

# *Simply Said 2010*



## *Issue 22*

*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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Photo of the tapestry made  
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## Foreword

This year sees the 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of Simply Said, the annual publication of writings by adult learners who are participating in programmes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service. The last 18 months have seen an increased interest in important skills such as sewing, horticulture, cooking, baking, car maintenance and media technologies. These programmes are integrated and embedded with literacy, language and numeracy, the skills which form the basis of our classes.

This year's publication has an intriguing collection of stories, poems, recipes, plays, memories, ideas and hopes. The publication reflects the diversity of our learners with stories from China, Cuba, Brazil, Nigeria, Congo, Angola, New York, Donegal, Doonbeg, Newmarket, Ennis and many more places from around Ireland and the world. The publication also reflects on the friendships made while attending courses in CABES, whether in the sewing class, the computer room or out in the allotment. There are wonderful reflections of times past which look at the hardness of bygone days but the closeness of community. And in the year 2010 it is still possible to give birth in the front seat of your car!

We would like to thank the CABES learners from Shannon who created this year's cover. It is a collaborative hand-made design which incorporates the elements of pattern, design and embroidery. The title, 'Le Chéile' and the pictures of flowers suggest the togetherness of class and tutor as they develop their skills and learn from each other.

Finally, congratulations to all the learners who have contributed to this year's publication. Your story is now on the bookshelves. A special thanks to the volunteer tutors for your continued dedication to our learners. Well done to everyone involved in the organisation and production of Simply Said 2010 and best wishes to all.

*The CABES Team*



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## Le Chéile

Most of the ladies in the group saw the sewing class advertised in the Adult Learning Centre. We first came together as a group to learn practical and some creative sewing. Some of us were feeling quite anxious, not knowing if we were able to do it, perhaps due to the fact that we had not got such good memories of our early sewing class days. Usually when a group comes together like this, they have different ideas on what they would like to achieve during the course. Our tutor showed us samples of her creative sewing. We all had ambitions to be able to achieve great things.

We started with learning about appliqué and embroidery stitches and working on a sample. When we looked at our finished samples with their vibrant colours and beautiful stitches, we decided as a group to put the samples together and make a wall hanging and donate it to the centre.

We came together as a group of students not knowing each other. We formed friendships from our various backgrounds and cultures, and therefore 'Le Chéile' was born which means 'together'.

Some students' comments from the class:

"When I came here first I liked meeting people and learning to sew."

"I came to the class to learn sewing, to make new friends, and now I feel more confident."

"I have made new friends and I enjoyed learning embroidery. I hope to put what I have learned to practical use."

"With my new skills I plan doing a patchwork quilt with my grandchildren."

"I came to the class to revive forgotten skills, learn creative embroidery and came away with much more."

"I wanted to learn patchwork; I thought it was going to be easy, I really enjoyed the class."



"I came to the class to learn new skills and I was made welcome."

"I got more practice with sewing and learned to mix with different people from other backgrounds."

"I enjoyed the class as I learnt new skills and made new friends."

*By Mary, Chandra, Nora, Margaret, Monica,  
Anne, Bridget, Mary, & Nona our tutor*

## **My young years in school**

The first couple of years seemed to be ok as I remember. Getting my first Holy Communion was pretty hard on learning the prayers but I got there. The night before my Communion, I remember my mother, God be with her, putting on my suit, my arm band and my badge. I felt like a prince. As I changed classes, the teachers and the home work got tougher.

As I got older, learning at school seemed to get harder. The teachers used get cross with me and in those days if you had trouble with your homework, it usually meant that you got slapped the next day. I think these events affected my learning at school as I would often make excuses for not attending. I couldn't wait to leave school and finally I left at fourteen years of age.

Now I am attending adult learning classes and I am enjoying them very much, and every week I look forward to attending. I am learning quite a bit and hope to continue learning for many more years.

*By Joe*

## **Friends**

A friend is a true companion,  
Someone who will be there when all is said and done.  
Someone who listens even when the story is dull.  
Someone who lends to the conversation even when there is  
a lull.

A friend is the best gift other than family,  
Who will try to see what you will see.  
A friend is a person you can count on  
And almost always someone you can rely on.

*By Mary*

## **There is always a first time.**

My Name is Breda. I am in my 40's and would love to learn how to drive a car. First, I will have to get a book or a CD. I can get all the information in that for the Driver Theory test. The CD is for a laptop or a computer. There are 40 questions and you have to read the rules of the road. Once I have read up about the theory test I can take my theory test in a mobile centre.

Next step; if I pass the theory test then I can take driving lessons which will give me more confidence. I will be able to go then and get a new car in the colour I like. I can go to a lot of places, for example, shopping or to the beach. I am from a family of seven and they all can drive. I think it is never too late to start from somewhere. Once I have passed my driving test I can visit my parents in Sixmilebridge with my new car.

*By Breda*

## Thoughts of home

Underneath the starry sheltered sky,  
Thoughts of home abide,  
Do the same thoughts submerge  
Inside my friends akin

Burning in the hearth of mother and child,  
A patriotic sense of love and pride,  
In a time and place  
That can never erase,

So we soldier on, with no love lost  
And more laughter to come,  
Together in our stride.

*By LorryJune*

## My best friends - my Mom and my Dad

My Mom died on February 27th 2007, and my Dad died three weeks later. I wrote this letter to them to ask them a favour.

Our little sister Teresa is very sick and she will be leaving us soon - not sure when. None of us want her to leave but she has to leave, hoping when she takes her journey she won't have to suffer pain anymore. So Mom and Dad; will you tell her it is ok to leave when she is ready and not to be afraid. I know you will be waiting for her at the end of her journey so you can all rest together and take care of each other. I am sending a kiss for you, Mom, and one for you Dad. I will send you a kiss for Teresa, so you can give it to her when you all meet up. Love and miss you always, from your daughter.

*By Winnie*

## **If only**

*Remembering the 112 women who have died through violence in Ireland since 1995.*

As she sits in the darkness  
To hear his key in the door,  
She says to herself  
I can't take this anymore.

She's sick of the hitting  
The lying and the put downs,  
She thinks it's time  
That she stand her ground.

She remembers the first time,  
The abuse had started.  
When he broke her nose,  
And her wrist he fractured.

From then on when her friends  
Asked her about the burns  
And the bruises,  
She was good at making up  
Lots of excuses.

She then turns to the bottle  
To help get her by,  
By the time she gets sober  
She just wants to die.

If only she had the willpower  
To get up and walk out,  
She knows she would manage  
Without a doubt.

So tonight as she waits for him to turn the key,  
She'll tell him she's leaving,  
That she wants to be free.

*By Mary*

## **Managing Newmarket Celtic**

My name is John and for 35 years I managed junior and under-age soccer teams for Newmarket Celtic.

As manager of the B team, every Sunday morning I would get the gear ready for 9 a.m. All the players had to be at the field at 10.15 a.m. The night before, the players would contact me to let me know if they were available and so I would have already picked the team based on this information.

After the squad had warmed up I would name the team. There would be a few sour faces, as usual! In my pep talk, I would explain my decision and I would stress that they would have to respect it. At this point, my assistant Ciaran would have to collect €2 a man for the referee – if Ciaran left it any later than this he would not get the money because everyone would disappear down to the pub after their showers.

During the match I'd be shouting, roaring and generally giving out whenever a pass went astray. I'd be keeping an eye on players and making sure that they weren't giving the referee a hard time because if they did, they'd get booked and possibly sent off.

At half-time we'd have another pep talk for 12 minutes – for the other three minutes of the break they could talk amongst themselves.

Ciaran and I would discuss who was playing badly, and any players not up to scratch after the first 15 minutes of the second half risked being taken off. All matches ended with each side shaking hands with the opposition and the referee.

The local Derby happens once a year, home and away. On one occasion it got out of hand. There was friction and bad feeling amongst supporters and players. At one stage the referee called on the captains to cool things down between



the players. The game continued and we had two goal-scorers - Denney and Crock – and we won the game 2-1.

After the match we warmed down for half an hour and the players showered. The smell of Lynx and aftershave in the changing rooms was overpowering.

After we'd locked up we went to the local pub and we stayed there till 12.59 a.m. A great evening was had by both teams and we made up over darts, pool and plenty of pints.

*By Johnny*

## **The king of pop – Michael Jackson**

He was born on August 29, 1958 in Indiana, east central U.S.A. and was the seventh of nine children. He signed his first record deal with his four brothers – Jackie, Tito, Jermaine and Marlon – as part of the Jackson 5 in 1968. His 1982 album *Thriller* is the best-selling record of all time by a solo artist and has sold more than 100 million copies worldwide. He starred as the scarecrow in the movie musical, *The Wiz*, alongside Diana Ross in 1978. He had three children. He was married twice.

On Thursday, June 25, 2009 at 2.26 p.m., the world lost one of its brightest stars. He never got to do his London shows.

I like his music, videos and dancing. He will be remembered for his music, his moonwalk dance and for *Thriller*. I like the songs, 'Billie Jean' and 'Beat It'. I'd like to have seen him on tour.

*By Michelle*

## White soda bread

### Ingredients

450g (1lb) plain flour  
1 level tsp caster sugar  
1 level tsp bicarbonate of soda  
1 tsp salt  
350-425ml (12-15 fl oz) buttermilk

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 230°C (425°F), Gas Mark 8.
2. Sift the dry ingredients into a large bowl and make a well in the centre. Pour in most of the buttermilk leaving about 60ml/2 fl oz in the measuring jug. Using one hand with your fingers outstretched like a clam, bring the flour and liquid together, adding more buttermilk if necessary. Do not knead the mixture or it will become heavy. The dough should be softish but not too wet or sticky.
3. When it comes together turn on to a floured work surface and bring together a little more. Pat the dough into a round about 4cm deep and cut a deep cross in it.
4. Place on a baking tray and bake in the pre-heated oven for 15 minutes then turn down the heat to 200 C (400 F), Gas Mark 6, and cook for 30 minutes more. When cooked the loaf will sound slightly hollow when tapped on its base and will be golden in colour.

*By Cíaran*

## **Driver theory test**

My task this year is to pass my driver theory test. If I pass, I can get my learner permit and go where I like. I can drive to work, training and the gym.

To pass my driver theory test, I have to knuckle down and practise hard. It's good to have the driver theory questions on a disk as it gives all of the questions that you may be asked on the day of the test.

I am waiting to get all of the questions right on the practice disk before I send my application form for a date to do the test. So for now all I have to do is give it 100%.

*By Michael*

## **A smile**

What ever happened to our smile? Most people I meet never seem to smile anymore. Why I don't know. It's nice when I meet a person who smiles. It makes me feel relaxed and I know that he/she is friendly so I don't feel nervous.

A smile lights up my day. I think people are too serious now-a-days. The only times they seem to smile is when they are at a party and perhaps feel relaxed. Then I see them smile but why wait for a party to do that? Smile and be friendly, it is the best medicine that we can get. Life is too short not to smile because a smile goes a long way.

Smile and the world smiles with you, weep and you weep alone.

*By Margaret*

## **Cuba - my dream**

Cuba, my beautiful Cuba. It is nearer to me than I can imagine. Cuba is my family; my mother is a beautiful woman who is like a ray of light. She loves music and dance. She has worked all her life in education, she is a teacher. I remember my mother all the time because she has something special for me, like, kisses and hugs. I think a mother can feel all that you need. I miss her a lot but I told her our hearts are always together. She is married to a wonderful man. He loves her and takes good care of her. He is a good strong worker and a very lovely person. I have a little brother who is eleven years old. He loves me and I love him. He is a very good boy. He misses me a lot and we miss him. For me he is special because he always believes in me and always pays attention to me and he loves talking to me.

I am going to tell you now about my grandmother who is the love of my life. She is an amazing woman. She is friendly and happy and is always talking to people. I think she has a gift for that. She loves her family and enjoys staying at home with the family to listen to music, have some traditional food and dance with me and my cousins. She always says that she can't dance, but we always get her to in the end. I'm sure that she enjoys this a lot. My grandmother loves that and I know it is her best fortune. Her name is Maria de Los Angeles but all the people call her China. I remember when I was a little girl, my grandmother said to me that nobody uses her name, but it's beautiful and in English it's Mary, it is very beautiful and very funny. I am 20 now so I can never forget that because all the time I remember her expression and her face when she told me that. Sometimes I have a big smile on my face when I think about her. I think my grandparents are very special, too.

My grandfather is my life, too. He is the most modest man in the world. I don't think I have enough words to describe him. All that he has done in his life is take care of his family and given them all that he has. He is always thinking about his family and gives them all that he has. My grandfather is

natural, simple and docile but is wonderfully honest and loves to work. He is never tired and never stops. When I was in Cuba I called him 'Ague' because this is the name that his grandchildren call him. He has a lot of birds at home. He loves animals and the animals love him, too. He has a couple of birds called 'Tomeguines def pinar' and he keeps them in a cage. My grandfather brings them some leaves and a few branches. They have a nest and after they have their chicks my grandfather takes care of them and gives them food. For us it is amazing that he shows them how to be good parents and in a short period of time they have beautiful chicks.

He is a fantastic farmer. He loves agriculture and everything to do with the land. At the weekend he has to go to the land and check everything. When I was 7 or 8 years old I liked to go to the garden with him. I got up early in the morning to go with him. He would carry me on his bicycle. I haven't forgotten how happy I was when I went to the garden and ate some fruit. That was wonderful. I'm asked all the time what is that and why. I will remember for all my life. I feel very happy to learn a lot for my grandfather. All my family is so important to me. Maybe one day we can all be together. I don't know where, but being together is the best dream I have. I have told them a lot about the history of Ireland, the traditional food, the people, the culture, the music, the Irish dance and they think that Ireland is a nice and beautiful place. Cuba is my song, my dance, my Cuban rum, my tobacco, my food, my red earth and beautiful sun, my sweet fruits and my sugar. I think sometimes where Cuba is... It is far, far away!

Oh no! It isn't! I see now Cuba is here in my heart.

*By Surelys*

## **Something new**

I hadn't intended on doing this particular course. I had signed up my daughter to do it as she wanted to learn how to use a sewing machine. But I stayed for the first class and that was it. I loved it! I can now use a sewing machine. I have made a bag and an apron. I have mended items of clothing at home and have made friends. My daughter and I even get on a lot better. We get ideas from each other and it's very easy to understand the teacher. I would be very interested in other courses that would be going on.

*By Bernie*

## **My country, China**

I come from a big city called Dalian in the north of China, a scenic seaside city. I live 20 minutes drive from the beach. We have four clear seasons of weather. The winter time is dry and cold, much colder than Ireland. I don't like winter time there.

The summer time is very hot and the sun is strong. If you go out you need an umbrella because the sun is dangerous. I don't like it too much, but I like swimming in the sea a lot.

Spring is the most beautiful season when you can enjoy the sunshine, but also you can enjoy the different flowers, trees and plants everywhere. It doesn't rain like here in Ireland and it is the best time to visit.

*By Jun*



## **When I discovered IT**

My last full-time job finished in 2004 and for a while I enjoyed my new found freedom. However, after all the visits and all the trips and all the tea and chat were completed time began to hang heavy.

I was in the FÁS office one day and I spoke to a lovely lady about my own age. We began to compare life in general and by the time I left she had me signed up for a beginner's computer course level 3 with BTEI. She figured my knowledge of IT was nil as I was over the age of fifty years, but I had learned to type in my early years in education. How right she was. As the memory of hours of typing practice and the day our home got its first electric cooker through the Rural Electrification Scheme in 1958 came flooding back, I thought just how far our world and I had travelled in the last fifty years.

I began my course in Clonroad with my tutor Deirdre and it wasn't long before I was well and truly hooked to the IT bandwagon. It was magic. My younger sister had just completed and got her ECDL, so I received her old laptop computer to help me practice. Armed with my new toy, I practiced and practiced. The images that appeared on the screen as I operated this little machine fascinated me. I learned a whole new meaning to words such as mouse, scroll, burn, virus, hacker and firewall. The job of producing a letter or document was made so much easier by the addition of an old printer I got from my son. He bought a new, more expensive one, of course. Gone were the days of stencils, carbon paper, Tipp-ex and multiple ink and carbon stained fingers. I went through reams of paper that first year; letters to friends, notes for my cookery book, notes for my gardening folder, and the fact that I could produce it all in colour amazed me.

As I moved up the FETAC grades I could draw, make pictures from shapes and colour the shaped and printed text in any colour I fancied at the time. It was great for gardening

projects and plans. The internet was like opening a door from a dark room into light. I got in touch with my overseas family and friends and even ordered goods online. The access to information was breathtaking. However I also learned not all that information was trustworthy, so I became selective as time went by.

On my birthday I received a gift of a digital camera. Oh what wizardry! Getting to know all its works and uses kept me occupied for a whole winter season. The following spring and summer I photographed each plant and shrub and flower in my garden. I copied all the images on to my computer and then made a short record of height, spread, variety, colour, age and position of each. My garden record is bulging and access to information on each entry is so easy to print when I give members of the family, or a friend, a cutting or divide of the plants.

For my birthday this year I received a web cam, so I am set up for a full winter season's entertainment and study of operation. The speed and accuracy with which the camera works means I can see and speak with my nephew and his family in Australia and to all my extended family in most parts of the world, provided they have a web cam of course.

I have learnt so much in the last four years, thanks to that lady in the FÁS office and her excellent communication skills.

*By Maureen*

## **The shovel**

In the small village that I come from in Donegal, there was a farmer who lived about three miles outside the town. This man was well known as a very lazy man and a poor farmer. In the evenings, all the local lads used to gather at the shop at the crossroads in the centre of the village.

One evening the farmer cycled into the village to go to the shop, which was also a hardware store. After some friendly banter with the local lads, he went into the shop. He was some time in the store and the lads outside were commenting and skitting about his reputation for being lazy. When he came out of the shop he was carrying a brand new shovel, which he then proceeded to tie very carefully onto the bicycle. After some more chat to the lads, he started to head home. When he was gone a short way down the road, one of the smart boys was heard to say, "well boys I think that there shovel is going to a good home!"

*By John*

## **A storm**

The night was dark and stormy. There was thunder and lightning and high winds. I was watching TV. Suddenly, the lights went out. I felt scared.

It was then that I heard something – footsteps. I saw something in the shadows – a dark figure. A door slammed. Someone was in the room with me. A person grabbed me. I was terrified. I screamed and lashed out. Just then, the lights came back on and I realised that the dark figure was my girlfriend.

*By Brendan*

## Doonbeg

Doonbeg is a lovely little village in west Clare about thirty miles from Ennis. People from all over the world come here for their holidays. Doonbeg has five pubs, two shops and a post office. Two of the pubs are also restaurants and serve lovely food for most of the year. There is a village hall which is used for the Drama Festival and for bingo every Friday night.

Doonbeg is an old village because there is a ruined castle that stands by the bridge and another castle out by the pier and a new cemetery. The castles used to belong to the Thomond family and both were used as look-out points for any invaders that might come from the sea. The river flows out into the sea and there is a lovely beach called Doughbeg where you can watch the salmon swimming upstream and the otters playing in the early evenings.

In the summer, visitors can go to the Jazz Festival where people from all over Ireland and Europe come to play in the pubs. There is also a Seafood Festival where there are cookery demonstrations and the Willie Keane Festival in the autumn for people who enjoy set dancing. The highlight of the year is the Drama Festival, which is usually over a week long and plays by well-known Irish writers are performed by amateur drama groups. The local Doonbeg Drama Group is very popular.

Doonbeg is a very friendly village and you can have a good pint and a chat in the pubs. It is my hometown and my father and his family all came from there. I like living there because it is in the country but there is a lot going on. You can watch the cows in the field or the sea lapping the beach and smell the lovely fresh air.

*By Adrienne*

## **Columbo**

Peter Falk plays Columbo – a detective from the 1970s. He wears a raincoat and acts as if he knows nothing, but he knows it all. It is a very good TV series – better than the new detective shows that are full of car chases and violence. Columbo has an old Peugeot car, so he doesn't have any car chases and he doesn't carry a gun.

Bing Crosby was asked to play Columbo but he turned down the offer because he was playing in a golf tournament. That's how Peter Falk became Columbo. He read the script and said he'd kill to play the part.

The series ran for 14 years and Falk won an award for his part. Columbo never told us his first name!

*By Frank*

## **Flowers**

Some are red,  
Some are white,  
Some are yellow,  
And some are pink.  
The beauty of flowers  
Makes you think.  
You see them in the park  
Their beauty leaves a mark  
On the sweetly singing larks.

Roses, petunias, marigolds and daisies  
Lend their beauty to the bees.

Spring is my favourite time  
Because of the flowers in the sunshine.

*By Mary*

## **Acanmu for breakfast from Nigeria**

### Ingredients

Corn flour  
Milk  
Sugar  
Water

### Equipment

Large saucepan  
Jug  
Wooden spoon  
Tablespoon

### Method

1. In the jug mix 3 tablespoons of corn flour with a little cold water. Stir in the milk
2. Pour into a saucepan, stir and heat until thickened.
3. Add sugar and serve.

*By Fred*

## **One of our day trips**

We go on an outing every month. I love going. Some trips are more enjoyable than others. A fine day makes all the difference.

On Sunday we went to Ennis and visited my friend's mother in the hospital. We went to Ballyalla for a picnic. It was lovely. The sun shone. The foliage was coming on the trees and the whitethorn and cherry blossom were in full bloom. We finished the day off by having our tea in a restaurant. We were home by 7.00 p.m.

*By Margaret*



## Amazing experiences

Many people have amazing experiences. Some people choose them, some people don't. Many people have gone diving in the wild oceans with sharks; jumped out of aeroplanes hundreds of feet off the ground with a parachute on their backs. Some even try to climb the highest mountains they can. I believe people do this for a bit of excitement, just to let loose how you might feel in the moment. However, some people don't have any choice. I didn't choose. So here is my amazing experience.

It was April 7<sup>th</sup>, my first wedding anniversary, and I was all excited with a whole two weeks to get myself sorted for the new baby. I lay wondering what I would do today to keep myself occupied. Lawrence lay next to me, lazy to get up for work, a normal Monday morning feeling for him! At eight o'clock he asked, "Any chance you could go into labour today and I'll get the day off?" "Wishful thinking," I said and jumped in for a shower to start the day.

When I got out of the shower, I started to get the first small cramps that I knew were the start of labour. Lawrence got his wish. I was in labour after all! I started getting dressed, getting my make-up on and hair done; trying to look my best, not knowing what was ahead of me.

Lawrence and myself headed for Limerick - as you would. But only seven miles down the road I was not able to cope with the painful contractions anymore. I said to Lawrence, "We'll go to the doctor NOW!" But it wasn't our lucky day as the surgery was closed because the doctor's house had been broken into the night before.

So we set off again, hoping to make it to the hospital sixty miles away. But a few miles down the road, the pain was intense and I knew the baby was not going to wait. Thankfully, we got the doctor on the mobile and she speeded to our assistance at the side of the road because that was where our baby decided to make her appearance!

Our beautiful baby girl arrived at thirteen minutes past nine in the front seat of a Seat Leon car on a Monday morning. Talk about the perfect anniversary present and what an amazing experience for all of us!

*By Caroline*

## **Programmes that I like on TV**

There are many channels and many programmes on all the different channels. I do not like sport at all on TV and there is, in my opinion, far too much of it every day and especially every weekend.

Without doubt, my favourite programmes are *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street* and *Casualty*. I love *Emmerdale* because it is interesting and at times funny. It seems to deal with real life, although it is a soap. The characters that I like in it are Laurel Thomas, Ashley Thomas, Paddy Kirk, Sam Dingle, Lisa Dingle, Zak Dingle and Marlon Dingle.

I like *Coronation Street*, too, because it is like *Emmerdale* in many ways. It deals with people in a working-class environment that live their ordinary lives in quiet frustration every day. The characters that I enjoy in *Coronation Street* are Ken Barlow, Rita Sullivan, Peter Barlow, Betty Williams, Deirdre Barlow, Audrey Roberts and Sally Webster. I enjoy them because they are very nice people and very entertaining on screen.

I like *Casualty* because it deals with people going to hospital after accidents or different tragedies. It deals with the lives of the doctors and nurses and paramedics associated with the hospital.

*By James*

## **Sylvia's story**

My name is Sylvia. I live in a five-bedroomed house. I work in Carraig Donn three days a week. I volunteer in a charity shop every Friday. I stay with my mother every second weekend. I have three sisters and they each had a baby last year. Also, I have a brother called Stephen. My sister, Carol, got engaged and is getting married next year. I have a boyfriend, Richard, and we are together two years since February.

I go to classes two days a week and I learn reading, writing and maths. I have joined the Ennis Gospel Choir and I practise every Tuesday night. I sing with the choir for Mass and concerts. The choir is going to London next year for three days. I am saving money every week and I can't wait.

*By Sylvia*

## **Living by the sea**

For three years I lived in an old, draughty, cold house by the sea. I didn't like it. I would often look out at an angry, wild sea with a white swell. The salty wind would take your breath away and you would hear the roar and rattle of the windows as you walked around the house. On other days the sea would change colour and be flat, clam and a beautiful greeny-blue. Sometimes, the clouds and sea would join together to make a lovely turquoise horizon.

The sea is ever-changing and it has a mind of its own. It can be dramatic, wild, and stormy or it can be calm, quiet and gentle. The tides would come and go and I would often look out of the window and think to myself, I don't like this!

*By Rita*

## **The three amigos**

When I was a boy I lived in Quilty. My best friends lived next door. Their names were Tomas and Daniel. As a child, Daniel had an accident that nearly killed him. It left him with bad use of his hand and leg, but that didn't make him any different to anyone else.

The three of us went to school together and at home, we played football. Daniel was a very dirty player. He wasn't as fast as the rest of us, but he knew how to get the ball. He had a knack of taking the legs out from under us.

Tomas, Daniel and myself were like the three amigos. Where there was one of us, there were three and there was always something going on. Our biggest thing was making buggies. There was no bike or fisherman's fish box safe from us.

The three of us used to go up the field for frogs. We had a plan for them. We would put them in the letterboxes of Daniel's mother and her neighbours. I knew better than to put them in my mother's and so did the boys!

Years went by too fast and we were at the end of national school. That was when things became different for us. We did not hang around as much but we would talk. Myself and Tomas went to Spanish Point and Daniel went to Ennis.

We used to go to Miltown at weekends and Daniel's mother would threaten us not to get drink for him, but that didn't work. We used to get him shandy. He had an eye for the women, even more so after the shandy, but that's another story.

I left school to go working. That is when we grew further away but still stayed friends. The biggest loves Daniel had were football and his family. He also used to like to paint. He painted a picture of his grandfather's old house. From 2000 on, Daniel had his good and bad years. The year 2010 was going to be the hardest.

Daniel got pneumonia in January and did not fully recover from it. Every time Daniel got sick, his sickness got worse. However, that did not stop him from going to the football matches. Kilmurry Ibrickane got to the All Ireland final in Dublin. Daniel did not feel well, but again he fought with his mother to go and again like she always did, she put Daniel first and drove him to Dublin. Kilmurry Ibrickane lost that game and we went back to the hotel. We were all feeling down but what was going to come next was going to be much worse.

I went to bed about 11.30 p.m. and at about 5.30 a.m. I got a surprise knock to my room door. Daniel was rushed to the hospital. Things were not good. Daniel fought for three more days and died on the Saturday.

The three of us were together for the last time. The weekend of the funeral was the hardest thing I ever went through. He was not just my best friend, he was like my brother. Daniel was just thirty one when he died and I will never forget him.

*By Alan*

## **Spring**

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

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

*By Ann*

## **The Burren**

The mountains of Carron in Co. Clare are part of the Burren. Wild goats and wild flowers can be found on these mountains. No one can catch the goats. No one ever even sees the goats. Holly and ivy grow on the mountains and the goats eat these. There are also some beautiful flowers on the mountains that will grow in the Burren and nowhere else.

There is beautiful scenery in the Burren. From Corkscrew Hill, you can see Galway Bay and the Aran Islands. At night, you can see lights from Galway shining on the sea.

The Burren area is also famous for its caves. Aillwee Caves are the best known ones. The caves known as Poll na Gollain are not as well known, but people visit them as well.

People love to explore the Burren.

*By Tommy*

## **Brazilian breakfast**

In Brazil people usually have bread, cheese, butter, cereal, yogurt, ham, boiled eggs or fried eggs for breakfast. They drink fruit juice, usually orange juice, or coffee. They don't have alcohol or a big meal. In my family we usually have bread, cheese, butter, cereal, yogurt, apple juice, coffee and apples or bananas for breakfast.

At the weekend we have bread, fried eggs, bacon and toast. We normally drink apple juice or coffee.

*By Patrícia*



## Problems

This is a story about young adults who party a lot. When they go out, they drink too much and they take drugs. There is Adam, who is 24. He has a girlfriend called Sharon. She is 22. She is getting sick of Adam and the way he is acting. She had a fling with Adam's best friend, Justin. Justin is 23. He drinks a lot. He has been best friends with Adam for 16 years.

### Scene 1

*It's a Saturday night and Adam, Sharon and Justin are out partying. They are in a noisy pub.*

**Sharon (loudly):** Ye want a drink?

**Justin and Adam:** Yeah.

**Sharon:** I'll get them then.

*Sharon goes up to the counter.*

**Adam (to Justin):** I have something to show you.

**Justin:** What?

*Adam takes out a bag of ecstasy tablets.*

**Justin:** What are you at? I thought you packed all that in.

**Adam:** Do you want one to save for later?

**Justin:** What about Sharon? She deserves better.

**Adam:** She has me. She don't need anyone better. Now, are you going to take one?

**Justin:** Go on. Give me one.

*Adam takes it out, nice and slow, making sure he won't be caught by the bouncers. He hands the ecstasy tablet to Justin who puts it into his pocket. Sharon comes down with three drinks.*

**Sharon:** Here ye go.

*Adam grabs Sharon and kisses her on the lips as Justin looks on.*

## Scene 2

*Later that night, Adam, Justin and Sharon are entering a nite club. Sharon walks ahead of Adam and Justin.*

**Adam:** We'll take them inside. You still got yours?

**Justin:** Yeah. I don't like hiding them from Sharon.

**Adam:** What she don't know, won't hurt her. Anyway, it's not like she is your girlfriend.

*Justin looks at Adam with guilt in his eyes.*

*In the nite club, Justin walks up to the counter and asks for three straight vodkas. He goes back to Sharon and Adam and gives them one each. They drink them with ease.*

**Adam:** It's my round. Sharon, will you get the drinks?

**Sharon:** Yeah.

*He hands her a twenty euro note and she goes to the counter.*

**Adam (to Justin):** Are you ready to take them?

**Justin:** Not yet. After this drink, we'll take them. You can take yours now if you want.

**Adam:** I'll wait for you.

*Sharon comes down with three shots of vodka. They let them down with ease.*

**Sharon:** I suppose I have to go up and get my round.

**Adam:** Of course. *(Pause)* I am going to the toilet.

*Adam leaves.*

**Sharon (to Justin):** What are ye up to?

**Justin:** Nothing. Why?

**Sharon:** I know Adam and I know you.

**Justin:** We're just having the crack. I thought you were too.

**Sharon:** I am, but he treats me like crap!  
**Justin:** If I tell him the truth, can we be together?  
**Sharon:** Are you gone mad? He'd go insane.  
*Sharon goes to the counter. Adam comes back to the table.*  
**Adam (to Justin):** Are you ready?

### Scene 3

*Later, outside a take-away, Justin and Adam are drunk and high.*

**Adam (to Justin):** You are out of it tonight.  
**Sharon (to Adam):** I'm leaving.  
**Adam:** Stay here.  
**Sharon:** I've had enough of you and your drugs.  
**Adam:** You want it that way, fine, and let me tell you something. I was with other girls behind your back and who had you? Only me.  
**Sharon:** I actually cheated on you too.  
**Adam:** With who?  
**Justin:** With me. I am sorry.  
*Adam hits Justin and keeps on hitting him.*

**Sharon (screaming, to Adam):** Get off him!  
*Other people get Adam off Justin.*

**Sharon (to people nearby):** Phone an ambulance.  
**Justin:** I'm all right.  
**Sharon:** We'll get you checked out.

Sharon and Justin ended up together and never spoke to Adam again.

*By Michael*

## **When Saturday comes**

My favourite day of the week is Saturday because it is the weekend! I usually stay in bed until 11 o'clock. Then I have a shower and go downstairs to say, "good morning" to my family. Then we go to the kitchen. My mother and I make eggs, cake and toast or some sandwiches for breakfast and we sit down to eat and converse.

My mother usually makes delicious food for lunch. Sometimes we might invite some friends. After lunch my brothers, my sisters and I go for a walk somewhere in town, or we visit some relatives. When we are tired we go back home. I call my cousins in London, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany and Dublin. I talk with them or we go on Facebook until we are bored. Sometimes it's different; we go to a party and stay there all night.

*By Sergio*

## **Cooking and sewing**

In February this year I saw a sign in the Molua Centre that a cookery class and a sewing class were beginning. They were both things I loved to do. I loved sewing but was not able to do it so I asked my daughter, who is unemployed, to come along to the class with me. The teacher, Kathy, showed us how to thread the machine and bobbin, something I had never done before. We were very excited about class, so we decided to buy a sewing machine. I brought in a pair of jeans belonging to my brother to turn up. It was great!

*By Mary*

## Racism

Friends, I'd like to speak today about racism in Ireland. There are a lot of different types of racism around every day. Racism comes from all social classes. Some people are more affected by racism than others due to the colour of their skin or their religion. In every country there is racism.

Is it ok to judge people according to their colour, or their background?

There is a lot of racism around us every day, usually in our schools, in our shops, in our parking lots. It is just everywhere. Sometimes it's just harmless jokes, but other times it can lead to violence or even death.

For example, lately a 21 year old man was arrested in connection with the racist attacks on Romanian families in Belfast. Homes and cars were vandalised in three separate attacks. One hundred and fifteen Romanians, including 49 children, were forced to seek refuge in a church hall in Belfast after being attacked. Why can't ordinary families (like us) feel safe in our homes?

A survey was carried out on immigrants' experience in Ireland

- Over 80 % of the sample tend to agree that racism is a serious problem in Ireland today.
- 78 % of foreign people experience racism. This varied widely when the different ethnic groups were compared.
- 36 % of the sample frequently heard or saw people making insulting comments about their skin colour or ethnic backgrounds.
- 81 % believe that there is not enough done to educate the public about racism.
- 84 % felt that the Government was not doing enough to combat racism.
- Almost 62 % tend to agree that people who commit racist acts are not likely to be brought to justice.

- Almost three quarters of the sample think that there is more racism in cities than in the country.
- 59 % of respondents think that black and ethnic minorities are treated unfairly by the authorities when arriving in Ireland.
- Women from black and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience racism than men from these groups.
- Only 14% of the samples tended to agree that the Gardaí take racism incidents seriously.

Therefore, do you think foreign nationals feel safe living in Ireland? Do you think racism is rife in Ireland? The so called land of 1000 welcomes. All people are equal, have a right to feel safe, so stamp out racism now! Become a human not a racist!

*By Indre*

## **Looking after yourself**

I love to go shopping to Dunnes in Ennis and look through all the clothes. I try my clothes on before I buy them because sometimes they don't fit. The sizes can be all wrong so it's important to try things on before you buy. My favourite colour is pink, but also I like red and blue. Black is a handy colour for looking slim and smart for work.

I like to get my hair done every Thursday - I go to Lorna's. She does my nails and I usually wear pink nail varnish. I sometimes have a back massage in Kilkee at the pool. It's really nice and relaxing.

I like to look after myself so that I feel good about myself. It's important to take care of yourself.

*By Ann Marie*

## **My early life**

I was born in New York, USA in 1928 to Irish parents. I lived there for seven or eight years, so my memories of that time are very vague. We returned to Ireland and settled down to farming life - or at least my parents did. There were three in my family - two girls and one boy. My sister returned to New York as soon as she could and met and married her husband there. Herself and her husband then moved to Florida where they lived until she died about three years ago at the age of 60, R.I.P. My brother also moved back to New York and he still lives there.

My mother died at the very early age of 36 years with cancer. I was only ten then and life suddenly got very hard for us, as my dad had to cope with us and the farm on his own. We were no help to him as we had to go to school, but we did what we could when we got home. My dad was very good to us and life had to go on. Dad eventually remarried and then sold up everything, including the farm, and headed back to New York.

I married myself when I was eighteen and had a family of eleven children - eight boys and three girls. It was a very hard life. I had to work all day inside looking after the family and outside looking after the farm. We had no running water so I had to bring in buckets from the well for all the washing, cooking and cleaning. We didn't have electric lights till much later and everything was done by candlelight. But we enjoyed life, and what we had to do, because we always had company and someone to talk to. Today, when I think and look back, it makes me lonely as I am left alone at nearly 82 years of age. My children all have their own lives. I never drove a car and now I feel lost at times. I have a very good friend who takes me out on and off, but it is sad to lose your independence.

*By Kathleen*



## **My tractor**

Last week the fan belt in my tractor broke. My brother, John, went to Griffin's garage and he got a new fan belt.

John put the new fan belt in my tractor and I am able to drive it again.

Yesterday, I used the tractor to spread fertiliser and roll my fields. This helps to improve the land and grow better grass to feed my cows.

*By Oliver*

## **The National Rehab Hospital, Dún Laoghaire**

The National Rehab Hospital in Dún Laoghaire is the only rehabilitation hospital in the country. I spent seven weeks there and it was a real eye opener. I saw people there who had spinal injuries and brain injuries. They had to go through long recovery programmes with a team of dedicated and hard-working staff. I met friends for life there, too.

The facilities at the hospital are fantastic. There is a gym, a swimming pool, a sauna and a jacuzzi. These are needed for people who have spinal injuries and who may get no other kind of exercise.

Your health is your wealth.

*By David*

## Treasured memories

My Dad was a kind, caring and lovely man. He was a wonderful father, husband, father-in-law, granddad, uncle, brother and friend. Dad did a lot for us over the years. When we were small he brought us to a lot of places. He would bring Claire and me cycling every summer. He would tell us about different places. Dad worked in Shannon for a long time. Every Christmas we would go to De Beers for the Christmas party. We would sing Christmas songs and get presents from Santa. Every summer Dad would bring us to Shannon for sports day. We used to get upset because we would never win. Dad would tell us we went to enjoy ourselves. One year I came 3rd. I won a medal. Dad and Claire were happy for me. There was a fathers' race. Claire and I pulled him into it. He came last, he fell over, and we had a great laugh about it.

Dad was a popular man. He was involved in a lot of things. He did the cycle to Lourdes eight times. Dad did a lot for the community. He helped to build the community centre. He worked in the credit union for 40 years. He used to bring Claire and me into the credit union every Sunday evening. He received an award in 2004 for volunteering in the community. We were so proud of him.

Dad was great with his grandsons. He would always play and have fun with them. He would play his mouthorgan and they would enjoy it.

At weddings Dad was a great dancer. He taught me how to waltz. At parties he would play his mouthorgan and take part in the sing along. He was always into music. He loved Sharon Shannon and many more. When he listened to music he would play along with his mouthorgan. Dad always enjoyed singing. He always sang 'Hard Times'. Whenever I hear that song I think of him. He was a wonderful singer. He was also a member of the Ballyea choir and he got me to join.

Dad was a great man for the matches. He would always go to see Clare and Ballyea playing. He loved to watch Munster playing. Mam and Dad always brought Claire and me places. The last trip the four of us had was in Killarney when we went to see the 'Joe Dolan Reunion Show'. They knew we would always have these lovely memories of our trips.

In August 2008 Dad wasn't well. It changed everything. There was a special Mass for him. August 2009 my Dad passed away. I was very sad and lonely after he died. I found it hard to go back to work and to my classes because I knew he wouldn't be there when I got home. I found it hard to eat and sleep. The first of everything was the hardest. I miss him so much. Losing someone close was very hard. I found it hard to say goodbye to him. I will miss his smile and laugh but I will always have good memories of my wonderful Dad and I will never forget him. Dad means everything to me. I was so happy to have had him in my life for 27 years.

I am happy to be writing this story about my Dad. It will help me to move on as that's what Dad would want. He would want me to be happy and I know he is with me in spirit. I am so proud to have had him as my Dad and proud to call myself his daughter. I loved my Dad.

*By Helen*

## **The Windsors**

Queen Elizabeth is the Queen of England. She had three sons and a daughter, Prince Charles, Prince Andrew, Prince Edward and Princess Ann. Prince Philip is her husband. The Queen is now in her eighties. Her mother lived until 101.

*By Gerard*

## **Walking to school**

I grew up in a place called Derryard, which is a small place about three miles from Doonbeg village. I remember when I was very young walking to school with the all the children that lived near me. About nine or ten of us would walk to school together. We really enjoyed that walk in the mornings and evenings, especially in the summer, in the good weather. It wasn't too nice on the wet winter mornings or when it got very windy in early spring.

Cars were scarce in those days so we didn't worry about the traffic – only priests or teachers could afford the petrol for the cars. We'd pick blackberries in the autumn and wild flowers in the summer and we would chat and tell each other stories of the day. We always seemed to have something to laugh or smile about and we were carefree.

I remember the school teacher used to keep himself warm with his back to the fire. All the parents were asked to take a load of turf to heat the school, and the children had to put the turf into the shed at the back of the school. We didn't hurry doing that job as it meant we got off doing our lessons! That was our recreation for the day. They were the good old days!

*By Mary*

## **Recession**

Everyone is talking about the recession and the state of the country. There are a lot of people unemployed now. I don't really understand it all but I hear people talking about setting gardens and growing their own vegetables and potatoes like long ago.

*By Noreen*

## The long wait

Mary was trying hard not to watch the time. She had set up the ironing board and purposely set it up so that her back was to the clock. She was ironing a pile of jeans and tops that she had been looking at for the last two weeks, just to keep herself busy. Being active made her feel a bit better, but ironing didn't require a lot of concentration, so it left her mind free to imagine all sorts of scenarios.

Surely Alan and Louise should be home by now. They had asked for the car to go to Ennis and they said they would not be more than three hours, but they were gone for nearly four at this stage. Mary had tried both of them on their mobile phones and hadn't been able to get them. This was the first time Alan had driven to Ennis without either Mary or Tom in the car with him. Mary was not very happy about giving the car in the first place, but Tom had said to take it. So many things were going through her head. What if they had crashed and had no I.D. on them and they were badly hurt. Or maybe they had a tip with another car and were afraid to come home and tell us.

She went out to the backyard to see if there was any sign of them coming down the avenue, but the road was quiet. Tom was coming out of the shed and spotted her. He called over to her. "Are you looking for me?" he enquired. "No," she answered. "I am worried about Alan and Louise. They're not home yet and I can't reach them on their mobiles." "You're worrying about nothing," he reassured her. "There's no fear of them." He said it must be time to put the kettle on for a cuppa and that the two would be home soon.

The kettle was just boiled when they heard the car stopping outside and Alan and Louise came bouncing into the kitchen. Mary reminded them that they should have been home an hour ago and they apologised and said that the time had gone so fast. Alan said that it was the best day of his life. He had a brilliant time and thanks for trusting him with the car. He went out to the car and brought in a box of

Mary's favourite chocolates as a 'thank you'. Tom looked at Mary and they both realised that their children were children no more, but young adults now.

*By Ann*

### **The missing donkey!**

I am from Morocco and I have been in Ireland for about one year. The reason for coming to this country is because my husband is living here.

My first impression when I came here is the weather. Most days it is raining but I really love this country, especially Ennis. It is a small and calm town and I feel very comfortable with the people here because they are very friendly. But, of course, I miss my country. I miss the sun and I miss everything else there. I miss the atmosphere when I sit with my family, my friends and when we celebrate our two Eids and the wedding ceremonies. You know that our traditional wedding ceremonies take seven days! They are very enjoyable.

In Morocco there are a lot of old stories like Joha stories and I am going to tell you just a small story about this man, Joha. It is a funny story. One day, Joha was walking with his donkey. Unfortunately, he lost him. Joha was saying; "Oh thank God! Thank God!" along his way and when he arrived to his village, the people heard what he was saying and they were shocked. They asked him why he was thanking God even though he lost his donkey. He said, "I am thanking God that I was not riding him. If I was, I would be lost, too!" I wish that you like this small story.

*By R'Kia*

## **This winter**

We never had it so bad in Ireland before. The roads and surroundings were so difficult. Airports were affected. Farmers were badly hit. Pathways were watery and mains were frozen and so on. It was very worrying while it lasted.

*By Mary*

## **Adult education**

Over the past few years I have taken part in different adult education classes. I learned about computers and sewing. I also improved my literacy and numeracy. I enjoyed the classes as there were other adults doing them with me. Learning was easier than school as it was a more relaxed atmosphere. My classes are ongoing, which is important to me to help me with my learning.

*By Denise*

## **Poor Clares**

The Poor Clare Sisters are in Ennis. There are twelve sisters in the community. They celebrated fifty years in Ennis last year. The sisters are very good and pray for people who look for prayers.

They are an enclosed order and they are from different parts of Ireland. Sister Angela, from Cork died last year. She was fifty years in the order. Sister Bernadette was a postulant when she and Sister Angela, R.I.P. came from Cork to start in Ennis. Bishop Rodgers invited them to Ennis to open the order.

*By Annette*



## **The robbery**

One October weekend in 1994, John and Nora got a phone call from the hospital. John's father had taken a bad turn and it would be advisable for the family to go to the hospital immediately. John contacted as many of his siblings as he could reach and told them the news. Then he set off for the hospital, which was about a mile from his home. When he got there, his father had deteriorated. He spoke to John for a little while but, unfortunately, he passed away. John's siblings arrived, and grief-stricken, they set about making arrangements for the funeral.

On a Sunday afternoon, John's father was removed to the church. Before this, the family had come together and spoken about the safety of houses and cars during the funeral. John and his brother, Tony, decided to ask a mutual friend to look in on the houses and check around while the funeral was going to the church. John locked the house and the family went to the funeral home.

Some cousins had travelled from Dublin for the funeral and after the removal, they decided to have a look at John and Nora's house as it had been a number of years since they had visited. As John and Nora arrived home from the church, John's cousin Breda asked Nora if they had someone looking after the house. Nora, surprised at the question, asked, "Why?" "The door is open!" Breda said, looking puzzled. John was parking the car and Nora, disbelieving, hurried up the avenue. Simultaneously, to their horror, they saw the open door and realised there had been a robbery.

Nora automatically ran from room to room checking, looking and gasping in a state of shock. John had gone very white and was utterly dismayed. Being an avid photographer, he had many expensive cameras and a lot of equipment. He could not quite comprehend that they had been robbed. With that, a relative came and took Nora to their family home where everyone had gathered after the funeral. John checked around and phoned the Gardaí. He suspected the

robbers had been interrupted as a lot of stuff was stacked in the hallway ready to go. The Gardaí came and took fingerprints and checked everywhere. Nora came home after a while and to her horror, in their bedroom, she discovered that they had opened her jewellery box. She had some very old rings belonging to her mother, who had passed away, and she thought they had been taken, but Nora sighed with relief when she saw they were still there.

For John and Nora the invasion of privacy was very traumatic. The robbers had taken some valuable equipment but not all. Had they not been interrupted by cousin Breda, everything would have gone. Nora searched around the house, outside and in the fields nearby in the vain hope of finding some stolen goods, but nothing turned up. The Gardaí were very helpful but, although they had suspicions on who had carried out the robbery, they had nothing concrete to go on.

It taught John and Nora a huge lesson, as before this they would have been very trusting people. They immediately had an alarm system installed and now they check that everything is secure. The death of John's father was traumatic on two counts and John, more so than Nora, took the robbery very personally. Nora remarked on this to a friend who said that yes, he would, as he's supposed to be 'the protector'. Before this, John was certainly very trusting about safety and would leave expensive items lying around openly. Nora would often suggest to him to lock the stuff away. He had left the family open to danger and felt that he had not fulfilled his job as protector of his family. It took him a long time to relax, as he was a little too over-protective but now, he never takes safety for granted and will listen to Nora's advice now and again!

*By Mary*

## Summer

Summer has awakened the call of the songbird.  
Winter has gone to sleep, nature has started to blossom.  
Breezes stir soft blooms like golden cups of light.  
A mockingbird sings its song to awaken the dawn,  
Daylight filters through the sky into a brand new morn.

The green leaves wavering, never ceasing to please,  
The corn-coloured hay ripening in the sun's rays.  
People dream of long, hot, summer days  
That blend hypnotically with the dappling seas.  
I hear the happy lilt of laughter echo  
As I watch the children play on the sand  
Eating ice-cream cones and pink candy-floss,  
Multicoloured bikinis and picnics on the strand.

Summer sunshine makes you feel good inside,  
A sweet fruition, a heavenly splendour, to be alive.

*By Pauline*

## The bog

I went to the bog with my father when I was a young boy to cut the turf. We used to bring two bottles of tea and homemade bread that my mother made. We used to barrow the turf out. It was cut with a sleán. We had to dry the turf by scattering it, and then we had to foot it by putting four sods standing up and two sods on top. We put it out with a pony and car and made a heap abroad near the road. Later we drew it home with a tractor and trailer. We then had to foot it into a reek and stack it with rushes.

*By Thomas*

## **My trip to Kerry**

We left home early and got the bus to Limerick. We had tea and scones there and waited for the bus to Killarney. The bus broke down in Abbeyfeale and we got a new bus to bring us to Killarney. When we arrived, we took our cases out and went to the hotel and had tea and sandwiches. Later on we went for a walk around the town and saw the horses and traps. We had dinner at 6 o'clock in the hotel and then we listened to music in the bar.

On Saturday morning, we went to the bus station and got a bus to Tralee. We walked around the town and did some shopping. We had our lunch and came back to Killarney. That night I watched television in the hotel.

On Sunday morning we went to Mass and then we went on a tour of the Ring of Kerry. We took pictures and the scenery was great. We stopped and had a meal and looked in the gift shops. Later that evening we had dinner in the hotel.

On Monday morning, we packed our things and headed home. I really enjoyed my trip to Kerry and I am looking forward to going back again in August for Puck Fair.

*By Kieran*

## **Jokes**

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

Why did you buy all those duck feathers?  
Because they were marked down.

*By Martin*

## Steak and rice dish from Angola

### Ingredients

Frying steak  
1 red pepper  
2 onions  
2 carrots  
Garlic  
Mixed herbs and cumin  
Lemon  
Tomato purée  
Bottle of lager  
Olive oil  
Salt, black pepper, stock cubes  
Rice

### Equipment

Large saucepan  
Knife  
Chopping board  
Frying pans

### Method

1. Chop half the red pepper, onion and 2 cloves of garlic and fry in olive oil in a frying pan. Add black pepper, mixed herbs, tomato purée, salt and a little water. Bring to the boil, stir and cover with a lid.
2. Grate the carrots, crushed cloves of garlic and fry in olive oil in a large saucepan. Add 2 stock cubes, 2 cups of rice, hot water to cover. Simmer until all the water is gone and the rice is cooked.
3. Meanwhile, fry the steak in olive oil with chopped red pepper, slices of onion, garlic, black pepper, lemon juice and cumin. Add some of the lager and a pinch of salt. Cover and cook on a low heat.
4. Serve with a salad made from chopped tomato and broccoli mixed together with olive oil and a squeeze of lemon juice.

*By Sergio*

## **Best time of the day**

The best time of the day for me is in the evening because I like to watch the television then. I like watching the soaps, especially *Coronation Street* on the television, but sometimes I watch them on the computer in the workshop if I have nothing else to do. I watch all the soaps, *EastEnders*, *Fair City*, *Coronation Street*. I like the stories and seeing the action. I don't really have any favourite characters, but I like to watch Christian and Syed fighting, or Kevin and Sally, because Sally doesn't know that Kevin had an affair with Molly.

In the evening I can also watch the Sky Channels in my bedroom – *Nickelodeon* is my favourite, but I watch a lot of game shows, too. I watch *Britain's Got Talent* and *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* which is on the BBC and they are trying to choose who will play Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. My favourite is Stephanie who is a really good singer, but I don't think she will make it to the final.

I don't know what life would be like without the television. If it went off I'd go mad. If I don't watch the television I go to see my cousin next door and he is usually watching *Fair City*.

*By Kieran*

## **Ireland's Own**

I love listening to stories and riddles. I really enjoy them as I'm not good at reading. Here is a riddle:

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

The one on the motorbike.

*By John*

## Planting

Earth, water and sun  
help them to grow.  
Greens, reds and yellows,  
lettuces, tulips and daffodils.

In winter's frost and snow,  
they can't grow.  
Into the cold ground they go.

In spring, sunshine and rain,  
they come back,  
small and green again.

I like looking after them,  
fresh air, moving, planting.

*By John, Margaret, Marie, Michael, Seamus,  
Sean and Suzie*

## My trip to Dublin 50 years ago

I went to Dublin to a wedding 50 years ago. My sister was getting married. My mother, brothers Anthony, Tom, Pat and sister, Bridget, went to the Mass for the marriage. After the Mass we went to a hotel and had some drinks. Then we had the breakfast for one hour. After breakfast we had music and dance. We all danced and had a great evening. Then we had tea with bread and biscuits. Four of us were sleeping in one room.

The traffic in the streets was very busy. There were lots of big houses. Later we went to Dún Laoghaire to see the boats.

*By Francie*



## **Daniel O'Donnell**

Daniel O'Donnell is a singer from Kincasslagh in Donegal. He sings Country and Western and gospel. He's in his fifties and is married with two stepchildren. His father died when he was young. He's always talking about his mother. He does a lot of work for charity. He is a brother of Margo. She's a good Country and Western singer also.

*By Bart*

## **Wedding bells**

My niece, Siobhan, got married on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 in Knockerra Church at one o'clock. I wore a white blouse, a black jacket and skirt with black high heeled shoes. There were about two hundred guests at the wedding.

The bride wore a beautiful full length white dress with a long train. She wore a tiara on her head. The three bridesmaids and the flower girl wore long wine dresses and they looked lovely. The groom and best men wore morning shirts and the page boy looked cute in a black waistcoat and pants, white shirt and dickey bow! There were two priests at the wedding.

After the Church ceremony, all drove to the Falls Hotel in Ennistymon for the reception. What a lovely setting for the photographs! The meal was excellent with a great choice of beef, chicken or fish for the main course. As usual, I chose soup, roast chicken, fresh vegetables and mashed potatoes and enjoyed the meal very much.

When the meal was over the music started; the band was lively and soon most of the guests were on the floor dancing. It finished about two o'clock. I had only a few hours in bed and was tired on Sunday. It was worth it though as I had the most enjoyable day.

*By Eileen*

## **Farming**

I know a lot about farming and I enjoy doing the work. Spring is the busiest time of the year. Cows are calving and it takes a lot of patience to get the calf to drink from the bucket. Every morning and evening the cows are brought into the parlour to be milked. The milk is collected by a milk lorry and taken to Kerry Co-op.

During the summer, all the animals are out in the fields grazing. When the grass is ready the farmer makes silage from it to feed to the animals in the winter.

In the autumn, I enjoy doing maintenance on the farm - painting the sheds, fixing the fences, cleaning the fields and when the turf is saved in the bog I help to bring it home. In September, the farmers will have cattle to sell and I get to go to the mart when they are selling.

For the winter, all the animals are housed, and fed with the silage that was saved during the summer. All the animals are given an injection to prevent fluke and worm after being housed. The winter time is a lot quieter for the farmer as there isn't a lot to be done because of the bad weather.

*By John*

## **Belarussian breakfast**

In Belarus people usually have butter, milk, bread, boiled eggs or beef for breakfast. They don't drink beer or wine. They drink coffee or juice. In my family we usually have soup, bread, fish, sausages and mayonnaise for breakfast.

At the weekend we have a salad, mash potatoes, ham, bread, butter and we drink mineral water.

*By Pelaheya*

## Winter

The winter months are November, December and January. This year we had all kinds of weather. In November, we had severe rain and flooding. In December, we had heavy frost and snow. In January, we had more frost. Some parts of the country were badly affected. Here in west Clare we were not too bad.

*By Michael*

## The Wedding

I went to my friends wedding in April. The morning of the big day, I got up early. I then had a shower and got dressed. I wore a lovely blue dress, silver shoes and tights. My family and I went to the church in Sixmilebridge. The Mass was lovely and I took photos. We then went to the West County Hotel in Ennis for a big meal which I really enjoyed. After the meal a great band played lots of music and I danced all night long. After the D.J. finished playing, I went home with my friend in a taxi.

I really enjoyed all of the wedding and I can't wait to see all the photos we took.

*By Sarah*

## Quick and easy lasagne

### Ingredients

Pack of mince meat  
1 onion  
1 jar lasagne tomato sauce  
1 jar lasagne white sauce  
Cheese  
Box of lasagne pasta  
Stock cube  
Olive oil

### Equipment

Large saucepan  
Frying pan  
Oven proof dish  
Chopping board  
Knife  
Spoon

### Method

1. Turn on the oven to 180°C.
2. Chop the onion and fry with the mince meat, stock cube and jar of lasagne tomato sauce.
3. Boil water in a large saucepan and cook the sheets of lasagne pasta. Strain in a sieve, rinse in cold water.
4. Line an oven proof dish with the lasagne pasta sheets and add layers of the mince, white sauce, lasagne pasta, finishing with white sauce.
5. Grate cheese over the top and place in the oven for about 30 minutes until golden brown on top. Serve with cooked vegetables or a salad.

*By Comfort*

## **Special Olympics in Limerick**

Welcome to Special Olympics World games on in Limerick starting the 7<sup>th</sup> of June. I work with the Brothers of Charity every day. I like all sports - table-tennis, badminton, football and bowling. I like running in relays and swimming in the swimming pool. I qualified to play Special Olympics table-tennis and I practise every week with my coach, Derek, on a Thursday.

We get to sleep over in a hotel for the Special Olympics. I will bring my clothes and bag. We will stay in Limerick in a hotel. I hope we have a great time. We are staying for three nights, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. I got a brand new set of tracksuits and a gear bag with 'Munster Team' written on them. I hope I win a medal.

*By John*

## **How I spend my Sundays**

I go for a drive to Lahinch on Sundays with my niece. We go for a walk on the beach and after, we get tea and apple tart with ice-cream. I enjoy this very much.

I like to go to the Rock Shop to look at all the things they sell. They have jewellery, perfume, marble stones, pictures, statues and local ornaments. This is a great way to spend a Sunday and I'm lucky to have two nieces that are so good to me.

*By Teresa*

## Harvest day in Bunratty

It was a bright warm sunny September Sunday. We decided to take a trip to Bunratty Folk Park. They had an organised event called Harvest Day which we thought the whole family would enjoy.

Bunratty Folk Park is built around Bunratty Castle and gives people an idea of what rural Ireland was like long ago. It has different cottages built showing how the poor, middle class and the well-off people lived in different parts of Ireland. Each cottage is brought alive by a member of staff showing how to make bread in one cottage, story-telling in another or simply giving an account of what life was like for people in that particular cottage that you visited. Outside, a little bóithrín (a windy road) leads you from one cottage to the next as you stroll under a heavenly blue sky. The children were free to run without any danger, stopping to pick blackberries, blackcurrants or wild flowers.

You were also shown the different crafts such as súgán making which was used to make a chair for the kitchen. The children were encouraged to weave súgán from hay. Then you had the thrashing of the corn, which involves separating the grain from the straw with a thrashing machine. What amount of help was needed! Now you could see how, on days like these, having a big family was a blessing! In fact, every task back then was quite labour intensive so a small family would put working life in rural Ireland under severe pressure. They also had a vintage section showing all old tractors. They then showed you how, at the end of a hard working day or week, they were still able to enjoy themselves with plenty of song and dancing.

What a wonderful experience for all the family. You can read about it or hear about it, but it is not until you actually see and experience it that it gives you a whole new understanding and meaning. Actually seeing it opens up the whole world of long ago.

*By Mary*

## Angola

I'm from Angola. My country is in the south west of Africa on the Atlantic Ocean. There are about 8 million people. The weather there is usually hot and there are a lot of beaches. The official language is Portuguese but some people speak original languages. There are about seven different languages, but in Toulou, our capital, everybody speaks Portuguese. The Angolan people are very happy. There are parties on all weekend. The typical food is Mufate. It is made from fresh fish, salad, sweet potatoes and beans. It is so delicious.

Angola's Independence Day is the 11<sup>th</sup> November. On that day everybody celebrates Angola's independence. They decorate the street with flags that have three colours; black red and yellow. The government pays for all actors and musicians, who gather together and make one big concert. There are a lot of parties and raves. It is very noisy and everyone is happy and dancing. On that day people usually cook 'Mufata' as a main course. The drinks are very cheap that day. At 7.00 p.m. everybody puts on fancy clothes and then go to parties, raves, and clubs or beach parties until the next day. All Angolan people love that day.

I came to Ireland and hope to go to university. My parents live here, but it is very expensive to go to university and they don't know how they will pay. I like Ireland because it is very quiet and the people are friendly and the space is green. It is so beautiful because I'm with my family. I feel here that the government gives a lot of opportunities to all people. I like it.

*By Sergio*



## Mashed plantains from Cuba

### Ingredients

4 large plantains  
1 whole garlic bulb  
1 onion  
1 lemon  
Vegetable oil  
Salt

### Equipment

Large and small saucepans  
Knife  
Chopping board  
Lemon squeezer  
Masher  
Wooden spoon

### Method

1. Cut the plantain into chunks with the skin still on. Place in a large saucepan with 1 tablespoon of oil, some salt and water to cover. Cook for 1 hour or until soft.
2. Remove the skin from the garlic bulb and crush the garlic.
3. Chop the onion into small pieces.
4. Squeeze the juice from the lemon
5. In a small saucepan put a quarter cup of oil, onion and garlic and fry all together. Then add the lemon juice and salt. The mixture will look green. Don't worry!
6. Take the plantains from the water and remove the skin. Mash them; make a mound of the mash with a hollow in the middle.
7. Pour the onion, oil, garlic and lemon mix over the top of the plantains and mix together well.
8. Serve the plantain and eat it while it is still hot.

*By Fred*

## **What I do on Fridays**

I take the bus from west Clare to Ennis every Friday. It stops at the back of Dunnes. The first thing I do is go for my dinner to the Sherwood. When I am finished my dinner I go to my class in the Adult Education Centre.

After class I go up the town. I do a bit of shopping. I go to the back of Dunnes at a quarter past five for the bus. The bus goes back to west Clare. It stops to let people off along the way. After the last passenger leaves the bus, it goes back to Ennis again.

When I get in home I have a cup of tea. Then I go out to see the cattle after the day. I usually meet someone and we have a chat. We talk about the weather and the local news going on in the parish.

*By Tony*

## **My country, Ghana**

I like my country, Ghana, because it is a good place and there are good people there. Most of them are Christians and I love that because I am Christian, too. There is good food, good houses, and people all respect each other. We always have good weather. I miss my place.

I like to help my wife all the time at home because I love her. I don't want her to suffer. I clean the house with her. I wash with her. I cook with her and we pray together. We always go everywhere together. I love that.

*By Prince Nicho*

## **The setting up of Bord na Móna**

When De Valera came into power in the 1930s there was a great national asset waiting to be explored. That was the large area of blanket bog-land that was in the centre of Ireland known as the Bog of Allen.

The man who was mainly in charge of doing it was Todd Andrews, grandfather of the present Minister of Children Barry Andrews. He went to Russia to find out how they were dealing with it there. It was probably the only other place that had such bog-land. When he came back, the plan was put in place. The name they called the enterprise was Bord na Móna.

Some machinery was imported for draining and also for pressing the turf and making peat briquettes. For the first time in the new state, large scale employment started. There were thousands involved in a year or two. Men with sleán, shovels and forks, as well as some in offices and related field work were employed. There were railway tracks put down for transporting the turf out of the bog.

*By Joe*

## **Chinese breakfast**

In my country, China, people usually have noodle soup with fried egg or rice gruel with steamed buns with stuffing or some different snacks. They don't have fish or meat. They drink milk or fruit juice. In my family we usually have noodle soup with egg or dumplings for breakfast.

At the weekend we have prawn and fish or vegetable stir-fry. It's a big meal. Delicious.

*By Jun*

## Exploring Britain's canals

My husband and I moved to Ireland in 2004, but we used to live in Sussex in the south east of England. One of our interests was exploring Britain's many canals. We went on a total of four narrow boat holidays and also spent some of our time walking the tow paths of other canals.

Our very first narrow boat holiday was from a place called Stone in Staffordshire. Stone is on the Trent and Mersey Canal which was promoted by Josiah Wedgewood to provide transportation for goods from his pottery plant. This part of the canal is very industrial.

The Caldon Canal, which goes off the Trent and Mersey, travels through much beautiful countryside and many spectacular bridges. There are many lochs to go through and it can be quite hard work when there is a whole flight of them together. Occasionally, there are tunnels to go through. Froghall Tunnel is a very narrow and low tunnel on one branch of the Caldon. In the old days, when there were no engines on the boats, the crew had to lie on their backs on top of the boats and use their legs to walk their way through tunnels. The tunnels were very dark and so they had to feel their way through – very spooky.

Our second narrow boat holiday was on the Llangollen Canal, which travels through the Welsh foothills and has many more lochs because of the hills. There is a magnificent aquaduct called the Pontcysyllte. This slender 19 arched aquaduct is 1007 yards long and carries the canal 120 feet above the river Dee which makes it the highest aquaduct on any canal in the world. There is a towpath with good railings on the east side, but only a few inches of cast iron on the other side, so it's like travelling along in a very long cast iron bath. We went on this particular holiday in April and the weather was very changeable and cold. In fact, as we went over the aquaduct it actually started to snow and the wind got quite strong, making the boat drift into the side as if you were going to get blown over. It is quite safe really, but you

can't help thinking, "What if?" After going over the aquaduct, the canal continues to a place called Horseshoe Falls, which is a massive but beautiful waterfall. You have to moor up and walk up along the pathways to the waterfall or you would end up with the boat dropping over, which of course would be disastrous!

Our other two narrow boat holidays were just as exciting. They were both circular routes. The first one was called The Four Counties Ring. You travel through Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire and the west Midlands. The second route was The Stourport Ring which goes through the heart of England.

You can stop virtually anywhere you like along the canal systems and moor up and explore the towns or villages you pass through. There are many pubs on the canal sides, too, so in the evenings you can go for a nice meal and a drink, which is perfect after a hard day's work! Although going through a large flight of locks can be tiring, when you are travelling along some of the long stretches, it is very relaxing. You pass people on other boats, who are all very friendly and wave and shout hello. I often used to leave my husband in charge of the boat whilst I walked along the tow paths with the dogs we had at the time.

If we won the lottery we wouldn't actually buy a narrow boat but would hire one for about six months and travel around the whole canal system which is much bigger than the canal system, here in Ireland. We'd use the rest of the money to buy a nice new house, possibly in Co. Wexford, so that if we wanted to visit England we'd be close to the ferry so we could take the dogs with us - flying with dogs is not an option. Of course, the same as most other people, we can only dream of winning the lottery. It would be lovely though, so we will just keep dreaming!

*By Angela*

## **My trip to Lourdes**

Last year, in June, I went to Lourdes with the Killaloe Diocese. I was driven to the airport and I met the helpers and other people who were going there. It was the first time I had been in an aeroplane and I found it a really exciting experience.

Lourdes was a big, busy place with many churches. I stayed in the hospital and had to use my wheelchair all the time. Luckily, I didn't have to speak French as I had helpers with me.

In the morning we went to Mass and in the evening there was a procession and an overnight vigil too. I went to the Grotto as well but my favourite memory of Lourdes is doing the Stations of the Cross out in the open air on a lovely sunny day. It is a very special place and I am looking forward to going back there again this year in June.

*By Mary*

## **West of Africa to west of Ireland**

My name is Nicholas. I am from Ghana in west Africa. I like my country because my country is good but there is no work so it makes it a little difficult to live there. I came here to find work so that I will live a good life and I can get money to take care of my family, and in order that I will live a happy life. I like Ireland because the country is good and there are lots of good things. I love Ireland because there is food, good houses, schools, good roads and good cars. I love all things in this country.

*By Nicholas*

## A poem

*Old Woman of the Roads by Padraic Colum*

O, to have a little house!  
To own the hearth and stool and all!  
The heaped up sods against the fire,  
The pile of turf against the wall!  
To have a clock with weights and chains  
And pendulum swinging up and down!  
A dresser filled with shining delph,  
Speckled and white and blue and brown!  
I could be busy all the day  
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,  
And fixing on their shelf again  
My white and blue and speckled store!  
I could be quiet there at night  
Beside the fire and by myself  
Sure of a bed and loth to leave  
The ticking clock and the shining delph!  
Och! But I'm weary of mist and dark,  
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,  
And tired I am of bog and road,  
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!  
And I am praying to God on high,  
And I am praying to Him night and day,  
For a little house - a house of my own  
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

*By Joe*



## The big win

There was a man by the name of Johnny. He lived in west Clare and he had his own farm. Johnny was also a handy man and did odd jobs by day. He lived with his wife Mary and their two kids, a boy and a girl. They lived in a small house on a very small farm that wasn't making much money. Their house was falling down and their car was all beaten up. Mary worked part time in the local shop.

One day, after a long day's work, Mary was on her way home when her car broke down. She had to walk the rest of the way home in the rain. By the time she got home she was wet, cold and tired. Mary was fed up with life and tired of working so hard to make her kids happy. She had no money to buy her kids the things they would like such as toys, games, phones and school things. They never went on a family holiday. Oh, how she would love to go somewhere, if only she had the money. Everything was going downhill for Johnny and Mary. Things were going wrong with the car, house and farm.

The next day, Mary was working in the shop and her friend Ann walked in. Mary and Ann were friends since they were at school together. They were like sisters and talked every day. Mary worked in the shop and Ann worked in the bar and restaurant next door. Ann knew all about Mary's money problems and was the one who got Mary the job in the shop. Ann tried to help Mary in every way she could. Mary told Ann about the car breaking down the day before. Ann made a joke about how Mary should start buying Lotto tickets as that week's Lotto was €125 million. Ann said, "You never know. If you're not in you can't win."

Next day, Mary was doing her weekly shopping and she decided to buy a Lotto ticket. Mary put the Lotto ticket in her purse and went home to do the same everyday jobs she always did. Just as the kids were playing, Johnny rang saying that the van had broken down. Mary had to ask a friend for the loan of a car so she could pick Johnny up.

The next day, Mary took the kids to school and went to work. Ann came into the shop to tell Mary that someone had won the Lotto last night. The ticket was bought in west Clare. "Oh my God," said Mary, "I never checked my ticket last night." She rushed home to look for the ticket and ran back to the shop to check the numbers. She had won.

The numbers were 3, 8, 9, 12, 15 and 25. She rang Johnny straight away, "I have them, I have them," she shouted. "You have what?" asked Johnny. "I have the numbers for this week's Lotto," she said. Mary then ran next door to tell Ann her good news. Ann could not believe what Mary was saying. Johnny came to the shop and himself, Mary and Ann checked the numbers again. "You're right," said Ann, "You've won." They were all so delighted; all their money problems were over. They went next door to celebrate!

*By Linda*

## **Tough times**

When times get tough what do you do?  
Hide from your problems, or focus on something new?  
Or would you curl into a ball  
And say nothing at all?  
Do you think anger helps to escape your past?  
You know it don't, but still you get angry fast.

Running through your mind trying to figure it out  
But it's easier to just forget about.  
It's always going to be there in the back of my head  
But it will go away, once I hit the bed.  
No one will notice if I hide behind a smile  
But how long will I fool them, only for a while.

*By Stephen*

## **Employed and happy**

My name is Josephine and I live in Ennistymon. I have two lively teenage daughters who try to keep me busy all day, every day. For sixteen years I was a stay-at-home mum. When my youngest was in fifth class at national school, I started to look for work and I found my current job two years ago when she started secondary school. My job is 19½ hours per week and I am happy working these hours although in the summer I would really like to work on Saturdays as well.

For my job I have to work in three different places. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays I work at a monastery, on Fridays at a crèche and on Tuesdays with the Sisters of Mercy in Lahinch. Mainly, I work as a cleaner. I vacuum, wash up crockery, dust, polish and wash walls, presses, doors, and skirtings.

Usually, for the nuns, I prepare vegetables straight away in the morning and then I clean for the rest of my time with them. My work for the nuns changes between May and October, when I do less cleaning so that I can go outside to help Sister Dolores in the garden. Sister Dolores loves gardening and she shows me what work I should do to help her. I happily brush up the yards and pull weeds because it makes the garden look neat and tidy. I also help to plant the flowers which Sister Dolores buys from the flower shop on the Ennis road.

I have met lots of different people since returning to work. Mostly, I see the same people, but at the crèche I meet new parents bringing their children for the day. Everybody is nice to me and they all appreciate the work I do for them. They all have time to say hello, ask me how I am and talk for a little while. Sister Dolores is generous, thoughtful and genuine, and because I mainly work with Sister Dolores, she is extra special.

Working gives me more energy, makes me feel full of life and feel better about myself. Having a job helps me to focus and

concentrate better. It makes my mind alert and keeps me fitter and healthier. At the end of a day's work I feel good.

Because I have a job, I feel I am my own person; that I am not just a mother stuck at home day and night. If I was not going out to work I know I would be bored sitting staring out of the window, thinking too much and being fed up with life.

It is very important to me that I earn my own money. It makes me feel satisfied especially when I cash my cheque at the bank. My wages mean I can afford to pay my bills and sometimes buy my daughters' special things.

The people I work with show they appreciate my work. When I do the same kind of work at home, I do not always feel appreciated. When I first started working, being appreciated and earning my own money gave me more confidence. Going out to work and having the routine of working also makes me feel more contented.

When I started looking for work, I did not think I would be able to get a job. I was really surprised, but very happy to get the job I have now. Importantly, I am still happy to have it.

*By Josie*

## **Ghanaian breakfast**

In Ghana people usually have porridge and bread for breakfast. They don't have fish or meat for breakfast. They drink coke and fruit juice or tea. In my family we usually have porridge for breakfast. At the weekend we have oats.

*By Bertha*

## **The Bonny Young Irish Boy (a ballad)**

First when I was courted by a bonny young Irish boy  
He called me his true love,  
His heart's delight was I.  
And how could I forget  
The thoughts of my bonny young Irish boy.

You all know Dublin city boys,  
That city of some great fame.  
T'was where my bonny young Irish boy  
To court me first he came.  
His cheeks were like the roses red  
And his eyes were black as sloes.  
They would coax the heart of any fair maid  
No matter where she'd go.

They asked him to a big hotel,  
With them to spend the night.  
The landlady's daughter was to him a great delight.  
She never took her eyes off him,  
While on the floor he stood  
Saying, "Mother, dearest mother, I'm in love with an Irish  
lad."

When we landed in Philadelphia,  
The girls all jumped with joy  
Saying one unto another there goes an Irish boy.  
They asked him for to dance with them,  
They took him by the hand  
Saying, "Mother, dearest mother, I'm in love with an Irish  
man."

When I am dead and in my grave  
There's one request I'd crave,  
Bring back my bones to Ireland  
And lay them in his grave.  
Write upon my tombstone for all that pass it by  
That I died in grief and sorrow  
For my bonny Irish boy.

*By Mary*

## **If only I could spell**

This is the first thing I have ever tried to write. The reason being my biggest draw back in life is that I have problems spelling. I am not blaming anybody but myself for this. I take full responsibility. I did not learn to spell when I was in school.

I had a normal childhood, average intelligence and good at sport. I played senior hurling with my club when I was 16 years of age. I would go out working when I should have been in school. I learned how to make a pound or two which came in handy at home. My school had two teachers, each with over 70 children in their rooms. The teacher did not have time to be worried about an individual child. At home my father was sick as long as I can remember. My mother had to cope with the finances, housework and look after six kids and a sick husband so I got away with my bad spelling, or did I?

When I was seventeen I got a job in a bar away from my home county. It made it hard to train or play with my home club. My club got me a job in sales with a company at home; a job you would be lucky to get at that time. I would have had to write up the orders where my problem would be noticed. I did not take the job as a result. My school friends believed I did not want to play hurling with them and I could not tell them why.

At another time I was offered the job of site manager but could not take it because I would have to fill out the work details. The only jobs that I could take were low-end with no promotion. If only I could write. This is something I have regretted all my life. I realise that for me to get on in life, I had to become self-employed. When I was a builder, I would use a dictaphone to do an estimate and then get somebody to type them up and I have been reasonably successful.

My home life is very good and I am happily married for 36 years. I have raised two children. The only regret is that I could not help my kids with their spelling.

Finally I got courage to do something about my spelling. I contacted the Adult Education services and met a lovely lady who explained how it works. She introduced me to my tutor, a lovely young person. She gives her time free to help me learn, tries to teach me and keeps encouraging me all the time. Yes, I am learning it slowly but I hope to keep at it until I get at least the basics right. I'm getting more confident all the time.

*By Seán*

### **My favourite poem**

This is a poem I learned many years ago. I like it a lot and would like to share it with you.

*I see His Blood upon the Rose by Joseph Mary Plunkett  
(1887–1916)*

I see his blood upon the rose  
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower  
The thunder and the singing of the birds,  
Are but his voice – and carved by his power,  
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His cross is every tree.

*By Teresa*



## Family learning classes

I started sewing classes in the Adult Learning Centre under Family Learning in September 2009. Nicola is our tutor.

Nicola gave me the idea of leaves on a spread. I gathered leaves from the garden and drew them on cardboard to make a template of each type. All materials used were recycled from old clothes and the sheet used was an old table cloth. Only for Nicola's help I wouldn't have known that my sewing machine could do the stitch I needed. This type of work is called appliqué.

It gave me the opportunity to explore new ideas and create something beautiful. Nicola gave me lots of inspiration and confidence. There is also the social side to these courses – meeting people and listening to their ideas and seeing what they are making. We all learn from each other. I also carried out a lot of alterations on my clothes. I never found time to do this at home.

I enjoyed family stories in a box. The deer was a present I got in 1975 from my uncle and aunt who were also my godparents. I came to Ennis for my summer holidays between the ages of 7-10. It was a real treat to go to Ennis even though it was only six miles away! Imagine, I would feel homesick.

They brought my cousin and myself to Dublin Zoo for a day trip. We were allowed to pick two things; I picked this deer and a Zebra mug. The deer is in my box because it is one of a few material things I have from my childhood.

*By Mary*

## Goat's cheese salad from Albania

### Ingredients

Lettuce  
Tomatoes  
Onion  
Goat's cheese  
Olive oil  
Mixed herbs  
Lemon

### Equipment

Knife  
Chopping board  
Bowl  
Fork

### Method

1. Wash the lettuce and cut into slices with the knife.
2. Peel and slice the onion.
3. Wash and cut the tomatoes in half and then into quarters.
4. Mix the lettuce, tomatoes and onions together in the bowl.
5. Cut the goat's cheese into cubes and add to the salad.
6. Add salt, a quarter cup of olive oil, mixed herbs, and a squeeze of lemon.
7. Mix all together and serve,

*By Viktor*

## **I would not change a thing**

I have lived in Kerry for the past fifty five years. I was born in Dublin and had a wonderful life, going to the cinema, and going on trips on my bike with friends. I had a good job in those days, back in the fifties. I was very independent.

I went to Kerry with my aunt to visit her in-laws. On our way to Mass; this was the highlight of the week in those days. I met two very handsome men, brothers in fact, and I fell for Martin immediately, the quieter of the two. On the way home James, his brother, chatted. Martin and I got on extremely well and from that point my life was to change for ever.

Soon after we first met, I returned home to Dublin. In those days communication was by letter. We kept in touch on a daily basis. Then out of the blue, as I returned home from work, there was my pen pal. He came all the way from Kerry to see me, which took a lot of time and expense in those days. Romance blossomed and we went to Birmingham in England to live. We got married there. My husband's father died suddenly, shortly after.

After two years we came home to Dublin to live. We were very happy; we both had jobs, were looking at houses and had one chosen. On a beautiful October day I came home from work to discover my husband had gone to his home in Kerry. His brother, the one I fancied first on that Sunday morning, had been taken ill. When my husband arrived in Kerry he discovered his brother had gone missing. I took the advice of my father, to go to my husband. I went to the country and there followed a six week search for my brother-in-law. It was in December that the body was found. We remained on the farm. We felt responsible for the animals that belonged to James and to keep James's memory alive. You can imagine a girl from the city finding herself in a rural setting. I had to swap my high heels and beautiful dresses for Wellington boots and smocks. Looking back, James must have lived a lonely life in an isolated part of the country. Being in my early thirties and never having tended to animals

in my life, the support I received from the older women in the community was my saving grace. Time moved on.

We were blessed with seven children and grandchildren, some living and married close by and others in England. Life was good and we were living comfortably. But nothing this good could last for ever. On a bright Wednesday morning we were getting up; we had planned to visit our daughter in her new house. We were very excited to have them come live so close with the grandchildren and were looking forward to helping with their vegetable garden. I was drawing back the curtains while Martin was getting out of bed. He collapsed and died aged 53. I had lost the love of my life. As time passed, the pain became easier to bear and my family kept me going but the memory of the love we shared never faded.

I am now in my eighties. Life has been good to me in the last twenty years. My grandchildren are great company; we share my love of books and they always lift my heart with their stories. They now have their own children who come to visit and they too share their lives, hopes and dreams with me. Life is strange. It brings good times and bad, but you know what? I would not change a thing.

*By Dora*

## **The Cuckoo**

April, come he will,  
In May he sings all day,  
In June he alters his tune,  
In July he prepares to fly,  
In August go he must.

*By John*

## **Dreams come true**

Back in 1986, while being a patient in Our Lady's Hospital, I made a request for a council flat or house. Back then I didn't believe that this was going to happen at all. But like the lotto, if you're not in you cannot win. Since then, I've been sharing houses or flats, sharing the kitchens, bathrooms and sitting rooms with others.

Even while I was working in Shannon Community Workshop, I just got on with my business trying to decide what I wanted with my life in years to come. I had totally forgotten about the council flats as I left Shannon Community Workshop and started a new lease of life in getting a new job in Ryan's Centra Foodstore in 2001.

I found it difficult to settle down in my new job because of the new surroundings and working with people I never even met before. Eventually, the boss spoke to me and explained what he expected from me. From that day I never looked back. In fact, I got another job just to be kept occupied in St. Vincent de Paul.

It was during this time in 2005, I got a letter from the Council stating that they wanted to up-date my application for a council flat/house. During this period, I was asked whether I wanted to share or have my very own place. In the end I decided that it was the latter that was my preference. So I told all my friends at St. Vincent de Paul the news and the support from them and Ryan's Centra grew even better. However, I was told that I could be waiting a very long time for a council flat/house. I can even recall so many people asking me if I got any word from the council, but nothing happened. But, out of the blue, while I was living in Parnell Court, there was a letter for me in May 2006 stating that the Council approved getting my own place.

It was like all my birthdays and Christmases came together, I was so thrilled and excited. The first person that I informed was my mother. She was excited indeed. Then all my

colleagues in St. Vincent de Paul and Ryan's Centra knew about my new lease of life in my very own home in Turnpike Road. The rest, as they say, is history.

Dreams and wishes do come true if you just believe in them. In January 11<sup>th</sup> 2009, I was unpacking my bags and suitcases in my new address. Even friends from St. Vincent de Paul (to whom I owe my gratitude to) and my family helped to get me furniture and other important items for my new home. Some things in life may not come free, but they are just as valuable and priceless.

*By Gabriel*

## **Getting fit**

I go dancing every Sunday to Knock, which is near to where I live. I go with my mom and sister and we have a lot of fun. I love dancing and it keeps me fit. Patsy is a great dancer and he shows me what to do. I like moving around quickly, listening to the music and dancing all night.

I go walking to get fit as well. I usually go with my mom and we go to the woods and walk around the paths. The woods are really nice, full of red flowers at this time of the year and it's not too cold when you are walking fast. My mom walks very fast, but I try and keep up with her.

We talk about different ways to keep fit in our class, and we need to be careful about what we eat, too. I used to drink a lot of coca-cola, but I know that too much sugar is bad for your health and teeth, so I don't drink that much coke anymore. I drink milk now.

*By Frances*

## **Oaty fruit puddings**

4oz rolled oats  
2oz melted butter  
2 tbsps chopped almonds  
1 tbsp clear honey  
Pinch of ground cinnamon  
2 pears, peeled, cored and finely chopped  
1 tbsp of marmalade  
Orange zest to decorate

Preheat the oven to 200° C / 400° F / gas mark 6.

Lightly oil and line the bottom of a cheese cake tin.

Mix together the oats, butter, nuts, honey and cinnamon in a small bowl.

Using a spoon spread the mixture over the base of the tin.

Toss together the chopped pears and marmalade and spoon into the tin.

Bake for 15 - 20 minutes, until golden brown.

*By Anne*

## **My story**

My name is Margaret. I live in Shannon with Mum and Dad. I have two sisters, Orla and Donna, and one brother, Thomas. I have one nephew called Tommy. I work in Supermacs in Shannon twelve hours a week. I am working there for the last twelve years. My hobbies are Taekwon-Do, bowling, computers and sewing. I like going to the Olde Lodge on Friday nights, talking and dancing with my friends.

*By Margaret*



## **Memories of life on a farm**

We did not always live on my grandparents' farm, but what sweet memories that short period of my life holds! We were city slickers, coming back home from London to my father's hometown in north Clare. We only ended up living with them for about a year before our own house was built, but we were never too far away from the farm.

I only ever helped out in a small way on the farm, possibly, I was in the way but nobody ever said that. One of my jobs was to collect the eggs. It was like finding lumps of gold, I would get so excited when I would find the eggs and I would proudly bring my full basket into my grandmother and she would promptly start making the breakfast with them. I loved feeding the calves but couldn't bring myself to milk any of the cows. Having come from the city, I found that the milk and butter were strange to taste – little did I realise how good they were for me! I did not quite like it when the milk was warm to drink (straight from the cow), but it was either that or nothing so I had to get used to it.

I loved it when the older members of the family were saving the hay; the sun always seemed to be shining. My job was to help granny prepare the food and make up the flasks of tea to bring down to the meadow. I would sit down and enjoy the picnic too. The men and women would work long hours as they did not know when the weather would change. They always seemed to be talking about the weather.

I loved those days and doesn't time fly by!

*By Mary*

## **Miracles do happen**

Valerie and I met every Monday evening at 7.30 for the local Saint Vincent de Paul meeting, which was always held in the local hall.

We usually visited the families together as we felt we were a good team and had a lot in common. We were both very fond of Bridget, who was one of our clients and had recently come to our attention through the Gardaí, who informed us that Bridget's purse was stolen and she had no money left for the week to live on.

Bridget was in her early sixties and had the most beautiful little face and a wonderful twinkle in her eyes. She lived in a tiny house, two rooms which were always full of goods from the shop next door. The owners of the shop were relations of Bridget's and she let them use her house for storing some of their stock and they kept her rent low as a result of this.

There were no luxuries in the house, just the basics. Bridget's story was a very tragic tale. She had four children during her lifetime and they were all taken away from her and put into care. Bridget was very fond of the little sup and she went to the local pub most evenings and chatted up anyone who was prepared to buy her a drink. Many a gent took advantage of this, hence the four children.

Thirty years on, Bridget had no idea where any of her children were. Through a lot of hard work Valerie and I got Bridget re-housed into a beautiful brand new house only a short distance away. We furnished the house with lovely new furniture. Bridget felt like a queen and was very cosy in her new situation.

Valerie and I continued to visit, as Bridget was a lovely soul and loved the company. Christmas was coming and the roads were very icy but Valerie and I were anxious to see Bridget, as we had promised that we would come round and stay for a couple of hours just before Christmas to deliver her

Christmas hamper and a few gifts that we had bought for her. We had a lovely evening. Bridget had three sherry glasses laid out on a tray with a beautiful lace cloth underneath. She poured us a sherry each and we sat in front of the fire drinking our little glass of sherry and singing songs. Tears rolled down Bridget's face as we bade our farewells and promised to come back again after Christmas. It was a wonderful evening and one I will always remember.

The week after Christmas we heard that Bridget had died. She was found on the floor in her house. We never knew who had called over the Christmas period.

Bridget was to be buried in a pauper's grave but Valerie and I insisted that the conference and the County Council would pay for a decent coffin. We contacted the relevant authorities in Ireland, the Salvation Army in England and the police in England to try and contact some of her children. We were very lucky, and after a lot of hard work three of her children were located and came home for her funeral.

Bridget's coffin lay in front of the altar in the church surrounded with flowers and Mass cards. It was a sight to behold. Six priests attended the Mass and a lovely tribute was paid to the lonely old woman known only as Bridget. We met the family afterwards and brought them down to Bridget's home and let them take away anything they would like as keepsakes.

It was really a miracle in the making and I often used this example when trying to get people who needed help to contact us, as miracles do happen.

*By Marie*

## Back to school

I left school at fifteen after doing my Inter Cert, as it was known back then. For the next twenty five years I did not do much reading or writing, only what I had to do.

Last year I joined the adult reading and writing course with Katie. Katie encouraged me to do more reading and writing. Now, I enjoy reading the newspaper not just the big headlines.

Before Christmas she started me on computers. After a while she introduced me to Sheila, a computer tutor. Sheila is a great teacher, very patient and understanding. She taught me how to type, send emails, accounts, painting, search the Internet and a lot more. Not bad for a lad that left school at fifteen!

*By Martin*

## Polina's sandwich

1. First cut two thin pieces of bread.
2. Then put some mayonnaise on one of the pieces.
3. Put some chicken breast slices on the mayonnaise.
4. Put some cabbage on the chicken.
5. Cut a tomato into pieces.
6. Put the tomato pieces on the chicken.
7. Then put some mayonnaise and black pepper on the tomato.
8. Put the other piece of bread on top.

Finally, eat the sandwich!

*By Pelaheya*

## **The process of change begins in wonder**

The theory of form. 'Philosophy begins in wonder' (Plato c248 BC – 348 BC)

I believe that down through the centuries many philosophers, theologians and artists have been struck by the thought that what we seem to see around us is not the ultimate reality but that the real world is somehow hidden. They have explored the fundamental ideas that have changed our view of the world moving from Buddha/Confucius and the celebrated thinkers of ancient Greece to latter day. They have suggested that if we could only pull back the curtain that divides us from this reality, we would be confronted by something extraordinary and the real world would be revealed.

'Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.' (Confucius)

I believe that happiness can be achieved through training the mind. There is a clearly defined path to happiness. It is achievable with a goal. As I look back over my years, the concept of achieving true happiness has, in the west, always seemed ill-defined, illusive and ungraspable. I am not referring to the mind merely as cognitive ability or intellect, but as intelligence and feeling, heart and mind. We train the mind by transforming our attitude and our approach to living. This can be done, generally speaking, by identifying those factors which lead to happiness and those that lead to suffering, and by gradually eliminating those factors which lead to suffering and cultivating those which lead to happiness. That is the way.

The greater the level of calmness of our minds, the greater the peace of mind, thus the greater our ability to enjoy a happy and joyful life. Having a calm or peaceful state of mind doesn't mean being completely empty in your mind. It is rooted in affection and compassion and stability, which is possible. The process of change eliminates our negative

behaviour. The first step, I think, involves early education and learning. In my view, negative emotions are harmful to our pursuit of happiness and positive emotions are helpful.

Conviction, determination, action, effort.

The next step is developing conviction. Learning and education are important because they help one develop conviction of the need to change. The way to freedom is education. Similarly, if you want a particular event or experience to occur, then the logical thing to do is to seek and accomplish the cause and conditions that give rise to it. If you maintain a feeling of compassion and loving kindness, then something automatically opens your inner door. Through that, you can communicate much more easily with other people.

A healthy sense of self-confidence is a critical factor in achieving our goals. This holds true whether our goal is to earn a college degree, build a successful business, enjoy a satisfactory relationship or train the mind to become happy. Low self-confidence inhibits our efforts to move ahead, to meet challenges and events, and to take some risks when necessary in the pursuit of our objectives.

The above practical wisdom and advice on how we can overcome everyday human problems and achieve lasting happiness will help you find balance in your life.

Let education be one of your convictions.

*By Tim*

## Chicken rice dish from Congo

### Ingredients

Chicken thighs  
Lemon  
Onion and spring onion  
Garlic  
Carrots  
Celery  
Stock cubes  
Tomato purée and pinch of chilli powder or a magic cube  
Salt  
Olive oil  
Rice

### Equipment

Large saucepan  
Frying pan  
Chopping board  
Knife

### Method

1. Wash the chicken thighs and cook with chopped onion, lemon juice and stock cube.
2. Chop onion and celery; fry in the olive oil. Add crushed garlic, chopped spring onion, stock cube, tomato purée and chilli powder or the magic cube.
3. Add the chicken thighs to the onion mixture; add sliced carrots and 4 cups of rice. Stir and fry.
4. Add 4½ cups of water cover and bring to the boil. Cook until all the water is gone. Serve.

*By Joel*



## **My wedding ring**

A number of years ago my husband replaced the original wedding ring I had. A few years of good living meant that the one we used on our wedding day was too small!

At this time I was 6 months pregnant with my second son; we also had a 15 month old son. My husband had to go away for 3 weeks on a business trip and I was feeling very low. The day before he left, we went to Limerick where he brought me into a very nice jewellery shop. He asked to see a particular ring from the window. When I tried it on, it was the perfect size, like it was meant for me. The ring, which I wear all the time, is half yellow gold and half white gold with a diamond in the middle.

On the way home I asked him why he decided to buy me that ring. He explained that the yellow gold represented the sun, while the white gold represented the moon and the diamond was the stars. He said that although he had to leave for 3 weeks, he wanted to leave me the sun, moon and stars!

*By Mary*

## **My best friend**

My best friend's name is Run Lian. She lives in Da Lian, China. She is a businesswoman. She is busy all the time. She has a big company including clothes shops. She is a tall person with long black hair. We became friends in primary school when I was in China. We spent much time together and did many things. We went shopping, to the cinema and we talked a lot. I miss her very much!

*By Jun*

'While it is true that people are friendly in their manner, it is harder to make friends than you'd think.'

'I had hopes to get a better job. So I saved and bought a car and got a better job.'

'I agree it can be difficult to make deeper friendships. Some of our customs baffle Irish people. For example taking off your shoes when coming into the house – they think this is really strange!'

'Dublin looks more colourful now than it did at first. And I enjoy the fact it is so easy to have casual conversation on the bus, or anywhere, with people. This is rare in Poland.'

'Of course, now, everyone has had to stop buying so much. Everyone is more careful now.'

'The economy has changed since my arrival here. Still, the new motorways are enjoyable when you have to travel to Galway or Dublin.'

'After a while, you find there is too little variety in the food. People like to eat the same foods a lot.'

'You can feel a bit enclosed if you live out in the country. There is not so much public transport, so it takes a long time to get anywhere for a little break.'

'People eat all day! And they cook too many boiled vegetables!'

*Avany from Brazil, Agne from Lithuania, Mirek from Poland, Aldona from Poland, Daniela from Peru, Clemence from France, Beatriz from Spain, and Lucie from France*

*By Avany, Agne, Mirek, Aldona, Daniela,  
Clemence, Bea and Lucie*

## **Working in the bookshop**

I work in the bookshop every Saturday and I usually open it up at about ten in the morning with Therese. In the shop, I sit at the table near the till and if any customer comes to the table I usually help to serve them. I can work out simple sums and change to give to the customers. I have to be nice to the customers. I can't be rude or angry. I talk to them about the weather. Sometimes it's sunny and dry and at other times it's raining.

I like working in the bookshop because I can look through the books and try to read them. I have bought some with pictures and stories in them and I like to try and read them before I go to sleep at night.

I like to watch people through the windows of the shop. People are usually friendly when they come in and they will talk to me and I like talking with them. It's nice and relaxing and I can make a cup of tea when I want to. It's really good working in the bookshop.

*By Breda*

## **Basic brown bread recipe**

2 cups of self-raising flour  
1 fist of brown flour  
1 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups of buttermilk  
1 egg  
1 pinch of salt

Mix flour and buttermilk into a dough. Add in salt and egg, and bake in a preheated oven at 190°C for about 45 minutes.

*By B.B.*

## Clogher

The Kilfenora Céilí Band was formed one hundred years ago. Céilí music was played in most houses in the townlands of Kilfenora. I was born into one of the three Lynch houses. The Lynchs moved to Clogher before the Famine after being evicted for not being able to pay the rent. All our houses were musical. If not played, the music was appreciated. Legend has it that eight daughters of Marshall McMahon all married locally and that all their descendants have had a musical talent.

Long ago in Clogher, fifty families used to cut turf in Burke's Bog. The meadows we have today were only half as productive 100 years ago when they were all bog. In order to make the bog productive back then, the farmers had to find material that water would drain through. To help with drainage, they cut 4 x 4 inches turf and threw them up at both sides of the drain in order to dry and get a hard crust. After a year, water would drain through this turf to the large drain below which was wedged by bog scraw. Nowadays, because of the current weather conditions and very large machinery, totally new ways of drainage have to be found compared to when there was a horse and cart.

There are three ringforts locally. Ringforts are the most common monuments in Clare. They are usually circular and enclosed by an earthen bank. They vary in diameter from 25-50 metres. There are 224 of them in Clare dating from 500-1100 A.D. They were most likely enclosures to protect farmhouses and stock.

One time six of us went hunting. By custom and superstition we would never hunt in a ringfort. As chance would have it, we were near Cahercommane Ringfort and we went in for shelter there from a passing shower. All the dogs except Foxy stayed with us. We heard Foxy barking and knew immediately that he had cornered a fox as that was the only animal he ever barked for. In our excitement to get at the

fox, we knocked some of the wall, which probably was there for a thousand years.

"Oh! Mother of God, Paddy, look what we've done!" said my friend Tom.

"That's awful unlucky, Tom. Let's get out of here quick!" I said. We swore that we would never hunt there again. Who knows, the fairies might be waiting for us!

*By Paddy*

### **The public house**

My family used to own a pub out in the country and I spent nearly 50 years of my life in it. I was born in the pub and was about fifteen or sixteen when I started serving customers and doing odd jobs in the place. I knew all the people that would come in for a drink as they were all neighbours from around and about. Strangers would only come in at Christmas or, sometimes, in the summer holidays if they were passing through the area.

The locals would talk about the horse fairs and the price of cattle, how the farm was doing and what the government of the day was not doing. I enjoyed serving the customers and listening to their stories. We'd have set dancing in the winter and some local musicians would come to play the music.

It was a happy time and I loved being there listening to all the stories. Everyone shared and did things together. When we killed and salted the pig, we'd share it with the neighbours and they would do the same. Everyone did things for each other and you never felt alone. I live in the town now and I find it can be very lonely when you don't know many people. Everyone is in a rush and people don't have the time anymore to look out for their neighbours. It's very lonesome. I miss the old days.

*By Maureen*

## Fresh bread from Morocco

### Ingredients

1 kg strong or plain flour  
2 sachets of dried yeast  
200 ml of warm water  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt

### Equipment

Bowl  
Jug  
Oven tray  
Frying pan

### Method

1. Turn on the oven to very hot.
2. Mix the yeast, flour, sugar and salt in the bowl.
3. Add the warm water, mix well and knead the dough with warm hands for at least 5 minutes.
4. Cover the bowl of dough and leave to rise in a warm place for 1 hour.
5. Divide the dough into 4 pieces, roll into balls then flatten into circles, again with warm hands. Cover and leave to rise some more.
6. Place the bread onto the oven tray and put in the very hot oven for 20 minutes or until it rises and is golden brown.  
Cut into 4 pieces and serve.

Or, place the bread into a hot frying pan, without oil, and cook until the bread rises like a balloon, very exciting to watch! Cut open and fill with meat and salad.

*By Aïcha*

## The king of the sea

On a hot summer's day the friends set off on their trip to California. The flight left Shannon in the afternoon. They arrived at 8.00 a.m. in California. They all went to reception to check in and then they went up to their rooms and unpacked their bags. They met up in the lobby and ordered sandwiches.

At the hotel bar, Gary went up and got the first round of drinks. He came back and put the drinks down saying, "drink up lads, the holiday's just beginning." "So, what's the plan for tomorrow?" said Dean. "I got a brochure on the plane about rental boats down at the bay," said James. Gary stood up "we'll do that tomorrow, so. What do you think Haley? You've been quiet all the time." "Yeah, let's go, I suppose. We'll head to bed now, get over this jetlag and have a good session tomorrow night."

Next day it was a beautiful morning with a beautiful day to follow, hopefully. They headed down to the docks and as they were waiting, James went to the Shack for a bit to eat and while he was eating they were standing alongside a smelly bin. "We'll never get going unless James hurries up, the fat fool." "Calm down Gary," said Hayley, "he won't be too long, he's Irish genes in him, and he'll eat fast." James came back. "Let's get a move on; we have a long day ahead of us." Dean turned around and said, "You're awful chirpy this morning. I guess we should go down to the boatman." So they made their way down.

When they arrived Tom, the boatman, shouted, "What took you so long? I've been standing out here for half an hour." James ran to the boat, stopped, turned around and said, "Pick up the gear." They all jumped into the boat filled with excitement. "We have the sun high in the sky and a long day ahead of us. So let's get a move on." They sailed out in the early sunshine.



When they'd been sailing for about two hours, James leapt off the back of the boat yelling with excitement. Dean shouted, "C'mon, you're always delaying us. We have to keep to a schedule." "Cop on to yourself. Throw away your schedule. Just jump in. The water is lovely." Gary and Hayley jumped in with no bother, but Dean was scared. He looked all around. There was no land to be seen. "There isn't a bit of land to be seen." Hayley swam towards him, "You just can't see the land behind the glare of the sun." James dived deep under the surface. A moment later, Hayley screamed. "Damm it, James, stop messing. You know there are sharks in these waters." "What are you talking about? It wasn't me, I swear." "Then who else was it so, because all of yer heads are above the water, so stop the messing." "No, I swear to God it wasn't me. Oh crap, what was that?" "What James?" "What I just felt swimming behind me." Dean said, "That must have been the thing that scared you Hayley." Gary heard something hit the other side of the boat. He swam around to look. The lads heard a scream. They swam around and, as they were swimming, they started to swim through blood. They started to panic. James shouted around to Hayley "Don't come around here." Hayley screamed, "Why?" "Just don't." Dean and James looked at each other. What the hell was going on? Where was Gary?

The two friends started to panic even more. Hayley clambered back on to the boat and looked over the other side. "What's all the blood from? Where's Gary? What the hell is going on?" "Hayley, be quiet. We're trying to find Gary." Hayley saw something splitting the horizon. "What's that? It looks like a dolphin fin." Dean looked at Hayley. "There are no dolphins in these waters," he gasped. "Get out, get out. It's a shark." Dean and James swam for the ladder frantically. As they did, the shark slid up behind. He latched onto Dean's leg. James kept swimming. He got to the ladder and climbed up. Dean was being tossed around like a rag doll. The shark let him go. He tried to swim to the boat but he couldn't. James went to grab the lifebuoy. He threw it in. Dean swam to it and got it around him. James began to pull him in, but the shark jumped up and gripped onto the buoy

pulling Dean under the water and James overboard. "No James, no," Hayley screamed. She ran towards James but just missed him as he fell. In that split second they glanced at each other with sheer terror.

Hayley ran below deck to make radio contact. Her fingers shook as she held the mic. "Help, help." Seconds later a voice said, "Hello, hello. What's the matter?" Hayley sobbed, "My friends are overboard. There's a shark in the water." "Where are you? We'll send help." Suddenly their voices were drowned out by the sound of a rescue helicopter overhead. She ran upstairs, feeling relieved. She turned her head, and, looking into the sky, saw the helicopter coming through the glare of the sun. As the winches were lowered, her eyes fell on the rescue diver with gratitude. As she was being raised to safety she was mouthing, "Save my friends. Save my friends." She looks down and all she sees is... nothing.

*By Gary*

## **Westerlies**

She bowed, gazelle-like, her grace  
belying the torment of daily life  
Whipped and beaten yet  
She still retaining the willowy beauty of youth.

A sentinel, he stands beside her  
His strong sure calmness never wavering  
Not buffeted by the wiles of the wind  
His strength will protect her  
Against the unrelenting westerlies.

*By Catherine*

## **Pakistan**

I am from Pakistan. Pakistan is the composition of two words 'Pak' and 'Istan'. Pak is a word from Persian and Urdu and it means 'holy, pure and clean,' 'Istan' means homeland. Then the true meaning comes to 'Homeland of Holy People.' My country borders China, India and Afghanistan. Pakistan is a Muslim country. Its capital city is Islamabad. My country's father is Quaid-E-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Our Independence Day is August 14<sup>th</sup> 1947.

My country's language is Urdu and offices use Urdu and English. Pakistani people are very polite and compromising. Our national game is hockey. Good places for tourists to visit are the historical buildings in Lahore city. Other interesting cities are Gilgit, Hunja, Kalash, Naran and Kaghan. These are very good places for tourists.

I like Ireland because Ireland is a good country. Irish people are very good.

*By Mujahid*

## **All kinds of music**

My name is Tracy and I am 24 years old. I'm into all kinds of music, like Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, 50 Cent, Britney Spears, Girls Aloud, Bon Jovi, Johnny Cash, Elvis, Eminem, Sean Paul, Bob Marley, UB40 and loads more.

When I'm cross, I have my music to calm me down and it always works. When I'm at work, my friends play music on the computer and it's great. If I didn't have music I wouldn't know what to do with myself. My favourite music in the whole world is Michael Jackson's.

*By Tracy*

## Story of a Cuban child

Cuba is a sacred word. It is the word I have most heard in my life. I think the first words that I heard coming from my mother's womb were those of my father shouting, "Ah! Another Cuban has been born." Cuba is the word that when the newsreader mentions it, I have to stay quiet. If I do not stay quiet I have to listen to my family shouting at me and telling me to shut up; they are speaking of Cuba. And if it is on Irish television that they mention the word, Cuba, I have to be ready to translate as my father wants to hear what they are saying about Cuba.

But, for me, Cuba is not just a word. Cuba is like a beret, like a religion, so much so that it appears that my family has put Cuba on an altar. Cuba is an obsession. I would imagine that holy water for all churches should come from a Cuban river. Even as strong as my father is and the times he has repeated to me that men do not cry, I have seen him cry sometimes when he talks to me of Cuba.

Cuba is like a shadow that follows me everywhere. Cuba is the conversations and discussions at the parties and at the wakes. To have Cuban blood my father tells me, is good as it allows me to go to McDonald's and Burger King and afterwards go home and eat croquettes and banana milkshakes! I can enjoy Irish music and at the same time I love hearing Celia Cruz saying sugar! Or my father singing 'The Guantanamera.' My school friends have one fatherland but I have two, mine and that of my parents. They have their national heroes. I have mine and those of my parents. If anyone asks me where Cuba is I will point with my index finger to my father's chest. Forget about the world map. There is Cuba, in the heart of my father.

According to the world map in the Adult Education Centre, Cuba is in the Caribbean but the truth is that Cuba is in my home. Cuba is in my fridge. Cuba is in the lunch that my mother makes for me, and in the coffee my father brews. I do not know if I will get an excellent for this composition, but

it doesn't matter. I am happy because I am sure that my father, with tears in his eyes, will give me an 'A'.

*By Leonardo*

## **Parent support group**

When I came to Ireland four years ago, I was very lonely. I could not even speak good English. Then I tried to get to know people by trying very hard to show them how desperate I was to learn English. I was five months pregnant with nobody to help me with things like paper work at the hospital. I didn't even know who to ask then anyway. Even the people that were in the hostel were not that kind to me.

When I went for the ante-natal check-up, I was very happy when the doctors introduced me to a social welfare officer in St. Munchin's Regional Hospital. She welcomed me with an open hand and she understood my problem. I just cannot believe how great she was by making me feel like one of her children. Then she introduced me to the parent support group in Limerick and they were fantastic. They supported me with everything. The most magic part for me was when Nancy actually went to the labour room with me. I was just full of emotion and for her to be at my bedside was just great. I will never forget Nancy and Martina in my life and without their support I do not know what would have happened.

Thank you for loving me even though you do not know me. We are not from the same country but you showed me it does not matter. Thank you again Nancy, Martina and the parent support group team.

*By Maryam*

## **A good day out**

One day I decided to do something different. I asked my daughter if she would like to have a fun-filled day. I thought we might go to the beach. It's funny; we live so near Lahinch, but we hardly ever go there. I suppose not having a car does not help. I did not have much money so I really had to think what was important to make the day special. I made a list. Buckets and spades and ice cream would have to be bought of course, but I thought I could save money by making up a picnic and bringing our lunch with us. I used my daughter's school bag and packed it with ham, cheese, bread, bananas and orange juice. I brought a ball and packed our swimsuits as well – just in case the sun would shine!

You know what? We had the best day ever. The sun did shine, and it didn't cost much at all. We walked to the beach and I brought an old blanket for us to sunbathe on. We collected shells and put them on our sandcastles and who would have thought just how tasty ham sandwiches can be when you are outside? We paddled in the sea and bought our ice creams. I felt like a kid myself! I plan to have many more days like that.

*By Jody*

## **Time bonding**

This experience has been a very good one for me. I came to this course so I could learn how to sew and it has helped me a lot. I plan on pursuing a career in fashion design. It has also helped me to get close to my mother. She didn't plan on staying, but then she did, so we spent time bonding.

*By Emma*

## **My family back home**

I love my family very much. I always think of them when I am away from them, because back home in Ghana we did everything together. We cooked, ate, relaxed and spent a lot of time together. I speak to my parents maybe twice a week on the phone. I always pray to God I will see them soon. I hope it is not too long.

*By Comfort*

## **A strange story**

Hello. I am going to tell you a story about one of my friends. One day she and her mother went to the market to buy food. Along the road, she saw money on the ground and she ran to pick it up. When she touched the money, she vanished and that was the end of her! She left us with pain. When I think about this story, I feel that this life we are living is nothing.

*By Tina*

## **My pet dog**

I bought my dog from a lady in Donegal. She is a St. Bernard. I called her Molly. She is brown and white in colour. She is one year old. I prepared a nice place for her to sleep. I feed her three times a day with nuts and water. I clean her house every evening. Every day, after work, I bring her for a walk down the road. I love my dog.

*By Tom*



## Black bean rice and steak from Cuba

### Ingredients

Frying steak  
1 Red pepper  
2 Onions  
Garlic  
Oregano and cumin  
Tin of black beans  
Olive oil    Lemon juice  
Salt, black pepper  
Rice

### Equipment

Large saucepan  
Knife  
Chopping board  
Frying pans

### Method

1. Marinate the steak overnight in lemon juice, chopped onion, crushed garlic, cumin and black pepper.
2. Chop and blend to a puree half the red pepper, onion, 2 cloves of garlic and cumin powder.
3. In a large saucepan place 1 teaspoon cumin powder, 1 teaspoon oregano, salt and the blended puree. Add quarter cup of oil, the black beans in their juice, 3 cups of rice and 250 ml of water. Bring to the boil and cook until all the water has gone.
4. Put the steak in a frying pan, add olive oil and more lemon juice and chopped onion. Cover with a lid and cook on a low heat for 20 minutes, turning once.
5. Serve with the black bean rice and a tomato salad.

*By Aymara, Leonardo and Surelys*

## **My visit to Boston**

I visited Boston in 1974. I visited my aunt and her husband. They brought me to the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) in Field's Corner in south Boston.

There, I played the flute I got from Pat in Galway. I played in the band with Paddy, Pat, the Reynolds and Bridie on the piano. Mick did some dancing. I liked playing in the band.

I went to the States on holidays in 1974 and I came home in 1976. Mick said, "Stay here and look after your aunt." I stayed longer than I should have. I came home in the end and I was glad to be home.

*By Níall*

## **A week of birthdays**

This is one of my favourite rhymes and I would like to share it with you.

Monday's child is fair of face  
Tuesday's child is full of grace  
Wednesday's child is full of woe  
Thursday's child has far to go  
Friday's child is loving and giving  
Saturday's child works hard for a living  
But the child that's born on the Sabbath day  
Is bonny and blithe and good and gay.

*By Joan*

## Preventing cyber bullying

- Educate children about different consequences, losing things like IM accounts.
- Teach them to respect others and to take a stand against bullying.

How to stop it once it starts

- All bullies have different motives, so it's very hard to stop it when it starts.

What is the schools' role in this?

- Schools can get sued for exceeding their authority and violating the students' free speech rights if they deal with things after school hours.
- Teachers have to talk to the parents of children to stop bullying and about behavioural problems.
- Schools can also educate children on cyber ethics and the law.

What is the parents' roll in this?

- Parents need to be supportive of their children during tough times.
- Parents need to let the school know, so the guidance counsellor can keep an eye out for the bully.
- Parents also need to understand that the bullying may be carried on by the victim as well as the bully.

Take a stand against cyber bullying

- Take 5 before responding to the bully.
- Goldilocks and the cyber bullies... not too hot, not too cold.
- Need to teach children that silence, when others are being hurt, is not acceptable.

*By Michele*

## John's story

I was born in Hackney in London. I started working at fifteen because I didn't like school. I used to work door to door selling paraffin with the owner of the round. I was still attending school now and again, going in for hands-on lessons like woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing and car mechanics. I've always been interested in cars. One evening, the truant officer called round to my house and all hell broke loose! As a result, I went back to school for about two weeks but soon returned to my old ways.

When I was sixteen, I began working in a garage as an apprentice. I was there for at least two years, but the promised apprenticeship never materialised. Next, I got a job as a ceiling fixer in west London. I was there for six years. In the meantime I met my wife, Helen. We got married and moved into a flat in Hackney.

My first child, a girl, was born when I was twenty-five. I started a new job driving a lorry for a company that did road works. I did this for the next sixteen years. During most of this time, Maggie Thatcher was prime minister. She brought in the poll tax and this cost everyone a lot of money. Meanwhile, two more children were born. To get onto the property ladder, we bought a house in Dagenham and we all moved to Essex. Helen started a new job making envelopes, on night shifts, just to live. As a result, we used to pass each other in the morning and that was all we saw of each other!

My mum had a caravan in Kent and we used to go there sometimes in the summer time. Things were getting so bad at home that we had no quality of life. One day in Kent, while my mum was minding the kids, we went to the pub and had a heart to heart. We made a decision to sell up and move back to Ireland and start a new life.

So we put the house on the market. Helen and the kids moved to Clare while I stayed in London working, and living with my mum.

I eventually moved back a month later to Kilrush. It was the first time in my life I had ever signed on. Soon, however, I began working for Leadmore driving a van. Six years later, I got my current job in the HSE. I love my job and I worry sometimes about job cutbacks.

Overall, I haven't looked back. We made the right decision. We haven't been out of work and everyone's doing well. We have four healthy grandchildren and we are looking to the future.

*By John*

## **How I spent my summer holidays**

I attended the summer programme in the Ennis Youth Centre. On July 27<sup>th</sup> 2009 my group and I went to see the dolphins in Carrigaholt. Two groups went that day, groups three and four.

It took us about twenty minutes on a boat before we saw the dolphins because the skipper was searching for them. When we saw the dolphins we all cheered with delight. Everyone was taking photos. It was my first time on a small boat and I was nervous because the boat was swaying from side to side.

The area was very scenic. It took us about fifteen minutes to get back to shore. When we got off the boat we had some lunch before we came back to Ennis. It was great fun and it was enjoyable. We laughed a lot.

*By Faith*

## **My little story**

Before I came to Ireland where my family and I resettled as refugees, I was living in a small country surrounded by water, just like Ireland, but with a different climate, very hot.

Here I find that warmth in the people we meet. They greet you and welcome you without asking questions. It is very different in my country where people are discriminated against just because they think differently. That is why many Cubans, like me, have escaped, but many others were not so lucky and they are in prison, or they died trying to flee the country.

It hurts me to see that Cuban society is deteriorating and I cannot do anything to change it.

You may think I am exaggerating, but I invite you to know the history of my country from inside with its people and their real stories. Many people remain silent because of fear. Today I am free, but I paid a high price, separating from my loved ones, my family and friends.

*By Aymara*

## **Summer**

My name is Rene. My favourite season is summer because I like to see the sun shining and I can go to the beach. Sometimes I can play football and you can see everyone is happy because they like the sun. In winter people are unhappy. They wear a lot of clothes and they are always sitting at home.

*By Rene*

## **Why I got involved in adult education**

It could be a really long story, but I will make it as short as I can. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2000, I was a back seat passenger in a car that had a very bad accident. I ended up with a lot of head injuries and spent 3 months in hospital and had a couple of years doing physiotherapy afterwards. I was paralysed on my left side due to my injuries.

Before my accident, I was a hairdresser and had spent seven years working in Hugh Campbell's hair salon, Marbles, on Cruises Street in Limerick. Because of my injuries I could not go back to it. I have very vague memories of my life before my accident. I was very shy and wouldn't talk very much or try to interact with people, so my partner tried to get me involved in different things that would help me to mingle with other people.

I have really grown in confidence compared to what I was. In one way, I suppose I am doing adult education courses to try to find out what I may be good at and to learn new skills and also to meet new people. I really love the courses and learn a lot from them. The teachers are very good and the people who attend are very nice, and it's great to get to know them. The people who organise the courses and help to set them up are absolutely brilliant and are always trying to figure out what people want from adult education, what people are interested in and they try their best to make it happen, if it's at all possible. I couldn't praise them enough.

*By Bríd*



## **Mary's story**

My name is Mary. I live in Ennis, Co. Clare. I have two sisters, Julia and Kathleen and one brother, Jim. My sister Kathleen is in Australia with her partner. She got engaged and is getting married next year. Jim is married to Teresa and they have seven children, four boys and three girls.

I attend the Brothers of Charity in Ennis where I do reception work; for example, answering the phone, checking emails, making sure people sign in and out, putting out the folders at 3.30 p.m. and making sure the place stays clean and tidy. On Mondays I do the wages.

I have two friends, Deirdre and Niamh. Sometimes Deirdre takes me out for lunch or tea. When I go to Gort to her house we visit her mammy for a chat. At her house she checks her emails and I do word searches. Deirdre is very nice to me and a good friend. Niamh was very sick and because of this I could not see her for a while, I missed her company. Sometimes we all meet up together.

I attend a reading and writing class in the adult education centre every Tuesday. Tom, the taxi driver, takes me there. In the class I do reading, writing, adding, taking away, word searches and sometimes making cards for my friends. I like the class very much and I think my reading and writing has improved.

We had a Valentine disco in the Woodstock Hotel. Ella took me there. We had food, drinks and music. Peter, my friend, danced with me. The song I like best is 'You're such a good looking woman,' by Joe Dolan.

Every Thursday I go to Lees road for training for the Special Olympics which takes place in June. They found out that I can use my walking aid for the 25 metres walking race. I am also doing the soft ball throw.

My friend, Deirdre, came back to work and I was very happy to see her. She took me to lunch on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> to Glór. She was delighted to see me using my walking aid. Peter, my friend, is a very nice man. I meet him in the workshop every day. My mammy, Julia and baby Julie went on holidays to Spain for two weeks and they had a great time. While they were gone I was staying in Bishops Court. It was very nice. My mammy got me two gifts, a watch and a hair grab.

Jo, from work asked me to do her a favour. She wants me to do a film about home sharing in Clare with my friend, Deirdre. I am really excited about it. Jo thinks that I am very funny and that I have a lovely personality and I think she is right.

*By Mary*

### **My car**

My first car was a Volkswagen Polo 1998. I bought this car when I was 16 years old. I was so happy that I had my first car. I bought it in Tralee from my uncle. He sold it to me for €600, so I had that car for six months, then I sold it to my friend but he had it only a few days when the car stopped working.

My friend is called Thomas. He said that he wanted his money back. I said, "I will not give back your money. If you came earlier I would have given you your money, but how can I know you didn't break the car? The car was driving like new for me."

Then I bought a new model Volkswagen Polo 2000 and I wanted to keep it for a long time when I bought it in Dublin from a sales garage. I bought it for €1,500 and it wasn't ready for NCT so I had to fix it for €700. Now the car is like new. I hope that the car will go on for a long time.

*By Michael*

## From Georgia to Ireland

My name is Tea and I am from Georgia. It is a very small country. Its area is about 70,000 sq km. In the north, Georgia borders Russia and in the east Azerbaijan; in the south, Armenia and Turkey and in the west it is washed by the Black Sea. That is why Georgian nature is varied and rich. The east part is very cold with much snow in winter and the west is very warm with all kinds of fruit and subtropics.

The population is about five million. The Georgian language is one of the oldest living languages. Its alphabet is one of the 14 alphabets in the world created in the third and fourth centuries B.C. It is a Christian country since the fourth century. There are many historic buildings and many interesting places for visitors. Last year, in December, I joined my family in Ireland. It was really the best time I've ever had in my life but, if I say the truth, soon I saw that my life was very boring. Everyday I sat at home alone, when everybody went to work. Sometimes I thought about going back. There was too much rain outside. I was sad and I really wanted my home and my country.

However, little by little, my mind has changed. Irish people are really very kind and welcoming people. They are always smiling. Since I started attending courses in the Adult Education Centre my life has fully changed and gotten more interesting. I have new friends, I like my teachers and their classes are easy to understand for me. I am very happy and every day I enjoy going there.

I hope when I finish my courses, my language will be good enough for me to get any job suitable for me. I am dreaming of a better future life.

*By Tea*

## **My favourite pastimes**

I have many interests both outside and inside, which I enjoy very much. I play games, work in the garden, care for our pet cat and help as a shopkeeper in the bookshop.

My favourite game is tennis. I play tennis in the tennis court in Kilkee with Tom. We play singles and I wear soft shoes. Sometimes I win. We play football also with Ian and Andrew.

We opened a new bookshop in Henry Street. We have lots of books standing on the shelves. They cost two euro, one euro and fifty cent. It is open from Tuesday to Saturday each week. I count the money with John and bring it to the bank. I like working in the bookshop.

I enjoy looking at the flowers in our garden. I sowed bulbs of spring flowers in tubs. They are growing now. I will plant summer flowers when the frost is gone.

I have a lovely cat called Dusty. I bought him in the pet shop. I feed him with cat food every morning and evening. He sleeps in a basket in the house. He is an old cat and sometimes plays tricks with me, like when he pulls at the netting. He likes me to cuddle him.

My indoor interest is painting. It is my favourite pastime. I have painted six pictures. I have some for sale in the coffee shop and the bookshop. My favourite painting is the one of the lighthouse.

*By Brian*

## **Life in Ireland**

I am Abdallah and was born in 1977 in Agadir. It's a nice city. There is a lot of sunshine there and there's a direct flight from Dublin to Agadir so that gives a lot of Irish the chance to go there. Don't forget there are Irish people in my city. I didn't know anything about Ireland until my sister came to work here and I asked her. When I finished my courses in Morocco, I applied for a work permit and I am very lucky that it was accepted in October 2002. I came to Ennis.

The first thing I like in this country is that all the Irish are friendly and also they help you to speak and to understand them. That was good for someone like me who didn't speak English. There were very few non natives in Ennis at that time but that means that everybody knows you. Now it is changing and there are a lot of us here.

I like this country because it is helping me to do a lot of things that I cannot do in Morocco. Now I am married and have a baby girl, Rim. I am happy with my little family and we don't have any problems staying in Ireland for the rest of our lives.

*By Abdallah*

## **Nigerian breakfast**

In Nigeria, people usually have custard with beans and cake for breakfast. They drink tea or coffee, but most people prefer tea. They don't have alcohol for breakfast. In my family we usually have tea and bread for breakfast.

At the weekend we have fried eggs with bread and custard.

*By Fred*

## **Fairy story**

A fiddler was going to a dance one stormy night. As he was passing a fairy fort, the fairies came out to meet him. They heard he was a good fiddler and wanted him to play for them.

They asked him into the fort and he started playing. They were giving him all sorts of drink to make him play all the more.

Suddenly a cock crew and the fiddler found himself on the side of the road, cold and wet in the stormy night. The fiddler set off for the dance and he met a farmer. "What time does the dance start?" "Dance?" said the farmer, "sure the dance was a year ago!"

*By P.J.*

## **A visit to Paris**

In January, I went to Paris for four days with my sister. We arrived late in the evening and had a meal. Next morning, we got the Metro to the Eiffel Tower and looked around the area. After a while we took the lift to the second floor and had a good view of Paris.

We visited the Louvre Museum and saw the famous Mona Lisa painting. There are thousands of paintings in this huge museum. I saw a lovely helmet and sword in a glass case and saw lots of works of art. We also visited the famous Notre Dame cathedral.

There is a lot to see in Paris and you would need more than four days to see everything in this beautiful city.

*By Kieran*

## **My second chance of life**

In the early hours of Sunday morning on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2008, on a night out in Limerick, drinking too much as usual, I had a serious accident. First, I went to the greyhound racing and then into the town drinking. I was drunk and so was my friend and we went to the wrong hotel. We were to stay in Jury's Hotel but we went to the Hilton. They are close to each other. We were drunk and we didn't care. I went to the toilet and on my return to my friend; I slipped and fell down the stairs.

I was in a coma for over two weeks. The doctors told my family I was going to die, so they had no hope for me, but I woke up after the two weeks. I was told I had to have an operation on my head to save my life on the night of my fall. I don't remember a thing. My walking was very bad. My speech and my sight in one eye was affected. I was sent back to Limerick and then to Newcastle West for three months and then to Ennis Rehab Care for three weeks.

My mother died six years ago, I still miss her but got my chance to say goodbye. She was in Dublin too, like me, not being well. I spent two months in Dublin but got a paid taxi home at the weekends. I lived in the Peter Bradley house in Ennis for six months and finally moved into a house in Ennis on my own.

I'm living in Ennis eleven years. I like it and have got to know a lot of people in that time. I like Tottenham FC, Clare hurling and show jumping. I've done computer classes and I am now doing a horticulture class. I am learning to write with my left hand with a nice lady called Mandy, as my right hand is not strong enough for writing. Who knows, maybe some day I can meet someone nice. I'm a non-smoker. I hate smoking, but drinking I don't mind even though I gave it up. The trick in getting on is don't feel sorry for yourself. I have achieved certificates in the computers, manual handling, first aid and horticulture. I am enjoying my second chance of life.

*By Eoin*



## Soccer

I like playing soccer. I play 5-a-side in the centre forward position and I can score goals. The team get on well with each other.

I'm going to be playing soccer at this year's Special Olympics. We will be playing teams from Ulster, Connacht and Leinster at the University of Limerick. Matches will be starting in June. I'm hoping to get a medal.

*By Barry*

## Visit east Clare

Why would a person visit east Clare?  
Why would anyone go anywhere?  
We have here a recipe for feeding the senses.  
Come in the month of May  
When the trout has feasted on the May fly.  
Breathe in the colours and the perfume,  
Bring your watercolours and  
Capture the lilac silver haze of the distant Burren.  
Crush the leaves of the walnut tree  
And discover its other worldly aroma.  
Redolent of mint and something more – something!  
Tread the east Clare way  
And startle a sika deer.  
Encounter a heard of wild goats  
Who will meet your gaze  
And nonchalantly continue to chew on the blazing yellow  
gorse.  
Overhead the Hen Harrier circles  
And the swallow swoops with the swiftness of a samurai  
sword.

*By Janet*

## **Last minutes**

I want to tell you a story about my friend. Everything began in New York. I was there for eleven years. I had to move to a small town called Evort. I bought a small house there. It was my dream come true. It had a lovely garden and one beautiful veranda.

One day I was on my veranda drinking lemonade and a woman passed. She said, "Hi, how are you?" I said, "Thanks, I am well," and we had a little conversation.

Some time later she passed by again, but this time she was a bit strange. When she was near my house she fell on the ground. I ran to her. I spoke to her but she didn't answer. I called the ambulance. They were very fast and they took her to hospital.

One day later, I went to visit and she was much better. She thanked me for everything. I said, "It was the least I could do," and we became the best of friends. After three days they let her go home and I visited often. We chatted every day. We were like sisters.

After a year she went to the doctor and he told her a terrible thing - she was dying. She was upset and I asked her what happened. She said to me very quietly, "I am dying." I said "What?" She said, "Yes, it's true." So I said to her that I'd be with her every day. I spent beautiful months with her. She was a very good friend and my sister.

*By Dušan*

## **My first job**

I remember my first job. I applied for work as a postman. I got the job and bought my first motorbike. I used to travel six miles a day delivering post. The weather was very warm as it was summer time and the days were lovely and long. I started work in the morning at 9.30 and finished in the evening at 4.30. I loved it.

I liked it because you would meet a lot of people. For the first time they would invite you into the house for tea and a chat. The neighbours were lovely. The post office I worked in was Lisdoonvarna. I later bought an old post office in Lisdoonvarna, renovated it and lived there for 19 years. I worked with the Council in Lisdoonvarna and with FÁS. The people I worked with were all locals and we got on great.

*By Anthony*

## **Book club**

A good book will have good descriptions so that you can see images from the book in your mind's eye. Books that are funny are good, too, and books that have a twist in the story are great. They take you by surprise.

The book you are reading has to be interesting. Stories that are based on reality are interesting because you feel that you know the people in them.

Reading books gives you quiet time – time to yourself. It's a great pastime and is very relaxing. You don't think of anything else when you're reading. You can just switch off and go into another world.

*By Anna Marie, Breeda, Eileen, Eilish and Jeananne*

## Democracy in Nepal

I am from Nepal. My country is in Asia and is surrounded by two big countries, India and China. Nepal is a mountainous country and about 75% of the country is covered by hills and mountains. Very little of the country is flat. The climate in my country varies from place to place. Some of the parts have a very hot climate and some are very cold. Temperature ranges from below zero degrees to nearly 40 degrees. Although Nepali is the main and official language of my country, many other languages are spoken in Nepal. This is a country of various languages, cultures and religions. Politically we have democracy with an elected president and prime minister. My country is fully dependent on agriculture. Mount Everest, which is the highest mountain in the world, lies in my country and is 8848 metres high. There are several other high mountains as well which are ranked in the top ten highest mountains in the world like Kanchanjunga, Annapurna and Dhowlagiri, etc.

I came to Ireland in 2004 by travelling through different countries like India, Hungary, etc. The main reason I left my country was a very bad political situation in my country at that time. There was a big people's movement against the monarchy and many people were being killed every day by both sides. Finally, the king was overthrown and the country got democracy.

*By Ram*

## **My lovely dog**

For a long time I had a collie dog. I called him Benny. He was black and white. He was a lovely dog and friendly to everyone. He was also a good watchdog and my best friend. I knew his parents also. I used to walk with him down to the river Shannon sometimes. He even came to town with my mother and me. My brother didn't have a lot of time for a dog, so he stayed with me. Now, unfortunately, he is gone to dog Heaven after fourteen years.

After three weeks, I went to the pound. I was looking for another lovely collie dog - a puppy. I asked the lady for a collie dog. She told me she had one. I found a small puppy, also black and white. He was only six weeks old and he was very small and he came to my home. He was very hungry and he had to learn a lot of things. In the pound he had learned to bite a lot. I taught him to stop biting my mother and me. He liked to have fun and to play a lot of tricks. We called him Bobby. He learnt a lot. Three times I took him to the vet. The vet said he needed to be wormed. I got a good book about dogs in the pet shop.

Unfortunately, in the middle of September 2009, I had to bring him back to the pound. He was very wild to my mother and me. My good friend had looked out for a dog for me and when he found one, he called and gave me the number of the owner. On the 12<sup>th</sup> October, we went to Inagh to collect him. Now I am very happy with him. I called him Sam. He is a lovely dog and he is quiet. He is also a good watchdog. He barks when he hears my voice.

*By Suzanne*

## Reading

Reading books helps you to connect with other lives and other people's points of view. You can identify with characters in a book and with their stories. When you read a good book, your spirit comes into a new place. You become part of the people in the book and part of their worlds – even if you don't agree with them.

Books bring you into a world of your own, too. You can become lost in a book and the world outside is shut out for a while. You have a new focus because a good book takes your total concentration. This takes your mind off your problems for a while.

Every book is different. Every reader is different. That's why two people can read the same book but find different meanings in it.

*By Nora, Paddy and Yayoí*

## Cookery class

I go to a cookery class at the Adult Education Centre every Tuesday for two hours. I like learning how to cook. It helps with my cooking at home. We make apple tarts, quiches, chocolate biscuit cake, brown bread and lots more.

I also get to meet and talk to other people. It's great to meet new people and to chat.

*By Ann*

## **Daniel O'Connell**

This is a story I heard when I was a child about Daniel O'Connell.

Daniel O'Connell was an M.P. He was sitting in Parliament and was invited out to a meal with the English M.P.s. There was an Irish maid working there. She said to him, "A Dhomhnaill an dtuigeann tú Gaeilge?" He replied, "Indeed I do a chailín from Ireland." She then said, "There is salt in your cup which is not in any other one! You switch the cup while I put out the light." She put out the light and Daniel O'Connell switched the cups.

While they were having the meal, a big English man fell back off the chair and Daniel and the maid ran out the door.

*By Mary Ellen*

## **I am from**

I am from you  
From sunshine and rain  
From baking and Christmas

From tears and loss  
From emptiness  
From sisters and brothers who bullied

From peacocks and sandwiches  
From bike rides  
And death rides

From here and now  
For the future, unsure, uncertain  
Assured

*By Catherine*



## **Adult education courses**

When I was laid off work in September 2008, I decided to do some adult education and I chose the Adult Education Centre here. I have to say I'm impressed with the well-equipped lecture rooms, one to one rooms for private tuition and a spacious canteen.

Last year I studied communications, computers and maths. This year I am studying horticulture, computers and Junior Cert maths. I started on the Leaving Cert but found it too difficult and after a bit I dropped out. All my tutors are excellent. If I need any extra bit of help they're available to give me any assistance when I need it. Some sit down with me at break time and talk about day-to-day events and concerns. They have their own worries, concerns and fears for the future. Who doesn't?

This present recession is affecting everybody in some way. Staff members talk to me in the corridors, canteen and some even call me by my name. I have to say I'm treated with respect and courtesy by all staff which I greatly appreciate. Some are available if I need help with any problems I might have and I get on well with everybody here, staff and students alike. I hope that when things improve, I will get a full time job through my education and hopefully make my own way in life.

*By Gerard*

## **A bright future**

My name is Joel and I am Congolese. I am in Ireland just for three months now and I would like to continue my studies here. I love my country, my family and studies. By the grace of God, hopefully, I will be in the correct direction in life, fulfil my dreams and have a bright future. We know where we come from, but we don't know where we are heading to.

*By Joel*

## **The Celtic Tiger**

The Celtic Tiger started when I came home from England in the early 1990s. I went to the training centre on the Gort Road making kennels and car trailers. There was a good market for the kennels. I got two years in the centre and then I had to finish. I did nothing then until I could go back to the training centre. That procedure lasted for ten years.

I got my first proper job in 2007 making timber houses in Lissycasey. The recession began then so the only productive work I did during the Celtic Tiger years was in Lissycasey for three months.

I am not idle by nature. I want to work but, as I am a Traveller, people are not inclined to employ me. I never got casual work. Nothing much happened for the Travellers during the Celtic Tiger years.

*By Paddy*

## **A day at the turf bog**

I lived in the country on a farm with my mother, father and three brothers. We worked very hard on the farm, saving hay, picking potatoes and stacking turf.

One day my father said to me, "Yourself and your friend Josie will have to go to the bog and start stacking the turf." I said to him, "How are we going to go?" He said, "You can take the ass and car."

So, the next day, I met Josie and told her we had a job to do. She was mad to hear about the job, but when I told her she wasn't too pleased. At about nine o'clock in the morning we set off in the ass and car. It took us about an hour to get there. The ass would not run but walked all the way there. We finally got there and took the ass from under the car, tied him to the car and gave him some hay to eat.

We had to walk for about a quarter of an hour into the bog. We stayed about three hours stacking the turf. We ate the bread and drank the milk that we had with us, but we were tired and set off for home. But when we got out, the ass was gone! We looked every place for him but could not find him. We were crying as we now had no way of going home. Then a man with a tractor came along and asked us what was the matter. We told him what had happened. He said he would take us home and that someone would find the ass. We were worried that my father would give out to us, but the man told him what had happened. Two days later the ass was found three miles from the car. After that Josie said to me, "I hope your father will not ask us to go to the bog again," and I hoped so too!

*By Patricia*

