

Simply Said 2014



Issue 26

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
Clare Adult Basic Education Service

A Collection of Writings
by
Students of
Clare Adult Basic Education Service

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Foreword

Welcome to the 26th issue of Simply Said, the annual collection of writings by adult learners taking part in programmes with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service.

This edition has an impressive 144 articles contained within its pages. This year's writers were inspired by many things, such as dreams, heroes and memories. The heroic Clare team and their success at becoming All-Ireland Senior Hurling Champions 2013 were mentioned, along with the joy they brought to the whole county.

The writers have shared their knowledge of cattle farming, crochet, health and fitness, nature and woodwork with us. Some of this year's writers have given us a virtual tour around their home towns, villages and cities. In addition to this, we read stories and poems about people's families, their holidays and their favourite time of year. The articles are thought provoking, uplifting and some are even a little scary.

The sketch on the cover of this year's Simply Said was drawn by a learner in the Shannon Adult Learning Centre. He participated in a horticulture class and they entered their 'Rineanna Garden' in the pop-up garden section of the Clare Garden Festival. The theme of the competition was 'Protecting the Environment in my Garden' and they won first prize.

Thank you to the tutors, especially the volunteer tutors, who encourage all the learners to value the knowledge that they have and support them on their learning journeys. Thanks also and well done to those involved in the planning and production of this year's publication.

Finally, and most importantly, congratulations and thank you to all who have written in this year's publication. We hope you enjoy reading *Simply Said 2014*.

The CABES team

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St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is an exciting day in our house, especially with 2 young girls. The badges out, hair gear and green clothes and off we go. The parade was exciting. We saw amusing floats of Vikings, famine scenes, farming tractors and vintage cars. The girls got their faces painted, were given balloons and lollipops of green, white and gold. With shamrock, hats and sunglasses, green clothes as far as the eye could see, Ennis was a sea of green. We finished off the day with ice cream and set off for home. What a day to remember!

By K

My name is Ivy

My name is Ivy. I come from Malaysia. The capital city is Kuala Lumpur. We speak Chinese, Malay, English and Tamil. In Malaysia we don't have the euro, we have Malaysian Ringgit. We have Sunni, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian religions. The weather is very hot and the food is very nice. The beginning of the new year is a different day every year. A lot of people go shopping to buy a new dress and shoes for the family. We go for dinner together in the evening.

By Ivy

Crochet

I learned to crochet a long time ago from a friend in Africa. I had forgotten all about it until I came to craft class in Ennis. Now I can crochet scarves, hats, blankets and shawls. I have learned single, double, treble, shell and trellis work. Me and my children really enjoy crochet.

By Rosemary

Making a dress for my daughter

First I took my daughter's measurements and I chose my fabric. I checked the book in our class and I found the style that I wanted to sew in the book.

I made my fabric flat, then I folded it in half and I cut the size out. I began to sew the dress. I followed the sewing directions on my pattern. I turned my fabric inside out and folded 1.5cm over on either side.

I used an iron to flatten it out. I put a zipper in the back of the dress so that it can open and close.

The dress is the thing I like to make.

By Tina

My name is Alena

I am from the Czech Republic. I came to Ireland 9 years ago. I didn't understand English. My 4 children live here too. I started English classes at the Adult Education Centre. The teachers are very nice.

By Alena

My life story

My name is Aysha. I'm from Sudan, but I was born in Libya. I am 28 years old. I married Essam in 2009 and I have two kids (Balsam, 4 and Ali, 1). We are living in Ennis. I came to Ireland in 2010. I love this country very much, especially the weather. I still have a problem with the names of the streets and communicating with people because of the different language. I hope that with time, I can understand everything that goes on around me easily.

My family, my mom, dad and sister are living in Sudan. I also have a sister living with me here in Ireland. I am happy and thank the good Lord that they are with me. I hope to go to see them soon. I miss them very much.

I lived a long period of my life in Libya, in the capital Tripoli. I long to go there again. I miss sitting with my friends and seeing them. I miss walking in the streets and I miss seeing the grave of my younger brother. His name was Ali, Allah's mercy.

I went to Syria in 2009 and lived in Damascus. It was the coolest time of my life. It is a beautiful country. I hope God can end these wars that killed millions and I hope they become as they were, my loving brothers.

The finest moments of my life were when I gave birth to my first baby, Balsam, the most beautiful and the greatest sense of the mother, as she lay in the hands of the nurse. My joy was complete when I gave birth to her brother, Ali. My kids, I love you so much.

This is my life that I adore.

By Aysha

A day as a head chef

I leave home at 7:30 a.m. I get to work at 8:00 a.m. Then I put on my uniform and next I wash my hands. I put on the oven to preheat. Then I start preparing lunch.

I get the ingredients for the brown soda bread. Then I mix them all together. Then I put it in baking tins. I put it in to the oven to cook for 30 minutes.

Then I make vegetable soup. It takes an hour to make.

I put two legs of lamb in a cooking tin and season them with salt, pepper, rosemary and one clove of garlic. It takes two hours to cook.

I get the vegetables and potatoes ready to put on half an hour before the lamb is cooked. I take the meat juices out of the cooking tin and put them in a pot to make gravy.

At 1:30 p.m. 30 people come in. They have soup first. Once they have eaten the soup they are served their main courses.

That is the end of my day at work.

By John

We are an English class

We are an English class. We are also mothers of children at Educate Together.

This is a small quiet school. The principal, Seán, is a good man. In this school there are children from many different countries; Slovakia, Czech Republic, Morocco, Ireland and more.

By Eva, Vlasta, Marta, Amína & Souad

My week

I go to Woodland House every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Monday, I do yoga with my friends at Cois na hAbhna. I travel by bus.

I go to Mass every Tuesday morning in the Friary. I then go to Clarecare where I do my exercises and chat with my friends. I travel back to Woodlands where I bake with Sheila for the rest of the afternoon. I bake pancakes, queen cakes and apple tarts. I go home at 5:30 p.m.

I am off on Wednesday. I do my housekeeping and my washing. I do gardening when it is not raining.

On Thursday, at 9:15 a.m., the bus collects me at the top of the road and takes me to Woodlands. I then go to the gym with Jackie. I do stretching exercises for one hour. I go shopping with my friends.

On Friday morning, I go to the VEC to my classes. I like my classes very much. Then I go to Mass in St. Joseph's Church. Later, I go bowling with my friends at the Bowling Alley on the Kilrush Road. I enjoy that very much. Sometimes, I go to the West County with my friend for tea and tart. Then we go for a long walk in Dromoland. I meet Martin at 4 o'clock and we have a cup of tea and a snack.

On Saturday, I sometimes go to Limerick to do shopping. We go in the bus. We have a mini breakfast in the Cellar. On Saturday evenings, I go to Mass at 7 o'clock in Doora church.

On last Tuesday, I went to a disco with my friends in the West County.

I have started a new class and I am learning how to knit. I am knitting a scarf which is red and blue.

By Teresa

My name is Regina

My name is Regina. I come from Czech Republic. The capital city is Praga. We speak Czech. We don't have the euro, we have koruna. Our special days are the first two days in the new year. We eat dumplings. I miss the food from my country.

By Regina

The wedding speech

Last year my daughter got married and as her father had passed away, I felt I'd like to make a speech at the wedding. Because I have reading and writing problems, I didn't feel confident enough to stand up in front of 200 people. I had been going to Adult Education classes for a while and when I told my tutor about the wedding speech she said we'd give it a go.

That evening at home, I wrote a rough copy of what I'd like to say if I ever got the courage. I started working on the speech every week with my tutor until I got it right. I practised saying it in front of my tutor at every class. I read it over and over until I nearly had it off by heart. At home, anyone that came into my house had to listen to it. I practised it in front of the mirror, pretending I was doing it in front of a crowd.

The morning of the wedding, there was so much happening that when I got to the hotel my bag was missing. I realised I'd left it at home. I panicked as my speech was in it. My partner had to go home and get it for me. He's missing from lots of the photos because of it.

The best man said his speech first and when he said, "The mother of the bride will now stand," I was so nervous I was hardly able to. I tried not to look at the crowd as I started to talk. I could hear a nervous wobble in my voice as I said the first few lines. I said to myself, "Stop! You can do this." I badly wanted to get this right for my daughter. I don't know where the courage came from but my voice changed and it all just came naturally to me. This is my speech.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. As mother of the bride, it is my pleasure to make this speech.

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all to Tom and Mary's wedding and I would like to thank you for coming, especially those of you who have travelled long distances. It's great to see you all again.

Sadly, there is one special person missing today – Mary's dad - but I'm sure that he's looking down on us and I know that he'd be very proud of Mary today.

Mary, it fills me with joy to see how wonderful you look today as you take your place beside your husband. You have always been a wonderful and talented daughter. If I had one piece of advice to pass on to you it would be that success in marriage is more than finding the right person. It is in being the right person.

Tom is a wonderful match for Mary and we are happy to see them start their new life together. Tom is everything a mother could want in a son-in-law and I'm pleased to welcome him to the family.

Now, please stand and join me in a toast to the bride and groom."

I got a big round of applause at the end and I felt really proud of myself.

By Bernadette

My name is Alzbeta

I come from Slovakia. I came to Ireland 9 years ago with my brother. Since then I have had 2 children. The first is my son Vladimir who is 6. The second is my daughter Alzbeta who is 4. When my son started school, I started English classes. I am learning to speak English. I go to classes 3 days a week. I'm happy now.

By Alzbeta

Shopping

We like to go shopping in Ennis. We get the bus in Lisdoonvarna. Our favourite shop is Dunnes Stores. We like clothes and sometimes we each buy a jumper. If there is time, we like to get our dinner. We go on the bus again to go home.

By Susan & Geraldine

The pool and the gym at the Falls Hotel

I go to the pool and the gym at the Falls Hotel every Friday. It costs five euro. I like the Falls and I want to keep fit. The Falls is in Ennistymon and it is not too far from Kilfenora where I live. I did not go last Friday because there was a terrible storm. I use the walking machine in the gym. I walk fast on this and I prefer it to walking outside.

By Michael

Clare, the All-Ireland Champions

Clare won the All-Ireland in 1995 against Offaly. They won again in 1997 when they beat Tipperary. Jamesie O'Connor got the winning point for Clare. I was in Croke Park both times and the matches were very good and it was very exciting.

Clare won again in 2013. We beat Cork after a replay. There was a replay because we drew the first time. I was not in Croke Park this time but I watched the game on TV.

Hurling is my favourite sport but I also like football. I played football for Kilmurry Ibrickane years ago. I won a medal for winning in the under 14s.

By John

Meeting people

I like to meet people. Some people are nice, kind and they smile. I smile back.

I like to talk to different people. My best friend is John. He is very funny.

By William

Holidays

I am going on my holidays in the summer. I am hoping to get good value hotel stays in Galway and Kerry. I will meet up with my sister, Sharon, and her fiancé, Ger, when I go to Kerry. We might take some trips around scenic places in the county.

I am going to Galway with John, Noel and Patsy. We will go to Salthill and to nice restaurants.

I own a white Polo. It needs a new battery. Ger will help me with it when he comes to Clare.

By Adrian

Planting

In the springtime, I plant rhubarb and leeks outside. I plant tomatoes in the polytunnel because they like to be warm. I use organic fertiliser and till the soil before I dig it. It takes the plants a few months to grow and then I can harvest the crop. I sell my vegetables in the Saturday market in Ennistymon.

By Seamus

All-Ireland match

Last September, Clare beat Cork in Croke Park. It was exciting. I watched the match in the pub. People were over the moon because Clare won the final. That night we went to the Fairgreen in Ennis to see the Clare team. There were saffron and blue flags all over the town. The people of Clare were celebrating for weeks.

By Declan

Christmas is

Christmas is about family. Christmas is a time to get together.

Christmas is when Santa comes. Christmas is when we eat chocolate.

Christmas is special because I get presents. Christmas is a time to visit family. I love Christmas because I like the Christmas dinner.

By Marie

Computers and the internet

I can send emails to my friends. I can go on Facebook and Twitter. I can play music. I can buy tickets on the internet and shop online. I can use the RTÉ player if I miss a programme. I can book holidays. Disadvantages of using computers and the internet are that you can contact the wrong people on the internet. You can be bullied. This is called cyber-bullying. You can get emails you don't want. You could lose your information.

The computer can get a virus. If there is a power cut you can't use your computer.

*By Brendan, Cíara, Jíll, Marie, Máiréad,
Martina, Níamh, Paul, Seán & Shauna*

Anniversary present

On 7th April 2008, I got up to go to work as normal, but it turned out to be anything but normal. My wife was due a baby in two weeks. It was our wedding anniversary. She said she had a pain so we headed for the doctor in Kilkee. There was no one there so we headed for Limerick but only made it to Banmore outside Kilkee.

In the next few minutes, Molly was on the floor. Thank God the doctor, midwife and ambulance arrived.

Now, six years later, she has lost her two front teeth and is waiting for the Tooth Fairy tonight.

By Lawrence

Learning something new as a five year old

I'm standing still on the back lane and I can see it at my side. I know it was there before but now I want to know what it is. Sometimes I'm scared as it appears at different times and in different places, in front of me or at my side. Now it's on my, let's see, I write with this hand and that's my right side so it's on my left. I tried running away from it but it is still there. I think it's behind me but when I turn around it's gone, even if I do it quickly. I tried jumping over it, no good, it's still there.

It's really quiet out here with a soft breeze coming off the height. Never did know why it was called that! I have to ask someone, but who? No, can't ask him. He'll only make fun of me. He's a know-all and will keep teasing me.

I walk up the lane. Maybe I'll ask Mammy or Daddy. They know loads. Anyone else might think I'm stupid. I walk around by O'Shea's. Wow! Now it's gone, so where did it go? I walk home trying to get my words right. What will I say?

OK! No one about. I go in the kitchen door and just stand there. Daddy is in his usual chair. He must be on the eight to four shift. I can't remember what Mammy is doing but she's there. I say, "Daddy, can I ask you something?" "Ask away." So I do and Mammy throws her eyes up to the ceiling. Not a good sign. Daddy says, "Show me." We go out to the back and I show him. He laughs. Oh no!

Then he says, "It's your shadow." "My what?!" I say.

Then he explains what my shadow is, how the sun works and I now know something new and it's great.

It's not scary any more. I discover everything has shadows. I wonder if Danny knows this; better not say anything. I'll wait and see. I hate when he teases me, such a know-all.

I could tell someone else what I know. That's what I'll do. Because then they won't be scared like I was and I'll tell them it's a new friend.

By Rose

Flight tracker

When I was doing my computer course I discovered a website called www.flightradar24.com. It is for people interested in aircraft.

The site can tell you about aircraft size, make and type. You can also trace flights going on various journeys around the world. This can be very useful if family members are flying away as you can trace the flight to their destination.

By Tommy

My nephew

I have a little nephew and his name is Max. He is 3 years old and full of mischief. He loves being outside driving his little tractor and trailer. He likes to carry stones in the trailer. He also loves to look at the neighbours' horses. He even likes to go to the bog with his granddad. He goes to playschool for a couple of days a week. He has a small brother who is 7 months old and his name is Cody.

He calls me Tina.

By Martina

My first game

I started to play my first video game when I was 10 or 11. I saw my big brother playing a cool game but I was not allowed to play it because the game was for over 18s. I liked watching my brother playing the game so much that one night I sneaked downstairs to play the game when they were all asleep in bed. I was scared when I was playing it, and what made it more scary was that I was afraid of getting caught by my mam and dad. This game was the most terrifying game I have ever played on my own. In the game, I was a man called Chris Redfield. The music at the start of the game was so creepy and scary. In spite of this, I played on for 3 hours. This went on for a good few nights. I was hooked! I became obsessed with trying to solve the codes and riddles. All my waking hours and some sleeping hours too were spent trying to decipher the most difficult code. I spent 6 months in my French class trying to solve the code. At last I had it all figured out. I was so proud of myself the first time I played a game from start to finish all on my own.

By Ian

My new home

My new home is near SuperValu in Ennistymon. It is a small house with four rooms and a hallway, with a shed and a yard at the back of the house. It is a nice house with a great shower, teak doors and lino floors. There are a few things needed in the house and I will get them over time.

I never lived in a town before I moved to Ennistymon. I used to live on a farm in the country.

I like to go out on Friday and Saturday nights. I walk into town and enjoy the Irish music in the pub.

By John

The ballroom of romance

Let me take you by the hand, back some fifty odd years, to the era of the so called, ballrooms of romance. Ballrooms they weren't and romance, well you can judge for yourself. The build up to the country dances was hectic and secret. Secret that is from the parents' watchful eye. Too much flesh on show would require the wearing of a cardigan and any sign of cosmetics would earn a good scrub with carbolic soap, which we all know stank from high heaven. Never the less, redden our lips we did, by sucking on the red cover of *The Messenger*. Many a cardigan was ruined by being pushed into a hole in the wall at the back of the house. Big hairstyles were in vogue, which required lots of backcombing, and then lacquered to the consistency of barbed wire. Lines were drawn down the backs of legs to give the impression that we were wearing stockings. Last, but certainly not least, were the stiletto heel shoes, our secret weapon, which when placed on an instep would cause immense pain to the recipient.

Why we went to all this trouble is now a mystery to me, as our only means of transport was a push bike, leaving us open to the elements and necessitating repair work in front of a cracked dirty

mirror in the smelly cloak room. As it cost six pence to hang our coats in the cloak room, we left them on our bikes.

Dancing was due to start at nine and to give them their due most bands started playing on time, but there would be no one dancing. The girls stayed in the mineral bar, chatting. The men frequented the local pub acquiring as much courage as they could hold without falling over. Believe me when I say, that the mixture of Guinness, cheap aftershave, and mouth spray giving off the stink of stale cabbage was to be avoided at all costs.

In they'd come, backs ramrod straight with their well Brylcreemed heads held high. I have a feeling that if they bent over, they'd spill. They would look around as if to say, "Well we're here now girls. Come and get us." Like hell we would! We would size them up to see who was likely to stink or slobber all over you, and most importantly who was wearing rubber soled shoes, which every girl knew stuck to the floor like glue, all of which had to be avoided at all costs. When the dancing got started, the caretaker would shake Lux soapflakes on the floor in the vain hope of making it slippery.

For some reason, known only to them, the men always advanced en masse, requiring us to keep a wary eye out for any unwanted invitation to dance. I use the term 'invitation' lightly, the words 'please' and 'thank you' were not in their vocabulary.

Leering at you with a dirty big grin plastered across his face he'd mutter, "Dance?" You would reply a quick "No."

"Why didn't you bring your knitting so?"

"I did. My friend has gone to get it for me."

Another request was, "Are you dancing?" – reply, "No, I'm holding down a loose floorboard."

Worst of all was, "Lend us your frame for a shuffle," which generally earned not a reply, but a well-placed stiletto heel on the

instep of the offender, twisting said heel, so putting all thoughts of dancing or romance out of his head for the rest of the night.

Once, I had the misfortune to accept the offer of a mineral because I was thirsty, but I swear to God I had only taken one sip when your man ordered me to get my coat. My expression must have told him what my answer was.

"Get your coat. It's cold outside," he said, trying to pull me out of my chair. His arms suddenly seemed to multiply and resemble an octopus on speed. "Give over. You must be drunker than you look," I replied, trying to defuse the situation.

He plonked down beside me and in what he may have thought was a whisper, but everyone in the room heard him, he had the brass neck to inform me that he had bought me a mineral, six pence at the time.

Slowly I stood up, much to his delight, which suddenly changed, when the said mineral was poured over him and a well-aimed bottle caused a satisfactory lump on the top of his head.

For me, the most enjoyable part of the entertainment was the inevitable bouts of fisticuffs outside when the dance was over. On one occasion, the local sergeant, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, came in contact with a fist meant for another. Down he went like a felled tree, giving the perpetrator time to scarper.

If what I have described to you has not convinced you that romance was not in the air, maybe the thought of running the gauntlet of the local P.P. chasing round after courting couples with the dedication matched only by a member of the S.A.S. will.

Once, he had the misfortune to ask me if I had seen such a couple who had given him the slip. I being me, told him that I had and that they had gone down the side of one of the pubs, warning him that he'd find the gate locked. "I'll climb it, never fear," he shouted as he rushed up the village as fast as he could on his fat little legs, his coat flapping out behind him. Of course I

had forgotten to mention that slurry was stored on the other side of the gate, but the roar when he landed in it was most satisfying.

The young people today have their discos and will form their own memories, whether they will be better than mine, who knows, only time will tell.

By Margaret

Irish landmarks

Shannon Airport is in Shannon, Co. Clare. You can go to the airport by bus or car or taxi. You can park your car in the car park while you are gone. You can buy duty free items while you wait for your flights.

You can have a drink or snack. You can catch a flight and go on your holidays. You can visit Poland or the U.S.A. and France or England.

It was the first airport in the west of Ireland opened in 1942. It has lots of flights to the U.S.A. every summer. It is Europe's most western airport.

There are lots of people who work there. It is open 24 hours, 365 days a year. The new terminal opened in 2000. In 1947 the first duty free shop opened in Shannon. It was the first in the world.

By Ciara

Skippy

We have a dog and his name is Skippy. He is a Jack Russell and he came to us when he was six weeks old. When he was four months old Fr. Conor blessed him. He would tear anything; for example, plastic bags, newspapers, shoes, slippers and soft toys if he got a chance. He drinks tea four times a day and he likes

Marietta biscuits in the evening. He was two years old on November 3rd and he got loads of presents.

Visitors are well examined before they are let in. The only people that Skippy lets in are Pauline, Murt and Dr. O'Dea. When any of my siblings come home, it would take Skippy a while to get used to them. When my brother brings Skippy out for his walk, Willy the Wagtail goes with them as well. Skippy is disgusted with Willy. He does not like being accompanied by a bird with feathers. If it was a two legged bird without feathers, he would have no problem however.

When any of the medical team used to call to my late mother, they were all great friends with Skippy. Dr. O'Dea was a great friend of my mother's and an excellent doctor.

By Catherine

The Clare Museum

We explored the Clare Museum today. We looked at ancient artefacts. There were stone crosses in the museum. They came from graveyards.

We liked the open fireplace. It brought back good memories for some people. We liked the fork. We liked the fireplace. We liked the well.

Some people liked the banner. County Clare is called The Banner County. We took photographs. We all had fun.

*By Brendan, Cíara, Jíll, Marie, Máiréad,
Martina, Níamh, Paul, Seán & Shauna*

Spring is in the air

Awake! Awake! Spring is here!
New life suddenly appears,
In the fields and the hedgerows parents are busy celebrating the
joy of new life.

You see lots of people with fishing rods, along the bank of the
river.
Some people catch small fish, others catch big ones and others
catch nothing at all.

Before you know it April has arrived.
Buds on the trees burst into leaf.
Golden daffodils on a carpet of green,
Gently windswept are a joy to be seen.
The clocks go forward, which means the days get longer.
Lambs are born and bring us great joy,
They run and jump as gravity they defy.
Birds building nests and setting up home
Singing and chirping, never leaving us alone.

Spring brings new life to the world around us,
A new generation is born each year,
Which fills us with joy and hope for the future,
Ensuring the world goes on, without fear.

By Denis

The West Clare Railway

When I was a young lad, to make a bit of pocket money for
ourselves, we used to meet the trains and buses from Limerick in
Kilkee.

We asked the passengers if we could carry their suitcases to
various hotels and guesthouses. The hotels were The Hydro, The
Atlantic, The Victoria, The Royal Marine, The Thomond, The West

End and The Esplanade. The guesthouses included The Kincora, Hickeys and The Westcliff.

You might get sixpence or a bob for taking a case. They were better times.

By Senan

Our names are Krystyna and Slawek

Our names are Krystyna and Slawek. We come from Poland. It is a country in central Europe. The capital city is Warsaw. We speak Polish. In Poland we don't have the euro, we have zloty. Our special days are: 9th May (Liberation Day, after World War II) and 22nd July.

Polish people are friendly. The country has many tourist attractions, but it is not always cheap to visit. It depends on the season. The weather is not too hot in summer, but winter is cold. Our special foods are bigos and dumplings.

By Krystyna and Slawek

My name is Aicha

My name is Aicha. I come from Morocco. The capital city is Rabat. We speak Arabic and French. In Morocco we don't have the euro, we have dirham. Ramadan is a special month. My city is Agadir. It's a very beautiful place. I miss the food from my country, especially couscous.

By Aicha

My friend Alina

My friend Alina is 38 years old. She lives in Lithuania in a town called Panevezys. Alina works as a music teacher.

Alina has two children - a son called Beras and a daughter, Karolina. Beras is 18 and he's studying engineering at college. Karolina is 7 years old. She's in primary school. Karolina really loves painting and drawing.

Alina has short brown hair and blue eyes. She's intelligent and funny, but sometimes she's a bit sad too. She loves music, dancing and playing the piano. She has a very beautiful voice. I love listening to her. She likes reading books and magazines. She has very good computer skills.

I like her because she is always there when I need her.

By Vaida

Things on my mind

Well, there is always something on my mind. It has a lot to do with my weight. It is thanks to some people the way I am today. When I was younger I was called a lot of bad names. I was called fat, ugly and other hurtful names too.

There were times I did not want to go out at all, and I just stayed in my bedroom until dark. When the kids had gone in, then I would go outside.

All this has got stuck in my mind and I think I am fat all the time. This makes me feel very down in myself. Family and friends say I am thin, but I feel they are only saying this to make me happy, because I feel like a whale. Will I ever be happy the way I am?

Another big thing on my mind is when my little girl, was taken off me. When she was born someone said bad things about me and my daughter was in care for 3 long years. All this time my husband

and I fought for her to come home. It was very hard but we kept on fighting until we got our little one home. People saying bad things makes lots of trouble. I always look out for my two kids in case they are getting bullied. Because it happened to me, I know how hurtful it can be.

When I was younger I couldn't tell my mam or dad all the hurtful names that were upsetting me, and they kept going over and over in my mind. Now I am watching out for my kids, and they can tell me what they are feeling.

Hopefully, things are looking up for me now. I went to arrange counselling a while ago to talk to someone about all the things troubling me. This took a lot of guts, and I was happy I was able to do this by myself.

I hope, when they get back to me, the counselling will do me the world of good and help me to get on with the rest of my life, with a smile on my face, and prove them all wrong. Watch this space.

By Imelda

Lithuania

Lithuania is the country where I was born. For me it is the most beautiful place in the world. There aren't many mountains, deserts or waterfalls in Lithuania but I think it is not just them that make a country beautiful. The nature and landscape is very nice in Lithuania and there are still a lot of wild places. Some people may see only boring fields and hills, forests and nothing else but if you want, you can see the beauty even in these things.

If you go for a walk in the forest or stay for some time by a lake or a river, listening to the sounds all around you, you can rest and get back the lost energy. I think you will like being there, taking a breath of fresh air.

By Vladas

Worclaw

I come from Worclaw in Poland. Worclaw is the capital of Lower Silesia. Worclaw is a really beautiful city. You can find a lot of monuments, old churches and museums. There are over 200 places you can visit. In my opinion, it is a most amazing city. Worclaw is a very old city on the banks of the Odra River. Everybody should visit it. I really recommend Ostrow Tumski and Gain Square. You can meet a lot of interesting people.

It is most colourful in spring, but you can visit it when you want. You might like to visit it in winter when we have lots of snow. This town never sleeps. Many restaurants and shops are open late. If you are interested in history, Worclaw is one city you must visit.

By Ewa

My sister

I have four sisters, but Khadija is very close to me. She is older than me and is always ready to listen, give advice and help. In fact, she is my best friend. She is very beautiful, friendly, sociable, confident and much more fashionable than me!

I love her because she is also really honest, sincere and very generous. She knows me better than I know myself and loves me and accepts me for what I am. We have no secrets from each other. When I am bored or fed up with life she talks to me and is always very positive. We share all happiness and sadness together. Finally, I can proudly say that she is the 'hero' of my life.

By Latifa

From Poland to Ireland

I am Gabriela and I'm from Poland. Poland is a country in Central Europe. There is a population of 36 million. Poland borders with seven countries. On the west it borders with Germany; on the

south with the Czech Republic and Slovakia; on the east with Ukraine and Belarus; on the north with Lithuania and Russia. The capital of Poland is Warsaw. Warsaw is a city in central Poland.

In Poland we have mountains. There are the Bieszczady mountains on the south-east of Poland, Tatry on the south and Sudety on the south-west. The highest mountain is Rysy in Tatry.

There are many lakes in the north country, called Pojezierze Mazurskie and Pojezierze Pomorskie. In the north country, Poland borders the Baltic Sea. The most popular cities on the sea are Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot. The most popular town in the mountains is Zakopane.

I live in Staszow. This is a small town in the south-west, in the area called Kielce. In this region there are mountains called Swietokrzyskie. The most popular place is a cove called Rag and the most popular tree is called Dab Bartek. Staszow has a population of 18,000. Poland is a great country for a holiday.

By Gabriela

A happy day

One day when I was at home, I got a phone call from my husband. That day was a happy day for me. That was the day he told me I got my visa. I could not believe it. I jumped with joy. I hugged my mom. We were so excited.

By Roubatou

Life in Poland

I'm from Poland. My country is very beautiful but bad for people. I worked 30 years and I earned €250 per month. That was terrible.

Now, I sometimes visit my brother and my mother. They live in Walbrzych. This is a nice city. There are many restaurants,

cinemas, shops and hotels. There isn't a river near that city but there is a little lake. Near to there are some mountains.

I now live in Clare and I sometimes dream about the lakes and the mountains of Poland.

By Teresa

Computer class

I liked computer class. It started on the 17th of January and continued until the 2nd of March 2014. There were five people in the class. The class was from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. once a week. Caroline was the teacher.

I learnt how to switch on the computer and turn it off. I learnt how to type my name and address. The computer class was for 7 weeks. The classroom had lots of computers and chairs.

By Kieran

I am a Polish man

I'm Lukasz and I'm a Polish man. Poland is beautiful. I love my native country. I live in a small village in the south-east of Poland near Ukraine. The nearest biggest town is Rzeszow. The capital of Poland is Warsaw. It is a big town. One million people live there.

Poland is a country in Central Europe. There is a population of 36 million. On the west it borders Germany. On the south it borders with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. On the east it borders with Ukraine and Belarus. On the north-east it borders with Lithuania and Russia.

In Poland we have mountains. There are mountains in the south of Poland. The longest river is the Vistula. The highest mountain is Tatry (Kupat). We have many lakes and forests. Poland has a long history. Poland became Christian in 966. The first king was

Boleslaw Chrobry. Poland is still a Catholic country. Now we celebrate that a Polish pope has become a saint.

By Lukasz

Leonardo da Vinci

I admire Leonardo da Vinci and how he was interested in lots of things like biology and mechanics. He had small drawings of flying machines and of the human body.

I like how he was full of ideas and inventions. I admire his artistic skills. His paintings are beautiful, colourful and interesting. The most famous is his *Mona Lisa*. He also painted *The Last Supper*. Only 15 of his drawings survive today.

His work was so good that people know him today. He is my hero.

By Luba

My friend

My friend's name is Ewelina. She is thirty and she is Polish. She lives in Krakow in Poland. She has long brown hair and brown eyes. She is funny and friendly. Because she is living in Poland and I am living here, she calls me at least once or twice a week. It is very important for me to speak with her because she is my only friend in Poland. She keeps me in touch with home.

She likes reading and cooking. She is also very artistic and loves to make beautiful things, for example, at Easter time she makes Easter bunnies and Easter eggs out of paper.

She has two daughters and I really like them too as they are such good girls. Ewelina doesn't work because her oldest daughter is sick and she cares for her full time.

We were born in the same year and she is only two weeks older than me. I have known her all my life and she is my 'hero' and closest friend.

By Agnieszka

My name is Tina

My name is Tina. I come from Nigeria. We speak Edo and English. In Nigeria we don't have the euro, we have naira. The weather in my country is very hot. We go to the beach every day. The people are friendly.

I came to Europe in 1997 and I lived in France for six years. In 2002, I came to Ireland and got married to Michael. We have three children. I like Ireland. I like the way they respect women in this country.

By Tina

My mother

Everyone in the world has a special person who occupies an essential place in their life. In my life this person is my mother. She is my support, my best friend. Her name is Cvijeta, which in translation from Bosnian means 'flower'. She has brown hair and remarkable deep blue eyes, the colour of the sky on a warm July day.

She has spent her whole life in the countryside, working hard on our family farm. She gave birth to my three sisters and me. When I was a child she struggled daily to keep us fed and give us what we needed. She spent her time worrying about us. It's only now that I have my own children, that I understand how hard she worked. My father worked away from home and spent very little time with us, so she was both father and mother to us children. In very difficult times, when our country was at war and when it was very hard to get food, our mother picked wild herbs, berries and

mushrooms and sold them in town to obtain money to buy basic groceries. She managed to create tasty meals for me and my sisters from very little food. I remember that she always ate last and often went hungry for us. At night she would tell us wonderful stories that she knew, to turn our attention away from the horrors of the war that was all around us. Many nights she spent awake next to us when we were sick. My mother rarely had time for herself but she never complained.

Her example has taught me to be brave and worthy, to help others and to always speak the truth. When I was leaving my country, with two young children in my arms, and going for the first time off into the unknown, it was my mother who encouraged me and gave me the strength for the future. Because of all this my mother is my 'hero', my 'good angel' and the person I love without limits.

By Bozica

My name is Besa

My name is Besa. I am from Kosovo. The capital city is Pristina. We speak Albanian and English. In Kosovo we have the euro. Ramadan is a special month. We can't eat or drink during the day.

By Besa

Spring in me

How do I know that it is spring outside? The weather is getting better. The sun is shining longer, brighter and warmer. Birds are singing more and louder. The grass is getting greener.

How do I know that spring is in me? I feel happier. I am taken with an indescribable feeling that I want to smile all the time and hug the whole world. Sunbeams increase my energy. I want to sing and shout so everyone around me knows – changes are starting.

Nature is calling me outside into the garden. I want to plant flowers and look at what plants have survived the winter. Though I usually do housework, the sunlight shining through the house shows up dust and cobwebs and I have time and energy for extra spring cleaning: washing, sorting, dusting, wiping, mopping, polishing and scrubbing. I speed around the house like a tornado.

But it's not just the house that needs spring cleaning. My body needs it as well. I stretch my back, lift my head and look at myself in the mirror. I open the wardrobe and try on the clothes to find out how much extra 'resources' I've accumulated during the winter. Yes, it's time for some self-tuning: diet, fitness, gym and spa.

That is how spring feels to me both outside and inside.

By Lienite

My first time in Ireland

I still remember that first day I came to Ireland. It was winter. The day I was leaving Lithuania it was cold and we had snow. I remember I had little flutters in my stomach all day. I was so excited! I was excited to see my husband who had been living here about a year already; but also excited to see this country.

At the airport, when I stepped outside the gates the first thing I noticed was the smell. Maybe it'll sound crazy but I could smell the air. It smelled warm, like sometimes you can smell spring coming. Everything seemed so different and new to me. The houses for example - it was so strange to see so many houses looking the same. In Lithuania every house is different, unique.

And people - people were smiling and asking me how I felt!!! It seemed funny, a stranger asking how I felt. They seemed more open and easy going than in my country, where people are closed and a little standoffish. We don't ask each other, "How are

you?" or we do not offer to help a stranger. Well, not often anyway. Of course there are exceptions!

On my second day in Ireland, we visited Bunratty Castle and historic village where I was introduced to Irish history. We visited a pub. It was fun! I liked live Irish music. I tasted this dark beer. Oh my God!!! It tasted awful! And the food! For the first few days, I didn't know what to eat. Everything tasted different and strange. I decided that people in Ireland must love chocolate. All cookies, cakes, fillings, toppings seemed to be made from chocolate!

And so I am here six years later. I think that I am getting used to the weather, this constant rain. I'm used to people asking me how I am. I've found food that I like. I'm even starting to like chocolate on everything! And when I think about all of this – I realise I like this green country.

By Aiste

All about me

Now I live in Ennis with my husband and my daughter. Before that I lived in Sudan with my mother, father, brother and sister. I am a student but I also work in the home. My husband worked in the computer shop but he doesn't work there now. My daughter goes to the crèche and after crèche she plays at home.

My school is the Adult Education Centre. I like to go to school every day at 9 o'clock in the morning. I hope in the future to learn more. It is a very good school. It gives lots of opportunities for everyone to take new courses and go forward in life. My teacher's name is Claire. She is brilliant. She always helps the students to concentrate on their studies and make them feel better.

By Sayeda

Cattle farming

I am a thirty one year old male student attending CABES. I am a carpenter by trade and I also farm part-time on our family farm with my father. Our farm is a dairy and beef farm. We have seven different types of cattle on our farm. Some are beef cattle and some are dairy cows. The beef cattle are Hereford, Aberdeen, Angus, Simmental and Limousin. We keep these cattle for a year after they are born before we send them to the mart. We milk our dairy cows twice a day. We give them nuts and grass to help them produce milk. The breeds of dairy cows we have are British Friesian and Holstein Friesian.

We feed the calves with milk from the cows. There are three types of milk and they are colostrum, whole milk and milk replacer. Colostrum is vital for the young calf but you must feed it within one hour of birth as the rate of absorption through the calf gut declines rapidly after birth. Resistance to disease in the form of antibodies is carried in the calf's blood. These antibodies are only transferred from the cow to the calf through the colostrum. Calves should be fed two litres of colostrum at least twice a day for the first four days. Whole milk is the natural follow on liquid diet for calves after the colostrum feeding. Some farmers feed the calves milk replacer rather than whole milk because milk replacer is cheaper. When calves are born they have three stomachs. As they grow and develop, the three stomachs become four.

There are various types of funding available to farmers. One scheme is called the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS). It is drawn up by a planner and the work is spread over five years. The farmer has to work to deadlines but the work is phased. If the farmer fails to meet his deadlines, he will be fined. The scheme is paid by the EU and the Irish Government.

When a farmer is involved in the REPS, there are some things he is not allowed to do. For example, he cannot remove walls or woodlands as this would be harmful to the environment. He must upgrade the farm, ensure proper care of water against pollution and follow the guidelines about fertilizers, etc. A scheme inspector comes to check that the work is done as it should be.

The farmer can make a lot of money from the scheme as he benefits in the form of guaranteed payments.

Here is a little information about the different types of cattle on my family farm.

Dairy Cattle

- British Friesian are black and white in colour.
- Holstein Friesian are also black and white and come from Jutland.
- Jersey cows come from South West England and are red in colour.

Beef Cattle

Beef breeds are suckler cows and this means that they keep their calves with them for at least six months.

- Hereford come from England and are black and red in colour.
- Aberdeen Angus come from the North of Scotland and are black in colour.
- Simmental are from Switzerland and can be either brown or beige.
- Limousin are from West France and are black or red in colour.

By Dermot

Food, glorious food

In the 1950s and 60s, providing food for people and animals on the farm was much different to nowadays. People were mostly self-sufficient and they grew all the crops they needed to feed themselves, their animals and their poultry. I remember in our house the only items of food which my mother bought regularly in the local shop were tea, sugar and flour.

Like many people, we had plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. We had a kitchen-garden near our house. My father dug and

tilled this garden by hand early every year. He planted early potatoes, cabbage, carrots, parsnips and onions. We also had an orchard leading up to the kitchen garden which grew cooking and eating apples. We also had plum trees, gooseberry bushes and rhubarb.

In early April, my father ploughed a section of land on the farm with horse and plough and prepared the ground for various crops. He was a great gardener and put his heart and soul into his work. He opened the drills and we, the children, helped to spread the farmyard manure and potato seeds. We also helped to sow cabbage plants, carrot and parsnip seeds by hand. My father used a horse-drawn seed machine to sow turnips and mangolds. Later in the year we pulped the mangolds by hand in the pulper, mixed them with a meal called 'pollard' and fed them to the animals. Mention of this meal reminds me that I once asked an elderly man if he had ever heard of pollard. Judging by his reply, he didn't seem to have happy memories of it... "Indeed I heard of pollard," he replied, "It choked a fine pig on us one time."

The five pigs we kept at home each year were fed with crops from the garden including chopped-up potatoes, turnips and cabbage. They also loved apples. I remember seeing my neighbour's pig shaking an apple tree to ensure he had a constant supply of fruit to eat. We kept two of the pigs 'for the barrel' and sold the other three, which helped to finance the whole operation.

My mother bought day-old chicks, which I collected from the local post office. These were fed with chick crumb at first and later with stirabout: a mixture of potatoes, other vegetables and parata, all cooked over the open fire. When these were fully grown, we had delicious roast chicken, vegetables and gravy for Sunday dinner with stewed rhubarb or apple tart for dessert. The hens supplied eggs for the household.

Work practices and life on the farm have changed a lot since my youth. Nowadays, I buy very young calves in March which I feed on replacement milk and nuts bought in the local co-op. I feed them in the yard until May, after which they go out into the fields.

Silage is the main food for the animals. We cut it in the summer months after it has been fertilised with slurry from the farmyard and some artificial manure. I feed the young animals for eighteen months and then sell them in the local mart.

We buy all our food in the local shop or supermarket. Our kitchen garden is long gone and so is our orchard. Now the calves love to graze there as the grass seems sweeter than elsewhere. Caring for them there brings me back fond memories of the wonders of home grown fruit and vegetables.

By Stephen

Krakow

My favourite city in my country is Krakow. Krakow is a big city in the south of Poland. It is not the capital city now, but it was in the past.

Krakow is very beautiful and very old. There are many monuments in Krakow. There is a big castle called Wawel. It is situated on a hill near the Wiha river. Below the castle, there is the Dragon's Cave and a statue of a dragon. Krakow is a favourite city for the tourist.

By Beata

My hospital stay

It was Friday at lunchtime when some chips got stuck in my throat. It was sore and I went Shannon Doc. He sent me to the hospital. I got there at 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon. I was waiting for 6 hours until 9 o'clock that night. They had taken an X-ray to see what was wrong. The X-ray was OK, so the doctor told me to take lots of drinks to help push the chips down. So I drank Coca-Cola, water and some coffee to help. Then I had to wait for another hour and a half until I got a trolley. After a while, I was able to breathe better and the pain was easing. At 2 o'clock in the

morning, I finally got a bed on the second floor. It was quiet but I couldn't sleep because of all of the coffee and Coca-Cola I had drunk!

On Sunday at 9:30 a.m., there were two doctors looking after me and I wasn't allowed to eat or drink until Monday evening. They put a tube down my throat to make sure that there was nothing stuck there. After this, I slept for a few hours but they said I could go home that evening because everything was all right. I had not eaten for 48 hours. This was a long time.

My brother, Max, was in Germany with my sister at that time and he called the hospital and asked for me. When I spoke to him he asked why I was in hospital. I said to him that Shannon Doc had sent me. My friend, who is a taxi driver, called every day to check on me and then he collected me on Monday evening and brought me back home. I was very happy to be home where I could have a good sleep.

I had to relax for about two weeks after the hospital and I had to take some tablets for eight weeks. I am very happy now that I am feeling better and I hope that I never have to go to hospital again.

By Suzanne

The human effect on wild birds

There are some birds which are becoming scarce in the countryside. The one that is less and less apparent is the grouse on the mountain. It was very common about thirty years ago to hear it crowing and see them fly while we were cutting the turf. Éanna Ní Lamhna on the *Mooney Show* described them and their call well; "Go back, go back, go back!" I think it was the cock who called like this when he landed after flying. She said it was the planting of trees that did it - banished them. There is a forest now where we used to cut the turf.

The next one that I miss a lot is the woodcock during the winter. He arrives from Scandinavia about the first of November and goes back again about March. But two winters ago I saw only one, and this past winter none at all. Before that, they were a common sight around where I am. They would rise from a dyke or bushes, making a couple of loud flaps of their wings. They were like big brown snipes with the same kind of long beaks. They were mainly silent though, and the snipe is not. The snipe is always flapping his wings and calling as he flies. According to Éanna, they were being shot as game birds in France on their way back and forth. They are banned from shooting them now. I wonder if it is too late.

While listening to the programme about birds, I also heard about strange birds that were blown onto our shores last year. I noticed several pairs of such birds all over the countryside. They used to perch on the sides of rushes and stems in the open fields. That is something I hadn't noticed with birds before. They were grey birds, bigger than the wagtail but shaped like him. When they flew, there were white feathers under their wings. I watched a wildlife series and there were birds on the programme that were just like them. It was set in the marshes of Iraq. The birds were called reed warblers and they disappeared from there, owing to the draining of the marshes. But now they are bringing them back, simply by blocking the trenches.

By Joseph

Kai

Kai is my eight week old grandson. How wonderful it is to welcome a new member to the family. When I think of him, I think of all the years he has ahead of him - all the years of childhood, so much fun and so many new things to explore; the teenage years and so on; all the friends he will meet and make along the way. There will be the odd disappointment along the way too, but that is all part of life. Will he be a very good student? I don't know. It doesn't matter really once he is happy and content with his life and makes the most of it.

The younger people of today have a broader range of social activities, going to sports, music and so on. Parents now have broken away from the tradition of naming the child after a family member. This is no harm at all, as there can be many people in the same family with the same name. Between post going to the wrong house and mixed up stories, it can be laughable at times.

I hope he travels and takes a good interest in the world around him. I hope he likes the outdoors and nature.

He is half Polish and my other grandson is half English. It is great to see other nationalities coming here and settling. We live in such a small island that we are in danger of marrying our own relations eventually. If we go back far enough many of us are related.

I also hope I will be around for a while yet to enjoy them and see them grow into two young men.

By Mary

My first concert

It was a lovely day in the middle of June. *The Script* were playing in the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. My best friend, Emily, and I went to the concert. Emily got me listening to *The Script* when I was sixteen but I had never liked their songs before that.

We got a lift from Kilrush to Limerick and then we got the train to Limerick Junction in Tipperary. We got collected there and we travelled the rest of the way by car.

There were a lot of people in the Aviva Stadium and the atmosphere was exciting. The concert started at 7:30 p.m. with *Tinie Tempah* on stage first. Everyone was shouting with joy and excitement. There were loads of people wearing T-shirts with pictures of *The Script* on the front.

There was an alcohol bar inside and there were a lot of people falling around after having too much to drink. The crowd went

wild when *The Script* came on and sang 'The man who can't be moved'.

When the concert ended we got the Luas back to the house where we were staying. This was the best night of my life!

By Shauna

My new kitchen

I just got my kitchen done in my flat. Gerard, the builder, took out the old presses and put in some lovely new ones. They are painted cream and the worktop is a shiny black colour. The sink is also new, a stainless steel one. I kept the black electric cooker because it fits nicely with the rest of the kitchen.

There is a table and three chairs by the window so I can have my dinner and look out into the garden. My cat, Bibi, likes to stay in the garden and catch birds, so I can watch her and stop her killing the robins and sparrows. I love my new kitchen. It's all shiny and clean.

By Breda

Kilkee after the storm

Last Saturday I went to Kilkee with a friend, the first time since the big storm in February. I felt very upset to see the strand wall had all fallen in and there were big holes in the road. It's all broken so cars can't go that way at all. The sand has gone from the beach and the wall is all broken with big holes in it. It will take a very long time to repair all this. The paving slabs have gone from the strand walk and the seats where you could sit in the summer are all broken up. We went to the Diamond Rocks Café for tea and buns. The coffee shop is really nice but the wall all around the car park is destroyed.

Afterwards, we went to Lahinch for a drive. It was very bad there too. The sea had done a lot of damage and two big windows were boarded up at the pub where the water had crashed through them. It must have been very frightening to be there that night.

It had been very bad that day. I was at work when the storm came, but we were taken home in the car as I couldn't walk with the wind and the rain. I have never seen a storm like it before in my lifetime, and I am over 60 years old.

By Christina

My woodwork class

I am going to a woodwork class in the Adult Education Centre on Friday at 10 o'clock every week. We are making wooden maps of Ireland. We cut them out using a bandsaw. I can't use it on my own so my tutor helps me. The bandsaw is very dangerous so you have to use a pair of safety glasses every time you use it.

We will also be painting and varnishing old furniture that people are bringing in. We already have old chairs which we are going to sand down and varnish. We are going to make clocks as well and we are planning to break down old pallets for fire wood. We might be able to raise money for charity or a trip away.

By John

My name is Souad

My name is Souad. I am from Morocco. I came to Ireland 7 years ago. I go to school to learn English. I am happy here but I always miss my family in Morocco.

By Souad

My trip to Lourdes

I went to Lourdes last year with my brother, Jimmy. We went from Shannon Airport. I didn't mind the flight because I like flying.

It was nice weather when we got there, not too hot or too cold, just how I like it.

We went to Mass with lots of other people. Some of the people were sick and in wheelchairs. Then I went into the pool of holy water with Jimmy. I felt better after that.

It was nice to go to Lourdes and we are going to go again this year.

By Joe

The haunted house

When I was younger, my friends and I always used to go to a house that was down the road from where we lived. People used to always warn us to stay out of there but we didn't listen as we had no idea what was wrong with the house.

One night we all told our parents that we were going to stay at our friend's house, but we were actually going to stay in the house. We decided to liven up the place so we played a game on the Ouija board. We sat around thinking nothing was going to happen but that's when everything changed! Immediately, we regretted playing this dangerous game. My friends, Kate and Mary, were really frightened as the lights started to flicker on and off. Mary screamed as she thought she saw what seemed to be a woman with long blonde hair passing the window. We ran to the window to look outside but there was no sign of this mysterious woman. When I looked at Katie she was white as a ghost and she had all these strange scratches coming out all over her body.

Straight away, we knew we had to get out of the house. But to our shock and horror, when we got to the door it was locked shut!

This really freaked us out. At that moment, we thought we were going to die. We were so scared.

Suddenly we heard someone talking outside, so we started screaming for help. We were so happy that the man outside heard us. He phoned for help and the police arrived and broke down the door. We could not wait to get home and apologise to our parents.

To this day, that house gives me the shivers when I walk past it. One thing I know for sure is that as long as we live, none of the three of us will ever set foot inside that house again. We have learned our lesson and we will listen to people again in the future!

By Cliona

My trip to hospital

I had to go to hospital last month because I got a very bad stomach pain. My sister called the doctor and he sent for an ambulance to take me to Limerick Hospital. I had to wait a long time before a doctor saw me and told me I had to stay in.

It was very busy in the hospital and the nurses were very nice but the food was awful. They did many tests and scans and the doctor came and gave me some tablets. He was very nice. I have to take a tablet every day at bed time. I stayed in hospital for two days but I feel a lot better now. I don't want to go back to hospital.

By Frances

Amazing Ireland

I remember when I came to Ireland. I was so excited. I heard that they call it "the green island" and isn't that the truth. When I went on a trip to the Cliffs of Moher, it made a big impression on me. I had never seen anything like that before. The ocean was

beautiful. The landscape is different here than in Poland. The grass here is green all year round and there are hills and hillocks everywhere. The people here are kind and friendly. That is why I live here.

By Joanna

Don't put roots down here

It all started in 1990 when myself and Graham were due to marry in August. As we didn't have a deposit to put down on a house, we put ourselves on the council list for a property. We were kind of desperate because I was pregnant with our first child, Natasha, who was due the following September.

In June, we received a letter from the council and we were offered a three bedroom house. So we called to the council office to collect the keys. To our delight the house was beautiful and set in a cul-de-sac with about fourteen other houses. It was a lovely area with two great schools nearby and plenty of shops. We were so delighted that we accepted their offer straight away and got a date in June to move in.

We were so happy in our new home and everything was going so well. We married and had Natasha. Then seven years later we had another child, Charlotte. After ten years in the house we decided to buy it instead of paying rent to the council. The house would be ours, which made great sense.

But two years after buying the house everything started to go wrong. Myself and Graham argued constantly. The girls would say that things they owned would go missing. They often felt somebody was present near them but really nobody would be there.

One day I was putting the washing on the line in the garden. It was a lovely, sunny day and I got talking to my next door neighbor, Linda. In conversation, I told her that we had bought the house. She then started to tell me about the couple who

were in the house before us and how they had left after eighteen months as they had separated. She also told me that the couple had unexplained things happening in the house, just as we had!

As time went on I often thought about this and I looked for signs of things going missing. Myself and Graham were also arguing more and more. I knew there had to be some kind of a curse on the house. Finally, we decided to move and make a fresh start for us as a family, to see if things could get better and give our relationship a better chance. For years we had talked about how we would love to move to Ireland, so this is what we decided to do. We put the house up for sale and sold it within five days.

We relocated to Ireland and have been very happy. The girls are grown up now and myself and Graham are happier than ever. I have since heard, eleven years on, that the couple who had bought the house from us have also sold and moved out as they had separated after just eighteen months.

Since then, the house has been sold four times. No one stays longer than two years. This confirms my suspicion that something was wrong. I now know that the properties in that cul-de-sac were built on old coal mines many years after the mines had closed. I believe something must have happened in the coal mine to curse the house, as it seems very odd that people who buy it never stay longer than two years and their relationships never last. Something in that house is saying, "Don't put down roots here. You don't belong here!"

By Jennifer

Haunted Ireland

The stories began when you were a small child. It might have been to keep you silent of a night when you went to bed and didn't behave or had an odd pillow fight with your brothers and sisters. But the stories were a part of you growing up in Ireland. The stories were about 'piseogs', ghosts, superstitions and bad omens. If the rat ran across your path walking down the road, it

was bad luck to keep going on your journey – that was another one.

There was this one thing that always gave me the creeps, and me, I used to pretend that nothing frightened me. But this one thing was my fear. I used to walk up to the school and would go to the Corner Shop. It was called that for as long as I can remember. Well, right beside the Corner Shop there was an old house. The door had two panes of glass with these heavy net curtains. I can still see it as plain as day. Always looking out and staring just behind the curtains, was this awful weird man, with deep black eyes, just staring at me. It terrified me. But often, I would kick the door and run away across the road just to see what would happen.

Now, looking back, I remember that I had done this all my life as a child. In the night, with the wind blowing and howling, I'd be thinking of him, staring out of the window. I would be ducking under the covers, terrified in case he came out to grab me. You see, he never came out of the house and that was abnormal. It just wasn't natural to never see him out anywhere. He was a hermit, a recluse. But, as a child, I never knew of such people.

Then one day, on the way to the Corner Shop, all hyped up, acting like the big woman, I had kicked his door and ran to the shop. But I had forgotten by the time I came back, of course. On the way down, just passing the door, it opened and he went to chase to me! Well, I ran like fire! I'll never forget it for as long as I live. The fear of God was in me for a long time afterwards.

Then I never saw him out after that, only inside the window, looking out at me as I passed. The fear never left me. That man behind the lace curtains still looks out at me to this day.

By Claire

My memories

My family home was very near to the beach. It was a lovely country house with a big garden. The garden was full of daffodils and lilies. We also had cabins near the house where we would milk the cows. I often helped with milking the cows as I enjoyed doing it.

My father was a fisherman. He had a black canoe with oars. He kept the canoes upside down on the beach. I loved to watch him row on the sea. He sometimes took me for a trip on the sea. This is a very special memory for me.

My father fished for salmon with nets. He also had lobster pots made from wire and concrete. When he caught the lobsters he would tie their claws with rubber bands. I remember one time a lobster caught my finger but he let go quick enough!

Cross beach was my favourite beach as it was near where I grew up. I swam there every day during the summer months. Sometimes, my mother and sister came with me. My mother bathed her feet by a log. The water was lovely and warm and helped to soothe her feet. I enjoyed spending time with my mother and sister but I also loved being there on my own as it made me feel very special.

Now, I like living in the town but I still have memories of my home in a very special place in the country.

By Eileen

The Dragon of Warsaw – a children's story

Long, long time ago there lived a monster in the old city of Warsaw. He lived in an old, old house in a crooked street. He looked like a dragon but he had the head of a rooster and a very long serpent's tail. He was a very terrifying monster and anyone who looked at him, turned to stone immediately.

One day, two brave children decided to get rid of the monster. The two young boys took a shiny shield from their father and went to the monster's house. The monster was hiding in the back room, getting ready to frighten the children. The boys went very quietly, up to the room in the back, with the shield held up. The monster saw his own reflection in the shiny shield. He could not believe what he saw looking back at him and, of course, he immediately turned to stone! That was the end of the monster of Warsaw!

By Waldek

My lovely grandsons

I'm the grandmother of 3 grandsons. David is 13 years old; Niko is 9 years old; and the youngest is Matthew - he is 3 years old.

David loves to play soccer. His favourite soccer player is Christian Ronaldo. He would like to be as good a football player as him. Niko loves Lego blocks and he knows how to build everything. He especially likes to make planes and cars. He likes to read books. One day he read a full book in 3 hours! Both of them like to play the X-Box and the laptop. They are very good students. They are two of the best in the class and I am very proud of them.

My grandsons love each other but, sometimes, they argue. The youngest one, Matthew, loves cars and everything that has wheels. His favourite cartoons are 'Cars' and 'Fireman Sam'. He loves dancing as well. There is lots of fun and laughter when he is dancing. All of them like sweets and chocolate. I love my grandsons, even though sometimes they make me mad.

By Elzbieta

My parents

My parents live in Poland. My mom is a housewife and my dad was a railroad man but he is retired now. He is at home now dealing with all the domestic work and looking after the garden.

My mom loves cooking very much and her dishes are delicious and all very tasty.

Dad likes sports, especially volleyball, ski-jumping and handball. My parents are still very active and they like to ride their bikes and often meet up with their friends at the weekend. Both of them like dogs and cats. They have two dogs, a Labrador and a mongrel one, and a lovely black cat.

I'd love to be at home because there is a nice family atmosphere. My parents are very kind and lovely. They are good people and I miss them very much.

By Barbara

My favourite season

My favourite season is spring. After a long and cold winter comes spring and beauty. It is the season of hope, happiness and love. Spring comes in March and ends in May. Nature comes to life at this wonderful time of the year. The ice is broken; the grass is beginning to shoot up; the trees are bursting into leaf; birds come back from warmer lands and twitter in the trees. There are the first flowers of spring – white snowdrops, dancing in the breeze. The days are getting longer and everything is brighter.

I like to walk outside to breathe the fresh air. I love spring for the warmth and beauty of nature!

By Solvita

How do I learn English?

Nowadays, it is very necessary to know a foreign language. English is spoken practically all over the world. It is spoken as the native language in Great Britain, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. A lot of people speak English in China, Japan, India, Africa and many other countries. Knowledge

of foreign languages helps us to develop friendship and understanding among people.

I study English because I want to read books by great writers. I want to communicate with people from different countries and I want to understand their cultures and traditions.

How do I learn English? First of all, I read a lot. There is always an English book on my desk. I'm trying to learn a few new words every day. I listen to songs in English and try to recognise the words. I like to watch different satellite TV programmes in English and listen to the radio. And, of course, I come to class at the Adult Education Centre.

By Vadim

I am a friend

I wonder what people think of me.
I hear all life's ups and downs.
I see the best in everyone.

I want to always be needed.
I am a friend.
I pretend to have no cares.
I touch my friend's hand.

I worry I will let people down.
I cry at sad stories.
I am a friend.

By Eileen

The end of the world, if you let it

In 2013, people were telling us that it was the end of the world and for many people it was. In 2013, my world ended. We had a lot of loss - me, my husband and the kids. My father-in-law, Laurence, suddenly passed away on St. Patrick's Day. Six weeks later my husband's uncle, Tommy, died of cancer. Then my brother-in-law, Bren, passed away from a heart attack at only 54 years of age, leaving my sister and her two grown-up children.

The icing on the cake, while this was going on was that my mother, Sarah, was diagnosed with cancer and there was nothing they could do. So we took her home to die. She passed away quietly on the 8th October, the day before her 79th birthday, while my two older sisters and myself slept on the floor. We did not hear her last breath, but for her to go in her sleep gives me immense comfort as she had gone through enough.

It was hard, but I am telling you all about my world ending just to say it doesn't have to. When something happens, big or small, you just have to go on. Keep your head up, look at the road ahead. Don't look back. There's nothing there for you. Have your sad days but don't let them take over the good days. People tell me I am a stronger person but, sometimes, I just want to roll up into a ball and forget about the world outside, but I can't. My mother would not want this. I get my strength and good looks from her so she kept me going. She had her world end many times, but she always got back up.

This was the hand I was dealt and it's up to me how to play it. Lie down and die or get up and fight. I know what I have to do. This could have been the end of my world if I had let it, but not yet. Not till I take my last breath. In the words of the singer/songwriter, Passenger – 'Life is for the living, so live it or you're better off dead!'

By Catherine

I don't have a dog

My friend, Scarlett, often leaves her Rottweiler dog with me. His name is Tyson. He's five years old. I like dogs. Tyson is very good and beautiful. I take the dog for a walk and play with a ball. He loves to swim. Usually we go to the river. I'm sorry that I don't have a dog.

By Audra

My unforgettable city

The city that ranks among the ten most beautiful cities in the world is called Prizren. It is a historical city in a small state of Kosovo, which is the youngest state in Europe. It is a charming Balkan city. Many call it "a museum in the open air". It has a population of around 180,000. The Roman town Prizren (old name Theranda) is mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geography* in the 2nd century. The name Prizren comes from old Serbian and could mean "see from far away". Well known are the dominant fortress over the city, the old stone bridge, Dokufest (international documentary and short film festival), and a tourist area with numerous cafés and restaurants.

In the centre of the city is a square with a very old fountain. The legend says that if you drink water from it you will come back again.

I'm glad I was born in this city and I highly recommend everyone to visit it at least once. There is a saying for Prizren: "Better to visit late than never."

By Abdulah

Around me

I moved to Ennis two years ago. It is a nice town and a fantastic place to live. When spring started I heard a strange whisper in my garden. To my surprise it was a hedgehog. He comes each

week. One evening, there was a rabbit running through the field. Another time, I saw a peacock. He appeared twice at my door. It is a fantastic bird. Last year, I saw a fox. I was surprised because of all the dogs in the neighbourhood.

I really like my home here. Every morning when I open my window and hear lots of bird songs, I feel like I live in a fairy tale. I like living in Ireland.

By Inga

Cliffs of Moher

The Cliffs of Moher are in County Clare. They are among the highest cliffs in Ireland. They rise 214 metres from the Atlantic Ocean. Stretching for 8km along the coast, the cliffs are one of Ireland's most famous spots.

Great rolling waves from the Atlantic Ocean crash against the base of the cliffs. The ocean below them is nearly always white with foam and froth. The rocks were formed over millions of years; the ocean has eaten away parts of the cliffs, making sea caves and arches. The cliffs are home to many seabirds that make their nests there. You can see the birds flying over the ocean and diving into it, looking for fish.

Thousands of people visit the cliffs every day. There is a special visitors' centre to help people find out more about the cliffs. There are also walls and fences to stop people going too near the edge of the cliffs. This is important, as it is a very long way down to the ocean!

I went there in May 2013. The view was breath-taking! It's definitely worth visiting, but if you are going there be sure to take your rain jacket!

By Ekaterina

New life

My name is Elzbieta. I'm from Poland. I have two adult sons. Here, I started a new life. I like life in Ireland very much because it is very different to my country. I live in Shannon. I have met a lot of nice people here. My English is not very good. It is hard to speak. About two years ago, I came to the Adult Education Centre where I'm learning English. Our teacher, Beatriz, is very nice. We all appreciate her very much and we like the lessons. I made lots of friends and I'm happy when I come to class.

By Elzbieta

I know too few words to describe it

What to write?

Maybe...

About nature that wakes up to life in the spring and now shows its most beautiful face, but...I know too few words to describe it.

Maybe...

About the beautiful landscapes, mysterious old castles, charming lakes, picturesque mountains, which I have seen in Ireland, but...I know too few words to describe it.

Maybe...

About love, which everyone desires, which everyone misses, which everyone waits for, which everyone experiences and feels differently, but without which nobody can live, but...I know too few words to describe it.

Maybe...

About the childhood and youthful years spent happily without mobile phones and computers, about family and friends who are

in Poland and I miss them, but...I know too few words to describe it.

Maybe...

About dreams which inspire us to action and are our driving force, about the hope that gives us strength to live and doesn't allow dreams to die, but...I know too few words to describe it.

Maybe...

About the small joys of everyday life - rainbows in the sky, singing birds, a smile on a stranger's face, sun rays, but...I know too few words to describe it.

That's why I don't write anything, because I know too few words to describe it all!

By Mirosława

Love letter for Di

(My partner has fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome.)

My dear love, how I wish that your health does not stand between us. As you already know, I do everything I can to help you. That does not mean that I'll do everything for you or that I'll treat you as if you were disabled. It means that I'll be by your side as long as I'm able. I want to help you with the difficulties of your day-to-day life. I'm not trying to be in charge or to take over but to join forces.

Let me be the fresh and playful air that supports you to be, and assists you to find your way. I try to empathise with your pain and your suffering, but I can't. I'm not in your skin. I'm trying to understand and to accept that things are not as we would like them to be. I can try to help you to see a way of embracing it, especially when frustration seems to take over. I'd like to walk this path with you and be there when you get tired. I'll do what I

humanly can to be with you. Forgive me if I sometimes fail. Frustration turns into anger and anger into a storm. I make mistakes, and I have flaws because I'm human.

I love you with all my heart, but I don't want to feel pity for you. I don't want to let you down.

I love you because you are a wonderful woman. I love you because you are the way you are.

I'm amazed to see you finding the strength to keep searching for ways to keep going. I'll use my best efforts to look for ways of improving our life, both as a couple and as individuals. Even if we run out of options, we'll look for alternatives until we are exhausted.

I promise that I'll always let you be you, and I'll never stop being me. If we share our best, we won't lose the essence of what we have.

Your love, Miguel

By Miguel

Light

If you say "light", probably most people will think about the sun. It's a natural source of light. But what kind of light can we use at night? Thousands of years ago, people learnt how to make a fire. After that, they developed candles. In the last century, Edison invented the incandescent light-bulb. Nowadays, the LED lamps are getting popular. It's a fourth generation of lighting.

In my opinion, it is a good time to think about changing your old bulbs into new white LEDs, but there are a couple of things you should remember; first of all, the amount of light which such a lamp produces. It should be at least 1,000 lumens. Secondly, the colour of the light is also an important thing. If you want to read books or you need to focus on something, it is better to choose a

cold one instead of warm. The latter is recommended if you're going to watch TV or relax.

To sum it up, the properties of light generated in white LEDs are very similar to the sun, which is known as a perfect source of light.

By Mírek

Mick Flavin

Mick Flavin is a country and western singer from County Longford. I have seen him on television. He is very popular and he is coming to the West County Hotel in Ennis on Easter Sunday. He is married with a family. I like his songs, especially *Wild Flowers*, *The Lights of Home* and *Maria's heading out to California*.

He is being treated for cancer at the moment. He gave an interview on Clare FM and he spoke a little bit about it.

By Bart

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan was President of America from 1981 to 1989. He was a Republican candidate, having gone from the Democrats to the Republicans in 1962. He was only three days in power when American hostages were released in Iran, after a long hostage crisis.

One of Reagan's main opponents was George H.W. Bush. He was elected President after Reagan had served for eight years in office.

Reagan was an actor before he went into politics. He was in a film called *The Castle Queen of Montana* and he was married to an actress, Nancy Reagan.

He got Alzheimer's disease and knew that his memory was failing. He died in 2004 at the age of 93. He was a good actor, a good man and a great president.

By Gerard

I am

As if the illness and treatment weren't bad enough!
They say it will get me in the end
but for now, I am a cancer survivor.

They also say I'm more likely to die
by being hit by a bus.
In the west of Clare it's more like a tractor!
Now I am a cancer survivor.

I think it sad
I ever had cause
to write this ditty,
but at least I can say
I AM a cancer survivor!

By Gretta

St. Brigid's Well

St. Brigid's Day is the 1st of February. I go to St. Brigid's Well in Liscannor on that day. Holy water is taken from the well because the priest blesses the water inside the passage.

The stones are painted white. It feels cold at first, but when it fills up a lovely warm feeling comes. The well is towards the back. There are medals, mortuary cards and rosary beads placed around the room. There is a bar to hold onto, so that people will not fall.

A woman called Dara came to our class to talk about St. Brigid's Well. She showed us a doll called a *Brideog* and she made a *crois*. The *crois* is a circle of woven straw. It is used to bless people.

Fr. Denis says Mass at the well. After Mass, we have tea at the Liscannor Bay Hotel.

By Margaret

Spring

Spring is the season of great hope
Coming after the long dark days.
Peeping through the frost and snow
Daffodils begin to grow.

Showing us how nature moves
From dead dark bark to budding trees.
Crocuses and bluebells bloom.
And cherry blossoms make us swoon.

Lambs come out to play again
Joining cattle on the fields.
April showers give fresh May flowers.
The cuckoo sings his welcome song

And as the clocks go back in time,
It won't be long till summertime.

By Kitty

On the radio

Áine Hennessey was a broadcaster on Clare FM. She recorded me one Sunday afternoon at my home. I had to phone her from the Kilmaley Inn to set up the visit.

I played two reels on the tin whistle, *Brennan's* and *The Wise Maid*. She recorded me on a tape recorder. I got those tunes from the *Bridge Céilí Band* who were from Portlaoise. I used to hear tunes on Clare FM as well. I'd get a tune into my head and I'd want to play it. I play by ear.

I play because I like music. You make friends through music; one musician knows another. Music puts people in good form.

By Níall

Gardening

When I was younger, I liked to work in the garden in good, dry weather. I grew carrots, potatoes and cabbage. They were fresher than shop vegetables and they tasted better.

I like to see vegetables growing. April is a good time to sow, but the frost in May can kill potato stalks. You can't sow too early. June is a safe time for growing vegetables.

Gardening is nice but it's hard on the back.

By Francie

My new house

I moved into my new house in July 2013. It is a nice house – lovely and cosy. I have my own bedroom to myself and a kitchen with a living room just off it. I know some of my neighbours. They are very kind and helpful. I was happy to move into my new house. I enjoyed buying new stuff. I got lovely pictures and a really comfy black leather chair.

I am near the town. My two brothers live very close to me, which is very nice. I can visit them often or they call down to me. My girlfriend, Marie, comes to my house and we have tea and cake

while we watch television. I also enjoy reading books in my new house. I take them out from the library.

I got nice gifts from people when I moved. My friend, Michel, made a lovely cabinet for my sitting room. I went to Miltown to buy new furniture also. I have solar lights in my front garden, which light up the path at night. I hope to plant some flowers soon as the weather is getting better.

By Martin

My favourite band men

I like P.J. Murrehy from County Clare. He plays Irish music and once played with the *Kilfenora Céilí Band*. I like Johnny Barrett as well. He played Irish music, country songs and dance music. I saw him at the Gleneagle Hotel in Killarney and at O'Donoghue's pub in Fanore. He was known as *Johnny One Man Band Barrett*. Sadly, he died in December 2008.

He had recorded an album in 1977 and called it 'Johnny Barrett Sings and Plays'. He lost his copy of the album and searched for it many times over the years but he couldn't find it. Friends of Johnny's wife, Anne, were tidying up the garage while visiting Anne for Johnny's month's mind Mass. When they moved a work bench, an album fell onto the floor. It had been trapped between the bench and the wall. It was the album that had been lost for over twenty years. It was finally found and they enjoyed listening to it.

I enjoy listening to Johnny Barrett's music on YouTube on the computer. My favourite song is 'Part of me will always be in love with you'.

By Thomas

Healthy eating and losing weight

I was overweight and I had to do something about it before it got too serious. When I was out walking I was out of breath. My clothes were not fitting me and I felt uncomfortable. I decided to change myself.

I went to a dietician and we came up with a plan for healthy eating. My doctor said I was overweight for my height. It was important for me to get the right help for my new healthy eating plan. I needed to know the right food to eat and the information from the food pyramid.

I also joined the gym and swimming pool. I walked more, stayed out of the pubs, cut out fizzy drinks, chocolate, Taytos and fast food. I am now eating healthy. Lots of vegetables, fruit, lean meat, chicken and fish. I make my own Slimming World chips with spray oil only. I have a dog and I go walking with him.

The most important thing is, don't be too hard on yourself; have a treat but limit it. Tell your friends that you are trying to be healthy and they can encourage you. I lost 3 stone in 3 months. It was not easy but I am delighted. I feel so much better and want to continue losing weight. I smoke but that will be my next goal, to give them up.

By Richard

Heroes - Antonina

The heroine of my story is called Antonina. She lives in Moscow. She was born on the day of St. Matrona, the 2nd of May. This is a very kind, sensitive, and cheerful woman who has been tested by life. She suffered a stroke three times, and each time had to learn to walk and talk again. Each time she got daily training with a speech therapist, first in the hospital, then at home. With every stroke, recovering her speech and the use of her legs got harder but her faith in the Lord God, daily prayer, perseverance,

patience, fortitude and love of life helped her overcome these difficult and sometimes unbearable months of disease.

Now she can walk long distances on her own, and she speaks at a slightly slower pace. I used to love visiting her. It was not often, but is remembered for a lifetime. Her house has a special aura of kindness and human warmth. In my language we say, when you communicate with a good person, you become a better person.

I really want to wish her good health and long life.

By Tatiana

The Horse Whisperer

The *Horse Whisperer* is a film that I really like. I have the DVD and I have watched it often. I also joined the library so I could borrow the book and read it. The book is about a girl called Grace and her horse, Pilgrim, who get injured in an accident. The story goes like this:

Grace and her friend, Judith, went horse riding. They said "Let's take a short cut," and then they were singing and laughing. They came to a hill but they couldn't get up the hill. Judith fell off the horse and it ran away. A truck came around the corner and crashed into them, killing Grace's friend, Judith, and putting Grace in hospital. Grace had to get her right leg amputated and the horse was also injured. The vet that was dealing with the horse asked if she should put down the horse. Grace's mother, Annie, had heard about a man called Tom Booker who dealt with horse problems. She rang him to see would he help the horse. He told her he only dealt with horse behaviour problems. Annie did not accept this, so she drove to Montana where Tom lived. He decided that there was no use dealing with the horse on its own and he asked Grace to come, too. He worked with Grace and the horse to try and get their confidence back. A few weeks later, Grace's father came to Montana.

He couldn't get over the change in Grace and the horse. Grace said to him, "Have you noticed I have no cane?" He was delighted with the progress they both had made.

Earlier on, Annie and Tom had fallen in love. But when Grace's father arrived, Tom was giving her the cold shoulder. He said, "I can't get in the middle of this," and Annie replied, "You are in the middle of it." Tom said, "Robert is a good man, so you have to figure out what you want". Grace's mother had to think long and hard about what she should do.

Meanwhile, Tom decided to try something new with the horse, who was lying quietly on the ground. He got Grace to slowly put her feet into the stirrups. Tom gently rocked the horse until he stood up. Grace was delighted with herself and they went for a ride.

Bit by bit, Grace and Pilgrim became friends again and she was able to go with her father to the city. Grace's mother made up her mind to go home as well. Even though the story starts off with a terrible accident, it all turns out well in the end.

I would recommend that you watch the film for yourself as I think you'll really enjoy it.

By Joan

The Messenger

The Messenger was a holy book that the nun gave Marion to give out to people in her area. However, Marion let the books pile up in her bag. Every now and then her mam would say, "Don't take those books if you are not going to give them out."

One sunny day as Marion was walking home from school she stood at the railing on the bridge, opened the school bag, took out the books and threw them into the Shannon. Some went swirling around with the current and the rest floated down the

river. Marion walked the rest of the way home delighted that her bag was much lighter.

All thoughts of *The Messenger* went out of her head, until one day the nun called her up and handed her little notes. She was to give these notes to the people she gave *The Messengers* to. She had a look at one. It was looking for money for the books! Marion's heart started racing. How on earth was she going to ask these people for money?

Bravely, or stupidly, she went to the first person. He was a lovely man and handed over the money straight away. Marion thought, "This is easy." She went on to the next person. As she walked into the house, she thought this lady could be a handful on a good day. She kept her standing for almost half an hour, giving out about the nuns and giving out to Marion about the price before finally handing over the money. With her head done in, she continued on with the others, listening to all kinds of things, including that it was a while since they had seen any *Messenger*. Finally, with the money in her hand, Marion went back and told the nun that she wasn't allowed to give out *The Messenger* anymore.

Years went by and then, one day, Marion walked into a house and there was *The Messenger* on the table. Guilt overwhelmed her. From that day on, she couldn't pass a ticket seller or bucket collector for charity without putting some money in. Indeed, the weight of the school bag was nothing compared to the weight of guilt Marion felt any time she thought of *The Messenger*.

By Mary

Thank you

My name is Ramji. I am from Nepal. I am living in Ireland for 14 years. Irish people are good to me. Thank you everybody.

By Ramji

The start of my new life

Six months ago I had a lovely home, but I had to pack our bags and we had to leave it all behind. My doctor gave me Clare Haven's number and I landed at their door.

They have been so good to me, helping me fill out forms, listening to what I had to say and didn't judge, came to meetings with me and are trying their best to get me a house. At Christmas, I could not believe my eyes when I saw the food gift boxes for myself and the kids. I couldn't believe anyone would do all this for us. I am so grateful to Clare Haven for all the love and support they have given me and are still giving. They also told me about group counselling, which I attend once a week. It really helps. It lets you know you are not alone and some people have been through a lot more.

They also pointed me in the right direction to do this reading and writing course, as my confidence and self-belief were gone so low. Now look at me today. I'm writing this little poem to say thanks a million to all the people who lent a helping hand.

The hands of friendship

The hands of friendship were shown to me as soon as I came through the door.

I came to learn to read and write

As I went to school some years ago.

A slap or two I got there, as all my age would know

But I have turned my life around.

Now look at me, I'm reading and writing for all to see.

As all the young would say, "High five," to all who helped me get this far.

By Teresa

The bank that went out of business

I have been a member of a bank for many years.

My postman, Francis, delivered my post on a wet and windy morning. What a surprise I got when I opened my post. My bank was going to close!

Attached were forms to be filled out so that I could get my money out of the bank. They gave me very short notice. A lot of paper work would have to be put into place before I could get my money out or open an account in another bank, that would not go bust.

Before I could take my money out, at short notice I needed to open an account in the only other bank that would remain open. I needed another bank straight away as I do not keep cash in the house.

I had to get proof of I.D. (passport), a copy of a utility bill, proof of where I live and fill out the forms they sent me.

I had to do all this to open a new account. I had to do the same to close my old account. I hope our one and only bank will remain open.

By Tony

Fox and hound

My hobby of interest is hunting. I go on Saturdays and Sundays with my dogs. The dogs I hunt are called hounds or beagles and we start in mid-August and finish in February. During the summer months, the hounds are not hunted. Instead, we walk them out every day. The way the hounds work is they use their noses. They get the scent of a trail and hunt after the scent of the game they are hunting.

When the hounds are put into a cover or forestry they smell what they're going to hunt. One or two hounds will cry out to let the

rest know they have found what they're looking for. Then they will all come together and they will go off in full cry on the scent.

Not all hounds are good at finding a fox in cover. Some are good at finding in cover and other ones are good out of cover at hunting the fox on open ground. The hunt continues until the fox escapes to his burrow or he outwits them.

I like this sport as I get to see my dogs working and a glimpse of an animal that many do not get to encounter.

By Mike

Nepal

I came to Ireland in July 1999 on a work permit visa and worked as an assistant chef in the Roadside Tavern in Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare until 2010. I also used to do music in the pub once a week.

I play a musical instrument called 'Sarangi' which is a bowed, short-necked, stringed musical instrument of Nepal, commonly played by the 'Gaine' or 'Gandharva', an ethnic group of Nepal.

I moved to Ennis in 2011. As soon as I came to Ennis, I joined the Adult Education Centre and have been doing several courses here at this centre such as English language, driver theory, cooking and computers, etc. I feel very lucky to have several good teachers here who always support, encourage and guide me. With their valuable support and guidance I have made a lot of progress with my English language, both reading and writing.

I would like to thank all my teachers, Karl, Olwyn and Siobhán, whose support and guidance to me are always appreciated.

By Hiralal

I haven't had grapes for a long time

Lying on the hospital bed, I see him coming towards me. His bald head is burnt from the sun and his faded brown pants are held up with braces. He's clutching a Dunnes Stores plastic bag. It's Patrick, my neighbour.

Patrick shoves the bag into my hands. I look in the bag and, to my horror, squashy grapes are looking up at me. I haven't had grapes in years. He sits down and I offer him the bag. He puts his big brown hands in and takes out some squishy grapes. As he puts them into his mouth, juice dribbles down. I stare, as one seed chases another down his chin and I turn away as he wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

Just then I spot Christina, another neighbour, standing at the entrance to the ward. There she is, with her Louis Vuitton bag hanging from her arm and her Karen Millen suit hugging her size ten figure. Obviously, she had spotted Patrick and was just about to do a U-turn when she realised I was staring at her.

Christina makes her way over to the bed. Patrick shoves the grapes in front of her. "Can't stay," she says, "Have to collect James," (her husband). Patrick jumps up. "I'll be along with you," he says.

As I watch Christina running out of the ward and Patrick running after her with one seed stuck to his chin, I can't help laughing. I haven't had grapes in years but I got great enjoyment out of this bag without ever tasting one.

By Mary

My name is Amina

I am from Morocco. I came to Ireland 8 years ago. Two years ago I started English classes. I like English class.

By Amina

Our names are Elzbieta and Jan

Our names are Elzbieta and Jan. We come from Poland. The capital city is Warszawa. We speak Polish. In Poland we don't have the euro, we have zloty. The population is 38,530,000 people. The religions in the country are Roman Catholic and Polish Orthodox. The special days are 8th March (Women's Day) and 26th May (Mother's Day). In Poland we have regional and traditional special food: bigos, pierogi, schabowe and golabki.

By Elzbieta and Jan

The long journey

I was just 16 and a half when my parents decided to move to Shannon. It was a bit of a shock as I had only ever known life in Dublin. My mother came from generations of Dublin people, but my father came from the country. He had no doubts about moving to the country again but my mother, being a city girl, and the rest of the family were very anxious about it.

We imagined living in the country to be all cows and sheep everywhere, and no street lights, no buses, and nothing to do. However, my father soon persuaded us that life would be great. We would have a big back garden and a dog. That changed things. I got a lovely dog and I could bring him out for walks. I couldn't do that in the city. We moved in the middle of the night. We packed up all our stuff and loaded it into the Kellogg's truck that my uncle had got a loan of. It was great fun in a big truck driving out of the city. We left the city at night time. Through a child's eyes, it was amazing. All the lights on, the big truck, furniture in the back of the truck and we headed off on the long journey to County Clare. I was looking out the window. I could see the stars in the sky, fields upon fields; sometimes, the roads were rocky and windy. We stopped for a rest at Borris-in-Ossory and went into a hotel for tea, a sandwich and a pint. After twenty minutes, we were back on the road again. We were only half way there, still had another hundred miles to go. We hopped back into the truck, got the blanket from the back and snuggled

up for a rest. We were all very sleepy. My eyes were tired from looking out the window.

When the truck finally stopped we were in County Clare.

By Vivienne

A divide of land

The fields had not been fertilised, as hay was not cut. There was an overgrowth of long, faded-looking ribs. Rushes were clearly visible in patches of the fields where drainage was not good and in most of the fields, drains were blocked with overgrowth of grass, ferns and weeds. The previous summer of 1961, a well-dressed man from the Land Commission, who wore a distinctive brown hat with two or three colourful feathers attached to it, had been seen more than once, walking the fields. During the warm summer days he was accompanied on his walks by two elderly farmers. The local farmers were not told that the land was in mind for dividing but, in reality, most people knew. Farmers waited in wonder and anticipation at the prospect of getting a divide of the 210 acres of land.

The seasons of autumn and a very wet winter passed and still there was no news from the Land Commission. It was a topic of much discussion where local farmers met, whether at the creamery, the cattle fairs or as they huddled in small groups chatting outside the church gates after Sunday morning Mass. Patrick Joseph Scully (better known locally as P.J.) heard a rumour doing the rounds saying that a few of the 'big men' had been in touch with their political contacts to try and make sure that they got a big divide of the more upland dry fields.

P.J. Scully was in his late thirties. He was brought up on a small farm in the next townland, and since the age of fourteen he had cut, saved and sold turf to earn a livelihood. He was well thought of and regarded as an honest, hardworking man. One of their five children, his only son Jack, was born with a disability. He was

disappointed with that news. He never talked to his neighbours about this child.

On a Tuesday morning in early April, the postman, who had been delivering the letters and parcels in that neighbourhood for more than twenty years, handed a large brown envelope to P.J. With the bicycle lying against his hip, the curious, chatty postman kept talking about all the extra letters he had for the neighbours that morning and suggested there must be some news about the divides from the two big farms. P.J. noticed the black government stamp on the envelope and his name and address were typed. After chatting to the postman for a few minutes, he walked briskly across the front yard and into the small cow cabin and with a few quick, jerky forward movements of his left thumb, he tore open the sealed envelope and began to skim over the information on the enclosed pages. Two of the pages showed detailed maps which plotted the boundaries of a number of fields. He felt excited as he whisked off his work-stained peaked cap and threw it up onto a shelf. He gently sat back on top of a bag of oats. Running around in his mind were the questions, "How many acres? Where are they?" Eventually, he noticed on one map a dark red colour around an area of fields. Gradually, he realised which land he was allotted. "Well, they have given the good upland fields to other farmers but not to me," he said aloud.

Excitement ebbing to concern, he then slowly looked over the maps and read the letter a few times. In his mind's eye he could immediately picture the fields, roughly two and a half miles away from his home. The fields had not been farmed for a few years and drainage was not good. It was not winter land for sure. He glanced at the invitation to meet the Land Commission man at the crossroads at eleven o'clock on Thursday for confirmation of the divides.

From ten o'clock onwards on the Thursday morning, the farmers were gathering at the crossroads. Some walked, others cycled, while a few came with the pony and car. After a few minutes, P.J. had heard enough and gradually moved away from the group. He walked smartly for half a mile or so until he arrived at the first field of his allocation. He walked in the first gap and around the

six fields of his new divide. He pulled out the map of his divide from the hip pocket of his worn brown corduroy trousers. He figured out that the steep hill and valley was a little over two acres, which could not be used for farming in its present condition. It suddenly dawned on him that his divide was not twenty-two acres but more likely to be nineteen or twenty acres.

With the arrival of spring the days were longer and the temperature had improved. P.J. spent three to four days a week doing up the boundary ditches and gaps, including fitting timber gates at the entrance gaps of the three fields along the road frontage. This was physically tough work each day and he kept asking himself what could he do to reclaim the hill and valley and could he afford to pay for the work?

By chance, P.J. got chatting to a farm machinery owner who had started to do land reclamation work. After a general chat the man said, "I'll be gettin' a new Hymac in about two or three weeks and shure that's the perfect machine to help reclaim that steep hill and valley you're talkin' about."

P.J. replied, "I'd never be able to afford that."

The contractor asked, "Have you not heard about the new land reclamation grant? You might be able to get that reclamation job done for the grant."

Two weeks later the brand new, bright yellow Hymac machine pulled into P.J.'s land and started the major work of clearing the two-plus acres in preparation of the soil for grass seeding and, eventually; an additional grazing area for the cattle. There was great interest, even much excitement, from the neighbouring farming community as the news spread about this big yellow powerful machine that was pulling roots of bushes with ease and throwing buckets of soil and stones in all directions. The dull humming noise from the powerful Volvo diesel engine of the Hymac could be heard for miles around in the quietness of the rural townlands. Farmers, alone or sometimes in pairs, strolled down the fields to watch the goings-on in utter amazement – some even watched from a distance. Hundreds of crows, seagulls

and a variety of smaller birds were flying high and low, hither and thither; they had discovered a plentiful supply of worms and perhaps other insects on the freshly broken soil. They literally had field days with the variety of food and pickings while the work was in progress. Occasionally, a neighbouring farmer would venture a little closer down the fields to get a better view of what this strange-looking machine was doing and also to talk to P.J. Most of the people were curious to find out where the machine came from and who could afford to pay to bring that kind of machine onto their land, not to mention paying what must be a huge amount for four days' work. But P.J. was coy with his answers and never mentioned a word about the £88 grant to his neighbours.

The spring days were dry; new time had come in the previous week, and from the third and fourth days there was great progress. The driver co-operated with P.J.'s request to build up the river bank at his side to a height of seven or eight feet with a wide gap roughly in the middle as an access point to the river from where the cattle could go and drink the water without trespassing on the land at the opposite side. The wide boundary river waters flowed to the west to mingle with the salt water of the wild Atlantic Ocean. P.J. knew that brown trout and, occasionally, salmon were caught in the river. He was quietly looking forward to fishing along the bank of the river and catching a few brown trout or even a salmon with his son Jack for, a few days earlier, to his surprise, he discovered that Jack shared his interest in fishing.

The farm machinery owner called every second day with cans of diesel for the Hymac. They walked over the soil which had been cleared and levelled, kicking any lumps of earth that appeared in their path. On the last day on the job, after the small talk about how nice the weather was, they walked briskly over two fields and viewed the reclamation job.

"There was much more diesel used than I expected. It costs a fair bit, you know." The man cast a glance at P.J. then.

"Oh, I know," P.J. agreed.

"I felt like an oil truck delivering oil – I'd to come so often with diesel!"

P.J. laughed. The contractor then noticed the neat work that was done along a stretch of the river bank. He immediately turned to P.J. "There was no mention of doing that work by the river. Shure no wonder there was so much diesel used on this job."

"Well, I just thought, while he was there with the machine, it was a great chance to get the bank built up and made safer for anyone fishing along by the bank in the future."

The contractor paused for a moment. He quickly turned to P.J. "There is no way that I can do all that work for the grant amount of £88."

P.J. was taken aback a little and replied, "Shure you told me a few weeks ago that the job would be done for the grant. Why are you changing your tune now?"

"I had hoped the job would have been completed in four or five days but it took nine days. The very best price I could accept is £160 and not a penny less."

P.J. stared at him. "Why didn't you tell me that before? You were here every other day! If I'd known" P.J. looked across to the river - silence except for the delicate gurgling of the free-flowing river. P.J. turned back to the man. "I've a young family;" he hesitated a moment, "including a child with a disability. I can't afford to pay more than the grant amount of £88."

This was of no consequence to the contractor. The haggling between both men went on for quite a while but the price went no lower than £140. As the contractor slowly walked away towards the road he said, "I'll call to your house in a week or two."

Somewhat stressed after the difficult haggling session, P.J. looked in the direction of the steep hill and valley below. He gazed across at the two acres he had reclaimed. His face hardened. His thoughts turned to his son. He wondered now how he would

support and protect him. His savings would have to go towards the debt of £52. He grimaced. He was stuck. He started to calculate his milch cows and calves. He calculated the time needed to increase his herd. He watched absently as the water started to trickle along the drain. P.J. took off his sleeveless jumper, rolled up the sleeves of his patterned tweed shirt, and with all his strength he continued to use the shovel and spade, the crook and slasher to cut and clear away briars, a variety of weeds, stumps of rushes to allow stale, dirty water to flow along the mud base drain for the first time in years. A subtle feeling of pride gradually came over his person. He turned and got on with his work.

By Joe

Riga

I come from a village outside Riga, the capital city of Latvia. There is very nice weather in winter and summer. The sea is nice and the countryside is very good. The biggest problem is unemployment. A lot of people have no work. Sometimes, people are so poor that they can't buy food.

By Vítolds

Not a word wasted

"Nail soak, timber rot." It is not unusual to hear this said by one of my family, even today, but more of that later.

Tomaisín was a 'spailpín fánach' who travelled around the county and was hired as needed for the harvest, for lambing, or other busy times. Tomaisín was 'a bit soft', as they used to say back in the day. In any case, he was known to be a great old worker and very reliable. However, as he grew older and travelling was harder for him, he would 'over-winter' with James, who was my great-grandfather. James had a mixed farm in west Cork, and on the farm, apart from the 'home place', was an old cottage.

Tomaisín had the use of the cottage whenever he stayed at the farm.

Tomaisín would arrive at the farm gate, usually in the late afternoon, tired and weary after his long walk. He would sometimes have walked as much as fifteen miles. He would present himself to the woman of the house at the kitchen door, asking for his usual 'two then wan eggs' for his tea. You see, counting to three in English was foreign to him. Tomaisín was a native Irish speaker, and had taught himself to speak English in his latter years. He had an interesting take on the language, because he had no use for the finer grammatical constructs – 'the' and 'and' were foreigners to him! He spoke in a kind of blank verse, never using two words where one would do. The little spailpín brought fun and comic relief to many a hard day on the farm and James looked forward to his arrival with the changing of the seasons. Tomaisín was the 'yeast that leavened the bread'.

James had a great respect for Tomaisín, even though they seemed in every way to be chalk and cheese. James was six foot four, fit and lean, ramrod straight and stern of face (you might think twice before you would cross him!). Tomaisín, on the other hand, was small, and a bit stooped. His skin was yellow and his teeth were few. There was a dignity about him just the same, as if he knew his worth. But the two men had one thing in common – James was a Gaelic scholar, when it was not fashionable to be so. On meeting Tomaisín, James would always greet him in Irish, and they would sometimes have long and winding conversations, in Irish, around the kitchen fire. James would often quote Tomaisín, pointing out the wisdom and wit in his sayings and stories.

Tomaisín carried out his work at a slow, steady pace, but he had a wonderful rhythm. There was almost a melody to it. It was a pleasure to watch him sweeping the scythe through the ripe barley in the River Field, or tossing the hay to the man on top of the reek in the dead heat of an August afternoon. James would say that Tomaisín in full flow reminded him of the swing of the pendulum on the old kitchen clock – something that you would only notice when everything else stopped. When younger men had to break for a rest, Tomaisín kept going, slow and steady, slow

and steady. James would comment admiringly on this, and even though Tomaisín would show no sign of hearing – slow and steady, slow and steady – he would seem to grow a little in stature.

Tomaisín even got away with murder. One evening, just before sunset, he was making his way to the main house to be fed. Now James had two sheepdogs, and was very proud of them. One of the dogs hated Tomaisín, and the feeling was reciprocated in full. Tomaisín was always expecting an ambush (he was in west Cork, after all!). That evening, he had a big stone in his hand at the ready. He sensed that the dog was slinking out behind him. He turned, flung the stone and – lucky shot to the head – the dog dropped dead. Tomaisín kept walking, slow and steady, but there was a witness to the murder. Later, at the kitchen table, Tomaisín noticed James glaring at him. He chewed on steadily, waiting for the storm to break, his arm around his plate. (Food was scarce in Tomaisín's childhood. You guarded what you had!). The old grandmother clock 'tick-tocked' loudly in the silent kitchen – had it ever sounded so loud before? And then, the explosion came. "Did you kill my dog, Tomaisín?" (James in a rage was a sight to behold!).

Tomaisín straightened his back, looked James in the eye and said, "'Twas not I, sir, 'twas lump of stone. He fell a-díreach, as sun went down".

James' anger disappeared like a burst balloon. He laughed until his sides ached. "What can I say?" he gasped. "The man's a poet."

No more was said.

And as for 'nail soak, timber rot' ... one awful winter's night, when the wind was blowing due east and the rain sheeting down, James heard stones rattling off his bedroom window. He stuck his head out, and there was Tomaisín standing, with difficulty, in the yard below. The rain was pouring down his face and his greatcoat was blowing out behind him. "T'anam an Díabhal, a Thomaisín! What are you doing taking the sleep of the night from me?" roared James.

Tomaisín's answer was a miracle of brevity – not a word too many, not a word too few. His song – for a song it is – has come down the generations through my family. My daughters will still quote it at me today. Tomaisín cried out above the howl of the wind, "NAIL SOAK TIMBER ROT WIND BLOW ROOF WAY EASHT FIELD DOWN SHE CLOP." (Translation: The rain soaked in via the nails and rotted the roof timbers of the old cottage. The wind blew the roof away up the field in an easterly direction, and 'down she clop.')

The seasons flowed over the farm. Decades passed, and I have a very clear memory of a very small and very bored little girl, sitting on a stool in the old farm kitchen, listening to the loud 'tick-tock' of the grandmother clock. Yes, it was the same clock, and that little girl was me.

Now, fast forward thirty-five years, and the farm is up for sale. The auctioneer, a local man, is in the old farm kitchen, rattling away as auctioneers do. That droning patter is like a barrier against the sadness of the occasion – a necessary ritual maybe. The old clock comes up for sale. It has stopped, of course, not having been wound for some time. The auctioneer pauses for a moment. "Isn't it a powerful sad thing," he says, "that after all the long years back, there is no one of the household left to wind that clock." And the gavel comes down. The old clock is sold. It is time.

By Kay

I love my village

I come from a village in Poland. I love my village because it is so beautiful. The people are very friendly. The weather is beautiful in the summer and there is a very nice lake.

The problem is there are no jobs. The second problem is that there are not many shops. The bus service is not very good either.

By Kinga

Turkey's delight

It was bitterly cold but at long last Christmas Eve had arrived; I had woken up to a fairy-tale world cloaked in snow. Da was in the backyard chopping firewood. Scampering down the stairs, I hurried out to him.

"Told ye it would snow, Da."

"I know. Bring some of them sticks in. It's too cold out here. Go on, I'll be in shortly." His breath smoked in the freezing air. The snow didn't have the same effect on Da as it had for me. He was a strict type of man with little time for laughter or light speech.

I threw the sticks down hard on to the hearth to make as much noise as possible, hoping I would waken Granda. He slept in the downstairs bedroom. With him awake, he would send me for his paper. He always gave me a few coppers for myself. A few minutes elapsed and I then heard him bawl. "Bring in my pipe. It's laying on the table." It was like he was speaking through a loudspeaker. Moving yesterday's newspaper, I found his smelly pipe turned on its side with ash spilt out of it.

Granda was pure bald with a thin bony face. His high, sharp cheekbones gave him a haunted look, but I loved him to bits. He would let me light his pipe sometimes and even showed me how to roll a fag. It was our secret; if Da found out I would get slayed. Each time I entered his room, which was cluttered with books and all sorts of everything, it was like going on a mystery tour. He would always have something of interest for me. I loved his world – the stories were extraordinary and his toothless smile always had a touch of warmth about it.

"There you go." I gave him his pipe and he gave me sixpence for his paper. The change would get me two penny gobstoppers. I turned to leave but got the shock of my life. I was actually rooted to the spot.

"What's wrong with ye?" Granda asked.

My voice dropped to an urgent whisper. "What the hell's that on the door?"

With an impish grin he pushed his pipe into the corner of his mouth and lit it up. "That came from O'Hares' farm."

"I don't care where you got it from, you're gonna have to open the door to let me out."

"Catch yourself on, just open it, ye eejit."

I stood motionless. Granda was not for getting out of bed to let me out of the room. He was sniggering away at my dilemma. In an attempt to leave, I put my hands over my eyes to block it out but ended up walking into a chest of drawers. Granda's whole body shook with laughter. I didn't know what to do. Ma wasn't around. I heard Da come in from the yard. I instantly shouted, "You need to come in here now."

He probably thought there was something up with Granda. "What's wrong?"

"I'm frightened of that."

"You're frightened of what?"

"That yoke behind you hanging on the door."

"Is that what you called me for? C'mon, I'm too busy for this nonsense, that's the turkey for tomorrow's dinner."

"I don't care. It keeps staring at me. Its eyes were as black as coal. You'll have to hold the door open till I get out, please Da."

As he held it open, I turned myself sideways and pushed as tight against the wall as possible to keep as much distance between me and that bedroom door. At long last I was safe. I could hear Granda chuckling away; I suppose it was funny, but not for me, and I could tell by Da's face he wasn't too impressed. The image of the turkey stayed with me for the day.

Later that afternoon, Da told me I had to keep an eye on my little sister. I detested minding her. She was forever telling tales and getting me into trouble. Her eyes were as big as saucers and with her angelic smile she could have sold sand to the Arabs. But I knew different – she was a dangerous, devious little devil. I once had a nightmare that she had a twin who was just like her. Last week, Da let her decorate the whole Christmas tree; no-one else got a look in. She was a right little bossy boots; anything I enjoyed doing she sucked the life out of it.

There she was, rhyming off all the stuff Santa would be bringing her for Christmas. I was fed up listening to her squeaky voice. I was actually on the verge of telling her there was no such thing as Santa – that would have wiped the smile off her face. I switched the Christmas lights on, and looking around at her I said, “There’s more decorations underneath Granda’s bed, you know.” Her face lit up. She jumped up and headed straight for the room. I knew she would fall for it. I told her Granda was having his nap, knowing full well she would not pay any heed to me. She never did.

“I’ll go easy. I won’t waken him.”

After a moment, I put my ear to the door. I heard a whisper. “Where are they? I can’t see any decorations.” I replied, “They might be hanging on the door.”

Next minute, there was this unmerciful scream. I had become accustomed to hearing her yell. The last time was when I put a dead daddy long legs on top of her pillow. Before you knew it, Da had burst through the door. “What’s goin’ on?” He rushed into the bedroom.

There was Granda lying on the floor – he had fallen out of his bed. My sister was standing in the corner of the room, both feet stuck to the floorboards. The smile had gone from her face and was replaced by a look of sheer terror. Granda clambered back into bed still trying to work out what had happened, while Da lifted your one up into his arms. He glared at me through narrowed eyes.

"I didn't do anything, Da, honestly."

My sister kept pointing at the door. She was now wailing like a banshee; I often thought she was one. I was half thinking of legging it and staying out of the way till Ma came home but Da copped what I had done. He grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and marched me upstairs to my room. Well, actually, it wasn't my room. I shared it with my four brothers.

To say he was cross would be an understatement. He told me there was no way Santa would be leaving me any presents. That didn't bother me. I was nearly nine and didn't believe in Santa anymore, although I didn't tell him that as my punishment would have been more severe.

Stuck upstairs alone, especially on Christmas Eve, made me miserable. However, every time I thought of my sister in Granda's room all by herself with that creature it cheered me up. Serves her right, all the times she got me into trouble.

When Ma came home from work I sneaked out to the top of the stairs. I could hear my sister whinging. She probably wanted me strung up. Ma and Da's voices were both raised, but after a while there was silence. Next minute, someone was coming up the stairs; it was Granda, I could hear him wheezing. He told me I was allowed to come down but had to say sorry to my sister. Smiling at me, he winked, "C'mon, let's go."

I did say sorry but had my fingers crossed behind my back, which meant I wasn't really sorry. She curled her lips into a savage sneer, then stuck out her tongue, being cute enough as usual to make sure Da didn't see her. That particular Christmas was forever engraved in my memory. Granda always told me, "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice." I tried, honestly I tried, but when it came to my sister I actually think I would have been better off if I still believed in Santa. Maybe I could have coped better.

By John

My name is Keltouma

My name is Keltouma. I come from Morocco. The capital city is Rabat. We speak Arabic, French and Berber. We don't have the euro, we have dirham. Friday is a special day in Morocco. Ramadan is a special month. In Ramadan we don't eat and drink. Our favourite foods are couscous and tajine.

By Keltouma

My mind's welcome rest

Revelling in a heartbeat, a gentle caress of emotion, set free,
Entwined in moments of time, shadows vanquished by an eternal light,
A shuddering sigh in buoyant contemplations of ecstasy,
Reason, embedded as my foe, instinct intervenes, hope takes flight.

To take your hand, cradled in mine, to touch your face,
Compulsions to be perpetually at your side,
A delicate breath, synchronised with the image of your embrace,
A rapport designed for the ages, to these pages I confide.

My essence of being is splendour by your smile,
Freedom in your unattainable zest,
Memories created with each passing moment, awoken from denial,
Content in my glee, the rhythm of the free, my mind's welcome rest.

By Daniel

I am from Poland

I am from Poland. The capital of Poland is Warsaw. In Poland I lived in Suwalki. This is a big town on the north-east of the country. Suwalki is near to the border with Lithuania and Russia. Around this

area there are lots of lakes and forests. In the summer, many people visit this part of Poland. It is a great place to camp and visitors go canoeing and fishing. Poland is a very nice country.

By Lucyna

Honour thy neighbour

Mrs Moten lived next door to us and she had thirteen kids – eight boys and five girls – and six cats. She did all the talking in her house. Mrs Moten's husband, Liam, was a very quiet man who worked in the bacon factory. He seldom spoke. My father reckoned he was waiting thirty years to get a word in. He just sat by the fire reading the paper or watching Charles Mitchell reading the news on RTÉ. He only spoke if she asked him to speak to one of the kids.

"Liam, talk to Thomas, he's giving me lip."

I was amazed. We would never give lip. He would stop the errant child with one word, usually their name, said with every vowel drawn out in a quiet but threatening way. "Thoomaas!" That was it! The Motens had a large garden and Mr Moten dug it and planted every inch of it by hand with no help from his children. I think it was his way of escaping from the house.

Mrs Moten never seemed to read papers or watch TV. All she talked about was her kids. One particular day, late September, the time we used to go 'apple harvesting', Mrs Moten arrived into our house in a flurry of flour dust and clouds of cigarette smoke. She walked in the front door without knocking, as people did in those days, with a John Carroll hanging precariously from the corner of her mouth. Talking before she had the door closed, she announced loudly, "Oliver and Noely are outside dying with stomach cramps from eating crab apples they robbed yesterday. How are your lads?" She glanced at us, hoping to detect some cramp.

My mother gave me a quick look. I pretended to be engrossed in our comics. "Shure, Vincent has a cast iron stomach." My mother had a knack of never letting on how she really felt. But we knew we were in for it the minute Mrs Moten left.

Mrs Moten, unsatisfied, switched subjects. "How's Billy, May?"

Billy was my father. He worked in England, as a lot of people did then, and she liked to slip it in. (Actually the first time I saw my father was through the crack in the kitchen door. I was confused to see a stranger kissing my mother.) "Still working in London, is he? Very dangerous. See all those men killed on the underground in England last week. Train ran over them."

"That was in a coal mine," my mother managed to slip in.

Mrs Moten ignored the comment. "Full of Protestants. Shure the Queen is their pope! It's not right, May, is it?"

She was fierce religious and completely swallowed the whole vengeful God thing. My mother was about to respond but Mrs Moten wasn't in the habit of waiting around for an answer.

"Paul done the civil service exam. Best in the Brothers." (Christian Brothers, that is.)

I happened to look up and, unfortunately, caught her eye. "That's right, Vincent, what do you think of that?"

I opened my mouth to mumble something.

"One of the best in the country. How do you like school, Stephen?" She turned on Stephen.

Stephen, seven years old, stared at her. A look of panic and he suddenly ran to the toilet. (Acting the doctor and to save my skin, I had given him a half bottle of Milk of Magnesia, which cured the cramps from the crab apples but had him running to the bathroom for two days. Running being the operative word.) Mam gave me a queer look.

"Ollie is great. He's going to the Brothers as well. Noely's great with his hands!" Mrs Moten proudly announced.

I thought, "He's great with his hands alright... they spend most of the time up his nostrils picking winners!"

Mrs Moten plonked a bag on the kitchen table with a thump. "Here's a bag of them apples the lads robbed in Browns." They're grand for apple tarts but with plenty of sugar. I suppose you know Carmel's up the pole, but she never listens to me; Liam says nothing."

I wondered what is she doing up a pole? Has she got a job like my father? I glanced out the window to see could I see her up a pole.

She enquired, "Is Billy coming home for Christmas?"

"Should be..."

"God, May, you need a man in the house to keep law and order. What would I do without Liam...? Oh, God, the ham!!" She always had to rush off to check the nearly burnt dinner.

Stephen arrived back in. Mam handed me the bag of apples. "Right, here you go, start peeling! And after that you can chuck the lot!"

My father came home from London soon after and got a government job with the Post and Telegraphs, as An Post was known then. He bought a car – his pride and joy. Sometimes, I think he loved that car too much. He always parked his pride and joy at the back of the house.

Mrs Moten's cats loved that car as it was parked in a sun trap. They always sat on it and left their paw marks and scratches all over it. This used to drive my father mad. But, of course, he'd say nothing. He eventually came up with the idea of connecting a car battery to the bonnet of the car at night. That'd be the end of the cats.

The following morning we were up early to go to the bog and Mr Moten was chatting over the fence to my father when Mrs Moten arrived out to see what she was missing. "Oh Billy, are you home for good now?" she said, coming in the back gate. "Is May inside... You know, if you don't keep up the payments you'll be back in London as quick, aaaaaaaahhhhhh.....!"

She jumped back and fell at my father's feet. My father kicked the leads off the battery before she spotted them. Mrs Moten was dumbstruck. My father said nothing, just acted concerned as he helped Mrs Moten to her feet. "Static, bloody static.... Well I'm not religious but it's strange you got a shock when you did... honour thy neighbour and all that..." He winked at me, and her husband turned away to hide his laughter. She stared at my father. She stumbled in home completely perplexed.

Mrs Moten took a long time to recover, but of course in time she did. She took great pride in "The Hand of God" incident and was quick to preach how she'd seen the error of her ways. Of course no-one else noticed any difference. My father and her husband were the best of friends after that and as for the cats, well that's another story.

By Terence

Poblocie

I come from a village in Poland called Poblocie. I love my village because it is near the sea, and on a river. The weather is very nice. I love summer in my village because the views are beautiful. A lot of people must leave the town because there are not many jobs.

By Honorata

Some things are priceless

I lived in Chelmsford Street with mother, father, sister and brother. We also had two adult miniature poodle dogs, one called Pepsi the dog, the other called Cindy the bitch.

Cindy was preparing herself to give birth to her puppies and as she ruffled the blanket up I knew it was time for her birth. I sat down and watched in amazement to make sure every puppy was alright and she didn't sit on them by mistake. She licked the first puppy clean, then, the others followed. They were tiny. They were the size of your hand and had black coats of silk and tiny floppy ears.

I counted seven puppies – two dogs and five bitches. Cindy lay down. She was exhausted. While her puppies sucked from her teats, I looked closer to see the tiniest puppy did not have a teat to suck from. I was upset. This puppy needed attention. I wanted to help her.

My mother had bought some baby milk from the chemist, beforehand. I mixed it up with cooled boiled water and poured it into the bottle, which was made especially for puppies. I didn't spill a drop. I made sure Cindy and Pepsi got their cuddles so they were never left out. As they say, the mother of the puppies gets jealous, so I had to be careful. I gently picked the puppy up, while talking to Cindy. I balanced her on my knee, so she was safe. I then placed the teat to the puppy's mouth – she wouldn't take it.

I was determined to get this puppy to feed, so I tried dropping some milk onto my hand – Splash! I dipped my finger in it. I put it to the pup's mouth – out came a pink tongue! I fed the puppy with the queer-shaped bottle. She loved it.

I had my eyes on this tiniest puppy since the day she was born. I continued feeding this tiny puppy, until she was out of danger. She was thriving! Weeks passed so quickly! The puppies were getting bigger and stronger. By that time, my mother and father said the puppies had to go to the vet.

"What for?" I asked.

"They have to get their tails shortened and their dewclaws cut."

"But won't that hurt them?" I asked my mother and father.

"Of course it will, but you wouldn't want them to cripple them walking, would you?" "No, but ..."

"There are no buts about it! They all have to go today."

I looked over at them. They were playing so happily with their brothers and sisters after having their feed from their mother.

My mother got the cardboard box ready. She put in a little blanket on the bottom of the box. I watched every puppy go calmly into the box. The puppies, still happy, didn't know where they were going. My father brought them away.

I cried. I was angry and disappointed with myself. I had looked after them since the day they were born! I must be some kind of traitor helping them get hurt. That's what the puppies will think of me when they come back from the vet.

My mother and father explained it, but didn't tell me what the vet was actually going to do. I hated it, but I had no choice.

The front door opened. There was my father standing with a box in his hands with the puppies in it screaming in pain. Their high-pitched voices had changed! I could feel their pain go through me. I picked one puppy up; it was the tiniest. I cuddled her, comforted her, then I put her down beside her mother. I did the same with the others. I felt so guilty. I vowed there would be no more pain.

Time passed so quickly. The puppies were no longer feeding from their mother, Cindy, so my mother and I would go shopping to the outside markets where there was cat fish and other varieties of fish were sold. I watched my mother slowly cook the cat fish with milk. It was then put on a big plate. The puppies started to eat it – all

you could see was seven puppies' mouths soaked in milk and fish! I cleaned them one by one. They all fell asleep. They were full up. The puppies had various kinds of dinners, but this one would be the best in their eyes.

My mother put a 'For Sale' advertisement in the local pet shop. It read:

For Sale

Black Miniature Poodle Puppies

The Price £20

The puppies went like hot cakes. My heart was broken as the first puppy was sold (with a birth certificate; Pepsi's father was a champion; he was KC Registered). Then the next one and so on, until there was one puppy left. My mother and father knew I wanted her. I said, "Don't sell her, she's mine."

I came home from school one day. I flew in the door. I looked towards Cindy's bed where she lay with her puppies. I couldn't see any pup. My jaw dropped. I was speechless. I turned to my mother and father. They both had smiles on their faces. "Some couple came to buy your puppy today – about an hour ago."

Half-listening, I was still looking around the room, puzzled. "Where is she?" I thought.

My mother and father said, "We told them we can't sell that puppy to you, it's our daughter's."

There she was, sat on my mother's knee. Tears of joy filled my eyes. The relief was unbelievable. I took her from my mother's hand. There she was, my cute fur ball. She was a fatty! Her fur was wavy, she had tiny ears that flopped down her face. She was mine! I called her Penny and, to me, she was priceless. I washed her in the bath. I poured shampoo on her wet fur and spread it all over her body. She loved it. She was like a baby. I carried her downstairs and put her near the fire to keep her warm. I finished drying her with a hair dryer.

We went everywhere with our poodles. We went to Jersey, on a ferry from Weymouth for two weeks, then we went to Norfolk. We brought food and minerals with us and stayed in our four-berth caravan. What a holiday to remember. The weather was smashing! I came home with a lovely suntan. My friends thought I had been to Spain. To me, I was a lucky child.

Unfortunately, Cindy died. We cried, as she brought so much happiness to us.

Then Penny had puppies and my sister claimed her brown poodle; she called her Ginny Lynn after a place we were passing through to get to Norfolk. It was called King's Lynn.

My mother and father moved to Ballyhenna, two miles away from Lisdoonvarna in County Clare. Then Penny died of old age, while I was away, two years ago. Ginny died later. I was so upset that I was not there for Penny, Pepsi and Ginny.

But my memories of them will stay in my heart forever.

By Sharon

My mom

Do you have someone who is really great in your life, who spends time with you, who really cares for you? Well, I do and she is my mom!

I can't say how much I love her, how much I am thankful to her, how she is the best mom on earth. I can write about the nice times we have spent together. She has taken good care of me when I was sick and she is always busy doing things to keep me happy. She is more than a mom, or a sister, she is my best friend, my hero.

By Nadia

Settling in

I come from Bangladesh where the weather is hot. Now I am living in Ennis and I find it very cold here. I miss my Mum and Dad and my family. I talk to my parents by phone every day. Maybe next year I will go on holiday back home. I look forward to shopping and cooking with my Mum. Now I am trying to adapt to life here. Life is better now that spring is here and winter is over.

By Alice

We can't turn back time

The morning of June 6th 2006 started off a beautiful warm sunny day. It was like being in the Bahamas. My brother, John, phoned me and asked if I could go on a trip to Killaloe. I thought, "Well I'm not doing anything and it is too hot to be doing any kind of work," so I picked up John at his house in Limerick and off we went. Our mother, who had Alzheimer's, was in a nursing home in the city. We thought to call and see her but we decided to wait until we were on our way home.

John, my younger brother, was full of mischief and mad for road and when we got to Killaloe the car park was full so we had to park up the street about a half a mile away. The shops were doing great business. People were stuffing their faces outside the restaurants at tables with parasols to protect them from the hot sun.

It was so hot, the beach seemed miles away and we were so thirsty we decided to stop at one of the pubs for a drink. I said to John, "One drink and then we are off to the beach." "OK," he said, but when we got inside, the pub was full and as we made our way to the bar we met some lads that we knew and their girlfriends. A round of drink was bought by one of the lads and we were included, and of course one round led to another. After about five pints were consumed, I said, "Let's go John." He said, "What is your hurry? We are out to enjoy ourselves. I think that I'm in with a chance with that bird over there." "OK," I said, "but I

have to drive home. I'm going for something to eat. I will see you later."

Off I went down to the nearest café. I was at least a half an hour in the café and just about to leave when a couple that I knew came in and we got talking. Another hour passed before I said goodbye to them. So I made my way back to the pub to meet up with John to make our way home. When I went into the pub there was no sign of John or the lads that we were with earlier. I thought, "He will turn up. He can't be gone far."

Just then my mobile phone rang and when I answered it, it was my sister, Mary. She asked me where I was. She sounded very upset and I said, "What's wrong?" She answered me in a breaking voice telling me, "Mum has passed away."

Suddenly, the evening changed. It was like someone had hit me with a brick in the back of the head. I was numb and could not speak. I mumbled something like, "OK, I will be home soon." Now, I was in a bad way. I thought to myself, "I have to find John. Where do I start?" I went from pub to pub and after going to three pubs, I met one of the lads that we were with earlier in the day. I told him about the phone call and he said, "Oh God man, I'm sorry. I know where he is." John was in a bar in a hotel up the street with the girl that he had his eye on. I went over to him and he was all smiles, but that soon changed when I told him the bad news. His face changed colour and I've never seen any man to sober up as fast as he did. He said, "What am I going to do?" All I could say was, "Come on John. We have to stick together and face this. Mum is at peace now and we have to go home. The family need each other at a time like this."

It was the longest ever drive back home. All that was running through my mind was why didn't we call to see her that morning. To this day the decision that I made that morning still haunts me but, unfortunately, we can't turn back time.

By Joe

Biggest city in Brazil

I come from the biggest city in Brazil. The weather is very hot. The people are friendly. We have a very good bus service. It is a very busy city and there are a lot of jobs.

By Isaura

Small village in Poland

I come from a small village in Poland. There are a lot of farms, and people are very busy doing work in the fields. The roads are very good, and there are always a lot of tractors on the roads. We live in the fork of two rivers. The views are beautiful but when it's raining there is a high risk of flooding. The climate is very wet, and there are a lot of mosquitoes.

There is a soccer team, and every Sunday there's a match so we always have entertainment. There is a church in our village. The bus service is very poor but most people have cars. In summer, it is very warm so we can swim in the lakes. Winters are very cold and we go ice skating.

By Antoni

Where I grew up

I was born in September 1952 in Raheen Hospital. I grew up alongside the hospital on 600 acres of farmland and wonderful woods owned by Dr Edward McLysaght. You can see already we had everything we needed in this wonderful place that I still call home.

My memories of the farm are mostly of my father who worked on the farm seven days every week. He never complained, and he just loved his life there, taking care of all the livestock. He was so proud of one breed of cow that was on the farm, which was the

Kerry Blue. He showed his prize cow at the Dublin Horse Show many times, where he won many prizes.

One of the busiest seasons on the farm was harvest, a time when the wheat and barley were gathered. My sister, Ann, and myself really enjoyed the arrival of the big threshing machines in Raheen. It was all hands on deck and the men worked from dawn to dusk. I remember the huge ham sandwiches and the glasses of stout served to the men to help keep their strength up, as it really was back-breaking work.

I have a vivid memory of one particular day when my sister, Ann, and I helped ourselves to some stout from the wooden keg. We had to be carried home and put to bed, so you can imagine, my Mam wasn't happy. I can remember her, telling Dad off for not looking after us, but he just laughed and said it was thirsty work. We were back helping bright and early the next morning and, as always, we really enjoyed that summer on the farm. These are simple memories I know, but back then we enjoyed ourselves so much so that the day was never long enough for us.

By Betty

My name is Si Mei

My name is Si Mei. I come from China. The capital city is Beijing. We speak Mandarin. In China we don't have the euro. We have yuan. The Chinese New Year is a special time. It is a different day every year. A lot of people are busy going shopping and buying everything for the family.

By Si Mei

Memories

You asked me to find a memory
About something from my past
But how can I select one from the many that I have?

There's my parents and my brothers
My friends and some others
But my school days were so full of many days of pleasure
That now I like to find a little time for leisure.

I close my eyes and there I am, transported to the past
Where I see so many pictures and a life so full of treasures
Days of sunshine, apple-trees, skittles and whatever
We had the time to spend on, whatever was our measure.

By Breda

Brazil to Ennis

I am from Brazil but I live in Ennis now. I like Ennis because it is so peaceful. There is a cinema and there are a lot of shops. There is also a railway station. The people are friendly.

The weather is nice in summer. It is a beautiful town to visit but there are problems. There is too much traffic. The hospital is not very good. Many shops and factories have closed so there is no work.

By Cacio

My town

I come from a town in Poland. I love my town because it's very nice and the people are friendly. It is very busy in the summer because my town is near the Baltic Sea. A lot of people go there for holidays.

By Jacek

A city in Poland

I come from a city in Poland. I like my home city because it is big and lovely. In summer, it is very warm so we go to the lake or the river. The cinemas and theatres are not very expensive. The people are happy because unemployment is low. The soccer stadium is very big and nice. You can get buses or trains to other cities. There is a good airport.

The biggest problem is in winter when the roads are covered in snow. Flats and houses are very expensive. The hotels are also very expensive. The city is very noisy on the weekend because people party!

By Jarek

Dreaming of beautiful places

I have always dreamed about seeing beautiful places. One day, a few years ago my dream came true. My husband, my three children and I went on a dream holiday to the Spanish island named Menorca.

We visited two beautiful towns there, Mahon and Ciutadella. The buildings are very different from Irish buildings. The people were very nice. We had very nice, sunny weather. The children played on the beach and swam in the warm water of the Mediterranean Sea. It was really nice to spend time in such a different, wonderful country.

By Agnieszka

Sweet dream

I have always dreamed about my own house. I love gardening and I am very close to nature. In Lithuania, where I am from, I lived in apartments with my husband and two sons in a big city.

We were very far from nature without any opportunity to have a garden.

I came to Ireland eight years ago (2006) with my sons. My husband has been living and working here since 2003. We rented a house and I was so happy to be nearer to my dream. I was still thinking about my house though.

In 2007, my dream came true. Now we are the owners of a beautiful, private house on a big site in a quiet area. We are very close to nature. I can garden as much as I want. I like to wake up early in the morning and go outside with my cup of coffee. I enjoy hearing birds singing and the beautiful scents of flowers growing. I am very happy to see pheasants, rabbits and foxes visiting my garden.

Life is beautiful!

By Vera

My dream

I came to Ireland four years ago in 2010. When I arrived, my sister and I lived in Sixmilebridge. I didn't think that I would stay here this long, but I met a very good man and I felt that I really would like to stay here longer. I moved to Ennis and we were living together and expecting our first child. When our daughter was born, I started to dream about having my own family in my own house in Poland. My dream was unreachable, though, because I couldn't find work.

Every day I think about my dream home, how I would like to see my garden or kitchen. I dream about a big house with five bedrooms and a big living room with a fireplace. I also dream about my family. I would like to have three children. I know that my dream can come true. I need only one thing – a job.

I dream about my home and my children but I also dream about the wedding. I'd like a really nice wedding with a white dress and all my family there. I have family in different parts of Poland. So I still dream and dream every day. I hope my dream comes true.

By Beata

A strong man

We came to Ireland from England in 2006 because my father-in-law was sick. He had cancer so we wanted to be with him. The first few years were not too bad but from 2009 he started to be very bad with the cancer. He had so many operations, and every three to four months they had to be repeated. It was a very bad time for him and all the family.

He stopped smoking and drinking coffee. He started eating healthily. In 2012, he started to get better but he still has cancer. He went for a check-up in January this year, and they found two small tumours. They can't do anything to treat those tumours yet. They have to wait until they get bigger. He is a very strong man.

By Veronika

A hotel and restaurant

I'm Nathaly Granda. I'm married. I have a good husband and a beautiful daughter. I'm happy with my life but I am not completely happy. I would like to own a hotel and restaurant on the beach in my country, Ecuador. I love the culture of Ecuador.

For the next year, I would like to go to chef school. I love cooking. I want to work first because we need money to make this dream come true. It might take ten years or more.

By Nathaly

The best holiday of my life

It was in August two years ago that I went on holiday to Italy with my family. We had the most wonderful holiday of my life there. The weather was great. It was sunny all the time. There were many people there to relax and enjoy the summer.

We wanted to visit many interesting places in Italy. We went to Rome, the capital city of Italy. It is the most beautiful city I have ever seen. We saw many old Italian castles and churches. On the holiday, we wanted to eat only typical Italian food. We visited a lot of restaurants. We tried spaghetti and pizza in Rome.

By Ursula

A town in Poland

I come from a town in Poland. I love my town because it is not too big. The countryside is beautiful with many forests nearby. It is so tidy and quiet. We have a bus station and a train station.

There are not many jobs but there are a lot of shops, banks and dentists. The weather is very nice in the summer but it is very cold in the winter when there is a lot of snow.

By Katarzyna

My grandson

My grandson is seven years old, and he is a first class student. He doesn't like school and he doesn't like learning. My grandson called me and asked for help. He said to tell his mother that school is unnecessary, and that he wants to leave school.

He went to class 15 minutes after the bell with a coffee in his hand. He said to the teacher, "I don't like your class!"

By Anna O

My name is Eva

I came to Ireland 7 years ago. I am from Slovakia. I have 4 children, 3 girls and 1 boy. I speak English a little. At first, I didn't know anybody and it was difficult for me.

Then I started English classes. I love English. The teachers are very nice. Ireland is very green, clean and quiet.

By Eva

My holiday

I have two sisters and one brother. I like my sisters very much but I see them only once a year. I get on especially well with my younger sister, Evelina, who lives in Madrid. I visited her there two years ago and we spent one week together.

Evelina showed me very nice places in Madrid. I particularly remember Park Retiro in the centre of Madrid. There was a lake there and we went swimming off a boat. The weather was beautiful. I have very nice photos to remember this holiday with her. I was very happy to spend this time with her and we stayed up talking very late every night. It was a wonderful holiday.

By Wioletta

Davy Fitzgerald

Davy won two All-Irelands with the Clare hurlers as goalkeeper. He won them back in 1995 and 1997. They were great times growing up. We were disappointed when we lost the All-Ireland back in 2002 but Davy got the All-Star that year. He got two more in 1995 and 2005. He has three All-Star awards altogether.

Davy was dropped by the manager Tony Considine back in 2007. Mike Mac took over as Clare manager in 2008. The first thing he did was bring Davy back. A month or two later Davy was playing

for his club, Sixmilebridge, and he was forced into retirement because of injury.

He got his first managerial stripes with LIT (Limerick Institute of Technology), with joint manager Anthony Daly. Then he managed his club side, Sixmilebridge, before taking over as Waterford Senior manager in 2008. He took them to an All-Ireland final in his first year in charge. He led them to a Munster title in 2010. He stepped down the following year.

Davy took over the Clare Senior hurlers and brought them from division 1B to division 1A in 2012. The following year, 2013, he won an All-Ireland as manager. Ger Loughnane said in the 1990s, "We are going to do it," and he was right.

The following lines are from a poem called 'He wishes for the cloths of heaven' by W.B. Yeats.

*"I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."*

Davy Fitzgerald was a boy that became a man from the Banner county.

By Colm

The tooth mouse

My son lost his tooth. He knows that if a child loses a baby tooth, he should place it under his pillow before going to bed. The tooth mouse will visit while he sleeps, and replace the lost tooth with a small payment.

"Mom," he says, "I had a hard job with that tooth. I have to leave a note for the tooth mouse with my baby tooth. The tooth mouse should give me €10 minimum. I spent a lot of time helping my tooth to fall out."

"Do you know how many children's teeth fall out every day?" I ask him. "Millions of children from all over the world. The tooth mouse will become very poor if everyone asks for €10 for every tooth."

My son does not want to give up. "Well, I am going to write a note asking for €10 anyway!" He smiles suddenly. "I think you put the money under the pillow! My friend told me that, once when his tooth fell out and nobody knew, he left it under his pillow and what do you think? The tooth mouse did not come! I think it is a nice fairy-tale for kids. Our parents replace the teeth with the money." My son is clearly disappointed after this speech.

I think quickly, "My dear, I told you that many children lose their teeth every day. The tooth mouse has assistants who help to collect these lost teeth. Even they don't know all the collection points. The easiest way for a successful collection is to tell your parents, or grandparents, about the tooth. They know what to do." My son seems satisfied with my explanation. I can't get my breath back after saying this. Yes, we adults know all about telephone numbers, e-mails, websites, and all kinds of different services. But, how do we reach the tooth mouse, Santa Claus, fairies, etc.? I believe this extra ability comes at the birth of our first child and is part of our immeasurable love for that child.

So, the letter for the tooth mouse is finished. The baby tooth is wrapped into the letter and put under the pillow. My son is going to sleep happy. "I'll get the money tomorrow," he says. "I don't mind how much. The other children need money too." Next morning, I find my son very busy. He is looking under his pillow, the sheet, under his bed, the mattress, everywhere. "What are you looking for?" I ask. "I found €5 and no letter with my tooth. I am looking for the other €5. Don't clean my room, please. I will be back after school. I must find the other €5," he said. Oh God! Childhood is very complicated sometimes! How can an adult explain such things to a small child?! But, I will do it, together with the tooth mouse.

By Vilma

Autumn

Autumn is a season of change. The leaves change colour and they fall off the trees; you can hear them rustling under your feet when walking in the woods. The clocks change time at the end of October. They go back one hour. The days get shorter and it is dark early in the evening. Then we have long nights, which are nice sometimes as we light our fire and watch the flames rising from the coal and wood and listen to it crackling. I love to sit by a big fire with a good book that I have been keeping for a night like this.

The things I don't like about autumn are the storms, thunder, lightning and the heavy rain that we get. We get frost as well, which can be very dangerous to walk or drive on.

The animals that hibernate have gathered all their food and have gone to sleep until the spring. A lot of birds have flown away to warmer countries. The robin is the bird that we see in autumn and winter, especially at Christmas time. It is time to get the bird feeders out, with nuts and seeds filled to the top for our feathered friends that are brave enough to stay with us.

By Teresa

Poland to Ennis

I come from Poland but I live in Ennis now. I like Ennis. It is a peaceful town. The bus and rail service is good. The people are friendly. There are nice hotels and a lot of pubs. There are a lot of lakes near Ennis.

The hospital is bad. There is too much traffic on the roads.

By Jan



The All-Ireland Hurling Final

I was right about 1995 when Clare won the All-Ireland Hurling final. It was a great day! I remember getting up early in the morning. I was very excited about the match and going with my friends. There were four of us. We go to all the matches together.

I remember going to see Clare v Galway in the semi-final and I left home early that morning to go to Dublin. When we arrived in Dublin we parked the car in one of the hotel car parks. We went for something to eat and we had a lovely breakfast. Then we left the hotel and made our way to the match. We met a lot of our friends and we had lots of fun.

When we arrived at Croke Park it was very big. When we got in we went up to the new stand. It was lovely. When Clare came out into the field I felt so excited. It was my dream for so long that I would see Clare in Croke Park.

When the match was over I went down to the field. It was lovely. I was looking forward to the final. It was going to be a great day. I will never forget that day.

By Noel

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