Work

I work down in Allwood Enterprises on a Monday. We make projects of pine timber. We also make tables and chairs.

I am down at Bredins hardware shop for the other four days. We make doors to any size and sand them. We sell flat packed kitchens and make up the carcass of the kitchen. We deliver the doors when they are ready.

I work on a Saturday at Bredins. I also do spraying. In the weekdays I enjoy working down at Bredins. I like it there.

I also go to meetings with the other lads when they are out in supported employment. Gerry takes me for a woodwork class on the weekdays. When class is over I sand doors, price goods and put away doors and skirting panels. We have a machine for putting on edging tape.

By Patrick



Feakle

I live in Kilbarron which is just outside Feakle Village. There is a lake near my house called Kilbarron lake.

In Feakle we have a Church, National School and a hurling field. We have three shops and four pubs in Feakle. There is also a FÁS office in the Village.

By Dorothy



Someone I'd Love to Have Known

Today I am thinking of my daughter. It is just a year ago she lost her baby. I got a phone call to say that my daughter was very ill. I went to see her, but nearly died when I saw how sick she was. The doctor told me that she was very bad, it was touch and go with her, and that her baby would die.

When I saw my daughter I could not tell her, so I asked to see the baby. I cried when I kissed her. I knew I was saying goodbye. I caught her hand and held her fingers. I was very upset over all that was going on. I left the hospital at half past eleven at night, and at four o'clock the hospital rang to say the baby had just died. I felt so sad for my daughter and her husband. I knew what she was going through as I lost a baby myself.

The hardest thing was seeing her in a white coffin. It tore me apart for a long time. The same day my other daughter got married and I could not go to her wedding. So every year on my daughter's wedding anniversary, I will think of that sad day. I pray to God for my daughter and myself every night, asking Him to help us through this.

By Marian

Spring

I love Spring.

The cold, wet winter days are disappearing. I like the bright evenings and long days. It is lovely to see the daffodils and snowdrops, buds on the trees and birds appearing.

I love going for walks in the countryside when everywhere is so green and alive.

By Margaret



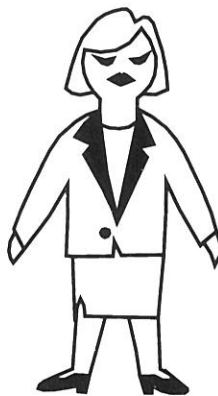
Mrs Scanlon

Mrs Scanlon was a very good friend to me. She was very kind and understanding.

She looked after myself, Phil and Paul very well. She brought us wherever we wanted to go. She was a good cook and made us nice meals. When we were ill she looked after us.

She left the hostel two years ago and we miss her very much.

By Anna



My Holiday

Last year I went to Portugal on my holiday. My Mother and Father, my sister Martina, my brother Patrick and my Aunty Liza went with me.

The name of the hotel was the "Cruzeire" in Praia da Rocha. It is a nice hotel.

The beach was lovely. There were sun beds for everyone. The beach was very big. There were plenty of pubs and restaurants and lots of shops and hotels. There was a pub called Dirty Nellies and a hotel restaurant called the Titanic.

I went on a coach tour to Fatima. It was a long trip. It was very nice.

They showed us where Jacinta Francisco and Lucia live. I lit some candles.

In the hotel there was a swimming pool outside our window. I went to Portomao fishing village. I went on a boat trip to a small beach and had a barbecue there.

I had such a nice holiday that I will go back to Portugal again.

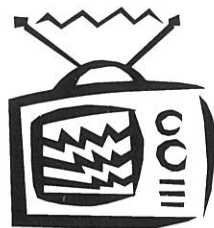
By Breeda

My Favourite TV Programme

My favourite TV programme is Fair City. It is on every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at seven o'clock.

My favourite actor is Bella and my favourite actress is Dolores. It is an Irish production set in Dublin.

By Martina



My Favourite Band

My favourite band is Boyzone. They are the best band in the world. My favourite one is Ronan. He is sexy.

I have joined the fan club. I have all their CDs and videos. The song I like best is "Key To My Life". There are five of them in the band.

Last Christmas Day I got a big surprise. In my Christmas card I got a ticket for the Point Depot in Dublin, to see Boyzone in concert on the 11th of January 2000.

We drove up as there wasn't any bus going. We arrived in Dublin at seven o' clock. We went to the Point there were lots of people in the queue.

Inside the Point there were lots of things for sale. I bought a Boyzone mug, key rings, poster, purse, book and whistle, which I made plenty of use of during the concert. The concert finished at eleven o' clock. I had a brilliant time. I would love to go again.

By Karen



Bright Spring

Nights are dark and days are bright.
Spring is sunny and summer is light.
The natural beauty of Ireland, green
But we like the summer,
It is our dream.

In other countries it never rains
But we are happy all the same.
Forget the weather, life goes on.
We have to make the future work.

By Nancy



My Family

I have two boys and two girls. They are all grown up now. Three of them are married, the two boys and one girl. My other daughter who is sixteen years old lives at home with me. My eldest son and his wife have one child, my only grandchild at the moment. His name is Martin and he is four years old.

My second grandchild is due in May around the 27th, from my second son and his wife. I hope my recently married daughter will have a baby next year, please God.

My sons and their wives live in England near each other. My daughter and son-in-law live in Ennis near me. My brother's wives and families live in Ennis, except one sister who lives in Cork with her husband and family.

By Winnie



Gluten Free Soda Bread

I am a coeliac and follow a gluten free diet.

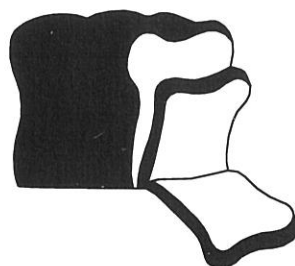
As many pre-prepared products are unsuitable, I do a lot of home cooking. Here is a gluten-free recipe for soda bread.

Soda Bread

1 box (500g) Juvela Gluten free fibre Mix
1X 5ml sp (1 tsp) bicarbonate of soda
1 X 5ml sp. (1 tsp) cream of tartar
2 X 15 ml sp. (2 tbsp) lemon juice
375 ml (17 floz) milk

Mix together dry ingredients. Add lemon juice to milk to sour it. Gradually add sufficient milk to produce soft but not sticky dough. Knead until smooth. Make a round shape and place on a greased baking tray. Cut a shallow cross on the top of the dough with a sharp knife and bake in a pre-heated oven for 45 to 50 minutes.

By Angela



Day Care Club

I am a member of the Day Care Club. We play bingo which I like very much. The bus collects us every Friday night and brings us to the club and home again.

I meet all my friends there and we get tea and biscuits. I like the fluffy biscuits best.

Sometimes we play tapes and dance to the music. Daniel O' Donnell is from Donegal like myself so he is my favourite.

Last week we had our end of year social. It was packed out. We had a few jars there and had to get a taxi home afterwards. It was great fun.

By Celia



Ireland's Own

I love Ireland's Own. My friend brings me one often. I enjoy the songs and learn to sing them. My favourite singer is Daniel O'Donnell. I saw him at the West County in Ennis last year.

I also like the riddles. Here is one for you:

Three drivers are waiting to go into a car wash. Which one is the silliest?

The one on the motor bike.

By Breda



A Family Wedding

I have eight brothers and two sisters. One of my brothers is getting married soon.

I am looking forward to the wedding as it will be a good family get-together. I will be staying in a hotel that night. I have never stayed in one before.

I went shopping with my house parent in Ennis and bought a new suit. I really like it. I hope to have a nice day.

By Martin



Letting Go to Grow

Today I feel the wealthiest person in the world. When I speak of wealth it is not of financial wealth, but of much deeper wealth of soul, mind, spirit and body.

Life's journey to now has taught me so much. First you must deal with your pain, work through it and start to let go. Letting go of the past is so important for one to grow. I know we all feel like throwing in the towel at times, and we feel we have got lost along the path of life.

It can be very painful, but through this pain and learning to let go of it, and sometimes of people in our lives, we detach from them with respect and dignity. We must keep trying because one more try can make all the difference to finding your peace or staying in your pain.

For me, I have learned pain is no bad thing if we don't allow ourselves to become bitter. But to face it and to use it for our growth, can help us to become better, more caring and understanding people.

For me today, I don't regret the pain in my life as it was through it I found a deeper meaning to my life, by letting go of the past. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present.

To be able to live in the present is a wonderful gift, and it is there we find our peace and tranquillity, and meet God in the wonders of nature all around us, and also to meet God in each and every person we meet every day.

So every day I say to God, "Dear Lord, help me to remember today, that there is nothing that can happen to me today that you and I can't handle together".

Knowing this makes life so much easier and peaceful and through this we learn to love life and live it to the fullest; in return we get love in abundance.

So when we feel at our lowest, don't quit, try, try again. It could be that last try that makes all the difference.

By Kathleen



Springtime in the Garden

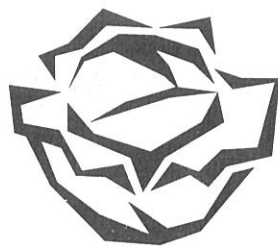
This year I am growing lettuce, turnip, onions, potatoes and cabbage.

I like to sow seed for cabbage plants.

I weed or hoe the garden every week to keep weeds from choking the vegetables. I cut the grass every week.

I really enjoy working in the garden.

By Pat



Limerick

When I was in a flower garden
There was a young man who was fartin'
He turned right round,
Said "What is that sound?"
It's the gas from your tank,
you big plank.

By Kathleen



My Work Experience

I did my work experience in the West County Hotel. I spent three weeks working in the West County.

During these three weeks I had to do lots of dusting and cleaning. I had to move all the beds and Teresa hoovered behind them.

We had our lunch break at half past twelve until one o'clock. Mary was my supervisor. All the staff were very nice to me while I was there.

I really enjoyed my work experience in the West County.

By Gerard



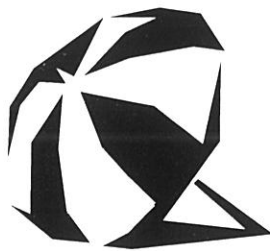
Summer Holidays

Last year I went to Kilkee on my summer holidays.

The weather was beautiful. We sat in the sun on the beach and watched the children play in the sand. We also went for lovely long walks. All my friends in the Day Centre were with me. At night we went to singing pubs and had a drink. We all had a very enjoyable holiday.

I am looking forward to going on holidays this year again.

By Josephine



Reception

I work at the reception desk at the Brothers of Charity two days a week, Monday and Thursday.

I answer the phone and sometimes use the puncher to punch holes in sheets to fit them in folders.

I love this work.

By Jill



My House

I share a house with three other people. Everyone shares the housework. It's lucky I like working because the housework never ends.

As a treat every Thursday I go with a friend to the Queen's for a half pint of Guinness. That's good fun.

By Bernie



Corofin

I lived in Corofin for 27 years. I lived with my mother in the Railway Cottage.

This was a very important place to live as we were responsible for closing the gates across the road to stop the traffic while the train passed.

There was a goods train from Ennis every morning which brought supplies to Corofin, Ennistymon, Lahinch, Moyasta and finally Kilkee.

The passenger train which was called the diesel train passed twice daily, (to and from Kilkee), during the Winter months and a few times a day during the Summer (to Lahinch only).

The trains started around eight o' clock in the morning and finished any time up to seven o' clock in the evening.

During the darker months we used to put a red light on the gates so that the oncoming cars, lorries, trucks could see that the gates were closed. These were paraffin oil lamps.

If there was anything on the tracks during foggy weather eg. horses, cows sheep, fallen trees etc., we had fog signals which we strapped to the railway track. When the train went over these they let off a loud bang and this alerted the driver to stop the train.

The diesel train often broke down and could take three to four hours before it was back on tracks again as the fitters had to come out from Ennis on another engine.

In later years the station master used to ring ahead to inform the next level-crossing of the expected passing time of the

train. Before that the train driver would blow a loud whistle before the train approached the crossing.

It was a very responsible job.

By Sunny



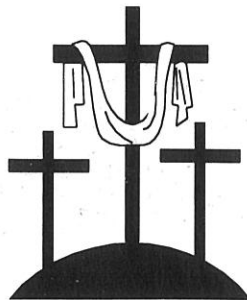
Lent

Lent comes once a year. It lasts for six weeks.

Oh! how I long for it to be over. I am off all sweets and biscuits.
Oh! I am so hungry.

How I long for Easter Sunday and a lovely Easter Egg.

By Annette



Holidays

My sister and I go to the beach in the Summer. We stay for a week in the White Strand outside Milltown Malbay. We go to the same place every year and have a great time, especially when the weather is fine.

My sister has two children aged thirteen and six and we bring them with us. I love swimming and building sand castles on the beach with them.

In the evenings, about seven or eight o'clock, we light a fire outdoors and have a barbecue. Sometimes we light candles as well, but we have to be careful not to let the children near them especially the six year old.

Some evenings we go into Milltown Malbay for a visit and to do some shopping. We don't go when the Willie Clancy festival is on because it gets too crowded. We prefer it to be quiet for the children, although the six year old loves the crowds.

We haven't set a date for our holiday this year, but I'm really looking forward to it.

By Kay

My Trip to Lourdes

Last year I went to Lourdes with the Killaloe Diocese. I was sponsored by Father Joe Hourigan. We arrived at Shannon Airport and our plane was delayed for seven hours. When I eventually arrived at Lourdes, I was so tired that I went straight to bed and was woken up just three hours later. I got out of bed, took a shower and had breakfast. Then I headed for the hospital with the other members of our group.

There were so many sick people in Lourdes looking for a miracle from Our Lady The Immaculate Conception. My job was to bring one of the old people from the hospital down to Mass and also to the grotto and the holy baths. We either pushed wheelchairs or pulled trolley chairs. It was very hot and the work was hard.

There were thousands of people at Lourdes and at night time the candle procession was just amazing. It was just beautiful. The grotto of Our Lady The Immaculate Conception is so nice and peaceful, especially at night time. I stayed at the grotto one particular evening until near midnight. I found great peace there and also great faith. We had our group photo taken and I'm glad I got one before I came home.

I'm hoping to return again to Lourdes with my husband next year. I felt fulfilled and it brought me back to the Church more. I spent five lovely days in Lourdes and also went to Spain for the day. It is a place you will never forget and will return to. I realise how lucky I was to have the opportunity to go and work in Lourdes and some day I will go back again as a helper, please God.

My sincere thanks to Father Joe Hourigan.

By Anne

My Family

I have one brother and one sister. I live with my mother and father during the holidays.

My sister Josephine is married to Gerry. She lives in Quin. She has three daughters.

My brother Tom lives in England.

By Bridget



My Plans for the Summer Holidays

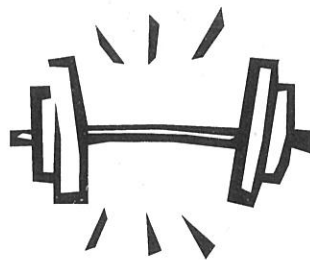
I am going on my summer holidays to Waterford for one week.

I am looking forward to going swimming during the holiday.

We will be doing weight lifting in the leisure centre.

I hope I will be able to go shopping as well.

By Nuala



Thank You Bill

When I was a teenager many years ago I went for a walk in the woods in Woodford. I got lost, as I turned right instead of left. If I had turned left I would have come out at the Grotto at the other side but it never happened as I went in too far and was not able to make my way back.

As it grew darker and darker I kept coming to dead ends. I got really frightened and scared as I could hear the branches shaking and making noises. I started running, but the strap of one of my sandals broke so I had to go bare footed.

Finally I saw the lights of a van and I ran towards it waving my sandal in the air. The driver was a man named Bill who was out looking for his cattle. He was very kind and brought me back in the van to where I was staying. He said he'd never forget the fright he got when he saw 'this lady like a drowned cat' running towards him waving a shoe in the air. My feet were all cut.

Only for Bill I don't know what would have happened to me that night. So many years later, thank you Bill.

By Mairead

My Favourite Season

Spring is my favourite season of the year. I like all the seasons but Spring is easily the best.

There are many reasons why I love Spring. The long, dreary, dull winter is over and life begins once more. In the gardens the flowers start to grow again and there is growth everywhere. It is lovely to see the daffodils in full bloom.

In the fields we notice many changes too. Young lambs play in the fields and in the warm sunshine. During those days I'm happy and light at heart. Everyone is happy because the weather is better and all look forward to balmy, sunny days in late Spring and throughout the whole Summer.

By Carl

