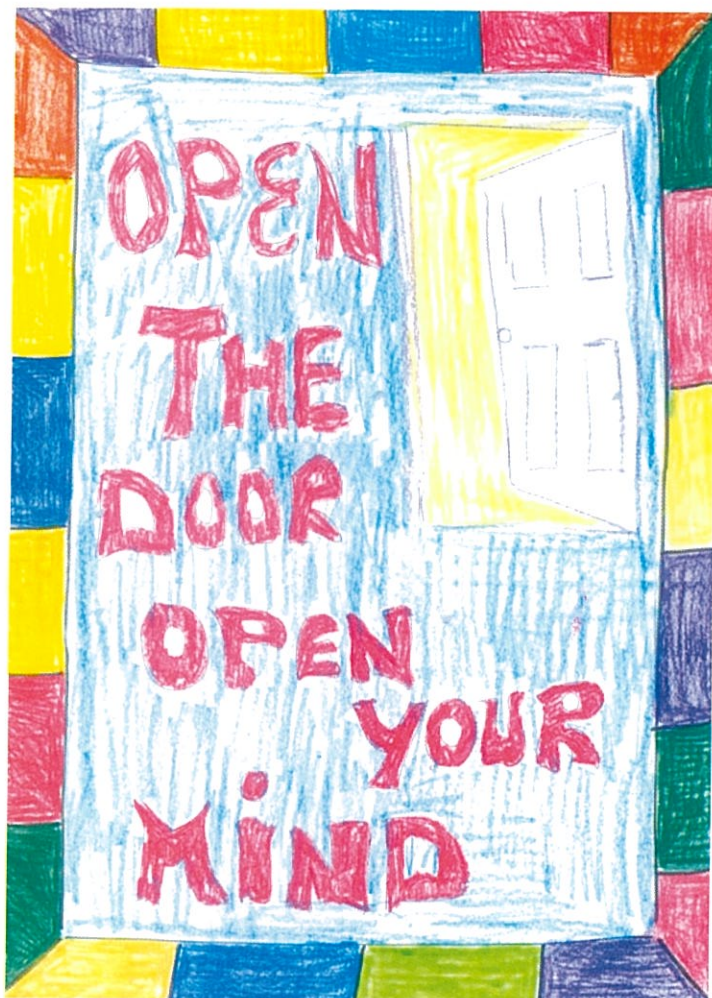


Simply Said 2006



Issue 18

Co. Clare VEC

Clare Adult Basic Education Service

*A Collection of Writings
by Students
of the
Co. Clare
Adult Basic Education Service*

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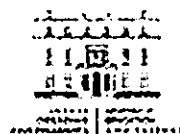
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Foreword

The students, tutors and staff of Clare Adult Basic Education Service are delighted to present the eighteenth issue of *Simply Said*, our annual student magazine.

The stories, jokes, poems and songs are a joy to read and reflect as always the issues which we all deal with on a daily basis, and those significant moments from the past that stay in our minds throughout a lifetime. These writings also display remarkable honesty and sincerity, which, despite some of the sad moments that are recalled, contribute to the 'feel-good' factor that makes you not want to put the book down once you start reading.

A sincere thank you to all the students, volunteer tutors and staff members who have helped in the organization and production of this year's *Simply Said*.

Most especially, congratulations to those of you whose work is represented here. Well done and thank you for your contributions.

Kieran

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Literacy – a Light in the Darkness

This is a story about my experiences of second-chance education and my desire to encourage and reach out to others who may benefit from literacy classes. It is also about my concern for a change in attitudes towards adults who may have problems with the written word in other education and training situations.

Two years ago at the age of 56, I finally decided that I had to learn to read and write. I could no longer survive on my wits. I was living a nightmare. Safe Pass courses were brought into the work place. I needed help.

My wife saw the advertisement in the Shannon Community Notes for the Clare Reading and Writing scheme. She phoned the number and made an appointment for me. When I arrived at the door I was very nervous, I did not know what to expect. I was made to feel very welcome and important. When I left I was full of confidence and hope for the future.

I attend class once a week on a one-to-one basis with my tutor. I feel that I have come a long way since that first night. I now enjoy learning to read and write. Slowly but surely, I am getting to the point where reading is a pleasure. I can go into the newsagents and read the headlines and pick out the most interesting story. I look forward to the day when I can read a book from cover to cover.

Unfortunately, problems with reading and writing continue to make life difficult for people of all ages in 2006. I know that there is some progress from the dark times of the 60's, 70's and 80's, but I would like to see something done to encourage adults with reading and writing problems to look for help, if it is available in their area.

One-to-one literacy is very important for the basic student who lacks the confidence to be part of a group. It is important to let people know that help is available for adults

with reading and writing difficulties. I would like to see the literacy service advertised regularly on local and community radio. I feel that local radio is a particularly good way to publicise the literacy service to those who are unable to read a poster, a leaflet or a newspaper.

Literacy classes can make a great difference in the lives of people who are struggling to cope with reading and writing problems. If these classes were available forty years ago, I would not have suffered so much for most of my adult life.

In addition to ongoing publicity about the literacy service, I would like to see a change in attitudes towards adults with reading and writing problems who are required to take part in education and training as part of their work. My experiences and those of other workers indicate that people involved in training such as FÁS, need to be aware that some adults doing health and safety courses may have difficulties with the way these courses are designed and presented. People doing such courses are skilled in the use of heavy machinery and have practical experience in various trades such as carpentry, electrical work, plumbing and many more. They may, however, have problems with reading, writing and various exercises involving the use of a large computer screen during the course. It is important that they are treated with dignity and respect as there have been some instances in which people have had their literacy difficulties highlighted.

Steps need to be taken to ensure that skilled and experienced workers, who need a Safe Pass card in order to continue working, are respectfully helped to complete the reading and writing exercises without loss of dignity or fear of humiliation.

Simply said, learning to read and write lets in the light and I hope that everyone involved in this important work will continue to light up the darkness.

By Tommy

Being a D.J.

I do D.J. in local pubs and clubs to earn some extra money. I have hundreds of CDs – far too many to name here.

All the equipment costs a lot of money, but it's worth it because I enjoy my music so much.

I play the music really loud. Some people give out about the noise but I take no notice of them – I don't turn it down – loud music is best.

By Michael

Fishing – An interview with Richard

Question: Where do you go fishing?

Answer: I go fishing in the river with my dad.

Q: What kind of fishing do you do?

A: I do trout fishing.

Q: What kind of weather is best?

A: It needs to be sunny with calm waters. It is hard to fish when it's windy.

Q: Do you catch many fish?

A: No, I don't catch many fish. My friends have all the tricks though.

Fishing tips:

- You need to be patient.
- Use worms, not flies.

Safety:

- Stand back from the river bank.
- Take care when you're putting on the bait.
- Take care when you are casting the line.

By Richard

Looking for a Full-Time Job in a Crèche

Last summer, I finished a childcare course and I was looking for a full-time job in a crèche. Things didn't go my way because I didn't have enough experience to get onto the career ladder. Then, at the end of the summer, I was told about a Diploma in Childcare and Education. After some thought, I decided to do it. It was going to be in Limerick in a small college called C.C.L. It was a two-year course, and I started it in September.

There are many different subjects covered in the Diploma, some of them are as follows:

1. Observation
2. Working with young children
3. Working with babies in their first year of life
4. Preparation for employment
5. Foundation to caring

For this Diploma, I had to work for sixty days in a crèche of my choice for two days a week over a thirty-week period. I really enjoyed it.

Next year, I will be in a primary school. I'm really looking forward to it. Then, after this course, I really would love to get a full-time job in a crèche in Ennis or elsewhere if I can't find one in Ennis.

I really like and enjoy working with babies and children.

By Jeananne

My Life

I was born in Harrow in 1962. I was the oldest of nine children. I went to school in the Marino Clinic in Bray for six years. I left Bray in 1977 when I was fourteen. There were children from all over Ireland in the school. I learned to walk there and I had many good times.

After that I went to Baldoyle. It was a bigger school run by the Sisters of Charity. I didn't do the Leaving Cert. It was too hard for me.

I came back to Clare in 1981 and stayed at home. I was fed up at home. There was very little I could do.

I started in Enable Ireland in 2003. It's a 54 mile round trip every weekday. I made a lot of friends since I came to the centre and I get on well with the staff.

That is my life story so far.

By Patrick

Girls Aloud

My favourite band is Girls Aloud. They are a band of five girls who are very popular at the moment. They have a few great songs like 'I'll Stand by You'. They were on a television programme called 'Pop stars' and they were voted winners by the judges after they had sung lots of songs. I like them because they have a good dress sense. Nadine Coyle is my favourite out of the band. She is twenty-one and has brown hair, brown eyes and she's very thin – only a size six! I think she's the best singer out of the band and the best looking too.

By Martin

My Trip to Knock

Every year, my friend and I go to Knock in Co. Mayo for a night vigil. We get the bus from The Old Ground Hotel in Ennis at eight o'clock and arrive in Knock around half ten. We bring the flask of tea and sandwiches to have on the way home. We get a meal when we arrive there.

We start the night vigil with a rosary as we walk around the Church of the Apparition. We then do a 'holy hour' in the church, which is followed by a candlelight procession around the grounds. At three o'clock, we do the Stations of the Cross outdoors. It is great when the night is fine.

There are a lot of priests there usually. We finish with mass at four o'clock and are ready to set off home by five o'clock. I am normally very tired by the time I arrive back home, so I go to bed for a couple of hours' rest.

By Eileen

Getting my Money

I look forward to going to the Post Office every Wednesday to get my bit of money. I bring it back to the Day Centre and get the nurse to check it. After I've paid my bills, rent and lunch, I treat myself to a cup of coffee and a bun in the café up the lane.

I save a good few bob every week and every now and again I buy some new clothes. I love buying presents for my friends for Christmas and Easter.

By Bernadette

A Visit

Ann Jones lives in the village with her husband and son. She is loving and kind and she has a lovely musical quality in her voice. When I arrive at the village, she makes me feel welcomed. Chatting over a cup of tea, she tells me all her stories. She comes from a farming background. In her younger days, she would milk the cows in the mornings and in the evenings; she helped around the farm by feeding the cattle and other similar tasks.

She married Tom who worked with the ESB. They bought a house in the village and they were happy. Tom died ten years ago. Their only child, John, is now grown up and working with the ESB in Dublin. Sometimes he comes home at the weekends. Next June, he is getting married to a Limerick girl he met in Dublin.

Ann goes into town once a month on the bus to go shopping. I enjoy our chats over tea.

By Tony

TV

Thank God for TV. I am not interested in playing sports but I love watching TV. I watch all the soaps, 'Eastenders', 'Fair City', 'Coronation Street' and 'Emmerdale'. I also enjoy a good film now and then. TV is great company and a great way to pass the time.

By Kenneth

Vale of Avoca

This happened in the Vale of Avoca in Co. Wicklow. The Lord of the Manor, who was a retired lieutenant colonel, was out walking one morning. His dog found a tramp sleeping at the exact spot where the bright waters meet, which Thomas Moore wrote about the Vale of Avoca: 'There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet, as that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet'.

The Lord shook the tramp and told him to move off his estate. The tramp got up, shook himself, cleaned the sleep off his eyes and said, "If the Lord pleases, if Tom Moore had to sleep without blanket or sheet, and wake up in the morning and start off on the roads having nothing to eat, with no shoes to his feet, it wouldn't trouble him much where the bright waters meet."

By John Joe

My Goal

I have had a goal for years but thought I would never achieve it, that is, being able to swim.

I overcame the fear of water years ago and, while I have been going into the swimming pool for some time, I just couldn't get the hang of swimming.

I have recently mastered the art thanks to the patience and guidance I got from Amy, a young girl on work experience with the Brothers of Charity in Ennis. I can now lift my feet and float in the water. It feels great so there's no stopping me now. I'm looking forward to my time in the pool every week and know that I've finally achieved my goal.

By Dorothy

Doing the Farm Work

In spring, we started to prepare the garden for potatoes and vegetables. We first dug it with the fork. We got the garden rotivated, then got drills made and we then planted the seed on top of the drills, set the cabbage plants in the drills and the potatoes (which had been cut in half). The next big job was going to the bog to cut and save the turf. We had to cut enough to heat the house and cook the food for a year. We cut the turf with a *slán*, which was a spade with an extra side to it. It took many weeks and a lot of turning and stacking before it was dry enough to bring home.

By the end of June, we were looking at the hay in the meadow and at the sky if the weather was promised good, we hired a tractor and mower and cut the hay. It was usually a local fellow that cut the hay. We then saved it ourselves, making trams and in later years, making bales. Bringing home the hay was always a big day – five or six of the neighbours came to help in the early days. We made reeks, but later we got a barn. We tried to get it in as quickly as possible.

By Thomas

Key Worker

I have a key worker and her name is Claire. A key worker is like a one-to-one helper and I can talk to her if there is something bothering me or if I need to get something. She guides me and advises me on how to manage my money. I consider her a friend and am glad she is in my life.

By Nuala

Handbags

A lot of people like shoes but I like handbags. I buy a new one every few weeks. I like the lovely coloured ones that are in the shops now. A few weeks ago, I bought a turquoise one in Dunnes. They are the best place. They have a great selection and the prices are good.

I try to match my handbag to my clothes. Today, I have a bright yellow bag; maybe I should have brought my turquoise one to match my t-shirt!

I prefer small ones; the big bags are too heavy and awkward to carry. Sometimes I get carried away and buy a bag just because it is bright and colourful for the summer but when I go to use it, it's too big. I have a few of them at home in the wardrobe.

I've bought about twenty bags in the last year. It's time to clear some of them out of the wardrobe to make way for some new ones.

By Celia

The Forest

So soothing are the sounds in wood
And if you listen carefully
The birds' song is so beautiful
Small creatures run for cover
You too should try the beautiful forest.

By Jed

My Story about Dominica

This year for Christmas, I am going to England to visit my grandmother. I haven't seen her in seven years now! Speaking to her on the phone, she has told me all that she can about this tiny island in the Caribbean, near larger Martinique.

She told me that people from America went there and took the Dominican people and sold them as slaves in America, and when they were sold they had to take their owner's name. Some escaped and tried to go to other countries like England, but it took them years and years to get away from their hard life.

I am doing a project about Dominica, which I have dedicated to my baby niece, Alicia Mary Jane. The following is an extract from my project:

Dominica is the least changed island since the Caribbean was first settled by Europeans. Christopher Columbus gave the island its name (in Spanish, *Domingo*, which means *Sunday*) in 1493, because they discovered it on a Sunday. Fierce disputes between the British and French over the island's ownership were finally settled in 1805, when the French left the island after extracting a ransom of £12000 (then US\$ 53000) from the British.

Dominica became an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1978, with an elected president as a head of state. Many of the island's place-names remain French and some of the inhabitants, who are mostly descendants of African slaves, still speak a French patois. On a reserve in the northeast of the island, there are several hundred caribs, the native Indians who originally inhabited the islands and after whom the Caribbean is named. But they have lost most of their original culture and language, and live in much the same way as their black neighbours.

By Kathrina

Many Years Ago

Two friends of mine, Mike Joe and Jack had a race from Crusheen to Ballinruan. Mike Jo was in the lorry and Jack was on the motorbike.

Mike Joe tore off to Ballinruan on the motorbike. He got worried about Jack and went back to look for him. He found him in over the wall in a ditch full of water and he had to pull him out of it.

Jack had nothing hurt but his pride and Mike Joe was declared the winner.

Those were the days when there was no traffic on the roads. They wouldn't be able to do it now!

By John

The Black and Tans

I remember when I was younger my mother telling me what it was like when she was young. She was afraid of the Black and Tans when she was coming home from school in Lisheen. They used to search houses for people that might be hiding.

The children used to take short cuts through the fields. My father, who was from Newmarket, told me that one night a group of Black and Tans were drinking in the village. They were driving home and crashed into the pillars at the entrance of Dromoland. Half of them were killed and that's why they say the gates of Dromoland are haunted now.

By Teresa

Trip to London

My uncle brought my mother and me to England for my cousin's confirmation. We flew out from Knock airport and into Stansted.

We bought presents in the Duty Free for our family in London. Stansted airport is very big and very busy. There was lots of noise. Airplanes were taking off and landing. People were arriving at the airport and leaving. Outside on the street, there were tunnels and roadworks.

We went to my cousin's confirmation on a Saturday and had a great day. We went to the park another day. My cousins played football there. We went to lots of shops. Altogether, we stayed a week in my uncle's house.

I missed London when I left.

By Kieran

Plane Crash

I was working as part of the Airport Police, the Fire Crew and Search and Rescue when 'The President' plane crashed. It was full of German farmers heading for America. It was dreadful, very distressing. The plane went straight down - 86 died and only one escaped.

By Ned

Dialogue

At the Apartment

Bertie: Hello, how are you getting on Mary?

Mary: Fine, thank you. Welcome to my new apartment Bertie. What do you think of it?

Bertie: Oh, it's lovely; I love the press and drawers. What's the name of that paint colour on the walls?

Mary: Sky blue from Crown. Are you just in from Dublin? Would you like something to drink?

Bertie: Yes, those reporters won't go away. I'm exhausted. I can't sleep with them annoying me. I'd love a cup of tea.

Mary: Here you are. You should go home and go to bed. I need to talk to you about certain things like the hospital waiting lists and the unions.

Bertie: Can we finish those notes tomorrow? I hope I don't get sick tonight, there are no beds in the local hospital here. There are fifty people on trolleys this evening.

Mary: Oh! Don't worry about that. I'll make sure you get a bed. Goodbye, see you tomorrow.

*By Ger, Anna, Marion, Paul, Ger, Phil B,
Phil O'R, Veronica, Josie, Desiree*

Olga

My name is Olga. I am from Russia. I came to Ireland three years ago. I am married. My husband's name is Roman. He has fair hair. He is a strong and tall man. We have a small daughter. Our daughter's name is Kamilla. She is 1 year and 6 months old. She has big blue eyes and fair hair. She is a beautiful and good girl. She likes going for a walk and shopping with me very much.

We live in Ennis. We have a merry and happy family.

By Olga

My Sister

When my sister died in the 1940's, she was the third child of six in the family. She was only 14. She was laid out in the house. She died of pneumonia as there was no penicillin in those days. The hearse was drawn by horses. It came to the house in the Quin area. We didn't live far from the church. She had just finished national school. It was very sudden and within a week she was dead. My mother was heartbroken.

By Frances

Work Experience

I have been doing work experience in the Dog Grooming Parlour which is situated in the Pet Supermarket in the Gort Road Industrial Estate. My boss there is Barbara who is a qualified dog groomer.

I was looking after all types of dogs, helping to bath and dry them and calm them if they were nervous. There were big dogs and small dogs for example spaniels, terriers, shitsus, labradors, collies and a Pomeranian. I learned lots of things about dogs that I didn't know before.

By Joan

Wedding in Chicago

My sister Vera and her daughter are going to a wedding in Chicago in September. My nephew, Brian, is getting married to a nice girl. They're getting married in the 'fall' (that's what they call autumn in America). I am not going. I am staying at home with James to mind the house. I prefer to go to the Day Care Centre to be with my friends. I am glad not to be going. The flight takes too long and I don't want to be sick or go to hospital with the chest. The family are very excited; the cases are ready and full of clothes.

By Marie

Wellness Course

I am doing a wellness course every Monday. My blood pressure and weight are measured every week and our diet is looked into. We have a blood test at the start of the course for cholesterol and diabetes and, also, my urine was checked at the beginning of the course.

I can take one spoon of sugar in my tea and I try to drink eight glasses of water every day.

I do exercises. I like going to the wellness class because we dance the Caledonian set. I am not a good dancer but I enjoy it immensely.

By Mary

Boxing

Boxing is my hobby. I go boxing three times a week in Limerick. I enjoy doing it because it is a great sport. I'm in the lightweight division. My weight is 60 kilos, and I'm sixteen years old.

I have been boxing for four years. I have been in the last two Munster finals.

Here is my workout. I run four times a week. I do a lot of pad work, skipping, push-ups and sit-ups. I also do bag work and shadowboxing and squats. I have to watch what I eat because I have to stay the right weight.

I watch a few fights before my ones; it helps me to settle in the ring. I'm friendly with my opponents in the ring but, inside, we're enemies.

By Martin

Good Healthy Work

My father was a farmer and my mother was a housewife. They had five children. We all walked to school about two miles. The school is now Vaughan's garage. I played football with Miltown Malbay, minor and junior. I played the accordion with Alfie Marrinan, Kilkee. We had a band. We travelled around the county with the band playing in hotels and halls. I still listen to and enjoy music.

We lived on a good farm near the sea. We raised cattle and cows, worked horses and my mother had fowl for the house and for sale. In summer we saved the turf in the bog, which we enjoyed during the winter. We saved hay for the animals. It was good healthy hard work. We had good neighbours and we helped one another.

In 1945, the war was on in Europe and it seemed far away from west Clare until one day, a German plane came down at the rear of our house. The pilot could not speak English and my father found that he was not hurt and called the Gardaí who took him away and he most likely spent the rest of the war in a camp in Kildare. A trailer came and took the plane away at a later stage.

In 1947, a ploughing match took place in one of our fields. People from all over the county and country were there. Mr Brassil won the match and many locals took part.

By John

Great Events

In 1979, I was at Ballybrit in Galway to see Pope John Paul 2nd. I went with my two brothers by car. We did not get very near the pope but there was a great atmosphere, a lot of music and talk and young people from all over the country and the sky rose 50 feet when the pope said 'Young people of Ireland, I love you!' The place was all mud but we did not mind.

The next big day in my life was at Croke Park in 1995 when Clare beat Offaly by one point. I had been following Clare all my life and never thought we would win the All Ireland. It is almost a blur, the excitement was so great. Clare shut down for weeks after. Many people said they would die happy. We won again in 1997. It was just as good the second time around. We enjoyed it more as we knew what it was about. I hope it happens again in my lifetime.

By PJ

Some of my Favourite Things

I like to buy books and I get help from my tutor to read them. I love to write stories down from my books and I like to watch the television. My favourite soaps are 'Fair City' and 'Coronation Street'. I love to watch the 'Late, Late Show' and 'ER'. I like to walk each day and I work at SuperValu on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I love my work.

By Kathleen

Antelope Against Snail

Once upon a time, in a small village of the lower Congo, there was a proud antelope that mocked a snail for being so slow. Every time they met each other, it was only the same merry-go-round. One day, the poor snail said to his friend, "I know you think you're better, always boasting. You think you're the best, but you forget you can't be like that with everything. One thing I have to let you know. I'm a better, faster runner than you are." Immediately, when the antelope heard that, he said, "Tomorrow we will race at 1 o'clock, from the big oak tree to the last fountain. Then we'll see who is the fastest. If you win, I promise I'll respect your dignity." At that time, the poor snail knew that he wouldn't win the race, so he went directly to visit his uncle to tell him about it. Both of them agreed that the only way the snail could win, would be by cheating. The snail would begin the race (by the big oak) and his uncle would finish by the last fountain.

The next day, the race took place and the snail won. During the race, the antelope did everything to win, but it was all in vain. He didn't suspect that there were two snails instead of one.

The moral of the story is that everyone is who they are. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses.

By Françoise

School Days

When I was a girl, I had to walk three miles to school, and when I came home I had to do plenty of jobs, like polish my brother's shoes and do messages.

By Kay

Camping at the Graveyard

Once upon a time myself, Mikey, and a few other pals decided to go camping for the night. It was Halloween night. I'll never forget it.

We'd all been trying to decide where to camp. Between us all at the finish we decided to camp down near the graveyard. "We'll have a great night tonight boys," we all said. Little did we know what was going to happen.

We all met up about half five and off we went. When we landed by the graveyard near the edge of the woods, we put the tents up. Everything was ready by seven o'clock, fire lighting, slugging each other, having the laugh. Two hours passed, it was nine o'clock. The fire was going low. Everyone had taken turns getting sticks for the fire. Now it was Mikey's turn. We all had a few cans to drink, well on it the six of us, but we still knew what we were doing, except Mikey. He was drunk.

Off went Mikey into the woods. It was about ten past nine. The rest of us were still drinking away, having a laugh. Time passed by. I checked my watch at one point. It was nearly ten, no sign of Mikey! I said to the boys, "There's something wrong. Why is Mikey gone so long?" It only took us about ten minutes to come back with the sticks." No one answered. "We'll give him another five minutes; if he's not back, we'll have to go and find him," the boys said. "We're not going into the woods. God knows what could happen there, especially now it's pitch dark. You won't see your hands in there!" Ten minutes passed. I said, "Boys come on, we have to look for him." "No," they said, "you go off, we'll wait for him here."

I left the campfire and went looking for Mikey. I was walking for about ten minutes. Suddenly, I found myself lost in the woods and started to get scared. I heard an eerie voice. "I'm coming to get you." It was the Banshee! I started to panic. I ran as fast as I could but I was getting nowhere.

Next, I heard a voice through the bushes. I said, "Is that you Mike?" No reply. Then this light came out of nowhere. I stood behind the tree. It was a light from a car passing by. I knew then that we were close to the road.

It went dark again. All of a sudden I heard a voice calling, "Help, help!" but I didn't know where it was coming from. I said to myself, "Please God help me to find him and get us out of here."

I looked around; I'll never forget it. There was Mikey in the ditch, broke up and left for dead. I'd finally found him. I checked my watch – it had been two hours I'd been looking for him. I went over to him, "Mikey are you all right?" He moaned, but somehow managed to get to his feet. I gave him a hand. His face was scratched and bleeding.

I looked towards the road again to see if we could get a lift to the hospital from someone passing by. We were walking about twenty minutes when this car came towards us. I flagged it down. The driver rolled down the window and asked, "Is everything alright?" I said, "Will you just bring us to the hospital fast? I'll tell you everything on the way!" We bundled in; I rang the boys back at the camp. The driver heard a story he'll never forget.

By Pa

Hilary Duff

My favourite actress is Hilary Duff, but she is also a singer. She has a new single coming out soon called 'Beat of My Heart'. I already have a CD of hers and it's very good. I'm going to write to her and ask for her photograph. I already have an autograph from Avril Lavigne. I like her too, and I have some of her CDs and DVDs.

By Brendan

Ennis – The Town I Live In

Ennis is the county town and administrative centre of Clare. The Irish name for the town is *Inis*, which means 'island' – the river Fergus flows through and around the town, forming an island.

Shannon airport is only a fifteen-minute drive, which makes Ennis a convenient first stop for tourists arriving from the US, UK and Europe. The compact nature of the town with its narrow lanes and courtyards makes it ideal for sightseeing and shopping. There are many hotels, restaurants and pubs providing good food, hospitality and traditional music in the evenings. The Ennis Friary, De Valera library, the cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the riches of Clare museum are all in the centre of town.

Famous people with Ennis connections include the Kings of Thomond, the O'Brien family and politicians Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stewart Parnell and Eamon De Valera.

There are several places close to Ennis that are worth a visit – Clare Abbey, Quin Abbey, Franciscan Friary, Knappogue Castle, the Craggaunowen Bronze Age project, Dysart O'Dea Castle Archaeological Centre, the Clare Heritage Centre at Corofin and the Burren Display Centre in Kilfenora. They all attract many visitors. The Tourist Information Office in Ennis can provide more detailed information.

The county has activities to suit all tastes – golf, horse riding, fishing (sea, river and lake) walking and cycling, to name a few. There is also surfing in Lahinch and Spanish Point. Spectators can enjoy hurling, gaelic football, association football and rugby.

The unique and beautiful countryside of the Burren must be seen. Doolin, Lahinch, Liscannor, Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaughan, the Cliffs of Moher and Ailwee Caves are all near the sea in west Clare while Lough Derg, Killaloe and Mountshannon are popular places in the east of the country

on the river Shannon. Bunratty Castle and Folk Park near Shannon airport is very popular or, for a brief taste of the big city Galway is 50km and Limerick only 30km.

Ennis is the gateway to Clare, a county renowned for its warmth and hospitality. Ennis is my home. I like the place. I think you will to.

By Carl

My New House

We have built a new house beside my aunt's. It is a dormer bungalow and it has four bedrooms, and I have a bedroom for myself. The dining kitchen is very big and there is a separate living room. My room is downstairs next to the kitchen and bathroom with shower in it. I can see the sea from the back of the house. There are many things to do before we can move into this new house. We need to put in a new fridge and the cooker and all the things in the living room. We have been sanding doors and floors and have painted the walls. But the plumbing is not finished yet. It has taken a long time to build this house. I'm really looking forward to moving in.

By Máiread

Killing the Pig

Killing the pig was a big event in every farmhouse many years ago. Usually a wet day was the norm in my part of the country. A few days before the neighbours would be told of the event and about mid-morning on the day, the neighbours would gather all ready for the job. Usually four men would take part. The table would be brought outside and my dad would go to the pig-sty to get the pig and put a rope on his head and then lead him outside. The pig would then be lifted onto the table, where there would be a lot of screaming from him. But only for a little while, then my dad would pierce the pig's throat with a big knife to draw blood. In the meantime, my mum would be there with the pan to hold the blood which would be saved to make the black puddings. In the kitchen my mum would put on a pot of hot water ready for washing the pig, whilst the younger members of the family had buckets of cold water ready nearby for washing the inside of the carcass. My dad would then get the ladder out with the help of the other men and would lift the pig onto it. Then he would proceed to open up the pig by cutting down the middle of his belly. This is when the cold water is needed. My dad would then proceed to take out all the intestines, and he would keep some of these and they would be cleaned and saved for the making of the black puddings.

My dad always saved the bladder of the pig for us and he would blow it up like a balloon and hang it up to dry for a few days. After that we could play with it like a football. The pig was then left hanging for a few days so that it would harden up, and it would be easy to cut up. Salting of the pig is another day's work and another story for another time, but you can't imagine the taste of pork steaks and black puddings from the pig. I can still taste it and it was so much better than anything that we get now:

By Sheila

A Few of my Favourite Things

My name is Edward and I live near Miltown Malbay. My favourite subjects are reading, writing, gardening, computers, soccer and music. My favourite soccer teams are Ireland and Manchester United. At the weekends, I watch the matches on the television and then I listen to music. I like watching the football teams in Clare playing at home and away.

I like playing games on the PlayStation. My favourite playstation game is 'Buzz'. I like 'Buzz' because it has a lot of questions on music. The questions that would be on the game would be very hard.

My favourite bands are the 'Red Hot Chilli Peppers'. I also like Pat Shortt's song called 'The Jumbo Breakfast Roll'. The reason I like this song is because it is funny because he sings it in a funny way.

I like to read 'The Clare Champion' every Thursday evening and I like to read the sports part because there is news of all the sporting events around the county. These are football, hurling, soccer, golf and rugby. I am interested in going to the gym every Friday morning. The gym is good for your fitness. Exercise is very good for your health. It will keep you in good condition.

By Edward

Quotations

If you cannot be nice, be as nice as you can.
Don't worry about middle age; you'll grow out of it!

By Martin

Going Out

I like going out on a Saturday night, and I go with my mother and father. I always have 7up to drink. I meet up with my friends and we always have a good laugh. I look forward to Saturday night.

By Colette

Metalwork

I live on a farm with my parents and my brother John who is also my godfather. My father and mother have retired from farming so John and I run the farm now. We have cows, calves and cattle. John works as a builder also and I work at the centre every day. I work in the workshop with Michel, making clocks. I work with Eddie, making rings and jewellery. I also sort clothes that are sent to poor countries. I am doing metalwork in the Tech. in Ennistymon and last year I did woodwork. I am very busy and I like metalwork the best. I hope I can continue doing it.

By Michael

My Dreams

I dreamed of walking on the sea,
But that is impossible for me,
For I am seated as you can see,
Then I awoke and learned some more!

By Shane

The Life of a Sunflower

I started out as a small oval shape. I was placed into a large pot of very wet and cold stuff called water with a lot of other things that looked just like me. I heard someone say, "We can take the seeds out of the water now and sow them in the greenhouse." I was then placed into very soft stuff known as compost. We were all left there for what seemed a very long time. Then, one day, I thought something seemed strange. I had a little green sprout coming from my head. Then, some time passed and I was taken from there and placed in a very large field with other little things that looked like me.

Some time went by and I grew taller and taller, and all of a sudden, I had a very pretty head. I had a very beautiful yellow flower outside a very large centre of greenish brown, which I learned were seeds just like I had been.

One day there was a lot of strange noises and I looked to see that all my friends and me were just cut down from where we stood. I was horrified and very scared, as to know what was going to happen to me now. I was thrown onto the back of a big flat lorry and taken to a large building. I was placed onto a rubber belt and all my green leaves were taken off. I was turned and whirled and turned and twirled until I was very dizzy. I ended up in a big sack and was taken off to a big store room. A lot of things seemed to be going on there. I was placed in a little plastic bag and learned that I was to be sent to a big store to be sold. I was called a sunflower seed and a lot of my other sunflower friends were used for sunflower oil and creams, butter and so many other items that are very healthy for people to eat and to cook with. I'm happy I'm a sunflower seed.

By Pippa

Moving On

In June 2006, I will be moving from The Brothers of Charity workshop on the Gort Road to the training centre in Clonroad, Ennis.

I will miss my friends but I'm looking forward to the change. I already have some friends in the training centre and will enjoy the challenge of doing new things and meeting new people. I like computers and will be doing a computer course. This is a big move for me.

By Desmond

Arriving in Amsterdam

I went to Holland in 1987. I was 17 years old. I left Ghana in March, when it was very warm, and six hours later I arrived in a cold country (Holland, Amsterdam). I thought to myself it was going to rain.

In Holland, there are lots of canals and bridges. There are lots of people riding bicycles.

Dutch people say, 'schoonmaken' instead of 'cleaning'. Amsterdam has long enchanted its visitors. Featuring the extraordinary architecture of the city – along with its canals, streets and interesting people – 'Amsterdam Always' portrays the city in all its grandeur, as it has never been seen before.

The wooden bridge across the Amstel River, The Magere Brug or 'Skinny Bridge' lent its name to the city itself.

By Margaret

Living in Canada

I was born in Canada and lived there for 32 years, so I guess I'm Canadian.

My parents and I came to live in Ireland in 1993 leaving my sister and two brothers, nieces and nephews behind. I miss them very much especially my sister. I talk to them on the phone all the time but it's not the same.

The lifestyle in Canada was different. For instance, you guys don't have ice hockey here and the main language there is French. I don't speak French myself as both my parents are from Belfast, so English is our first language.

Believe it or not, I like the weather here in Ireland! The summers in Montreal are too hot and the winters too cold; at least the weather here is fairly O.K. - a twelve month wet season.

I really like living in Ireland and I don't really want to go back to Canada, but I'd love it if the rest of my family came to live here also.

By Trish

Bird Watching

I did a bird watching course in Kilrush. I started the course in October 2005. During the course, I was shown different slides of different birds. Our tutor also brought in stuffed birds of all different varieties. By the end of the course, I was able identify a lot of birds. I enjoyed this course and I will be giving a course on bird watching in Labasheeda in September and I'm looking forward to it.

By Orla

An Accident

One Sunday afternoon my husband John, my daughters Ailish and Joan and myself, decided to go for a drive. The girls wanted to do something different so John and I decided to take them go-carting. This meant driving to Limerick.

Limerick was particularly busy because lots of families were taking advantage of the summer's day. We were driving along the main street, right of way being ours, until someone decided otherwise. A car aiming for Cecil St. shot out of Catherine St. and banged right into us.

Luckily, John and the girls escaped injury. I ended up with a pulled muscle and badly bruised chest-bone and am still paying the price. The car was a write-off. The go-carting was put off for another day, but we will have another Sunday outing to look forward to.

By Joan

Our Davy

I am from Sixmilebridge or, as we say, 'The Bridge' and Davy Fitz. is one of my favourite people.

He is a great 'Bridge' man as well as a great representative for the county. I often attend the training sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We are preparing for the championship and hope to win it out with Davy's help. Even though Davy is very well known throughout Ireland, he always has time for the local club. We are very proud of this great Clare man.

By Ronan

The Story of Newmarket-on-Fergus

I lived in Knocksaggart, Newmarket-on-Fergus and then moved in 1978 to Kilnasoolagh Park. I was small when I moved. My parents are from Newmarket also. I have two brothers and one sister. It is a nice place to live. We have a Catholic Church and it is named Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Most Holy Rosary. It is situated in the main street. There are three priests in the parish and there is also an adult choir. There is also a Protestant Church near the village.

After more than a century of single sex education, the boys' and girls' schools amalgamated on September 1st 2000. The school originally existed at a site close to the local library but moved in 1959 to the current location. The historic amalgamation, a major event in the life of the parish, was celebrated with a Mass in the school hall to further mark the event. A Red Oak was blessed by Fr. Oakley and planted by Ronan, the youngest child in the school at the time. As a result of the merger, the school now enjoys very favourable staffing levels with 12 teachers, including learning support and resource teachers. Along with the normal primary school curriculum both French and German are available to senior students. Ballet, music and Irish dancing can be enjoyed as extra-curricular activities within the school.

Our national games are well catered for with hurling, football and camogie enthusiastically played. There is also a handball alley and a hall where badminton and bingo is held.

There are two hotels. They are named Dromoland and the Clare Inn. Many tourists come every year from all over the world. There is also a nursing home in the area. It is called Carrigoran Nursing Home. There are six pubs in the village, three of these have restaurants. There is also a Chinese take-away, a chip shop and pizza place. There is also a library, credit union, post office, Garda barracks, chemist, butcher and clothes shop, along with two large supermarkets and a

small newsagent. We have three hairdressers, two garages and a laundry.

A very important part of Newmarket-on-Fergus is the Obair Organisation. It was set up in 1993 in order to help the people of the area. A new centre was built to provide more facilities and these include welfare and health information, a base for healthcare professionals, community training, childcare training, child protection training, first aid and Fetac courses.

The Environment group look after the enhancement of the village. They are responsible for grass cutting, maintenance, cleaning windows, flowers and shrubs. They also look after Dr. O'Regan Park and keep it very well.

The crèche provides care for children from three months to school going age and also have an after school play club.

Newmarket-on-Fergus is in a very good location. It is near Shannon airport, Shannon Town Centre and Shannon Industrial Estate. A lot of tourists visit the area, especially Bunratty Castle and Folk Park.

By Christine

Miltown

My sister lives in Miltown. I go to her at Easter and Christmas. They live on a farm and they have cows, cats and dogs. I prefer cats to any other of the animals.

By Mary

Star of Cairo

The Star of Cairo was a constellation aircraft that crashed on Christmas week of 1946. There was low fog coming in from Paris to Shannon. We could hear the plane passing over the airport. The radio tower stopped hearing messages from it.

I worked for Aer Lingus, they wanted six workers to go out and I was one of the ones sent. An American aircraft mechanic had oily clothes. We put them on sticks and lit them as a way of seeing in the dark. Johnny Cleary was the herdsman on a nearby island where the plane had crashed. He brought us to where the plane was blazing. Clifford Sparrow was the co-pilot. He kept asking, "Is Tanzy alright?" We replied, "Aw, she is, she is," a few times. It turned out it was the Captain's name and he was all right.

By John Joe

Diet and Exercise

I'm on a diet and exercise programme in the Day Care Centre. I love sausages but I can't have them and I love salt but I can't have salt either. I sneak a couple of sausages now and again when nobody sees me. I keep losing weight and putting it on again. Maybe the sausages are to blame. I hate exercising but I do it every Monday and then the nurse checks our blood pressure. I'm looking forward to the summer when all my clothes will fit me. At least I feel much healthier on the diet.

By Margaret

My Christmas Day

In my house, there are seven or eight people on Christmas day, including five kids. Usually, I get up around twelve or one. My mother cooks the dinner. The family helps.

We have all the trimmings including parsnips, roast and mash potatoes, white parsley sauce and gravy. Then we have trifle in a huge glass bowl, with coloured sprinkles on top. My parents have red wine and we have Coke.

After that, we clear the table. At about three o'clock, I ring my friends and we go to the pub. We stay there for a while and then maybe go to a party. Next day, I have a sleep in.

By Patrick

Staying in Ireland

My name is Oumar. I'm from Guinea in West Africa. I'm twenty years old. I'm in the Youth Centre for five months and I'm waiting to get my certificates. When I do, I would like to get a nice job, maybe as a plumber. I am in Ireland about two and a half years. I want to go to Guinea for my holidays and have a nice time.

After working here in Ireland, I would like to get married when I turn twenty-seven, and I would like to have my first child when I'm twenty-nine. After all that, I would like to have my own house and car, and live with my family.

By Oumar

Getting my Hair Done

My name is Patrice. I live in Miltown Malbay. I have one brother and he is married in England. I miss him so much. I live at home with my Mum and Dad.

I love getting my hair done for going out on Saturday nights. I got extensions in my hair for my birthday. It took two and a half hours to put them in. They were sewn into my head! They were lovely but it really hurt.

Taking them out was a big problem. My mum was all day and all night doing it. I was roaring at her because it hurt so much. I will never get extensions in my hair again.

I would love to do hairdressing and I would never hurt other people the way I got hurt. I also love shopping and buying the whole shop out if I can. I love getting my nails done.

By Patrice

A Busy Year

I had a very busy year last year. I was in Kerry for a week and Inis Oírr for a few days. My niece got married last December in Limerick and I had a lovely red suit for it.

I am knitting squares for a blanket and have about fifty done now. I do a lot of work on the computer and I love to bake cakes and buns. I work with Linda on the knitting and Eddie on the jewellery. I come to the centre every day and I love to go shopping and eating out. I like music and going for a drink.

By Margaret

My Trip to Salthill

During the Easter holidays, I went away with a group of friends to Salthill for two nights.

We stayed in a hotel. We went for walks along the strand. The weather was beautiful. At night, we had music and a sing-song in the hotel. The food was beautiful and we were very sorry to leave Salthill.

On the way home, we stopped in Clarenbridge for tea and sandwiches. We had a lovely break.

By Phillis

What I Watch

I used to watch 'Coronation Street' but I don't watch it anymore because it's no good. I watch everything and anything. We have ten channels. I would like the satellite because there would be more on it.

I like to watch a bit of hurling if there's a good match on but I don't really like any other sport.

I have a TV in my bedroom but I'd rather watch the one in the sitting room with my family. I don't really have any other past-times. I used to have an exercise machine but it's broken so I don't do that anymore. Now I just watch TV.

By Deirdre

President McAleese

I was honoured to meet and speak to our President Mary McAleese and her husband, Dr. McAleese, in November 2005.

She was in Ennis to officially launch the housing initiative of the Brothers of Charity

It was a good feeling to meet the best-known and most important lady in Ireland. It doesn't happen every day. She is so easy to talk to. She is a marvellous speaker. I know because I heard her at the microphone

The best thing for me was the bunch of flowers. I brought them up to her, and they matched her coat. I liked the red suit she wore. She gave me a hug and said, "Thank you for the beautiful flowers," and I had my photo taken with her. If she comes again, I will make her a cup of tea. I didn't get the chance the last time because of the crowd of people.

By Jill

To Mother

As time rolls on,
Things may change,
But there is one thing
You can rely upon
No matter when or where,
Those children of yours
Will always love you.

By Caroline

Independent Living

I moved to my own apartment in September 2003. I share with a guy called Paddy and we get on very well as housemates. We get our dinner at the workshop in the Brothers of Charity every day, but prepare our own breakfast and tea.

I go to Mullagh every weekend and return to Ennis Monday mornings. We keep our apartment nice and tidy. It is bright and warm. We share the household chores so there are no rows. Our apartment is an extension to a house where four other friends live. I like the way I am living now.

By Danny

Working for T.G. Moran

I started work with T.G. Moran, the contractor, in 1939. We laid the pipes for the main runway. The converting started in 1940. I was there until August 1942. We had to lay it like a railway track to vibrate the concrete. The bogies brought in the concrete on little tracks over the slob land. There wasn't any hard foundation. There was 20 or 30 feet of blue mud and gram and we had to pile drive it.

Bobby Wilkey drives a loco,
With the bogies hooked behind,
He never blows a hooter,
But he shouts out,
"Are you f-g blind?"

By Sean

Ennis Town

I walk around Ennis a lot, sometimes too much. I get very wet when it rains. I go into Dunnes out of the rain. Dunnes is a good place to go. I can walk around looking at things and no one comes near me. The restaurant there is nice. I can have something to eat and watch all the people passing by.

I don't go walking out in the country anymore. It's a bit far for me to walk now. It's safer walking in town because the cars fly by out in the country.

The long evenings are great as I can stay out later and take my time going home.

By John

Yum

I work in a coffee shop in Ennis on work experience from the Brothers of Charity. It is called Yum and the food lives up to its name. It serves a wide range of coffee, teas, wine and soft drinks. The desserts are yum, as are the rolls and baps.

It is a very relaxing type of place where the customers meet and chat. The boss is very nice to work for and the staff are friendly. I help out generally wherever I'm needed. It is a good place to gain work experience.

By Declan

The Christmas Dance

Dress up and shower,
Go to the wardrobe for something nice,
The bus collects us at a quarter to six,
Out to dinner – Turkey and Ham,
We'll have music tonight
With a sing song later
After the meal
We need space for boogieing
When the rock and roll starts
The legs start to fly,
With a trip to the bar
To quench our thirst.

Irish Country Pottery Group

My Dog

I had a lovely dog called Sammy – he was brown and white.
I got him as a pup just over ten years ago. In the last year, he
became very feeble and couldn't walk very well. I took him
to the vet and she suggested that it would be better to put
him to sleep. I miss him very much and I hope to get another
dog soon.

By Mary

Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill

My favourite song is 'Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill'. I like the tune and I like singing along to it. It goes like this:

I'm thinking tonight of the old rustic bridge
That bends o'er the murmuring stream,
'Twas there Maggie dear with her heart full of cheer,
We strayed 'neath the moon's gentle gleam.
'Twas there I first met you, the light of your eyes,
Awoke in my heart a sweet thrill,
Though now far away, still
My thoughts fondly stray
To the old rustic bridge by the mill.

By Bernie

Broken Arm

I was reared in a pub, The Cusack Stand in Newmarket-on-Fergus. When I was small, I wasn't let mix with the customers. We minded our own business. One day when we were getting the pub painted, a teacher left an umbrella behind. I was sent up the Ballycar Road with the umbrella on my sister's bike, to return it to the teacher. On the way back, I fell and crashed very hard into the hurling field wall. I broke my arm. Neighbours across the road came out to help me. I asked them where my arm was, as it had gone numb. They told me my arm was still there. I had to go to the bonesetter in Miltown Malbay, a Mr. Burke. A neighbour from home, who was a nurse, brought me there. I had a plaster on for six weeks.

My father always put a shutter in the window to show respect when someone in the village died.

By Eithne

Life on a Farm

As a young girl growing up in Newmarket, living and working on the farm was hard work during the war years or the 'Emergency', as it was better known. We were self-sufficient. We grew all our vegetables and crops including wheat, oats, beet, and barley. We made all our own bread in those days, as no shop bread was available. The flour was very dark but we used to sieve it through a nylon stocking to get the bran out of it, and then we would make the scones. We had meat all year through, as we killed two pigs every year.

I don't know how people who didn't have land survived those years. Life on the farm was very tough and the work was extremely hard with very little time to yourself. I decided farm life wasn't for me and I married a man who had no involvement in farming.

By Hannah

Beauty Course for Trainees

Three trainees at the Clare Youth Centre recently completed a six-week make-up and beauty course with Aisling. Those who took part in the course were Heather, Kathleen, and Nikita.

The course consisted of learning to cleanse, tone and moisturise, and also how to apply make-up and learn to suit individual looks from day to night.

Each student was given a good starter-kit. The practical exam was Thursday, December 1st. Everyone passed with flying colours.

By Heather

A Place for Everyone

I started playing golf last year and now I love the game. Derek took a group of the Brothers of Charity to the driving range in Limerick and it took off from there.

I am now part of the Munster squad heading for the National Special Olympics in Belfast (June 21st –25th). If we win, we will be going to China for the World Special Olympics (June 2007).

We get great support from the Ennis Golf Club, and have volunteer members as our playing partners. We practise at the Golf Club once a week.

We have been given lovely sets of gear for our Belfast trip – tracksuit, wet gear, polo shirts and caps.

All the gear is in the Munster colours – navy, red and white, with the logo:

‘Special Olympics’

Ireland

Team: Munster

2006-05-31 A place for everyone

By Adrién

I Learned Some More

I used to believe
In the tooth fairy
In Angels to stand beside me
And then I learned some more

I used to believe
In a crock of gold
Leprechauns, fairies, the bogey man
And then I learned some more

I used to believe
In the cookie monster
Santa, the Banshee
And then I learned some more

I used to dream
Of angry chirping birds
Fear of traffic
And then I learned some more

I used to believe
That John was the answer
But he is only a man sir
And then I learned some more

By the Jovial Bunch

Missing Moran's

One of my happiest memories is of going shopping with Nora. We went to Moran's in O'Connell Street before it closed. I bought two pants, one green and one white.

My friend was pleased with her purchase too. We're all sorry to see Moran's closing; the shop assistants were always helpful.

By Teresa

Tookie Williams

Stanley Tookie Williams was executed on the 13th of December 2005 inside San Quentin Prison in Los Angeles.

Williams co-founded the Crips gang, one of the biggest gangs in America, and he was one of the most feared men at the time. He was sent to San Quentin for the murder of four people in 1981. When he was in prison, he started to change; he sent a message to all the gangs in America to tell them to stop killing each other. Then he started to write children's books to keep them from growing up in gangs. He was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize a number of times. He then actually got the Crips and the Bloods to meet and call a truce. That was no good. They started shooting again. So the 13th of December came and Stanley Tookie Williams was executed in San Quentin Prison.

By Adam

Family Reunion

About two years ago, cousins Marie and Sheila had an idea that our family should have another reunion, as it was about seven years since we had the last one. Around Christmas time, we heard the reunion would take place the last week of April. I heard next that all the organising and work was landed on Kathleen's shoulders. Thank God she had the support of her husband Tommy, daughter Amy and son Matthew. Kathleen organised everything from house rentals to hotels, church booklets, church music, the readings, venues for first night meetings, the venue for the dinner, the dance music for the second night, and the caterers for the final day that was held in one of the rented houses.

We all met in Mullrany the first night. A lot of our family members play music and sing and so we had a lot of party pieces. It was lovely to meet all the relations from Spain, New York, England, Dublin, Atlanta, Clare and, of course, those that live in Mayo. We shared a few drinks, some lovely food and a few stories and the night went by very fast. On the Saturday, some of us took a trip to Connemara; we travelled the coast road to take in the scenery. We had lunch in Ballinalacken Castle, which was very nice and then on to Kylemore Abbey. Back home, a few people chose to climb Croagh Patrick and they were very lucky with the lovely day; all went well there too. That night we had the lovely dinner and dance. After, we had some more party pieces and it went on late into the night. Sunday morning Mass was on at ten. It was for all the family, living and dead. Again, some people did readings, others brought up gifts, while others provided the music. The priest gave us a mention and welcomed everybody, and that gave it a nice touch. While we were at the church, the caterers came to the house where my sister was staying and prepared all the food. When we got back from the church all we had to do was eat, drink and party some more. We had a very enjoyable evening.

There was a lot of talk about when the next reunion will be. Will it be five or ten years down the line? I felt a bit emotional

thinking how it was so nice to meet all the relations and extended families; that we were lucky to be able to get together, and I can't help thinking where we will all be in five or ten years down the line, and what sort of shape some of us mature people will be in. We will have to wait and see.

By Carmel

Miltown Madness

(A work of fiction)

One day, I was on my way to Youthreach in Miltown Malbay and I noticed that everyone was running all over the place like crazy. Windows were broken and cars were burnt out. Strangely enough, I saw a green fog all over the place. I put two and two together and I was convinced that it was the fog that was driving everyone mad.

Then I decided that since I was the only sane person left in Miltown, I would go and investigate. I covered my face with my jumper because of the fog and then I had to sneak up the Ballard Road. The fog was getting thicker, so I thought it must be somewhere around the area I was travelling in. As I made my way up Ballard Road, I saw a pipe and it was ripped and that's where the fog was coming from. I had to find a way to stop it from leaking, so I went to Youthreach and got some masking tape. I went back up and covered the pipe with all the tape and then waited for the fog to clear.

After that all the people stopped and all were very confused-looking, but everything turned out O.K. apart from the destruction of Miltown Malbay. It took about three weeks for Miltown to get back to the way it was.

By Ken

My School Days

I am here sitting beside my window having a cup of tea. It is a beautiful sunny day, and my mind flashes back to my school days when I started at secondary school. It was called secondary school in those days, but now it is called post-primary.

I remember the lead-up to my first day in secondary school. It was a wonderful day. I got the new uniform, namely the navy jumper, dress, white collar and tie, black socks and a new pair of shoes. My father got me a bicycle, not a new one but it was my first bicycle, and it was a big step in my life. No more walking to school. I had to cycle about two miles to meet my friend in those days, no mobile phones to contact each other, only meeting after Mass on Sunday to make our arrangements.

We met on a Monday morning and cycled together to school, about 5 miles. When we arrived at the school we didn't know where to put our bicycles, so we left them against the wall and then we went in. It was very daunting going into the school, but we were met by a lovely nun named Sister Paul. We were very shy in the first week but by the next week we knew a few more girls, and by the end of the month we had settled into our school. We had lots of extra new subjects, some nicer than others, algebra, geometry and so on. Later, these were hard to grasp but after a while we got by.

We came and went every day, some days more enjoyable than others. We had one very good singer in the class. Each Monday morning she would come into the class early, before the teacher, and sing most of the top 20 that she would have heard the previous night on Radio Luxembourg. Those days we had no TV, only the radio which ran on wet and dry batteries.

By Mary

Jobs

All people have their jobs and life and style. Some of them are workmen; a lot of people work as clerks, others as directors and managers. Some jobs require great effort from us, like working in a mine or the oil platform. Many people who work as, for example, tour guides or managers have to go abroad and visit many different places all the time. A lot of people don't have enough time for their families because they devote it to their jobs.

Nowadays, people suffer from stress. It is often a result of being tired all the time. People can over-estimate their strength and work too hard for too long. They have too little time for their families, for a rest or for meeting friends. They often don't go to the theatre or the cinema; they spend all their free time at home. Some people aren't happy with their jobs. They complain of the fact that their jobs don't give them satisfaction or that they are boring. I think, also, that people choose their jobs for the money – people want to earn as much as possible and often think that working is just about earning money. But in fact, it isn't so. If you want to be happy, your job should also give you satisfaction and pleasure.

In the future, I will have a job connected with teaching. In my opinion, it is a very interesting job and it could give me a lot of satisfaction. I would like to teach English because the language has a lot of possibilities. It is simply amazing that we can communicate with this language around the world. It doesn't matter where we are at the moment. I have friends from Austria and Germany and we can sit together and have a lovely chat.

Summing up, I think that many people dream about the future job that they will have, but they should realise that an occupation ought to give them more than money. In my opinion, work should give us satisfaction. We would like our jobs much better in a situation where there is a balance between work and family and free time. I also think that

what we will do in the future depends on our education. If we have good results and a real passion for our jobs we will be better at them, and money won't be the most important thing.

By Malgorzata

A Fright

This is a story about a fright I got in the post office. Up in Co. Meath where I was living at the time, I was in the post office one day. Three men came in wearing balaclavas and one had a gun. He shut the door, pointed the gun at us and told us to lie on the floor. They tied up the husband and wife running the post office and I can't tell you the fright I got. I'll never get over it. They robbed the post office in the middle of the day. Many of the post offices were robbed in Co. Meath around that time.

We were broken into at home as well. They broke the bathroom window, but they didn't get anything as the kitchen door was locked. This happened during the night and we didn't know until the morning. My husband died a number of years ago and I moved down here where I came from, and I'm happy here with lovely neighbours.

By Hannah

A Hard Life

I was one of thirteen children born to a poor family in 1942. We lived in a small thatched cabin left over from the famine. It was just a shed, one large room with flags on the floor. They were just left down on the earth. The rafters were made out of old bog deal, which was covered with old potato sacks. The sacks were then whitewashed with lime to hide the thatch, to keep out the rain and to brighten the place up.

All the rafters were covered with small wooden crosses, which were put up for St. Bridget's Day on the 1st of February. Rats used to climb up on the thatch and get trapped between the thatch and the sacks. We used to hear the rats running around. My father had a bayonet with a handle made out of a hazel stick. He used to stab the rat through the sack and then cut a hole and take it down. We all stood around looking at the rat. Someone used to kick it and make it move. We thought it had come back to life.

At one end of the house, there was a big open fireplace with two hobs. We did not always have the makings of a fire. There was a settle bed up against the wall; four of us slept in it. By day, it was closed up and used as a table.

We kept ducks and hens for to have some eggs for summer. Duck eggs were bigger than the hens' eggs so we kept more ducks than hens.

When someone got sick, we didn't want them to get better too quickly. In our house, when you were sick you didn't eat – not that there was much anyway. It meant more for us.

Like most Irish people, I went to London in 1961. I worked on the buildings, London Transport and long-distance lorry driving. I was always conscious of not being able to read or write, so when I was on the buses sitting in traffic I started to spell words from the signposts, for example, 'Trafalgar Square'. I used to break it down like this, 'Tra-fal-gar'.

Another example was 'Broadway'. I broke it down like this, 'B-road-way'.

I never learned A-B-C going to school. I learned it from the top of a Wheatabix box about five years ago. About six years ago, I saw a leaflet advertising classes on how to read and write. I picked up the courage to make a phone call. I was blessed to get tutors that understand me and I appreciate it.

Thank you very much.

By Jim

A Visit to the Cinema

Last March my boyfriend Mark and I went to the cinema in Ennis. 'Johnny Cash - Walk the Line' was the name of the film. We really enjoyed this film about the life and times of this famous singer.

Johnny's life was sad because his father blamed him for the death of his brother in an accident. Johnny's dad often said, "The wrong son died," and this was hard for Johnny growing up.

Johnny wanted to be a singer but, in the beginning, this was hard for him because other bands would not take him on as a singer.

When Johnny Cash made his breakthrough, it was with a song called 'Walk the Line'. Johnny also struggled for a long time with drug addiction and this made him and his family sad and unhappy.

This film is very enjoyable and I would recommend it to all Johnny Cash fans.

By Ann

My Busy Life

I have two nephews and a niece. My niece was born in January and we had her christening in Miltown Church. It was a lovely sunny day and all my family were there. Baby Ava was very good. The cake was fantastic and the food was lovely.

This year I have done a lot of things, including horse-riding in Cooraclare. My horse is called Lincoln and he is a lovely brown colour and a well-behaved horse. I have also bought a digital camera, so I can take lots of photographs of all my friends and family.

I am living in my own house and I look after the garden and cut the grass. I have just got a new door and windows and I am also busy making window boxes for the summer. I had a lovely birthday party in my house at Easter and I got loads of cards and presents. My picture was in 'The Clare Champion'. The picture was taken at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Kilrush. I am always kept very busy.

By John

My Work

I worked at home. My brothers had their own jobs. I helped in the meadow in the summer time and I also gave a hand in the bog with my dad. It was hard work. I was a poor scholar in school. The national school was all right but the secondary was hard, but I did not understand it I suppose.

By M.M.N

My Musical Career

The first songs I heard when I was growing up were by Tommy Drennan, Shaun O'Dowd, Danny Doyle and Johnny McEvoy. My friends and I went to dances in the Kincora and saw the above bands playing. We bought their songbooks and formed a group. There were two lads from Ennistymon and one from Lisdoonvarna and myself, Anthony – I played mandolin and drums.

We would play for three hours a night, seven nights a week. We would start off with three waltzes, three quicksteps and then three slow numbers. We played in Barrett's in Ennistymon.

By Anthony

Music in An Glór

We are practising for a fund-raising concert: 'Music in An Glór', which will be held in Glór on Thursday, June 1st. This is to raise funds in support of our Ennis based athletes who will be representing Munster at the National Special Olympics in Belfast (June 21st – 25th). Marie and myself are part of a band. Marie plays the tambourine and I play the drums. We go for a practice in Glór every Friday morning at 10 a.m. We are really enjoying the lead-up to the concert and hope there will be a great turn-out on the night.

By David & Marie

Tunes That I Know

This is a list of tunes that I like to listen to. Do you know any of them?

A Trip to Durrah
The Boys of Ballisodare
The Pigeon at the Gate
Tim Moloney
Trim the Velvet
The Wise Maid
The Collier's Reel
The Cliffs of Moher
Saddle the Pony
The Crooked Road to Dublin
The Ferry Reel
The Killimer Jig
Finnbarr Dwyer's Reel
The Maid behind the Bar
I'm Waiting for You
The Bellharbour Reel
Chase me Charlie
Paddy Fahey's Jig
Abbey Reel
Lady Anne Montgomery
The Plough and the Stars
The Sixpenny Money
Dillon's Reel
The Sligo Maid
The Bucks of Oranmore

By Níall

Living in West Clare

I live in west Clare with my parents, and I like watching soccer matches on Sunday afternoon when I have finished eating my dinner. My favourite team is Man. Utd. My favourite hobbies are reading books and gardening. I like going to the cinema with my sister and brother. 'Big Mamma's House' is a very funny film and it would make you laugh out loud. I like to read 'The Clare Champion' to see if there is any news going on in the world. I like watching television – 'Vets on Call' was very interesting because it showed vets going to the farms and all the animals. I like looking after animals when they have to be fed. We are very busy on the farm when cows are calving, but now it has quietened down. Soon, we will be doing the silage. I like doing the classes at the Adult Education Centre – we are learning to read, write and do sums. In the future, I would like to run my own farm.

By Brian

My New Bank Account

I live with my mother and brother Mattie. My brother just came back from a holiday in America. He was in Chicago and Boston and got stuck in the biggest snowstorm they had in many years. He bought me a new jacket and I am wearing it today. I would not like to go to America, as my mother would not travel and I would not go without her. I just opened my own bank account and I now have my own bankcard and can get money when I need it. I come to the centre every day and enjoy meeting all my friends and working with Monica.

By Bríd

Visit to Cork

A group of us went to Cork for a short break in April. Sonny, John, Gerard, Carmel, Aisling and myself travelled in the Space-Wagon. The weather was O.K. (we had some rain of course – Ireland for it).

We stayed three nights. We went sightseeing during the days and went to a concert in the Opera House one evening. Another evening we went out for a meal and then greyhound racing, which was great fun. I would definitely recommend Cork City for a good holiday.

By Noel

Boyzone

I went to the Boyzone concert one Christmas. One of my sisters brought me and now I have a Boyzone mug. One of my best friends gave it to me, along with loads of posters. My favourite singer is Stephen Gately. He's the sweetest member of the band. My happiest memory is when Stephen saw me up on the balcony with my sister, Clara. I remember my sister said to me, "Look at Stephen." I shouted out his name and said, "Stephen, I love you babe!" and he looked up at me and winked. He thinks I'm beautiful and cute and I blew him a kiss. He's the soloist and he's a really good singer.

By Gabrielle

Attitude

Teenagers today have too much money to spend. Sadly, many of them spend it on drink, drugs and cigarettes. Peer pressure is not helping the situation either. This all leads to violence and many young people end up in trouble.

Too many young people are getting killed in road accidents because they have too much money for fancy cars. They drive too fast and don't always wear their seatbelts. This kind of driving is called 'joy riding', but where is the joy in this behaviour?

Another problem is that many people don't earn enough money to buy these cars, so they borrow or use credit cards. Sometimes, they can't afford the repayments and get into trouble. The children grow up with this example and they expect to get everything they want.

Some parents come home late after a drinking session when they finish work. They can be aggressive with a family member without realising it. This is upsetting to the children.

By Joe and William

The May Morning Dew

My favourite song is 'The May Morning Dew'. I like to sing along to this and it is a nice song with lovely words.

How sweet 'tis in winter to sit by the hob,
listening to the barks and the howls of the dog
and to wander through the green fields
where the wild daisies grew,
or to pluck the wild flowers
in the May morning dew.

By Breda

Christmas

Christmas is a time of the year when the family gets a break from work and gets together. It's good to understand that Christmas is really about getting together and giving each other time and having a few drinks.

For some people though, life can be hard at Christmas. People can be lonely, have money worries or miss those who have died. It is good to be aware of the people around us at this time of year and remember that Christmas is really about getting together.

By Pa

When I was Young

When I was growing up I was in the middle of a family of seven, so there was a lot of hard work in the rearing of us.

Nearly everything seemed to be homemade. Our clothes, in general, were bought but there were jobs done on everything before they were worn-out. One convenient aspect of it was, the moment one grew out of something, there was another to take it over. Patches on knees of trousers were common. But I was in my teens before I started wearing long pants, as was the custom then. No day passed that my mother did not have to sew something.

The same went for my father at the farming. He did a lot of making and repairing. He made the wooden crate used for feeding hay to the cattle and he used reed to make the horses tackling, for example. He could make a púicín, as he used to call it, for the young calves. It was a kind of muzzle pulled up over their mouths to stop them sucking or eating anything that was not for them when they were not able to

eat hay. One day, I was feeding a calf that was wearing one made from a tin saucepan. When I had put it on him, he hit me in the face with it. But that was a púicín that was made in an emergency. They were normally made of ozier rods. They were a kind of sally branch. There was a piece of fibre yarn put on to them to tie around the calf's head behind his ears. That was the common binding twine at that time and different people had different names for it. We called it 'Coil'. The main use for this cord was tying the cocks and winds of hay, and tying the thatch on the roofs of houses and sheds. It was like the bale of twine of today.

In my young days, there was a lot of labour involved on the farm. But there was more help where there were families. The bachelor neighbour, too, got a little help. So, what was lost around the table was gained in the meadow. The garden, too, took a lot of labour. Our older brothers would go to the bog when the time came in May or June. The ones that did not go at first cutting of the turf and spreading got a chance to go later, doing something like picking hurs – a nice fruit that grew on green heather late in the summer.

By Joe

Pink Roses

Down in the garden,
Pink roses bloom
The air fragrant laden
By the breath of their perfume.

By Éileen

On the Move

The training centre section of the Brothers of Charity has recently moved from the Gort Road to the Adult Education Centre, Clonroad, Ennis. We are very happy with the move, as our new building is very bright and spacious and we also have access to the facilities of the Adult Education Centre, e.g. the computer room and woodwork room.

We have a very full time-table which includes horticulture, woodwork, music, pottery, cookery, computers, information technology, independent living skills, literacy, numeracy, community integration and sport which includes football, hockey, table-tennis, bowling, golf, swimming and basketball.

We also have meetings once a week where we get together to give feed-back on the week's activities and discuss any issues or concerns that may have arisen. We are very proud of our training centre.

*By Julie, Paul C., Paul O'B.,
Therese & Gerard*

Keeping Busy

I come to the centre five days a week. I take care of the lawn and work in the workshop doing woodwork. I did woodwork at the Tech. in Ennistymon last year and made a bathroom cabinet. We are making window boxes and clocks with Michel. I go to the gym and bowling and I work on the farm with my father. I like to keep busy and always help Mary to carry the bags. I like painting the window boxes and seeing them all finished. I also cut the timber with the saw. I do jewellery making with Eddie. We make rings and chains using silver beads. I am working with a good group of people.

By Seamus

How my Life has Changed

As a young girl growing up in Poland, I never thought I would travel across Europe to Ireland, and I never thought I would go there to better my future. My life in Poland was so much easier than what it is in Ireland. I could speak my own language and do everything that I wanted to do; everywhere I wanted to go was close by.

My life has changed so much since I came to Ireland. I found it hard at work, and in everyday life to understand what people were saying to me, and to talk to people. This made me feel withdrawn, lonely and afraid because communication is important in everyone's life. Even though I learned English in school, it was much harder than what I imagined.

It was then that I decided to go to English classes to make these feelings disappear and to improve my bad mood.

From that moment on, my life has been getting better, allowing me to get to know people and allowing people to get to know what I'm like. I came to Ireland with the hope of making my future better and to learn a new language, but to do this I had to leave the most important part of my life; my bay, my family and friends who have made my world. Even though I had to leave all of them behind, I am glad I have been given the chance to meet special people who have been showing me kindness and generosity; who I can turn to when times are hard; who could hold my hand when I feel lonely and need company, people who have the ability to make a heart smile and bring happiness.

I don't know how much my life will change again and how many choices I will have, but I know that it won't be easy. That was the choice I made and, hopefully, it was the right one.

By Ewelena

My Childhood from Ennis to Newmarket

I lived in Ennis when I was a child. My mother used to tell me that the women of Ennis who wore black shawls used to throw them down on the ground in front of the houses when De Valera was coming into town. My mother thought it was too much.

I was one of 14 when I came down to Newmarket-on-Fergus. My father had so many plots for the bogs. When plots were being given out each one of us were able to thin carrots, parsnips and do all the jobs. I used to have to cut an eight stone bag of potatoes. Father gave us a plot of land each and we had to till it.

I was fourteen and a half when I started working in Ennis. I had to do the washing when I got home in the evening. I earned one pound three shillings and four pence a week in my job. I left it on the table for mother but I kept half a crown for myself for the week, so I was able to go to the pictures and chew sweets.

By Peggy

I Used to Believe

I used to believe,
There was a man on the moon,
Sitting pretty upon a stone,
For that was his throne,
Then I grew up and learned some more!

By Kathleen

About Me

My name is Mary. I work in the Brothers of Charity and I'm 34 years old. I have three nieces and three nephews from my brother. They live down the road. I have a niece from my sister and she lives with us.

She loves playing with me because I always make her laugh. She is five months old. I sometimes hold her if my sister is there. I made her a little quilt and pillow when she was born.

I love working for the Brothers of Charity. I do lots of nice things there. My supervisor's name is Fiona and she's very nice.

I love working on the computer. I like to check my e-mails and I like writing back.

I have a new helper. Her name is Ann-Marie. She is with me Mondays and Tuesdays. We go to some things like sewing, cooking or computers. I cook with Nora every Tuesday in the training centre. I love working in the sewing area; I usually make bags because I like them so much.

When I go home from work, I like to listen to music and watch TV to relax.

By Mary

My Life as a Vixen

I'm going to tell you about my life as a vixen. My name is Vickey. I live in the forest with a lot of other foxes and vixens. I am about to give birth. Black Tip, my partner, is very excited about it. He spends a lot of his time searching for food to keep me nourished.

At long last they have arrived, I have four beautiful cubs. From now on, all my attention will be on them and on keeping them safe from danger, at least until they are able to fend for themselves.

Black Tip and my other friends put my needs first while I take care of the cubs. I was glad of their support and very thankful for my lovely family and good friends.

By Anna Marie

Hillery's Bar

My family come from Miltown Malbay which, during the autumn/winter months, could be described as a small quiet town in west Clare. But, in reality, there is great life and entertainment there all year round.

I go home most weekends and if my brother is home we usually go to Hillery's bar. This is a very well-run family pub. It has a warm friendly atmosphere where the locals meet for a bit of music and dance or just a chat. Everyone is made to feel welcome and I feel very much at home there.

By Ger

The Accident

Instead of catching my father out, my twin-sister Martina and myself got caught out. We intended putting on a show but, instead, set up an accident. My father was a birth registrar and a barber. On sunny days, it was usual for him to sit out on the window-sill outside the shop when he had a moment to spare.

One particular day, Martina and I observed him in that position. We had a plan. We got a loan of a bicycle from a friend. It had no carriers. I sat on the handlebars and Martina sat on the saddle. We took off from the top of the hill on the main street of Killaloe. We went down the hill screaming "Daddy look at us!" Suddenly we realised there were no brakes and we screamed at the top of our voices, "We can't stop, help!" Both of us ended up at the bottom of the street bashed into a wall.

The bike was in pieces and I got a nasty cut on my head, which needed a few stitches. My sister, Martina, was taken to hospital with a broken leg.

We spent some time recovering, but our greatest pain came from my father's tongue lashing. We cancelled all future shows in the interest of safety.

By Ann

Happiness

Happiness is a beautiful word. It is hard to find. Most find it when, unfortunately, others never do. The people that find happiness are very lucky and are never sad or lonely again. They always have a greeting and a smile for everybody.

By Deirdre

My Favourite Poem

I like this poem and I have read it out on the West Clare Community Radio where I do a radio programme every week. Usually I write my own stories but, sometimes, I like to read out nice poems. This one is called 'Lifelines' by Michael Cody.

Daughter, your eyes are clearer than mine,
You've asked me why
The top and the bottom
Of my pint don't mix
And why we're dropping coins
Into a model lifeboat.
I've said that heavy things
Sink to the bottom
And there are unexpected storms, lives to be
Snatched out of the wind.
Later in the rain
You take my hand
Lead me through
A tumult of dark trees.
I flare a match and fumble with the key
Your face and hair are wet
And your eyes are shining.

By Kathleen

Things I Like to Do

I like to go to mass every day, sometimes I walk, weather permitting. It is at ten o'clock. My job, every day, is to set the table for dinner and tea for ten people. Some days, I go for a walk after dinner.

By Ann

My Story for Simply Said

I work in the library every Wednesday, scanning the books and stamping them with the library stamp. I enjoy doing this. I come to the workshop each day and do different things. I come to literacy classes and we do reading and writing. Sometimes, we watch a video and talk and write about it afterwards. I also do knitting. I am knitting a scarf at the moment. If the weather is good I go outside the workshop in my wheelchair.

I went to see Mary Black in Glór recently and had a great night. My favourite music is Country and Western and I am looking forward to the launch of 'Simply Said'.

By Maura

Jemima

My daughter's name is Jemima and she is 20 years old. She will be 21 on the 28th of August. She is presently studying at the GMIT in Galway. It's a three-year programme and she is in her second year. Jemima is very intelligent and is getting driving lessons at the moment. Jemima is also into doing plays and, last Friday night, Jemima took part in a play in Glór in Ennis. I thought it was quite good and, afterwards, several people told me that Jemima was very good. Eventually, Jemima hopes to write television scripts. Quite a daunting task and I wish her good luck.

By Bernadette

Latoon Cottage

The year 1910 was a very significant year for our family. That was the year that my grandfather received the key to our family home, 'Latoon Cottage', situated about two miles from the village of Newmarket-on-Fergus and on the edge of the Dromoland Castle estate. We still have the original key for 'Latoon Cottage' even though our home is no longer there having made way for the Newmarket-on-Fergus bypass. My brother kept one of the original flags from the step at the cottage gate and it has been built into one of the paths at his new home. Life has changed so much since 1910.

Grandfather was Patrick, known as Patsy, and he married a Limerick girl, Johanna Coffey. This was the name given to me. Johanna died in 1922 in the middle of 'The Troubles' and I heard them say that the volunteers shouldered her coffin from Latoon to the church in Newmarket-on-Fergus. Before his move to Latoon, Grandfather lived in Rose Cottage. This cottage was provided for him as part of his job – he was the caretaker for the church in Kilnasoolagh and one of his tasks was to look after the horses and carriages while people attended the Sunday service.

He told me lots of stories about different occasions and events. The one that I remember very vividly is the story of the day that he moved into his own little whitewashed palace - the little palace that had no electricity, no running water and no toilet!

Patsy and Johanna had six children, May, Ellen, Delia, Patrick, John and Tommy. They adopted a seventh child, Johnny. My mother, Ellen, was the one that returned to 'Latoon Cottage' when she married and my grandfather continued to live with them and share in the family life and chores. When I was small, I considered him to be a giant of a man. He wasn't very tall really, but his air of authority was something we were all aware of.

The year 1932 was the year that I remember very well. My mother gave birth to twins and I can still see my grandfather putting the finishing touches to the cot that he made for them. In that same year, my brother contracted polio. He was seven years old and spent a lot of time in hospital. He made his First Holy Communion in bed. He told my mother that he had heard the doctors and nurses talking and he knew from the gist of their conversation that he was not going to recover. He pleaded with my mother to bring him home to Latoon so that he could be with his family.

I can still see the house in my mind as a bustling place, the kitchen and three other rooms constantly full of people coming and going. The twins, Des and Tom, were in one room in their cot and Jack, the patient in the other. As well as myself, I had two other brothers, Pat and Phonsie. Very often one of my aunts, Delia or May, came to stay to help my mother out while my brother was sick. But I can still recall the air of stillness and sadness about the house when that little boy, Jack, passed away.

By Joan

My Special Car

My car is a really special car. It is a Toyota and the colour of it is green. It is fitted with a lift so that my wheelchair can be loaded easily. My wheelchair is held in position by straps fastened to the floor.

The car can carry four people, plus myself. Both my parents drive me around and I really love my special car. I have travelled to many places, including Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

By Jonathan

Silly Sally and the Bank Holiday

I wrote this story on the 5th of June, 1988 for my granddaughter Sarah who is now coming up for 22 years in July 2006. At that time the old grey cells were fresher than they are now and many stories were said to this little lady, which she enjoyed at a tender young age. She is now a very attractive young woman and the eldest of my grandchildren. My younger grandchildren aged eight, seven and five years now enjoy my stories as well as Sarah did all those years ago. My grandson, Glen, Sarah's younger brother also loved my stories and is now listening to them in heaven.

The other day, just after lunch, Silly Sally was sitting on the path beside the farmhouse thinking about her life as a brown chicken. As she sat there, a voice came over Radio 2 telling everyone about how people were going away for the Bank Holiday. Now, Silly Sally, who loved any kind of a holiday, decided she would have a Bank Holiday too. And, being a very friendly little chicken, she hurried off to tell all her friends on Farmer Growgrain's farm the good news.

"Cracracra! I think we should all go away on a Bank Holiday. I know I would like to stop laying eggs for a day or two or even six, and a Bank Holiday is quite the most fashionable thing to do these days, especially now it's hot and sunny," Silly Sally cried, as she ran this way and that way along the path.

"Cracracra! Oh! Esmeralda McGillycuddy, you kind brown cow, I bet you are tired of giving milk every day, and you too, little Benny. You must be fed up sitting in puddles. I think both of you should come along on my holiday," Silly Sally said, as she stood between her two friends.

"Mooooo, you are right my friend. I am tired of giving milk morning and night. But what, pray, is a Bank Holiday?" Esmeralda asked, as she flicked a few flies with the tip of her tail.

"I am not tired of sitting in puddles!" little Benny pig squealed. "I love sitting in puddles," he said, snuggling down in a puddle to show how much he really did love puddles. "But what kind of a holiday is a Bank one?" he asked.

"Cracracra, well if you all meet me in the barn just after tea-time, I will tell you all about it," Silly Sally said, as she ran off to see Henrietta Featherbottom, the big red hen who also wondered what a Bank Holiday was. And it was the same everywhere she went. The animals were glad enough to go on holiday, but they all wanted to know exactly what kind of a holiday it was and Silly Sally, of course, didn't know anymore about it than they did.

So she hurried off to find somewhere quiet where she could worry. At last, she went into the hen house and walked to and fro with her wings crossed over her back. Then, all of a sudden, she remembered a place her mother used to take her when she was a tiny baby chick. So, not even stopping for tea because she was so late, Silly Sally hurried over to the barn where all the animals were waiting for her.

"Cracracra! First, I would like to thank you all for coming and now I will tell you all about what a Bank Holiday is. My mother and I used to have one almost every day. Then I left home and forgot all about them. Back then, Mammy was always saying, "Let's go to the river bank so you can play with the little ducks." Well, you all know the stream that runs along the bottom of our farm, don't you?" she asked.

All the animals nodded their heads to say, "Yes!"

"Cracracra! Well, the land on each side of a river or a stream is called the 'Bank'. So, a 'Bank Holiday' is a day spent by the stream. We can play and lie in the sunshine. Oh! It should be so much fun!" Silly Sally cried.

All the animals agreed that it was the best idea Silly Sally had ever had and, from that day to this, every time the sun shines, the animals can be seen down by the stream, enjoying their very own special kind of a Bank Holiday!

By Valerie

A Day in the Congo

I spent twenty-one years in the Irish army, working in the transport section. I spent six months in the Congo and six months in Cyprus.

It was dangerous in the Congo, at the time we went; I was driver for a Lieutenant Colonel Ryan, from Fermoy, Co. Cork.

One evening, a few of us decided to go for a short walk, the Lieutenant, the Sergeant and myself. We walked up the road and came to a house on the right hand side of the road, with a small window to the left of the door. There was a bad smell, which was getting worse the closer we got to the house. One of the lads was going to walk up to the door, but I shouted at him to come back. You never walked near a door before checking for booby-traps. We fired shots into the door and the roof, but there were no booby traps there. Inside the house, was a single bed with blankets thrown loosely on it and a pair of legs with tackies hanging down from them.

With my weapon, the bayonet part of the gun, I was asked to turn back the blankets. There was a body on the bed without a head. Whatever look I gave, I saw the head under the bed eaten by flies. It was a skull. We alerted the police and they removed the body and knocked down the house. We had to receive medical attention when we went back to the base.

By William

Trailers

Life in a trailer is good for some people, but not for others who know nothing about them. I like living in a trailer more than I do in a house. I lived in a trailer for ten years and then we moved into our house, but we still go travelling in the summer from June to September.

When we come back every year, we sell our trailer and get another one every year. My favourite trailer is a Tabbert because I like the colours and the shape. There are two types of Tabberts; they are the Contessa and the Boroness.

There are lots of different types of trailers: LMC, Tourer, Panthers, Lord Munster Caravans are all examples.

Tabberts are the dearest and also my favourite. I like Panthers too. They are long curved-shaped with white and aqua and green stripes along them.

By Tracey

Travel

Every month we go on an outing. I live in Kilrush. A bus is organised and it takes up to ten of us for a trip to different places. The bus driver is lovely and jolly. My favourite trip is to Lahinch and to stop at the Armada at Spanish Point for our tea. We take a different direction every month. Last month, we went to Ennis and visited Michael's mother in hospital. I am looking forward to our next outing.

By Ann

School Days

I went to my local school and it was not a happy time in my life. I need people to be patient and kind to me and I met the opposite. I had two men and one lady teacher and none of them were nice to me. They thought they could rule by the stick and not by the book. It was not a happy period in my life and it still bothers me.

I grew up on a small farm with my three sisters and one brother, all of whom live in Ireland. I did all the usual jobs on the farm – calves, cleaning sheds and milking cows. Ourselves and the neighbours, all worked together on the jobs and we were always there for one another in times of joy or trouble. We lived next door to the creamery and took the milk on a wheelbarrow to separate. I fed the calves and hens and geese. We always had dogs and I still have two pets. I enjoy listening to news programmes and keeping up with the news around me.

By Gerard

My New Computer Course

I started a new computer course with the Disabled People of Clare in Ennis. It is on every Thursday from ten thirty to eleven thirty and I really enjoy doing it. It is a Jaws programme and it speaks to me and helps me a lot. I also do literacy classes at the Brothers of Charity at Kilrush every Monday morning and I find them very helpful. I look forward to meeting my friends at the Brothers every week.

By Bernadette

My Piercing

I went to Ennis to get my tongue pierced. I was very nervous about getting it done, even though it wasn't my first time getting one. The lady was very nice and polite. She went through the whole procedure before I got it done. I sat up on the bed and she cleaned my tongue with disinfectant and mouthwash. She then got a clasper with two holes in the middle of it and tightened it on my tongue and pierced it. The pain, for a minute, was terrible. Afterwards, I couldn't eat or talk properly. The next day, it was swollen really badly and remained that way for about five or six days. All I was eating was rice pudding. I'm happy I got it done because I really liked the piercing on other people and I wanted to get it done. Now that it's healed, I can change the type of piercing.

By Fiona

People using Drugs

When people take drugs, they ruin their community as well as their own lives. When they smoke a joint they get a buzz out of it, but some people don't get wired. Smoking has long-term effects on a lot of people. It can lead to depression and to taking other, harder drugs. People think drugs are cool, but if they don't pay the drug dealers they get shot and killed. Drug dealers make a lot of money in this business. They can buy new cars and holiday homes in Spain.

They are shooting each other in Dublin. This is a drug war, which they are fighting all the time.

By Aoife

Croatia to Ireland

I come from Croatia, and I'm about five years in Ireland. I like this country because it's so beautiful, and the people are so nice. Ireland and Croatia are similar; they're both full of natural green beauty. To me, it seems like Ireland had a mysterious past. I like to read and hear everything about this country. I was reading one book about the famine, the name of that book was 'The Whitest Flower', and it's an amazing book.

Lots of times, we go in my car to visit castles. When I'm watching them I ask myself, who were those people and what did they look like? I love most of the things in Ireland. I love Irish music and dancing. When I was a child, at Christmas, there was a TV show presented by Michael Flatley. I never knew that 'Riverdance' was an Irish dance – it was breathtaking. On my first days in Ireland, I realised that it was my destiny to be in the country of 'Riverdance' and now, after all those years, I'm beginning to love everything about this country. Still, Ireland needs one thing to be perfect, snow at Christmas time.

I won't say too much about Croatia. It had the greatest emigration rate in the world, after Ireland. The name 'Croatia' (which we call Hrvatska) is abbreviated to H.R. We speak Croatian, and our monetary system is called Kuna.

The present capital of Croatia is the city of Zagreb (population of about one million). It is a very old and pleasant city. Croatia has more than a thousand islands on the Adriatic Sea and a mountain of natural beauty – Velebit; the most beautiful national park in Europe – the Plitvice Lakes; and the richest bird reservation in Europe – Kopacki Rit.

The films 'Winnetou' and 'Old Shatterhand' were made in the Paklenica Canyon, Plitvice Lakes and on the Krka River in Croatia.

Maybe you didn't know that something you use every day was invented in Croatia, the pen. Edvard Penkala invented the mechanical pen in 1906.

We have some famous people.

- Nobel Prize winners: Ivo Andric, for literature, and Lavoslav Ruzicka, for discoveries in organic chemistry.
- Nikola Tesla – The man who invented the modern world, invented modern radio, X-rays, vacuum tube. His monument can be seen in the Nikola Tesla power plant on the Niagara Falls.
- Sculptor: Antun Augustincic, created the 'Horsewoman' (the monument of peace). It is situated in front of the main building in New York.
- Pianist: Ivo Pogorelic
- Actor: John Malkovich
- Sculptor: Ivan Mestrovic
- Writers: Miroslav Krleza, and Ivana Brlic-Mazuranic (she wrote the beautiful Croatian 'Tales of Long Ago').
- Skier: Janica Kostelic
- Table tennis: Zoran Primorac
- Basketball players: Drazen Petrovic; Kresimir Cosic; Toni Kukoc, Dino Racta
- Tennis players: Goran Ivanisevic and Iva Majoli
- Alpinist: Stipe Bozic (climbed Mount Everest twice)
- Footballer: Davor Suker

This is a little something about my country and, who knows, maybe my children might write something nice about Ireland, maybe even me. Thank you.

By Snezana

Short Autobiography

I was twenty-one when I first went to England. I was working as a waitress in London in Heathrow. I used to go dancing in the Garryowen Club in Hammersmith a couple of times a week with friends. The dances were over at eleven thirty at night. The girls were on one side of the club, and the boys on the other side. There was no such thing as mingling. Fellas would come over and ask a girl to dance. If you wouldn't dance with some of them, they'd say, "Why didn't you bring your knitting?" I went over with some of the girls that had come over on holidays. I lived in digs. In England, you were better able to afford clothes, etc. They were better times there and hundreds of people went over. I came back when I was twenty-four. I got married while I was there to a man from Newmarket-on-Fergus.

By Bridie

Friends

I've been a fan of the television show 'Friends' from when it began until it finished. When I watch it, I feel that the characters are friends of mine and that I know them well. Sometimes when I'm watching them, I dream that I live with them and I am part of their lives.

Chandler is the clever one. Joey is the silly but good-hearted one. Rachel is the one who makes all the decisions. Phoebe is cute and different. Ross is the sensible one and Monica can be bossy sometimes, but she's my favourite.

I have a good few videos of 'Friends' and I watch them often.

By Paul

My Story

I was born in 1922. My mother died when I was five years old. My brother and I moved to my grandparents' home ten miles away. We started school at six years of age. We walked to school with the rest of the boys who lived in the surrounding area. I was the only girl among them. We had to get there on time. I liked school but my brothers hated it, including the master. We brought bread and a bottle of milk for our lunch.

When school was over, we were always hungry. We ate sloes and blackberries on our way home. We had no money for treats for years. We had jobs to do when we got home. We had to go to the wood and bring home firewood to start the fire quickly in the morning, as the men had to be at work at eight o'clock. We had no electricity then. We did our homework by lamp and candlelight. We would spend Sunday afternoons walking through the woods and the fields. We would see an odd fox, lots of rabbits and herds of lovely deer. We would pick crab apples and black damsons and cream ones and bring them home to make jam. In the month of September, we would go to the hazel wood for nuts. We would pick enough to keep us going until Christmas. The wood was cut down soon after and now there are houses built there.

I think myself, we had a good life in comparison to today's children. There is a lot of pressure on them. They are off in the early hours of the morning to crèches or babysitters.

By Mary

A Fine Written Song

I remember school when trying to break the law of its rule. Getting told how my life won't mount to much, never hurt me or made me blush. I became the fighter who fought with pride to make my schooling a no win ride. The teachers hated me, is how it seems when you waste your time with all your dreams. Dreams of being the next big named rock star, lots of money and a big fine car. I had to leave and get out of that place, no education and a world to face.

A pound an hour for sweeping a floor became my jobs like a revolving door. Working hard with life going on, I tried making life my own fine written song.

I made a name and got to my top but when I got there it had to stop. A warehouse team leader making money and getting greedier. A working week twice as long to the educated people, with lives in a fine written song.

It came to me in a funny old way, I had to change my long working day. I moved my family to a better place, leaving behind the whole rat race. On the dole for a little time, money for nothing that is no crime, it's just life seemed to lose its rhyme.

I decided to fix the words of my life song and went back to school and found a place to belong. It seemed so strange when the first class started; my words and rhythm were no longer parted. It's all coming together I found some notes hidden in words of educated quotes. Back in school just where I belong, life is making a come back like a fine written song.

By Michael

Drugs

I think drugs are messing up people's lives, young and old people. It is ruining most young boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, maybe even younger. Most girls have gotten into drugs on account of the fellas they're with. If a girl takes one, she wants more and more; girls get more addicted to them than fellas.

When someone takes a drug such as ecstasy, all they want to do is dance to rave music, and when you take one ecstasy tablet it makes you want to take more. I know a few girls and their fellas give them one tablet. They keep taking them and then they get addicted. Most girls keep taking them and when they're on ecstasy, they won't just take one, they'll take two. They call this 'double dropping', or they'll take three, 'triple dropping'.

Drugs are very dangerous, especially taken two or three at a time. If you took one ecstasy tablet before and nothing happened, that doesn't mean they are not dangerous, because they are. You could take one another day and it could make you suicidal or it could kill you on the spot. Ecstasy is not the only dangerous drug; all drugs such as cocaine, heroin or crack are bad for you.

The ecstasy drug tablet can have very bad effects. It makes your heart rate faster and your blood pressure and body temperature higher. Some people's mouths go funny ways; you can get very dehydrated and very paranoid.

If you take a large dose, such as over five to about six or eight, you could have a muscle breakdown or kidney failure.

I would not advise anybody to take drugs.

By Nikki

Missing Bikes

Teenagers Shauna and Kiera were first cousins. Shauna was big into plants. Kiera was bubbly and always on the go. One sunny Sunday, the girls were in each other's company wondering what to do. Shauna came up with the idea of going for a cycle as far as Broadford. It was a lovely, sunny day. The birds were singing at the top of their voices as the girls rode along.

After some time, the girls spotted a field covered in bluebells. Of course, Shauna couldn't pass it by. The girls dismounted and parked the bicycles against a stone wall. They each picked a bunch of bluebells to take home. Then they sat on the grass, relaxing in the beautiful surroundings and nattering about the night before. Suddenly, Kiera realised the time and that she had a date at eight. They got up, jumped back over the wall; lo and behold, the bikes were gone.

Whatever about the bikes, a date couldn't be missed so they thumbed a lift off the first car that came. As soon as they arrived home, they reported the stolen property and Kiera went off on her date.

Despite Garda searches and numerous appeals on 'Crimeline' the bikes failed to turn up. However the date worked out and Kiera has since tied the knot.

By Gillian

A Wedding in Barcelona

My brother and his girlfriend got married this week in Barcelona, which is a lovely city in Spain. They had been living in Barcelona a few years and I had already visited them. Thirty of the family went out together for the wedding – all family and friends and the bride and groom.

The ceremony was different from the way we do it here in Ireland. They said, "I do," and gave the rings to each other and put them on their fingers at the beginning of the wedding before the mass. There were eighty guests invited. The bride only had one bridesmaid, which was her best friend. The bride's nephew, Luke, and the groom's goddaughter, Chloe, brought the rings up to the altar. The bride's sister and myself said a few prayers, and the groom's friends did the readings at the end of the mass.

The reception after the wedding was held outdoors. It was a beautiful sunny day, about twenty degrees. That was something else that was different about the wedding. It was pouring in Ireland that day!

By Tara

The Cat let me Down

When I was about fifteen, I had a boyfriend – a very tame relationship, I might add. In those days you had travelling shows with swinging boats on the outside and, inside, you played 'pongo'. Now, 'pongo' was the start of bingo. I think it was only two pence to play. Eoin was the teacher's son and when I ran out of money he always had some, so he paid for me. I loved the swinging boats and the lad in charge always kept a red one for me, so I felt very important.

On the night in question, my two brothers and myself were going to a Good Friday ceremony. I was to wear wellington boots to get to the church because we had to go across fields. But, since we planned to go to the show, I had no notion of wearing wellingtons, so during the day I hid my shoes in our neighbour's ditch. On the way to the church, I got my shoes on and left my wellington boots in the ditch. I was on my way!

Lo and behold, the cat was missing and my father went looking for him. But he couldn't find him anywhere, so my father got his flash lamp and went towards the neighbour's house. He found my wellingtons in the ditch instead of the cat! So he forgot the cat and went down to the show to find me. A girl came in as I was playing pongo, hoping to win four pence, and told me that my father was outside. He wouldn't come in, so I went out and I knew I was in trouble – his face was set like a mask!

I walked with him up the road and he didn't speak to me. When I got home, he roared at me and I think but for my mother he would have really let me have it. My father was a real gentle man and, years later, he told me how sorry he was. His excuse was that he was trying to protect me. He hadn't told me the facts of life but my cousins had told me very plainly, leaving nothing unsaid!

I often thought to ask my father if he led a colourful life in his youth before he met my mother, but I never had the courage. My mother trusted me more than the boys and I would never let her down.

By Maureen

My Holiday in Long Island

Last October, I went on holiday to the USA to visit my daughter who lives in Northport, Long Island. Northport is a small town with a marina, a bit like our own town of Kilrush. There are lots of boats of all sizes, small ones, big sailing boats and the wealthy-looking yachts. There is always lots of activity with people coming and going, sailing for pleasure or fishing.

The first few days were lovely, and we were out and about exploring and enjoying ourselves. However, on the third day it started to rain that night, and it never stopped for eight days and nights. Sometimes, it was torrential and stormy and the American people couldn't understand it. They thought it was probably the tail end of hurricane Katrina. It really ruined our holiday, as we got out very little without getting soaked. Up-country, some roads were flooded and closed off, so I never got to see my best friend, Carmel, who lives in New Jersey. She telephoned and said that the water was coming in through the floor in her basement and it might be wiser not to chance going to New Jersey. Some Americans asked us when we were going home. I think they thought that we must have brought the rain with us from Ireland! So, next time you hear visitors going on about the Irish weather, you can tell them this story!

By Maura

Short Stories

A lot of people take reading for granted. For me, I really appreciate reading short stories. I left school early and was not able to read very well. I am a student with the Clare Reading and Writing for the last number of years and my reading has improved. Now I love to read the 'TV Guide' and short stories.

My favourite short story is about a mother who felt she was taken for granted by her husband and children. She felt all that they wanted her for was to clean, tidy up after them and to have their meals ready for them. She was tired of it all. Then, she met somebody at her work who gave her a lot of attention and a present. It made her feel good. Then, one evening, there was a knock on the door and there stood the florist with a big bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates. Who were they from?

With trembling hands she opened the card and it said, "From your loving husband and children." She held the flowers close to her and realised how lucky she was. Later on that evening, she had another surprise. Her husband drove a second-hand car into the driveway. "A present for you, my love," he said. With tears in her eyes, she hugged him. "What a fool I've been," she thought.

By Margaret

What I Like

I work in the workshop with Michel. I do a lot of painting of window boxes. I also work with Eddie making jewellery. I love working in the workshop and try to get out of doing the writing with Mary. I also work in town at the community centre, cleaning.

I go bowling once a week and to the gym. I like working at the community centre in Ennistymon, because I am away from the group and independent.

I went to London last year on holidays. It was my first time flying and I loved it. I have no plans yet this year, but I hope we do something.

I go home to Lisdoonvarna every weekend and I like to go for a pint. I also like to listen to music. I have a lot of CDs and I do not have any favourites. I also enjoy my quiet time – maybe at the beach or in my room.

By Willie

Moving Countries

My name is Happy and I'm from Bangladesh. I came to Ireland on the 2nd of April 2002. I'm married and have children.

Before I came to Ireland, I spoke no English. It was difficult for me to go shopping or go to the doctor, for example.

I came from a hot country and found Ireland very cold. I was so affected by it that now I suffer from arthritis.

I was surprised to see that even in the big shopping centres, the people I didn't know were very friendly and helpful. I was also surprised the first time I saw my country's fish. Now I'm surprised I'm going to the adult education centre to learn English. I speak better now than before and my children can speak English as well. I am very happy.

By Happy

Ten Golden Rules

- Gain knowledge through education.
- Devote time to every learning need... learn now!
- Listen, learn and improve your skills.
- Make understanding and interaction easy by exploiting your talents now!
- Enhance your creativity; share knowledge.
- Strive to reach a consensus life.
- Be tolerant; respect one another and increase performance.
- Analyse your decisions and learn to share ideas.
- Communicate with one another freely.
- Be productive in life through education.

Education – The engine of knowledge

As education is a part of life, it falters in the face of mounting challenges. To learn now is to play an active role, so as not to jeopardize our future. Our future lies in our hands. Make hay while the sun shines!

Some said the world is flat, but then they learned it was round. The education revolution that began 300 years ago has accelerated exponentially. It is moving so fast that the spread of knowledge defines our times now and for the future.

The student that learns now will gain and prosper in the future, but it will take something else, wisdom, commitment and endurance to achieve this knowledge. It is time to make education in Ireland a task that we must all achieve in our lifetimes. Don't be left behind!

By John

Limerick

Limerick is the third biggest city in Ireland. It is a beautiful city. There are a lot of old churches and old buildings. There are a lot of students and tourists. Also, it is a lovely place to shop. O'Connell Street is the busiest shopping street in Limerick. A lot of people walk down this main street every day. It is possible to buy anything that you want. This street has a lot of small, specialist shops.

It has one big expensive shop, Brown Thomas. It isn't cheap, because you can buy exclusive clothes from the most expensive designers such as Dolce & Gabana, Versace, Tommy Hilfiger or Calvin Klein.

There are a lot of small boutiques that sell men's and women's clothes that aren't too expensive. There are also bookshops and record stores. There are many good restaurants and cafes. It is a beautiful city to look at and to do your big shopping there.

By Laura

Special Olympics

My name is Barry and I attend the Brothers of Charity in Ennis on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday and Friday I work in McDonald's in Shannon.

I love all sports and play soccer, basketball, hockey, and I also go swimming and bowling. I am on the Munster soccer team going to Belfast for the Special Olympics.

By the time this appears in the 2006 issue of 'Simply Said', we will know if we were successful in securing a place for the 2007 World Olympics in China – very exciting stuff. I am very optimistic that some of my fellow competitors will make it to China.

By Barry

Dicey Riley

I like this song and would like to share the words of it with everyone.

Poor old Dicey Riley she has taken to the sup
Poor old Dicey Riley she will never give it up
It's off in the morning to the pub
And then she's in for anther little drop
For the heart of the rule is Dicey Riley

She walks along Fitzgibbon Street with an independent air
Then it's down by Summerhill at her the people stare
She says it's nearly half past one
So I'll just drop in for another little one
For the heart of the rule is Dicey Riley

She owns a little sweet shop at the corner of the street
And every day after school I go to wash her feet
She leaves me there to mind the shop
While she nips in for another little drop
For the heart of the rule is Dicey Riley

By Martina

Making a Movie

We made a movie in our drama class. It was about a bank robbery and I was playing one of the robbers. There were two of us robbing a Credit Union, and we had to get the bag of money from the cashier. One of the security guards chased after us and caught us. After that, we had to go to court and listen to what the judge had to say.

I really enjoyed making this film. It was good fun and we all had a laugh doing it. I like acting, but it is hard to remember my lines and what I have to do. It will be nice to see it on D.V.D. when it is finished. We will all get a copy.

By Pauline

Gardaí

The Gardaí came to the training centre at the Brothers of Charity to talk about safety.

They advised us about wearing seatbelts, minding our wallets and mobile phones. They said we should keep our phones in our pockets.

They also told us to cross the road carefully – to use traffic lights or if there are no lights, to cross where there is a good view of the traffic.

They gave us a spin in their van with the siren on. They also advised us not to take a lift from strangers. The two Gardaí in uniform were very nice.

By Declan

My First Plane Journey

I remember my first journey by plane. It was difficult for me, but I had to leave because I was being persecuted at home. I took the flight on the 27th of September 2003 without a set destination. It was raining, but not cold, so I didn't bring any jumpers with me. Well, I didn't care; I only found how to save my life. I remember, also, that the sky was dark with a rainbow. Anyway, we all know what the feeling is like of getting on a plane for the first time. I was afraid and when the plane moved forward, I shouted and took a look out the window. I couldn't see any houses, water or people, and the sky was covered by fog. After nine hours, the plane arrived in France, and then I took another one to Ireland. It was much quicker. I didn't have time to relax. Inside the plane, the male flight attendant spoke English, so I couldn't understand.

When the plane arrived in Ireland and I got out, it was cold and rainy but the wind wasn't as strong as in Africa. Everything was so different. I took a taxi to the R.I.S. but, by mistake, the driver left me at the Garda Station. I was very surprised to see a policeman with a gun and a different name. I slept in a chair in the station all night long. I was by the main door with no jumper and I never experienced the same level of coldness I felt that night.

By Jean

Farm Safety

My dad has a new tractor. He bought it in Kilrush and it is the new Massey Ferguson 138. I am going to keep the old one for driving round the farm because we had that one for a long time. It is fine for going to the bog because it has double wheels. It is very important to be safe around farm machinery. You need to drive nice and slow and make sure you turn off the engine when you leave the tractor with the handbrake on, otherwise it can roll down the hill and run over people. You can't stop the tractor if it's rolling. Sometimes, you can put a stone at the back of the wheels to stop it rolling back. There are machines you put on the back of the tractor to cut rushes or silage. These can be dangerous, so you need to be careful. Farm safety also means things like shutting the gates and keeping oil and petrol safely away from the sheds and barns. My dad is very careful about farm safety. It also means closing the dairy doors and closing the cow cabin doors. You need to keep away from cows when they have just had a calf and keep away from the bull, always!

By Adrian

Early Wake up Call by Jenny Wren

5.30 a.m.! Who wants to wake up at this unearthly hour? But our resident wren is doing her best to wake us up with her wonderful singing. The wren, at 3 inches long, being Ireland's second smallest bird – the goldcrest being the smallest, has the most beautiful singing voice, far louder than you would expect from so small a bird. The wren is equal in voice to the blackbird that is about four times larger.

The male builds about four 'des-res' nests for his lady wife and invites her to take her pick – isn't she lucky?! The nests are neat ball-like structures of moss, leaves and grass. Our wren's nest is built in a coconut shell bird feeder in our shed. The female lays between 6–12 eggs and may have two broods.

In the Bronze Age the wren was hunted as part of the 'New Year' celebrations and this was carried out until fairly recently. Thus, we have the verse of the wren boys on the 26th of December or St. Stephen's Day. This goes:

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze,
Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
Give us a penny and we'll be gone!

By Jackie

Will England Win the World Cup?

I like music and my favourite singer is Ozzy Osbourne who was in Black Sabbath. He now sings with another band. My favourite song by Ozzy is 'Back to Earth' because the music is great. I also like Shayne Ward. He won the X-Factor and he sings very well. I like watching football, especially Chelsea and Man. Utd. Chelsea won the premiership but they won't win it next year. My favourite soccer players are Damien Duff and Wayne Rooney. I don't think England have much of a chance in the World Cup because Wayne Rooney is injured but I will watch the World Cup on the television.

When I lived in Dublin, I used to go to a Health Club with my friends. I had known them since I was small and I had gone to school with them. I had two best friends – Robbie and Shane. I sometimes send them a text or e-mail. I miss Dublin, especially my friends and family. Clare is a bit boring and there is not much to do, but my mum and sister love it here.

By Derek

The Big Storm in Kilkee

I was born and raised by Querrin Shore, very close to the water and the high tide would come right up to the door. About fifty years ago, there was a terrible storm one night and the spring tide was also high at the same time. I was in England at the time but my parents and sister were at home and they told me the story. My mother woke in the middle of the night to find her legs under water. She called to my father who said, "It's only the high tide, go back to sleep!"

My mother wouldn't walk in the water. She was frightened, so my father had to carry her in his arms out to the kitchen. They sat in the kitchen and waited for the tide to go out, helping to sweep some of the water and seaweed out. There was a foot of dampness on the walls when the water finally went down.

Later, we heard that a good stretch of the sea wall on the strand line had fallen down with the force of the water. People said that there were even fish coming down the chimney of the Strand Hotel and the few cars in town were overturned. Lots of houses lost slates from the roofs. Windows and doors were broken. People had to leave their homes and stay with friends and family. The whole town looked like a bomb had hit it. Thank goodness we haven't had such a bad storm since then. I don't live in Querrin anymore, but it is still a beautiful place.

By Dolly

Travelling

My house is near the Falls Hotel in Ennistymon. They have just built a gym and pool and we can go any time. I go often and enjoy the gym and a swim sometimes.

I was in London last year with a group and Eddie. It was my first time flying. My brother, Stephen, works in Shannon airport and he met us before we left. I really enjoyed the city of London – all it's buildings and the craic of being on holidays. This year, we are making plans for France. Some of the staff are coming, so I will be reading and working on the computer to learn as much as I can about France. I went to Dublin to a football match and had pictures taken with the manager and team.

I am learning the keyboard and my tutor is Helen. I love music, playing and singing with the choir in Ennistymon church.

I had a very sad time this year. My twin sister, Ann, passed away. She and her husband John have four children. We all miss her very much.

By Martin

The Day of Fundraising

We started in Ennis town at 9.30 a.m. A group of helpers had buckets to collect money for Sr. Ethel Normoyle's Mission in Africa. When we finished collecting in Ennis. We continued to walk to Lissycasey collecting along the way while pushing a bed.

We arrived at Fanny O'Dea's at 6.30 p.m. Food and music were organised and a cake was presented to Sr. Ethel, as it was her birthday.

We had a great night and €30,000 was collected to build a church in Africa.

By Tom

When I was Small

When I was small, the world was a great place. There was no war or famine and the sun shone all the time. No one ever died. Christmas was the best time of year. The sky was always blue and the stars filled the sky at night. There was no tomorrow, only today. We were always happy. When I was small, no one told me I would get big.

Now that I am big, the world is still a great place. But there is war and famine and the sun does not shine all the time. The sky is blue sometimes and the stars do not come out every night. Christmas can be a nightmare and we are not always happy. We think about tomorrow and people do die. When I was small, no one told me it was going to be like this. Sometimes I wish I were still small.

By Gerard

My Holiday in Lanzerote

A group of my family, eight in all, went on a holiday to Lanzerote. All of us were looking forward to the trip for a few weeks. We took two taxis to the airport and our flight went out from Shannon. Our flight was very smooth and it took four hours. During our flight, we were served a meal.

When we arrived at the airport in Lanzerote, a bus took us to our apartments and we got our keys. Soon after that, we went shopping in a local supermarket. The weather was really nice and we had a really lovely time. The water was very cold but the children took no notice of the cold.

We went out to a restaurant every night and the food was very nice and we liked especially the restaurant, Bodega Jose, in the old town. We also went for a trip on a boat in the sea. The time went by very quickly and soon it was time to return home.

We took home lovely memories of the restaurants and we took nice photos of the places there. The holiday was great but it was nice to get back home again.

By James

